



De Kruif era ends

BFF wooing an Italian

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The Lodewijk de Kruif era in Bangladesh football ended yesterday as the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) looked towards an Italian coach to take charge of the national team. The Dutch coach, who had been working on an assignment-based contract since October, 2014 after being appointed in July, 2013, disclosed the news after a meeting with BFF vice-president Tabith Awal last night.

"Both the BFF and I felt the need to sever the relationship. I have achieved two goals during my stay -- taking Bangladesh team to a respectable position and finding new young talents -- and thus my journey ends here," said the Dutchman, who will be leaving today.

Earlier in the day, the BFF high-ups held a meeting with Fabio Lopez, a goalkeeper-turned coach from Italy who has had managerial experience at youth academies in Rome apart from a stint with B.G. Sports Club, a Maldivian premier league outfit, in the 2013-14 season.

"Lopez had a short meeting with BFF president Kazi Salahuddin and vice president Tabith Awal today (Wednesday) after the Italian showed interest to work with the Bangladesh team," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag.

A final decision on whether Lopez will be appointed as the new head coach of Bangladesh, however, might be taken at its executive committee meeting today.

There's no quick fix

Experts say after Jordan defeat

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The football organisers and enthusiasts in Bangladesh, who apparently found positives even from the 5-0 defeat against Australia last week, were dealt a reality check after the men in red and green suffered a shambolic 4-0 defeat at home against Jordan on Tuesday. They are pondering how far we are lagging behind from even the second-tier teams of Asia and what could be done to improve our current standard and how long it might take to match the standard of those teams.

Former national team captain and coach, Golam Sarwar Tipu, felt the result against Jordan was quite expected, considering our current standard and the opposing intentions of the two teams during Tuesday's game.

"This is our standard and there is nothing to make an issue of," said Tipu, while posing the question whether anyone should expect big things from this group of footballers, given the fact that there is only one viable football venue in the capital and no proper professional club structure in place as yet.

Tipu felt the mistakes that the booters made against Jordan were expected, as a team playing to defend is bound to make mistakes when facing pressure.

The former national defender said there is no alternative but to increase the number of quality players by spreading the game to the grassroots level.

"If we want to reach the Asian standard we need massive changes, both in terms of structure and mentality. But I don't know how it will be achieved. Football needs a lot of money and the execution of a proper plan and vision," said Tipu.

Sheikh Russel coach Maruful Haque, however, praised the team for the way they defended in the first half against Jordan, but noticed the lack of a proper game plan.

"There was seemingly no game plan regarding the throw-ins and counter-attacks. No player seemed to know his duty on the pitch; we could not even take advantage of the weak points of the opponents," said Maruful.

"Bangladesh are behind the top Asian teams in four aspects -- technical, physical, tactical and psychological -- and if we want to compete against the top teams of Asia, we need to start grooming players as young as eight years old, but I don't see those four hurdles being overcome in the next 12 years," added Maruful.

Meanwhile, a high official of the Bangladesh Football Federation felt that despite the gulf in difference, there was no excuse for such a shambolic performance.

"We have to understand that there is no alternative but to go on with the current batch of footballers until new players emerge to take their positions. However, we are thinking of roping in foreign coaching staff for the junior players, who are more willing to perform on the pitch," said the official seeking anonymity.



JUST RELAX: Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (L), who knows India's cricketing conditions like the back of his hand, seems to be sharing his wisdom with Bangladesh A skipper Mominul Haque (R) and vice-captain Nasir Hossain ahead of their tour to Bangalore. PHOTO: STAR

Nasir expects 'tough battle'

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As opposed to reports published in the Indian media, the India A squad for the series against Bangladesh did not include a host of senior players.

Speculations that the likes of Virat Kohli, Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Ajinkya Rahane would feature in the second string Indian line-up -- in a bid to warm up for their series against South Africa next month -- were put to rest when the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced the squad yesterday.

India A's three-day squad will see left-arm opener Shikhar Dhawan leading Ravindra Jadeja, Varun Aaron and Shreyas Iyer, among others.

The one-day squad will be led by Unmukt Chand and will also include national players such as

Suresh Raina and Dhawal Kulkarni.

The squad may not be as strong as the Indian media initially speculated, that however didn't make any difference to Bangladesh A vice-captain Nasir Hossain, who expects the upcoming series to be a 'tough battle' between the sides.

