

Booters brace for Mission Australia

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh coach Lodewijk de Kruij said his side is not taking the tour of Australia for the World Cup and Asian Cup Qualifier not just as a case of 'being there', rather they want to make the hosts feel their presence, no matter what the final result turns out to be.

The Bangladesh team will flying off to for Kuala Lumpur at the early hours of Thursday and will play a friendly match against the Malaysians on August 29 before travelling to Perth where they will be hosted by the Socceroos on September 3.

The match against the reigning Asian champions will be the biggest fixture for the men in red and green in recent years and whatever the scoreline turns out to be, it will be an enormous experience for them, feel the coach and his players.

"We are not going there as tourists. We are a professional team. We are going there to represent our country and that means we will fight, we will battle in every angle we can," said de Kruij while addressing the media at a press conference at the Bangladesh Football Federation House yesterday.

The 45-year coach, however, did not forget to mention that Australia are the number one team in Asia with high profile players who play their trade all over the world.

"We can't hide from the fact that Australia is a fantastic and highly rated team. I want to you to remember that my country (Holland) faced Australia in Brazil and beat them 3-2 in a difficult match," said de Kruij. "When we are going there, we are prepared and highly motivated. Nobody knows what will happen there but there is a big difference between Bangladesh and Australia in quality, education etc. That's what we have to know and we have to face."

Australia are ranked 61st in the FIFA rankings, 109 runs ahead Bangladesh, and have played the World Cup for four



Lodewijk de Kruij tries desperately to make defender Nasirul Islam (R) understand his point as skipper Mamunul Islam and winger Zahid Hossain play the ball between them during at practice session at the Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club Ground yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

times including the last three. In their World Cup Qualifiers opener, the Socceroos notched up a 2-1 win over Kyrgyzstan, who defeated Bangladesh 3-0 in Dhaka.

Having analysed the strength of Australia, de Kruij is mulling a counter-attack based defensive strategy.

"Australia have a lot of strength in midfield and attack. You see how they

build up the game; every ball goes through their captain. The play is going on high speed. The players are changing their position frequently upfront. Midfield is playing significant role and speeding up the game," analysed de Kruij.

"What we have to do is to make the pitch very close, very small, very compact. When they come in that area we have to attack them, very hard and

tough, keep them from the goal and don't allow them come inside the box.

"85 per cent of our tactics would be regarding defensive organisation, because when we have the ball the only challenge we have is the quick transition, going for attack in 3-4-5 seconds. In that moment if we lose the ball again, (we will have to) come back again - very close and very compact," added de Kruij,

who will not be allowed to stand at the dugout due to a FIFA suspension.

The Dutch coach indicated that he may field wingers Zahid Hossain and Jewel Rana to capitalise on the opportunities if they get against Australia but he will certainly have some problems in backline, which looks vulnerable with the off-form players as well as having less central-back.

'One of the best places'



Stuart Law walks along with Bangladesh Under-19 coach Mizanur Rahman Babul, after the former signed all the paperwork at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

SPORTS REPORTER



Stuart Law said yesterday that he came here to add some value. The Australian arrived in the capital on Monday night to work with the Bangladesh Under-19 team as a technical adviser. The former Australia middle-order batsman was the head coach of the Tigers from June 2011, but he resigned less than ten months into the job and during his tenure Bangladesh reached the final of the Asia Cup for the first time in 2012.

However, the short stint was good enough for the 46-year-old coach to get emotionally attached to Bangladesh cricket and that's why he first expressed his excitement over the Tigers' recent successes while he was talking to reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Saying that he was looking forward to getting involved with the future of Bangladesh cricket, Law said: "It has been really exciting the way Bangladesh have been playing cricket for the last 12 months. I am sure the young fellows would want to emulate their heroes. I am very privileged and happy to be part of it."

"I watched them pretty closely, particularly in the World Cup when

they had a couple of games in my home town of Brisbane. I am following the team's progress as much as I can and I am following them on Facebook. I congratulated them and when they are in good form it's pleasing to see," he continued.

When he was questioned regarding the 2012 Asia Cup final match, it seemed that Law preserved his best words for his former charges.

"It was pleasing to see, not for me, but for the players that have gone through a bit of a struggle trying to find their place in the national team. All of a sudden they started to believe that they could play at that level, the level of the Sri Lankans, Indians and they went on to beat every team after that. If you look back, they should have even won the games that they ended up losing. The eventual loss to Pakistan, they should have won that easily. I believe if we were playing that tournament now, Bangladesh would be odds-on favourites to win it," he said in tribute to the Tigers' current form.

"Bangladesh is now one of the best countries when it comes to playing cricket. You've got a huge population base to choose from, but you only need eleven players and there should be eleven good ones out of hundred and sixty million. The pressure is there but you get great rewards and great satisfaction from doing well at

that level. And they can make it if they are willing to work hard at that level," he continued.

The expectation is very high from the Under-19 team which has been going through a good time, but BCB hired the high-profile coach as they are looking forward to glory in the Youth World Cup to be held at home in January-February next year. Law was very much aware about the expectation and he exuded confidence regarding the success but also tempered expectations saying, "To make any team a champion is quite a difficult challenge and it's not all down to one person."

Referring to his experience of working with Australia's Under-19 team Law said, "It's a different challenge to get a player who's between the ages of 16 to 19, to offer them advice and see them take it on board and put it in practice."

And the obvious question was what would be his role during 16-week stint with the team. "I am not here to change anything and I am not here to come in and say you do it that way or this way. I am going to assist and enhance the system as it is at the moment. They have got the plan in place and I am here to add value to that plan, not change it. I am looking forward to seeing them playing a good brand of cricket," he said, making his

Pakistan & Sri Lanka to play in Eng in '16

REUTERS, London

England are to play three home Tests against Sri Lanka next year and four against Pakistan.

