

TURF AT BKSP BFF gets the go-ahead

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has finally got a positive response from the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP) authorities to install an artificial turf in its Sylhet unit, which is currently being used as the BFF Academy. BFF's general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag said he got the response from the director general of BKSP yesterday.

During the inauguration of the academy in November last year, FIFA development officer Shaji Prabhakaran had declared sanctioning of an artificial turf under the FIFA Goal Project - V, subject to compliance with the conditions set by the game's governing body.

However, the BFF was struggling to obtain a 20-year lease of the BKSP Sylhet unit from the government, which is one of the conditions of FIFA, and thus the sanctioning process had lagged behind.

BFF had earlier installed two artificial turfs sanctioned by FIFA at the Balur Math in Motijheel and the Kamalapur Stadium, with the work on the latter scheduled to finish by the middle of this month.



Argentina winger Angel Di Maria juggles the ball during a training session in Buenos Aires on Tuesday ahead their 2018 World Cup qualifier against Ecuador.

PHOTO: AFP

SOUTH AMERICA WORLD CUP JOURNEY BEGINS Messi, Neymar absent

AFP, Montevideo



Lionel Messi and Neymar will be absent as Brazil and Argentina set out on the road to Russia -- and redemption -- when South American qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup kick off on Thursday.

Injured Messi and suspended Neymar are just two of a galaxy of stars who will be missing as the long journey to Russia 2018 begins. Uruguay will be without Luis Suarez and Edinson Cavani while Colombia's James Rodriguez is also injured.

Brazil and Argentina, the two superpowers of South American football, launch their respective qualifying campaigns still smarting from disappointing performances in the Copa America, which saw Chile lift the title on home soil.

Brazil's Copa America ended in defeat to Paraguay in the quarterfinals, a loss that deepened the sense of

gloom surrounding the Selecao, still bearing the scars of their humiliating World Cup exit to Germany in 2014.

Argentina's campaign meanwhile ended in a penalty shoot-out against Chile in the final, shattering Messi and the Albiceleste's hopes of winning a first major tournament since 1993.

FIXTURES	
BOLIVIA	v URUGUAY
COLOMBIA	v PERU
VENEZUELA	v PARAGUAY
CHILE	v BRAZIL
ARGENTINA	v ECUADOR

Those twin setbacks provide the sobering backdrop to Thursday's opening round of fixtures, where Brazil face a daunting trip to Santiago to face Chile while Argentina meet Ecuador in Buenos Aires.

But while Copa America form suggests Chile are favourites, Brazil

head into their game with history squarely in their corner.

Brazil have suffered one solitary defeat to Chile during World Cup qualifiers, a 3-0 loss during the campaign to reach the 2002 tournament.

In 14 meetings since that defeat, Brazil have won 12, drawn two, lost none.

"Every game has its own history, and times change, but the fact that we do well against Chile whenever we play them has its advantages," said Brazilian veteran Kaka.

Brazil's most recent win over the Chileans came in March, a 1-0 friendly victory in London which followed last year's World Cup second round win.

"Any match against Chile is difficult, but we are determined to win," Brazil defender David Luiz said shortly after arriving in Chile.

One critical factor for Brazil could be the absence of suspended captain Neymar, who was banned after being sent off in a stormy Copa America

F1 could be sold by 2016

AFP, Kitzbuehel

The Formula One circus could be under new ownership by the end of the year, supremo Bernie Ecclestone said on Tuesday.

Speaking by video at a sports summit in Kitzbuehel, Austria, organised by German football legend Franz Beckenbauer, Ecclestone was adamant a new owner would be found this year.

"Our shareholders are in a position at the moment where they have to lose some, or all, of their shares shortly," he said.

"That's the way things are set up for them. There has been a lot of interest, and I would say there are three parties at the moment. I'd be surprised if one of them doesn't buy very shortly."