"We have a number of national players in our side, but it won't be an easy tour. India will come hard at us and I think it will be a good contest," Nasir told reporters before practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

In contrast to India's line-up, the visitors have included just one uncapped player.

"The reason why there are so many national players in the side is because we are looking at this series as preparation for the Australia series. If we can play well here, it will help us against the Aussies," explained Nasir.

"It's a good thing that the three-

THREE-DAY SQUAD

Shikhar Dhawan (captain), Abhinav Mukund, Karun Nair, Shreyas Iyer, Baba Aparajith, Naman Ojha, Jayant Yadav, Vijay Shankar, Ravindra Jadeja, Shreyas Gopal, Abhimanyu Mithun, Varun Aaron, Ishwar Pandey, Sheldon Jackson.

ONE-DAY SQUAD

Unmukt Chand (captain), Mayank Agarwal, Manish Pandey, Suresh Raina, Kedar Jadhav, Sanju Samson, Karun Nair, Kuldeep Yadav, Jayant Yadav, Karn Sharma, Rishi Dhawan, Sreenath Aravind, Dhawal Kulkarni, Rush Kalaria, Gurkeerat Singh Mann.

will miss the first few rounds of the National Cricket League (NCL), which begins on September 18. Nasir however, felt that the players wouldn't be too disappointed.

"I think this [India] series will be a better opportunity than the NCL. After all, we are playing against India in India. It will be a tough fight and there will be a lot more focus on that," said Nasir.

Kedar Jadhav, Manish Pandey and Sanju Samson -- who played in India's recent series in Zimbabwe -- have also been included in the one-day squad for this series.

Also in the side is leg-spinner Karn Sharma, who missed the Zimbabwe tour due to injury.

The three one-day fixtures will be played on September 16, 18 and 20 and the second three-day match will start on September 27, all in Bangalore against India A. They play the first three-dayer against Karnataka in Mysore from September 22.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

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A 17-member women's basketball team from West Bengal was scheduled to arrive in Dhaka last night to play three exhibition matches against Bangladesh women's basketball team. The first two matches will be played in Dhaka today and tomorrow while the third match is scheduled to be held in Chittagong on Saturday.

School handball begins today

The Polar Ice Cream 23rd National School Handball Tournament begins today at the Shaheed M Mansur Ali National Handball Stadium. Thirty schools -- 18 in boys' groups and 12 in girls' group -- will compete in round robin format at the initial stage, said organisers at a press conference at the federation office yesterday. Polar Ice Cream, which is sponsoring the tournament for the fifth consecutive year, is providing the entire expense of the meet amounting Tk 7.5 lakhs, said speakers at a press conference at the federation house yesterday.

Bridge C'ship from Saturday

The qualifying round of the 31st Ispahani National Bridge Championship will begin at the Engineering Institute Auditorium tomorrow while the competition proper will begin on Saturday. The Bangladesh Bridge Federation has kept open registration of teams and are encouraging teams from outside the capital to take part. The champions will receive Tk 50,000 and the runners-up will be richer for Tk 30,000, said organisers at a press conference at the Bangladesh Olympic Association Auditorium

Nat'l athletics from today

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The AKM Shamsuzzoha Smiriti 39th National Athletics competition starts today at the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS).

The three-day competition, which will be the focus of the whole athletics fraternity in the country due to the upcoming South Asian Games, will see its showpiece event -- the 100m sprint for men and women -- held on Friday afternoon.

The current fastest male sprinter Mezbahuddin Ahmed of Bangladesh Navy and fastest female sprinter Shirin Sultana will be among the contenders for the crown of the showpiece event.

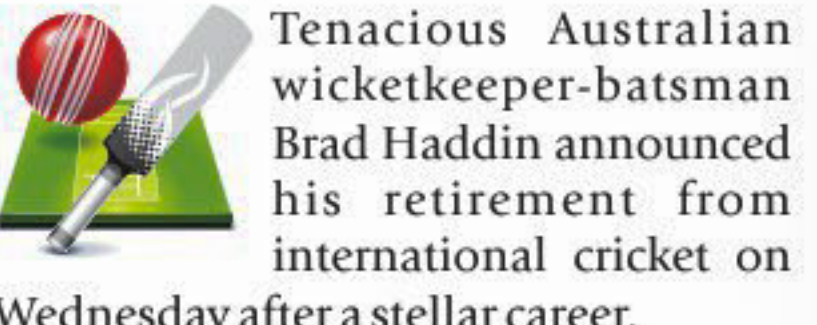
State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives, Moshir Rahman Ranga MP, will inaugurate the three-day meet named after Independence Award winner and former MP AKM Shamsuzzoha.

