

BFF's £1m proposal for Soccer Int'l

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The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has offered Soccer International, UK to buy all the rights of next season's Bangladesh Premier League in exchange for one million pounds, said speakers after an executive committee meeting at the BFF House yesterday.

The UK based company, in a recent meeting with the BFF high-ups, expressed its desire to arrange a franchise football league in Bangladesh. But the BFF's alternative proposal, which is deemed as a test case for the UK based company, will soon be sent officially.

The meeting also gave all-clear to Chittagong Abahani Club to host the Sheikh Kamal Gold Cup International Club Football Tournament in Chittagong from October 17 to 30. The proposed tournament is expected to feature three or four teams from Bangladesh and the same number of teams from neighbouring countries. However, if that tournament goes ahead, this season's Independence Cup, which was scheduled for October, may not be held, the speakers informed.

The meeting also accepted development committee's proposal to take the under-16 national team into the BFF Academy in Sylhet for the next four years.

The five-hour long meeting also decided, among other things, to start the Bangladesh Championship League, from October 25 involving ten teams, including one of the BFF Academy.

Meanwhile, a new set of jerseys for all the national football teams of Bangladesh, chosen through a competition recently -- were displayed to the media during the programme.



Mustafizur Rahman (R) demonstrates his balancing skills to his teammates at the home of cricket in Mirpur yesterday; the day the Tigers joined the national camp after enjoying a three-week rest.

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Six players did not turn up to attend the first day of the Bangladesh cricket team's conditioning camp that began at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, ahead of the two-match Test series against Australia.

Everyone though had their reason for being absent. Rony Talukder's wedding reception took place yesterday evening in his hometown of Narayanganj. Interestingly, the 24-year-old right-hander, who tied the knot with Smriti Mondal on July 31 this year, was not keen on ducking the first day of the camp and it was at the insistence of a

board official that he took the leave to enjoy the occasion fully.

"The programme is at 7 pm, so I thought that I could still attend the beep test. Every moment is important and fitness is crucial. It is very competitive these days as everyone wants to capitalise on any opportunity," Rony told The Daily Star over phone yesterday, when asked why he was reluctant to take the break.

That probably shows the way the players think nowadays. Another huge change in attitude of the players was reflected by the comments of Mario Villavarayen, who is conducting the fitness camp alongside physio Bayzedul Islam Khan.

When jokingly asked how much weight his charges gained during the three-week break, the Sri

Lankan excitedly said, "I was a little worried about their weight, but I was surprised today. Some even lost some. It's fantastic."

And while Villavarayen was already happy, his birthday celebration by the players added more zest on the opening day of the camp.

"Everybody is very conscious about their fitness and that's why they take care of themselves."

Considering the busy schedule of the players over the next six months, Villavarayen said that the coming four-week fitness training would be crucial for them.

"We wanted to see the fitness levels and conditioning of the players in today's test. We have four weeks in hand to work with them and these four weeks are very important

because there's a lot of cricket coming in the next six months, not only international, but also domestic."

He also informed that left-handed opener Tamim Iqbal was having some problems in his knee, which is why he didn't take the beep test, only participating in running, while there were also some concerns over off-spinner Shohag Gazi's fitness. He said, "We should understand that he [Gazi] was out of cricket for quite a long time."

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza will join the camp after returning from Singapore on August 26, followed by Shakib Al Hasan, who is vacationing in the USA, the day after. All-rounder Sabbir Rahman and pacer Abul Hasan didn't turn up due to family commitments, while Test skipper Mushfiqur Rahim has been suffering from fever.

Bangladesh in semis

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Bangladesh youths booked their spot in the semifinals of the SAFF U-19 Championship after a 2-0 victory against Bhutan in their opening match at the ANFA Complex Ground in Lalitpur, Kathmandu yesterday.

The boys in red and green, who dominated possession all through the match and took a 2-0 lead right at the end of the first half, wasted a couple of goal scoring chances after the break to squander the opportunity to grab the pole position in Group A, which also features Nepal.

Bangladesh are in second position behind Nepal, who scored more goals, and will face the hosts tomorrow in Group A's last match, which will decide the group champions and runners-up positions.

In yesterday's match, Bangladesh initiated their attacks mostly through the wings, with Mohammad Ibrahim and Rohit Sarker causing quite a few problems to the opposition, who were thrashed by Nepal 3-1 in their opening match. Mannan Rabbi meanwhile was a constant threat as the lone centre-forward, but the lack of communication among the front three meant Bangladesh had to wait until the 42nd minute for the first goal. The break came when Rohit slammed home from the edge of the box on the half-volley after being set up with a header by Ibrahim. It took only two minutes for Bangladesh to double the lead as Rahmatganj forward Rabbi got hold of a long ball from the deep before squaring off the keeper and somewhat scrappily putting the ball at the back of the net.

Bangladesh were not happy to sit on a two-goal lead in the second half, and continued their forays through the wings, while offering little down the middle. Ibrahim saw his flick from point-blank range in the 65th minute come off the goalkeeper's body before incredibly failing to connect to a square-pass from just two yards in front of the goal six minutes later, as Bangladesh walked off with a comfortable, yet less than satisfactory victory.



Bangladesh players celebrate one of their two goals against Bhutan in their SAFF U-19 Championship fixture at the ANFA Complex Ground in Kathmandu yesterday.

SL collapse suddenly

AFP, Colombo

SRI LANKA: Sri Lanka captain Angelo Mathews hit a century before India fought back to assume control of the second Test at the P Sara Oval in Colombo on Saturday.

The tourists, seeking a series-levelling win after losing the first Test in Galle, ended Sri Lanka's first innings at 306 after tea on the third day in reply to their own 393.

