

BNS press box in dilapidated condition

SPORTS REPORTER

The continuous downpour over the past week has left the press box at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in a delicate state, invoking horror memories of its roof collapse of October 9, 2007. The roof of the press box which holds the VIP box with a false ceiling, has been leaking water in places for the last few days, thanks to the faulty design of the building.

A similar situation had resulted in the collapse of the roof eight years ago when some 100 journalists narrowly escaped disaster as the roof had collapsed a couple of hours after an international match between Bangladesh and Tajikistan. Even though the roof was reconstructed to some extent after that accident, the heavy downpour this season has once again left the facilities in a perilous state.

Still fresh in the memory of the journalists and football officials, the current issue has been taken into cognizance of National Sports Council (NSC) by the Bangladesh Football Federation officials. NSC secretary, Ashok Kumar Biswas, who inspected the press box recently, said they would take steps to renovate the facilities.

Ryan moves to Valencia

AFP, Paris

Australian international goalkeeper Matthew Ryan signed a six year contract with Spanish side Valencia from Belgian outfit Bruges on Tuesday.

The 23-year-old -- who played for Australia at last year's World Cup finals -- has been at Bruges since 2013 but Valencia signed him because they believe he has the qualities required to play in the Champions League -- they are in the play-offs having finished fourth in La Liga last term.

Valencia president Layhoun Chan, who has been in charge since Amadeo Salvo stepped down on July 1, said it hadn't been easy finding a goalkeeper who could meet the challenges of the Champions League.

Pakistan clinch series

AFP, Colombo

Ahmed Shehzad smashed 95 off 90 balls as Pakistan thrashed below-par Sri Lanka by seven wickets in the fourth one-day match in Colombo on Wednesday to clinch the five-match series.

Mohammad Hafeez chipped in with 70 as the tourists surpassed Sri Lanka's 256-9 in the 41st over at the Premadasa stadium to take a decisive 3-1 lead in the series.

The series win kept Azhar Ali's Pakistan in contention for a place in the eight-nation Champions Trophy in England in 2017.

Pakistan are two points ahead of the West Indies at number eight in the rankings, but both teams are due to play a tri-series in Zimbabwe next month that will determine the final spot.

Pakistan's one-day success follows their 2-1 victory over Sri Lanka in the preceding Test series under Misbah-ul Haq's captaincy.

Sri Lanka are assured of taking part in the Champions Trophy, but their lacklustre display did not do justice to the former world champions.

Shehzad and Azhar put Pakistan on the road to victory with an opening stand of 75 in 11 overs before the skipper was removed by sling-arm fast bowler Lasith Malinga for 33.

Hafeez helped Shehzad build on the fine start by adding 115 for the second wicket, but Sri Lanka hit back to remove both batsmen in the space of 23 runs.

Shehzad fell five runs short of his fourth one-day century when he cut seamer Suranga Lakmal to a diving Kusal Perera at third man. He hit 12 boundaries and a six.

Hafeez was caught behind by Dinesh Chandimal off spinner Milinda Siriwardana to leave Pakistan on 213-3, but Sri Lanka's recovery came too late.

Shoaib Malik hit a 16-ball 29 and ended the match by lofting Siriwardana over mid-wicket for his fourth six. Sarfraz Ahmed remained unbeaten on 17.

Earlier, Lahiru Thirimanne top-scored with 90 for Sri Lanka after skipper Angelo Mathews won the toss for the first time on Pakistan's current tour and elected to bat.

The left-hander put on 109 for the second wicket with Tillakaratne Dilshan (50) after Perera had been dismissed by Mohammad Irfan off the second ball of the match.

Thirimanne missed his fifth one-day century when he swept leg-spinner Yasir Shah to deep square-leg, where Shehzad picked up a low catch to make amends for a dropped catch in the bowler's previous over.

Besides Thirimanne and Dilshan, none of the other top-order batsmen settled in as Mathews fell for 12 and Dinesh Chandimal was dismissed after making 20.

Tailender Malinga smashed 17 off 13 balls at the end to ensure Sri Lanka crossed the 250-run mark.

