

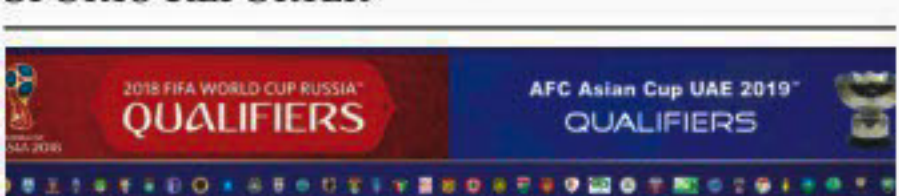


Bangladesh captain Mamunul Islam (C) has his eyes on the ball during the team's practice session at the Nib Stadium in Perth yesterday, ahead of their World Cup-Asian Cup qualifier against Australia today. The match will start at 5:00pm Bangladesh time and will be telecast live on Fox Australia. No satellite television channel here could be confirmed of telecast, but the game may be watched through live streaming.

PHOTO: BFF

The biggest day for booters

SPORTS REPORTER



Ever since the draw for the Joint Qualifiers of the 2018 Russia World Cup and the 2019 UAE Asian Cup was made on April 14 this year, one particular fixture became a talk of the football fraternity in Bangladesh.

That fixture – a September 3 showdown at Perth's NIB Stadium between four-time World Cuppers Australia and rank-outsiders Bangladesh – was believed to be the biggest ever football match in Bangladesh's recent football history, or perhaps, in our football history altogether.

The reason is: The current crop of Bangladesh booters have never played a competitive fixture outside the Asian

landscape, let alone a World Cup playing nation and current Asian champions on their own turf. The last time Bangladesh had faced a World Cupper was in the 2002 qualifying campaign against Saudi Arabia when most of the current Bangladesh players were in their infancy.

Now that the big day has finally arrived, a relatively young Bangladesh team, under the guidance of Dutchman Lodewijk de Kruijff, is trying to not let the occasion get the better of them. Buoyed by a 1-1 draw against Tajikistan in the previous qualifying fixture at home and a stubborn 0-0 draw against Malaysia in a friendly fixture last week, the men in red and green are looking positively at the prospect of facing Australia and making an impression there.

De Kruijff is not a man who likes to hide either his frustration or his ambition -- the

Dutchman has been constantly reminding his employers of his due wages, even in the middle of practice sessions -- so when he put on a brave face despite admitting the gulf of difference between the sides during the pre-match press conference, it was no surprise.

"It's a big difference in all sides of quality of life and playing football in Australia," said the Dutchman, before adding: "We have our tactics, we have analysed the opponent very well. We will start our match very motivated and eager to get a good result. You have to consider that in football everything can happen."

De Kruijff implied he knows what needs to be done to stop the hosts from a goal-fest. "I watched the game against Kyrgyzstan over there [when Australia won 2-1]. They made it very tough for Australia in that match," said the 45-year-old coach, who will have to watch the match from the

stands due to a touchline ban.

Bangladesh skipper Mamunul Islam was as brave, if not as diplomatic, as his coach in his pre-match analysis.

"Everyone knows that Australia's level is the sky. But the Bangladesh team will fight. It's exciting, but not scary. Football is 11 versus 11."

Asked about the challenge of facing a player such as Tim Cahill, Mamunul said: "He has two arms and two legs. He is better than me, but everyone will try their best."

That is the attitude that the football loving people of Bangladesh would want to see from their players. If a semblance of that confidence is transformed onto the pitch, the biggest day in Bangladesh's football will get even bigger.

BANGLADESH (Probables): Sohel; Yeasin, Topu, Yeamin, Nasirul; Mamunul, Jamal, Hemanta/Monaem, Enamul,

Aamer says sorry again

AFP, Karachi

Disgraced Pakistan pacer-mohammad Aamer issued a public apology to fans and players on Wednesday as his five-year ban for spot-fixing expired, vowing to make a fresh beginning.

The 23-year-old is eligible to return to all levels of cricket from Wednesday, along with Salman Butt and Mohammad Asif, who were also banned for their part in the notorious 2010 Lord's spot-fixing scandal.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) kicked them out of the game for five years for orchestrating deliberate no-balls in return for money during a Test against England. They were also jailed by a British court.

Aamer, who has repeatedly voiced contrition for the scandal, said sorry once again.

"I sincerely apologise to everyone I have hurt -- my colleagues, my fans, family and my country," he said in a statement.

"I will never be able to explain how much I regret the mistake I made at the promising start of my career. I disappointed my teammates and seniors who expected much better from me."