"Pakistan and Sri Lanka will attract strong support from their own communities in this country," England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chief executive officer Tom Harrison said in a statement on Tuesday.

The home team will bid to avenge last year's 1-0 Test series defeat by Sri Lanka in matches in Leeds, Durham and Lord's.

Pakistan, who are also England's opponents in a three-Test series in the United Arab Emirates in October, will play Tests at Lord's, Manchester, Birmingham and The Oval.

England will also take on both Sri Lanka and Pakistan in five one-day internationals and a Twenty20 match.

Qatar in talks to host Pak T20 league

AFP, Doha

Football World Cup 2022 host Qatar is poised to move into the lucrative international Twenty20 cricket market as the venue for the inaugural Pakistan Super League, officials said Tuesday.

The head of the Qatar Cricket Association, Gul Khan told AFP there was a "70 per cent" chance Doha would host the tournament, to be played in February 2016, following three days of talks with the senior members of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) over the weekend.

PCB officials are expected to return to Qatar in early September when a final decision will be taken.

IN A NUTSHELL

IndyCar racer killed in crash

IndyCar driver Justin Wilson has died of a head injury, it has been confirmed.

The British driver, who was 37, had been in a coma since sustaining a head injury when he was hit by a large piece of debris that broke off a car in a crash-filled race at Pocono Raceway on Sunday.

IndyCar made the announcement on Monday night at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. "This is a monumentally sad day for Indycar and the motor sports community," Mark Miles, CEO of Hulman & Co, the parent of Indycar said in a statement.

He is survived by his wife, Julia, and two daughters, aged seven and five.

Murali lauds Ranatunga

At least statistically, Kumar Sangakkara was the greatest batsman Sri Lanka ever produced, but was he the most influential cricketer ever?

Muttiah Muralidharan feels it was Ranatunga who had the greatest influence on Lankan cricket and more importantly, it's character.

Sri Lanka won the 1996 World Cup under Ranatunga. The left-handed batsman transformed a gifted but timid side into a world beating unit that looked the opposition in the eye and had the mental ability to turn up on the big days.

"Arjuna made us believe in ourselves for two decades. We owe a lot to him. He helped us become a force in world cricket. He is definitely the most influential cricketer Sri Lanka ever produced," Muralidharan said on Monday, without belittling Sangakkara's contribution.

"Kumar was a perfectionist. Coaches hated him because he would keep batting for two hours during nets. But I would reckon Mahela was the most talented we ever had."

'IPL is an option'

Australia's retired captain Michael Clarke revealed he will look at playing in the IPL as an 'option'. Clarke had a poor time with the bat in the only season of the IPL he played for the defunct side Pune Warriors India in 2012, scoring 98 runs in six outings.

"That's (IPL) probably one of the things I've got to think about over the next week or so. What I'm going to do there, am I going to look at that as an option? I'll spend the next few days trying to sum that up. See where my mind is at, see where my body is at and have a good think about it," said Clarke.



Compiled by Star Sport Desk

SAFF U-19 C'SHIP Bangladesh to meet India in semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will face India in the semifinals of the SAFF U-19 Championship after the regional powerhouse outplayed Maldives 3-0 at the ANFA Complex Ground in Lalitpur yesterday to emerge Group B champions.

India finished the group stages with six points while Afghanistan finished with three points and they will face Group A champions Nepal in the last-four battle. Both the semifinals will be held tomorrow.

Moinuddin put India ahead four minutes from the end of the first half before Lalramzauba doubled the lead in the 47th minute while Anirudh wrapped up the victory scoring in the 71st minute.

SAILOR U-15 NAT'L C'SHIP Dhaka, N'ganj win big

SPORTS REPORTER

Borhanuddin slotted five goals to guide Dhaka to an emphatic 8-1 win over Thakurgaon in the final round of Sailor-BFF U-15 National Football Championship at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Apart from Borhan's feat, Rubel struck a brace while Sohag netted one after Shuvo had provided an early breakthrough for Thakurgaon.

Meanwhile at the Abahani Ground in Dhanmondi, Narayanganj thrashed Jessore 5-0, with Ibrahim and Imran scoring a brace each before Rony sealed the

Ashes toashes!

AFP, London

One of the charms of Test cricket is that a match scheduled to last five days allows for the possibility of a fight-back, even if a team falls behind early on.

It was a charm, however, completely lacking from the 2015 Ashes, which ended with England winning the five-match series 3-2 despite Australia's innings and 46-run win in the concluding Test at The Oval on Sunday.

This Ashes equalled in length the shortest five-Test series of modern times of 18 days that took place when England played the West Indies in 2000.

The fifth day wasn't needed in any of the matches, with the nearest thing to a 'close' contest being England's 169-run win in the series opener in Cardiff.

Prior to the series both sides spoke about their intention to play aggressive cricket.

It became such an ingrained mantra that it was almost as if the thought of playing out a maiden filled some batsmen with a sense of dread.

Australia rectified their approach at The Oval, where their opening boundary did not arrive until the 15th over of the match and they still piled up 481, but by then it was too late to save the Ashes.

While the English climate produces surfaces that are generally more conducive to swing and seam bowling than many places elsewhere in the world, there was a feeling following Australia's 405-run win in the second Test on a docile pitch at Lord's of groundsmen being instructed to prepare wickets that aided horizontal movement.

The irony was that it needed an Australian, in new England coach Trevor Bayliss, to point this out.