Irfan finished with three wickets, while fellow seamer Anwar Ali took two.

The fifth match will be played in Hambantota on Sunday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SRI LANKA: 256 for 9 in 50 overs (Dilshan 50, Thirimanne 90, Chandimal 20, Priyanjan 18, Siriwardana 19; Irfan 3-50, Anwar 2-41)

PAKISTAN: 257 for 3 in 40.4 overs (Azhar 33, Shehzad 95, Hafeez 70, Sarfraz 17 not out, Malik 29 not out; Malinga 1-46, Lakmal 1-50, Siriwardana 1-28)

Result: Pakistan won by 7 wickets and lead the five-match series 3-1.

Player-of-the-match: Ahmed Shehzad.

BD to host AFC U-19 qualifiers

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) on Tuesday got the final consent from the Asian Football Confederation to stage the qualifying round of AFC Under-19 Championship in Dhaka this year.

Bangladesh are in Group A alongside Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bhutan and the matches will be held from September 28 to October 6 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

This qualifying campaign was supposed to be held in Colombo, but the Sri Lankan football authorities later declined to host the event due to internal issues.

AFC later asked the other participating nations to host the tournament and Bangladesh took the opportunity.

A total of 43 teams, split into 10 qualifying groups, will compete for the 16-team final tournament, which will be held in Bahrain in 2016. The ten group winners and the five best runners-up will join hosts Bahrain in the final round.

MOURINHO OPEN TO MLS MOVE

Jose Mourinho is open to the possibility of one day coaching in Major League Soccer but says there is no chance of him heading Stateside while his hunger for success in European club football remains. The Chelsea boss, widely regarded as one of the best managers in world football, said he would be interested in coaching in the MLS to "give something back" to a developing football community. But just as Mourinho has rebuffed opportunities to coach at international



Mohammedan striker Ismael Bangoura (R) celebrates his opening goal with teammates during their Manyavar Bangladesh Premier League match against Muktijoddha at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

MSC held by Muktis

SPORTS REPORTER



Muktijoddha Sangsad side in their Manyavar Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Even though the draw took Black and Whites to second position alongside arch-rivals Abahani on 31 points from 16 matches, they would see the result as two

**MUKTIJODDHA 1 - 1 MOHAMMEDAN
CTG ABAHANI 1 - 0 RAHMATGANJ**

valuable points dropped as they now trail leaders and defending

champions Sheikh Jamal by nine points, with only four matches left to play.

Muktijoddha Sangsad, on the other hand, would be the happier side as the draw snapped a three-match losing streak for them. The All Reds, who were the early pace-setters in the league with four consecutive wins before losing their way, thanks to infighting between players and officials, remain in sixth position with 22 points from 16 matches.

The Black and Whites, who came into the match on the back of a 6-1 win over Farashganj, took the lead in the 12th minute with a neat placing shot from Ismael Bangoura on a rolling free-kick from Sohel

Rana. The lead lasted some 22 minutes as Muktijoddha's national striker Enamul Haque found the net for the 11th time in the league with a clinical penalty conversion. The 31-year-old forward sent Mohammedan goalkeeper Ashrafal Haque Rana the wrong way from the spot after being brought down inside the box by Mohammedan's Nigerian defender Eleta Benjamin.

Rana then made a brilliant save on the stroke of half time to deny Enamul from giving the All Reds the lead. Mohammedan's substitute winger Mobarak Hossain blasted wide of target, despite getting Muktijoddha keeper T. I. Tumir Chowdhury on a one-on-one situation, in the 78th minute as the match

headed for a draw.

CTG ABAHANI GRAB VITAL WIN

The port city side grabbed their second win of the league after beating visiting Rahmatganj Muslim Friends Society 1-0 at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday. Cameroonian midfielder Yoko Samnik grabbed the all-important goal in the 78th minute of the match. The win took the port city to relative safety, at tenth position with 10 points from 15 matches, and five clear of bottom-side Farashganj. Rahmatganj, meanwhile, remained one place above them with 11 points from same number of matches.