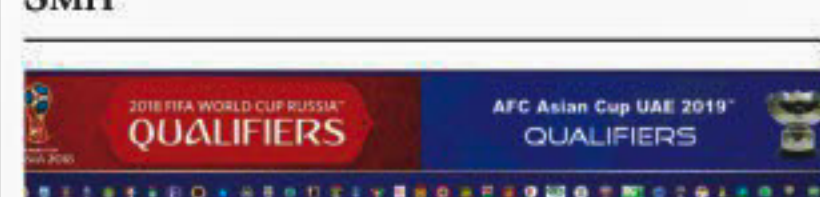
A precocious talent, Aamer graduated to play for Pakistan aged just 17 in 2009 and received widespread sympathy from across the cricketing world at the time of his ban.

Partly because of his youth and naivety, the ICC earlier this year allowed him to return early to domestic cricket.

Aamer said he wanted to win over doubting fans through his performances.

Cahill sounds out warning

SMH



Tim Cahill will take the armband and lead the Socceroos in tonight's World Cup qualifier against Bangladesh at the NIB Stadium in Perth. But excited as he is to captain his country once



Australia's stand-in captain Tim Cahill takes a selfie with fans after a practice session at Nib Stadium in Perth yesterday.

PHOTO: SMH

again, the Socceroos' premier marksman made it clear that anything less than a comfortable win for Australia would be a monumental upset.

"(A goalless draw) would be a massive upset," said Cahill in reply to a journalist's question. "No disrespect to Bangladesh. Three World Cups, three Asian Cups, some great football played along the way. We are an organisation

that pride ourselves on really trying to get the best result possible. We give the utmost respect to every team, we prepare to win every game. For us a 0-0 against Holland these days would be an upset, we wouldn't be happy," Cahill added.

Bangladesh will be expected to defend in depth and try to frustrate Australia for as long as possible, so an early goal would be a huge boost for Agne Postecoglou's men.

Cahill said the Australian coaching staff had monitored Bangladesh's last match, a scoreless draw against Malaysia at the weekend, and that they would not be taken for granted despite the gulf in class and the confidence Australia held.

"They are very good on the counter attack," Cahill said. "They can mix it up going forward and defending. We definitely respect every team the same and we know that possibly the biggest thing for us is focusing on our own game plan and trying to execute that in the best way possible."

AUSTRALIA (Probables): Federici; Elrich, Wilkinson, Spiranovic, Davidson; Milligan, Rogic, Luongo; Leckie, Cahill, Burns.

Mitch, Josh not coming here

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD



Australia will rest Mitchell Johnson and Josh Hazlewood from next month's Test series in Bangladesh in a calculated decision aimed at freshening them up for the summer but one that could potentially backfire on them against a nation that last month drew at home against top-ranked South Africa.

It is an unprecedented move for Australia not to send their leading fast bowler to a Test series and Johnson's absence is likely to leave captain Steve Smith, vice-captain David Warner, spinner Nathan Lyon and recalled quick Peter Siddle as the only players with substantive Test experience in a

new-look squad for the two matches on the subcontinent.

The decision to keep him and Hazlewood at home opens Australia up to possible criticism that they are taking world No.9 Bangladesh lightly in their first post-Ashes outing. However, Cricket Australia is intent on carefully managing the output of its pacemen with home series against New Zealand and the West Indies to come from November and then two Tests across the ditch in the new year.

"The selectors won't meet to discuss the tour of Bangladesh for a couple of weeks," said Pat Howard, CA's executive general manager of team performance. "There's some important consideration that needs to be given to

managing our fast bowlers, not just in Bangladesh, but the full 10-Test season, and that will be part of the discussion. Mitchell Johnson and Josh Hazlewood are two players that have had heavy workloads and need to be managed carefully."

Without Johnson and Hazlewood the Australian fast bowling contingent could well comprise Ashes squad members Siddle, Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins as well as another quick such as James Pattinson, Nathan Coulter-Nile or Gurinder Sandhu, who impressed on the recent Australia A tour of India where he also bowled spin. Starc is expected to have to soldier on after a gruelling schedule similar to Johnson this year.

'Five teams enough'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon expressed his determination to hold the third edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) in November of this year, even if the organisers have to go forward with five franchises, instead of seven like they previously did.

"We can even hold the BPL with five teams, but we have always thought about six teams," said Papon while talking to reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

"Four organisations have sought an extension of the deadline, but there are two issues. The first is whether we will accept their demand and the second is if it is accepted, then we have to decide who to pick from the four. Besides them, an old team also wanted a chance. So we can't say anything now."

Papon said that at the moment they have five companies in hand and he was hopeful that they would reach a decision regarding the rest of the interested parties by September 4.