The organisers are expecting around 600 athletes from across the country to participate in the premier athletics completion of the country. The male athletes of the competition will be accommodated at different city hotels while the female athletes will reside at the Sultana Kamal Women's Sports Complex in Dhanmondi, said Ibrahim Chengis, the general secretary of Bangladesh Athletics Federation (BAF), at a press conference at the BNS yesterday.

Representatives of the meet's sponsor handed over a cheque of Tk 8 lakh to the officials of BAF. The athletes, who will set new national records in the meet, will be awarded a cash prize of Tk 5,000 each, it was informed during the press confer-

Haddin has had enough of it

AFF, Sydney



Tenacious Australian wicketkeeper-batsman Brad Haddin announced his retirement from international cricket on Wednesday after a stellar career.

Vice-captain of the Test team for much of the last two years, the 37-year-old will continue to play only Twenty20 cricket for the Sydney Sixers.

"I came to the realisation after Lord's," Haddin said. "I've had a privileged run, but I lost the hunger on the Ashes Tour. It was an easy decision to retire."

Haddin controversially lost his place on Australia's England tour after performing below his usual high standards in the opening game and returned home last month for family reasons.

He praised new skipper Steve Smith as a "great leader".

"I think Australian cricket is in good stead," he told a press conference here yesterday.



TEST STATS	
MATCHES	66
INNINGS	112
RUNS	3,266
HIGHEST SCORE	169
AVERAGE	32.98
BALLS FACED	5,587
STRIKE RATE	58.45
100s	4
50s	18
4s	363
6s	54
CATCHES	262
STUMPINGS	8

TRIBUTES TO HADDIN

- MICHAEL CLARKE**
I was 17 when I got to play cricket with this guy for the first time. We started together, we finished together. Great times my friend.
- DARREN LEHMANN**
Congrats to Brad and his family on a great career. A true great and a gentleman, love playing with and against him and loved coaching him!
- STEVE SMITH**
Congrats Brad Haddin on a magnificent career. Never backed down out on the cricket field. A great team mate and friend!
- MITCHELL JOHNSON**
Congrats Brad Haddin on an amazing career! Always a fighter out in the middle and never backed down! Privileged to have played with a legend.



The fans at the Gillette Stadium got their money's worth as Neymar dazzled them for 45 minutes and scored twice in typically stylish fashion during a 4-1 win against USA. PHOTO: AFP

Brazil thrash USA

AFF, Foxborough



Barcelona superstar Neymar scored twice as Brazil thrashed the United States 4-1 to equal the Americans' heaviest margin of defeat under manager Jurgen Klinsmann in a friendly international here Tuesday.

The USA were run ragged as Brazil turned on the style at the Gillette Stadium in Foxborough.

The scoreline matched the worst ever suffered by the Americans under Klinsmann, who were beaten 4-1 by Brazil in 2012 and 4-1 by Ireland in 2014.

Brazil were always in control. Hulk and youngster Rafinha scored the five-time world champion's other goals.

Substitute Danny Williams scored a late consolation for the Americans, lashing home

a 30-yard screamer in the 90th minute.

The South Americans dominated a one-sided first half, sweeping forward confidently and their early superiority was rewarded with the first goal, through Hulk.

With Brazil leading by a single goal at half-time, USA still had some hopes. However, those hopes vanished as Neymar was introduced at the start of the second-half.

Neymar made an instant impact.

David Luiz released Neymar into acres of space down the right and the number 10 cut back inside only to have Stoke City defender Geoff Cameron sweep his legs from beneath him for a penalty, which Neymar scored.

Rafinha was the next to find the target, finishing after an exquisite pass from Lucas Moura.

Another superb ball by Moura set up Neymar to make it 4-0 in the 67th minute, the Barcelona player shooting low through a crowd of USA defenders to beat Guzan once more.

ICRC cricket final today

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England will play Pakistan in the final of the ICRC Twenty20 International Cricket Tournament 2015 at BKSP in Savar today.

Both Pakistan and England finished with six points each at the end of the group stage. They both won three out of their four matches. While Pakistan lost to England in a tight contest, England lost the tournament opener to hosts Bangladesh.

Both England and Pakistan are the most experienced teams amongst the lot. They have faced each other a number of times prior to the tournament.