Siddikur Rahman will look to get his European dream in shape when he participates in the Omega European Masters which starts in the Swiss town of Crans Montana today. The 30-year-old golfer, who

'Drogba ideal for MLS'

SPORTS REPORTER

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho has backed Didier Drogba to make a success of a move to Major League Soccer after reports linking the Blues legend to a career swansong in North America.

Several MLS teams are reportedly in the hunt for Drogba, with the Montreal Impact and Chicago Fire the front-runners after opening talks with the 37-year-old Ivory Coast striker.

Drogba has been a free agent since his contract with the English Premier League champions expired at the end of last season following a second stint at the club.

Mourinho gave any would-be MLS suitor a glowing reference about the forward as he spoke to journalists in Montreal ahead of Chelsea's opening game in their US tour here Tuesday.

"I think he's the perfect choice," Mourinho said.

Siddikur embarks on Omega mission

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman will look to get his European dream in shape when he participates in the Omega European Masters which starts in the Swiss town of Crans Montana today. The 30-year-old golfer, who

twice took part in this prestigious event but had the misfortune of missing the cut and withdrawing due to injuries in the last two editions, will tee off at 7:35am local time at the Crans-sur-Sierre Golf Club.

Siddikur, who resurrected a flagging season with a third-place finish at the Queen's Cup in Thailand in June, left the country for Switzerland on the Eid day, the 19th of July. After missing four cuts in five Asian Tour events, Siddikur had returned from Thailand and practiced with his coach for a few days at the Kurmitola Golf Club in Dhaka.

The two-time Asian Tour winner will be competing alongside a stellar field which includes defending champion David Lipsky of the United States, Sergio Garcia of Spain, Lee Westwood of England and India's golfing sensation Anirban Lahiri.

The 2.7 million euro event is the only event hosted in Europe which is co-sanctioned by the Asian Tour and the European Tour.

Cambiasso on way out

SPORTS REPORTER

Veteran former Argentinian international midfielder Esteban Cambiasso announced Tuesday he will not seek a new contract with Leicester City ahead of the upcoming Premier League season.

The 34-year-old helped Leicester avoid relegation from the lucrative top flight of English football last term but his current contract expired last month.

New Foxes manager Claudio Ranieri said Monday he needed to know, and quickly, what Cambiasso's intentions were and on Tuesday he had an answer.

"I would like to announce that I have decided not to renew my contract with Leicester City," said Cambiasso on his Facebook page.

"I have taken this decision only 24 hours after receiving the proposal from Leicester because I want to give the club as much time as possible to find an alternative."



Barcelona striker Luis Suarez (L) scores the opening goal against LA Galaxy during their International Champions Cup tie in Pasadena on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Barca edge LA Galaxy

SPORTS REPORTER

Goals from Luis Suarez and Sergi Roberto lifted Barcelona to a 2-1 victory over the Los Angeles Galaxy on Tuesday that manager Luis Enrique called an encouraging start to the European Champions' North American tour.

Uruguay international Suarez came out on top in a clash with former Liverpool teammate Steven Gerrard -- the Galaxy's latest acquisition from Europe.

His 45th-minute strike and Roberto's 56th-minute goal ensured that even without such stars as Argentina's Lionel Messi and Brazilian Neymar -- let off the pre-season tour after Copa America duty -- Barcelona got the win their dominant performance deserved in front of 93,226 fans at Pasadena's Rose Bowl.

It was the largest crowd ever to watch a match featuring a Major League Soccer club.

"Based on what a first game of the pre-season looks like, considering we've only had about seven days of practice, a lot of travelling, overall I

feel very positive," the coach said. "Overall, our players look good." Barcelona, preparing to defend their La Liga, Copa Del Rey and Champions League treble, effectively neutralized any threat from Gerrard and Galaxy teammate Robbie Keane, while pressing relentlessly themselves.

They were finally rewarded in the 45th minute when Suarez fired a left-footed shot past Galaxy keeper Brian Rowe after Rafinha's deflected cross was moved on by Marc Bartra.

"I'm happy with the way the team played, with the level, the intensity," Luis Enrique said.