The 84-year-old, who runs Formula One Management, the company that generates and manages F1's revenue, did not reveal the names of the interested parties.

F1 chief executive Ecclestone confirmed he would sell his own five percent stake in the business as part of any deal.

SK KAMAL INT'L CLUB CUP

Budget Tk 11 crore, winners get Tk 20 lakh

SPORTS REPORTER



With yesterday's announcement of the participating clubs for the inaugural Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup, the country is set to organise its second international football tournament, nine months after the six-nation Bangabandhu Gold Cup earlier this year.

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) had so far organised all international tournaments in the country, but this time a professional football league club, Chittagong Abahani, has taken the initiative to organise the eight-club tournament. The tournament, scheduled to be held in the port city from October 20 to 30, will feature three local and five foreign clubs from the subcontinent and has an estimated budget of Tk 11 crore.

Apart from attracting crowds to football matches, the organisers also have the aim to highlight the enormous contributions of Sheikh Kamal -- the founder of Dhaka Abahani and the eldest son of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman -- to sports.

"We have invited some of fan-based popular clubs as well as the league champi-

ons from inside and outside the country," said Shamsul Haque Chowdhury, the member secretary of the tournament. "We want to hold this tournament every year in a bid to establish the name of Sheikh Kamal, who had a great contribution in sports in Bangladesh and across Asia."

However, some famous clubs like Bangladesh league champions Sheikh Jamal, India league champions Mohun Bagan and Nepal league champions have refused to take part in the tournament for different reasons.

The participating teams -- De Spinghar Bazan Club of Afghanistan, East Bengal and Mohammedan of India, Karachi Electronic FC of Pakistan, Solid FC of Sri Lanka, Dhaka Abahani, Dhaka Mohammedan and Chittagong Abahani -- will get Tk 5 lakh each as participation money while champions and runners-up teams will be awarded US\$ 25,000 (apx 20 lakh taka) and US\$ 10,000 (apx 8 lakh taka) respectively. The winners of every match will also get cash awards, said the organisers during an official press briefing at the BFF House yesterday where BFF vice president Badal Roy, Chittagong Abahani president MA Latif MP and the club's football committee chairman Tarafder Ruhul Amin were



'JOSE SETS A BAD EXAMPLE'

The behaviour of outspoken Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho sets a bad example for young people, Dutch football great Johan Cruyff said on Tuesday. "What I like about him is he's always capable of creating good ambience within the players and what I don't like is that he always puts himself on the first row," Cruyff told British television channel Sky Sports News. "He should be on the second row. It's probably because of his (non-playing) background, where he's never been

Germany need 1 point

AFP, Berlin



Germany face Ireland away on Thursday and a point in Dublin would be enough to confirm their Euro 2016 qualification, but the world champions want a win to stop Poland topping the group.

"We don't want to play for the draw. Our aim must be to win the game with our qualities," said Germany midfielder Ilkay Gundogan ahead of the Aviva Stadium clash.

Germany are two points clear at the top of Group D, but a draw in Dublin could allow Poland to claim top spot if they beat Scotland in Glasgow on the same night by virtue of their superior goal difference.

The Germans are bracing themselves against Martin O'Neil's Irish, who earned a point with a 90th-minute equaliser to seal a 1-1 draw in Gelsenkirchen last October.

"We know what to expect, we have to stay as patient as we did in the 3-2 win in Scotland and wait for our chances," said Germany centre-back Jerome Boateng.

The Bayern Munich star's two long balls led to goals in the Bavarians' 5-1 thrashing of Borussia Dortmund in Sunday's top-of-the-table Bundesliga clash, and he was part of the Germany team which beat Ireland 6-1 in a World Cup qualifier in October 2012.

"I hope things will go the same way for us as they did back then," said Boateng, who is set to win his 55th cap.

Lukas Podolski has been ruled out of both the Ireland match and Sunday's home game against Georgia in Leipzig with an injury to his left ankle and the striker

returned to his club Galatasaray for treatment on Tuesday.