DBL Group, Dhaka Dynamics (representing Beximco), Axiom Technologies, ISports Limited and Royal Sporting Limited were the companies which submitted the requisite financial documents before the August 30 deadline to almost confirm their participation in the third edition of the trouble-hit league.

When Papon's attention was drawn to the legal notice from Dhaka Gladiators, he responded, "Officially, I don't know whether any legal notice came from Dhaka Gladiators, but I heard that a notice came to the board and I can only understand fully when I see it."

It was learnt that the Dhaka Gladiators served the legal notice regarding the issue of pending dues.

There has been talk of a series between Bangladesh and Pakistan, but Papon said there is little chance of that happening before 2016.

"I don't see any chance to play a series against any team in December because we have the BPL and before that we have a home series against Australia. After that we have the Asia Cup, followed by the ICC World Twenty20 and a series against Zimbabwe in January. So we don't have time and that's why there is no initiative from us."

Sources however informed that an additional series may take place in December if the BPL is ultimately a five-team league.

"A five team tournament means we will need lesser time to finish [the tournament], so in that case we may play an additional series, but nothing is confirmed yet," said an official on condition of anonymity.

In response to another question, Papon said that a five-member security team will fly for Pakistan on September 5 to assess the security in Karachi and Lahore. The BCB is sending the security team in connection with the proposed tour of the Bangladesh Women's Cricket team to Pakistan.

Papon also informed that they are considering opening a wing in the BCB which will deal with disabled cricketers from all over the country.

INA NUTSHELL

Aces to clash in London

A host of international cricketers will take part in a charity game in London at the Oval on September 17.

Indian duo Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Virender Sehwag will be sharing a dressing room with Pakistan's Shahid Afridi and South African ace Herschelle Gibbs of the Help for Heroes XI, captained by England Director of Cricket Andrew Strauss and managed by the great Ian Botham.

They will take on a Rest of the World XI featuring Brendon McCullum, Matthew Hayden, Mahela Jayawardene and Graeme Smith, Daniel Vettori and charismatic Afghan Shapoor Zadran. The team will be coached by Gary Kirsten and managed by the legendary Indian Sunil Gavaskar.

Sidhu's 22.5cr deal kaput?

Former Indian cricketer Navjot Singh Sidhu has been engulfed in controversy as a 3-year deal worth 22.5 crore rupees between him and Star India has gone into intervention with the channel accusing him of breaching a contractual agreement of 'exclusivity'.

According to reports, the former India cricketer broke the agreement with his commentary stint in the Indian Premier League 2014.

Star India agreed to pay Sidhu yearly fees in advance of 8 crores. However, the channel has alleged that despite getting the fees, Sidhu failed to meet his commitments and completely disregarded the exclusivity commitment by simultaneously agreeing to work for Sony during IPL 2014.

The Bombay High Court has accepted Star India's plea of arbitration and proceedings will be initiated.

Bravo honoured

West Indies all-rounder Dwayne Bravo has been presented with the Hummingbird Medal, Trinidad and Tobago's third highest award.

The medal was presented to Bravo for his service to sport during celebrations for the republic's 53rd anniversary since gaining independence.

"Receiving the third highest award in Trinidad and Tobago, the Hummingbird Gold, for my contribution to sport. I could not have done it without the love and support of my fans and most of all my teammates. This one is for you," Bravo



Compiled by Star Sport Desk

Tharindu reported

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka off-spinner Tharindu Kaushal has been reported for a suspected illegal bowling action during the third and final Test against India, the International Cricket Council said Wednesday.

"The match officials' report cited concerns about the legality of the 22-year-old's bowling action," the ICC said in a statement.

He will now undergo testing on his action within two weeks following the match.

Kaushal, who has picked up 24 wickets from six Tests since making his international debut in December, is allowed to continue bowling in international cricket until the test results are known.

Acting on the recommendations of its cricket committee last year, the ICC has cracked down on suspect bowling actions, with off-spinners being the main target.

Pakistan's Saeed Ajmal, Sri Lanka's Sachithra Senanayake and New Zealand's Kane Williamson -- all off-spinners -- were among those reported and subsequently suspended to allow remedial work on their actions.

The crackdown has largely been welcomed in the cricket community but critics have warned against what they felt was selective culling.

Rules drawn up in November 2004 state that an action is illegal when the bowler's elbow straightens over the stipulated 15-degree arc in his delivery stride.

The off-spinner's googly -- "the doosra" which turns from leg to off -- is believed to be targeted by umpires on the pretext that it is difficult to bowl one with a legal action.