

Naturalised Players

A new era in Bangladeshi Football

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The naturalisation of foreign footballers and subsequent inclusion in national teams has been a familiar trend in international football. It's a trend that's finally about to catch up in Bangladesh, a trend that brings with it new hopes and concerns for football in Bangladesh.

Guinean striker Ismail Bangura, Ghanaian defender Samad Yousuf and Nigerian Kingsley Chibueze are the three players reportedly targeted by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) to represent Bangladesh at the international level. This decision has been triggered by the lack of quality strikers in the national team's current pool of players. The players' inability to perform at a maximum level for the full 90 minutes, as seen in recent games, has also compelled the Federation and the management to look at these options.

Teams in the Middle East have done well in recent years and much of that owes to the mass naturalisation of Brazilian and African footballers since the early 2000s. According to FIFA regulations, a player must spend 5 years in residence in a country before being available for selection in the national squad. Most football fans will remember Portuguese midfielder Deco, who was born in Brazil but played international football for Portugal since 2003 after spending five years in various Portuguese clubs. In more recent times, Brazilian born Diego Costa opted to play for the Spanish national team instead of Brazil, having played in Spain since 2007.

While there are many who think this decision will eventually be harmful to our local footballers and discourage young players in the future, this may just prove to be the perfect solution for all our problems in the short term. The national team strikers haven't scored enough goals, and once they have scored, the team has looked tired and unfit in the latter part of games. The aforementioned foreign players have the capability to come up with answers for both these problems.

With the addition of these new players, the supporters can hope to see a better Bangladesh side on the pitch, and the BFF officials have eyed the FIFA World Cup 2018 qualifier match against Australia in September to field these new players. But there still remains concern about the fact that naturalised players will be occupying spots in the team that would otherwise go to local players, and if local players find it difficult to play for the national squad, it wouldn't mean good things for the motivation of whatever budding young talent we have rising up the ranks for Bangladesh.

The BFF have to be careful to not become over reliant on foreign players in the future, something that has already happened in our domestic leagues. Foreign strikers have consistently been top scorers in the Bangladesh Premier League, and local strikers have played second fiddle more often than not. The current predicament we are in is a result of that, and it is up to the federation and the club managements to ensure that local players, especially strikers, have enough opportunities to develop and flourish in the domestic league, and eventually replace naturalised players in the national team. The decision to bring in foreign players into the mix for the national squad is commendable, but there are a lot of things that could go wrong with this, and concerned authorities need to make sure that they don't. Players like Ismail Bangura and Samad Yousuf could open the doors to a new era in Bangladeshi football, but we hope that this door doesn't remain open for any longer than necessary.

When he's not obsessing over football, Azmin spends his time devising ways of not getting mugged, only to fail miserably. Give him advice at fb.com/azminazran



Notebooks you want *And can have*

PHOTO: SOHAIL ANWAR

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Have you ever felt a little hesitant taking out your notebook in front of others, because it had an odd-looking cover, like a bird or flowers? I know I have. But not anymore, thanks to these online shops that sell cool notebooks with pop-culture references. Let's check some out.

Audacieux

In a very short time, Audacieux has become popular among youngsters as it offers various designs of notebooks and bookmarks. As of now, they have 11 different designs of notebooks that you can buy. They will soon be launching new designs, as well as a new collection of student notebooks that will be widely available.

Notebooks and bookmarks featuring Up, Minion, Sherlock, How I Met Your Mother and some football clubs are the most popular among buyers.

Their notebooks have 200 pages (100 sheets x 2) with spiral binding and matte lamination on the outer and inner covers. The notebooks are 5.5 inch by 8.5 inch in dimension and with 100 gsm paper weight. The bookmarks are 7.5 inch by 2 inch in size, with 250 gsm paper weight and gloss lamination. Each notebook costs BDT 280 and each bookmark costs BDT 80, but you can get some set offers at discounted prices. Audacieux delivers all over Bangladesh. Within Dhaka, the delivery charges are BDT 50, but if your net order is over BDT 300, they will deliver the notebooks to you for free. Check out their collection at facebook.com/ZI.audacieux

Banana

Behind Banana is a brilliant team of creative designers. If I were to describe their line of notebooks in a word, I would say their collection is "hip". They have 7 designs as of now, but they are working on 5 more designs. Some of their most famous notebooks are Monsters, Tape Recorder, Retro Cat, and Sick. You can order the notebooks online, with a delivery charge of BDT 50. However, Banana's notebooks are also avail-

able at Yellow Submarine Café (Banani), Candy Floss (Dhanmondi), Vertical Horizon Coaching Centre (Dhanmondi) and North South University's stationary shop (Bashundhara R/A).

Banana's notebooks come in a large and a small size. The large ones have 150 ruled pages with double spiral binding and are of the standard A4 size, and cost BDT 250 per notebook. The smaller notebooks have 140 plain pages with a book bind. They are 5 inch by 7 inch in size and are priced at BDT 190. Each paper is of 80 gsm, while the covers are 300 gsm. For ordering, visit facebook.com/bananawhat and send them a message there.

Foverós

Foverós describe themselves as the ultimate pop culture notebook store, and their happy customers will vouch for that. They initially started out with 10 designs, paying homage to Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, Game of Thrones and Friends beside some humorous designs. But they promise that more new designs are coming soon. Their designs like Harry Potter's lightning bolt scar, Professor Snape, the Parental Advisory design and the Doodles design drew the most interest from customers.

Foverós' spiral bound notebooks have 150 pages (75 sheets x 2) and have dimensions of 7.125 inch by 9.5 inch. The papers weigh 80 gsm, with a hard cover of 150 gsm. Each notebook will cost you BDT 250, but Foverós will be offering discounts as soon as their new designs roll out. Cherry on top – Foverós delivers for free all around Dhaka. Visit facebook.com/foverosofficial to marvel at their collection and order.

At a time when our lives are dictated by expressive visuals, a well-designed notebook can certainly up our coolness quotient. So check out the online notebook shops mentioned, and get yourself a fancy notebook that can make your friends jealous.

Arman R. Khan is a caffeine addict, a dreamer and a culture enthusiast who takes life one day at a time. Correspond with him at fb.com/arman.r.khan or tweet @ArmanRK