India closed the day at 70-1 in their second knock, an overall lead of 157 runs with nine wickets in hand on the slow, wearing pitch that promises to help spinners on the last two days.

Murali Vijay was unbeaten on 39 and Ajinkya Rahane was on 28, the pair having put on 67 runs for the second wicket after Lokesh Rahul was bowled by Dhammika Prasad off the fifth ball.

The duo saw off the last five overs in fading light as play was extended by more than an hour due to a rain interruption after lunch.

Mathews hit a glorious 102 to lift his team to a strong position before India turned the tables after a barren morning session.

Sri Lanka, who started the day at 140-3, were cruising at 241-3 soon after lunch



Sri Lanka captain Angelo Mathews raises his arms to celebrate his century against India on the third day of the second Test at the P Sara Oval in Colombo on Saturday.

IN A NUTSHELL

A legend departs

Former Australian opener Arthur Morris, a member of Don Bradman's 1948 'Invincibles' team, has died aged 93, Cricket Australia said Saturday.

The death of Morris, who had been the country's oldest living former Test player, meant "a cherished link with our past" had been lost, said the governing body's chairman Wally Edwards.

"When Australia's best openers are discussed his name will always be one of the first mentioned," Edwards said.



Harbhajan next in line

After Dinesh Karthik tied the knot with squash star Dipika Pallikal, the cricket world is all set for another big fat wedding as veteran spinner Harbhajan Singh is set to enter marital bliss with partner and Bollywood actress Geeta Basra.

The pair has been together for quite a while now and Geeta was seen attending Mumbai Indians matches very frequently in the IPL.

The couple are set to tie the knot on October 29 in Phagwara in a traditional Punjabi style wedding, where cricket and Bollywood stars will attend.

However, if Singh is selected for India's series against South Africa, then wedding dates may be shifted.

Bopara meets Gunners duo

England all-rounder Ravi Bopara was spending time with Arsenal stars Theo Walcott and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain on Friday.

Bopara posted a picture of himself with the Arsenal posse on his Twitter account, followed by a few videos of the guests playing cricket.

In short clips he posted, Chamberlain hit a full-toss delivery for a big six, while Theo Walcott played a beautiful cover drive.

After Bopara posted all the videos, he tweeted, "Crowdfunding to buy them out of their contracts and get them Essex Cricket ????"

Compiled by Star Sport Desk

No auction in 3rd BPL

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BPL 100 Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon said that the number of franchises may increase for the third edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

"There is a chance to see more than seven teams. If we find that there are some more good investors then we may increase the number of teams," Papon told reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

He also informed that players will be allocated to the franchises through a lottery-based transfer system called 'players-by-choice' -- which he believes will ensure balance among the teams -- instead of the auctioning process that was used for the 2012-13 Dhaka Premier League.

Papon also said that they have discussed making quotas for local and foreign players and that they would make a list of local cricket-

ers and divide them into different categories and will have a long list of foreign cricketers from where every team can take four cricketers.

Papon said that the owners of the Rangpur franchise from the 2013 BPL have cleared their dues and that's why they can now bid for a team in this year's tournament.

"Among the old franchises, Rangpur have cleared their dues, so now we have 12 companies which have expressed their interest. We will give them a letter on August 30 or September 1 to deposit Tk 1 crore as pay order and Tk 4.5 crore as bank guarantee, a total of Tk 5.5 crore. There won't be any risks if we take Tk 5.5 crore," said Papon.

"We will wait till August 27 for the old franchises to pay their past dues. Five companies are yet to pay Tk 36.81 crore. The Sylhet franchise has almost Tk 8 crore, Barisal 6.5 crore, Khulna around 8.19 crore, Rajshahi 6.09 crore and Chittagong 7.45 crore. There may be discrepancies of 1 to 2 lakh taka in these figures, but this is what we have in our records, he added.

Oz close to victory

REUTERS, London

Australia reduced England to 203 for six to move to the brink of a consolation victory on the third day of the final Ashes test at The Oval on Saturday.

England captain Alastair Cook made a brave 85 before falling to Steve Smith shortly before the close and the touring side, 129 runs ahead, need four more wickets to end the series on a high after relinquishing the urn.

England, following on 332 runs behind, lost Adam Lyth (10), Ian Bell (13) and Joe Root (11) cheaply in warm sunshine in south London.

Jonny Bairstow made 26 but he and Ben Stokes (nought) fell in the same over from spinner Nathan Lyon to leave Australia on course to win inside three days.

Cook, however, had other ideas and he and Jos Buttler added 59 to give the hosts an outside chance of saving the match with rain forecast over the next two days.

Just 15 runs short of his first century of the series, Cook pushed tentatively forward to

part-time leg-spinner Smith and Voges pouched the catch at short leg to end the England captain's five-hour stay at the crease.

Australia's fired-up pace attack had ripped through England's top order.

Lyth was caught by Michael Clarke at second slip off Peter Siddle, continuing a wretched run of form for the England opener who will surely be dropped after failing to pass fifty in the series.

Bell never looked comfortable before fending a snorting delivery from Mitchell Marsh to captain Clarke.

Root also struggled to cope with Australia's pace attack and hooked a short ball from Mitchell Johnson to Mitchell Starc at long leg.

Cook took 27 balls to score his first run and batted with watchful intent, determined to avoid a repeat of the collapse England suffered on Friday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: First innings 481

ENGLAND: First Innings 149 (Cook 22, Ali 30, Wood 24; Johnson 3-21, Marsh 3-30)

ENGLAND: Second Innings following on 203 for 6 (Cook 85, Buttler 33 no; Lyon 2-52; Siddle 1-14, Smith 1-7)