Bayer Leverkusen winger Karim Bellarabi is struggling to be fit due to a shoulder problem.

Dortmund winger Marco Reus is set to feature off the bench, but is unlikely to start as he works his way back after a toe injury.

"We know that we can count on him," said Germany coach Joachim Loew.

Ireland are third in the group behind Poland and need to beat Joachim Loew's Germany to keep alive their dreams of qualifying directly for next year's tournament in France.

"The Irish will come at us with even more bravery and they have players of a very high quality," insisted Loew.

Germany will have just two training sessions together before flying to Dublin, but despite the short preparation time, the world champions will be ready, insisted Gundogan.

"We're used to it. The most important thing is that when the kick-off comes we are all 100 percent ready to give everything we have. And we will do," said the defensive midfielder.

Ireland's goalkeeper Shay Given paid tribute to his opposite number Manuel Neuer but said he is confident his teammates will enjoy success in front of goal.

"The Scots scored two past him last month. Sometimes you think he's unbeatable but he's human like the rest of us," said the 39-year-old Given.

"We can hopefully get a few goals against him."

"He'll go down as one of the best of all time -- he's a class act."

Palestine-Saudi Arabia match postponed

AFP, Lausanne

FIFA have postponed next week's 2018 World Cup qualifier between Palestine and Saudi Arabia until a decision is made on where the match between the two nations should be played.

A meeting was held at FIFA headquarters in Zurich on Tuesday between Palestinian Football Federation president Jibril Rajoub and his Saudi counterpart Ahmed Eid Al Harbi.

"It was decided to postpone the match until the ongoing process has been concluded," a FIFA spokesperson told AFP on Wednesday.

The fixture, set for October 13, had been scheduled to take place in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, but Saudi Arabia on September 23 demanded that it be played on neutral ground.

But the Palestinian Federation refused to accept, saying: "Depriving Palestine of the right to play at home is a dangerous precedent and impossible to accept under any conditions."

Mueller shaken by idol's Alzheimer's

AFP, Berlin



Germany forward Thomas Mueller admits he has been "shaken to the core" by the news his Bayern Munich idol and namesake Gerd Mueller is suffering from Alzheimer's.

Gerd Mueller - dubbed 'The Bomber of the Nation' - was the most feared striker in world football in the 1970s, scoring a phenomenal 68 goals in 62 games for West Germany as they won the 1972 European Championships and the 1974 World Cup.

On Tuesday, Bayern put out a statement that Mueller, who will be 70 in November, has been receiving treatment for the condition since February in a Bavarian nursing home.

Thomas Mueller, 26, will line up for reigning world champions Germany against Ireland in Dublin in Thursday's Euro 2016 qualifier, but admits news of his idol's demise is on his mind.

"Gerd Mueller's illness has shaken me to the core. He is a big role-model for me and is someone I always perceived as a great man," Mueller, who has scored 30 goals in 65 games for Germany, told German daily Bild.

"No one will ever get near his goal ratio for Germany."

The younger Mueller has scored eight goals in eight Bundesliga games so far this season to help keep Bayern top of the German league table and he said working with his idol as a youngster helped make him the player he is now.

"When I was a young player and arrived in the reserves, it allowed me to get to know him."

"We always got on great, right from the start."

"He gave me tips from the word go, like how I should behave as an attacking player in the penalty area and I'm still grateful for them today."

Mueller played 15 seasons with Bayern, where he won three European Cups between 1974-1976 and scored an astonishing 533 goals.

Club president Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said without Mueller's goals "Bayern Munich and Germany would not be where they are now".

After retiring in the 1980s, Mueller worked as a coach for Bayern's reserve team, but ran into both financial difficulties and had problems with alcohol.

Alzheimer's is a chronic and incurable neurodegenerative disease which begins with memory loss and language problems and whose sufferers have an average life expectancy of between three and nine years.

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