



Bangladesh's new Italian coach Fabio Lopez (R) appears to have convinced his captain Mamunul Islam of his new role as they share a light moment at the BFF House yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

It's Lopez time for Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh football team will fly out for Bishkek today to play their World Cup and Asian Cup qualifying match against Kyrgyzstan, who had won their away fixture 3-1 in Dhaka last June.

The 13th October game in Bishkek will also mark the debut of Bangladesh's new Italian coach Fabio Lopez, whose biggest challenge would be damage limitation of a team that has so far won one point from their previous Group B games under Dutch coach Lodewijk de Kruijff.

Lopez took over after Bangladesh's 4-0 home defeat against Jordan last month. And for the past one month he was busy picking his own team amidst a growing injury list. He also tried different combinations in a few practice games and among those the most discussed subject was trying playmaker Mamunul Islam as one of three attackers in Tuesday's practice match, further from his usual midfield role.

"I saw some players, I saw the skills of the players, I have my opinion about some of my players and I must use the players for the best of the team. We have some instruments that gave us reports about their fitness. Of course I need to bring some changes. There is no point in me being here if I don't try to change things, but I don't want to change a lot," said Lopez during a press conference at the BFF House yesterday, adding that he

was confident of some improvement against Kyrgyzstan.

The 43-year-old coach also announced his 23-member squad for Kyrgyzstan during the briefing. The squad includes seven new players, of whom striker Nabib Newaj Jibon is the only fresh blood while goalkeeper Mazharul Islam Himel, midfielder Shahedul Alam Jr, Wali Faisal, Faisal Mahmud, Rony, defender Rezaul Karim staged comebacks. Jibon, a young Team BJMC forward, is likely to make his Bangladesh debut as a lone striker in place of ill Zahid Hasan Emily.

Captain Mamunul also hoped for a better show against Kyrgyzstan, especially after the effort the Italian coach had given to construct a cohesive defending line during opposition attacks.

"We launch attacks easily but during the transition from attack to defense our lines are not maintained properly. We even face problems in organising the defence and the coach has worked a lot on this," said Mamunul. "The coach also brought some positional changes because he believes the individual player can give their best for the team from their new positions."

Explaining his own new role, Mamunul said, "The coach has reduced my responsibility to 40-50 per cent from 80-90 per cent after drafting me in a new position. The coach also believes I can score from my new position and assist others."

The Bangladesh captain informed that they would play counter-attacking football against Kyrgyzstan.

BANGLADESH IN QUALIFYING

Vs Kyrgyzstan	3-1 (H)
Vs Tajikistan	1-1 (H)
Vs Australia	5-0 (A)
Vs Jordan	4-0 (H)

BD U-17s march on

SPORTS REPORTER

Aminul Islam hit a hundred as Bangladesh Under-17s dominated the second day of the three-day match against visiting Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) Under-17s at BKSP yesterday.

Resuming the day on 77, Aminul was bowled by Tribrit Roy but not before making an impressive 262-ball 122. During a near six-hour stay, Aminul smashed 17 boundaries and helped his side as they declared their first innings at 400-8.

Mortaza Ahmed scored an unbeaten 55 off 83 balls with six boundaries.

In reply, the visitors recovered from five for two to finish the day on 83 for four with Amab Bhattacharjee remaining unbeaten for 66.

Sharif Islam gave the breakthrough in the first over, removing Debojyoti Ghosh for duck and Sadat Ridoy took the second wicket as he dismissed SK Biswas.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH U-17: 400-8 dec in 127 overs (Ratul 84, Sojibul 41, Aminul 122, Mortaza 55; Rohit 3-79)
CAB U-17: 83-4 in 45 overs (Amab 66 n o; Sharif 1-14,

Cheers & fears grip Mashrafe's Test ambition

BISHWAJIT ROY

One can enjoy nothing more brilliant, vivid and striking than the company of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza. Ask any of his teammates how big his influence is both on and off the field, ask any journalist how entertaining and refreshing spending time with the brave-hearted cricketer is, or ask any of his friends, regardless of class and creed, how warming it is to spend time with him; they will tell you the same.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Mashrafe is the most beloved cricketer in the country. He has proved his ability and courage as a player beyond doubt and the 'Narail Express' showed that he could perform magic as a captain, inspiring his teammates to achieve feats one after another under his leadership.

Apart from his presence during the Tigers' successes since the World Cup in Australia and New Zealand, a long-time fit Mashrafe was a big surprise to his fans. When someone like Mashrafe expresses a desire then everyone wants it to be fulfilled, but when the pacer revealed last Monday – on his 32nd birthday – that he wanted to make a return to Test cricket, many embraced the news with more fears than cheers.

Mashrafe said that he would play for Khulna in their next four-day National Cricket League (NCL) match against Rangpur which begins tomorrow. He also expressed his desire to play another round in what he termed a first attempt to reviving

his Test career.

Everyone would love to see him don the whites for his country once again, but his fitness issues remain a constant worry. Every time the right-arm pacer takes the field, millions of fans pray that they don't get any bad news since injury has become synonymous with Mashrafe.

Constant injuries significantly reduced his appearances in the international circuit, but he is still going strong after having operations on both his knees several times, which itself is a miracle in the world's sports arena.

Mashrafe could only play 36 Tests since making his debut against Zimbabwe in 2001 and his last Test was in July 2009 against the West Indies. In his last Test, where he was captain, he had taken a tumble on his follow-through after bowling only 6.3 overs. Thereafter he struggled to meet fitness requirements to play longer-version cricket and has regularly featured only in shorter formats over the last 18 months.

His last first-class appearances were in January 2014, when he played in the Bangladesh Cricket League only to prove that he was match-fit.

Under these circumstances when he expressed his desire for Test cricket, the fear is whether he would hurt himself again while playing the more demanding cricket when he could only bowl four or five overs at a good pace in a shorter-version international match. True, he is a man who has overcome many adversities and his fans respect his desire, but at the same time they



Mashrafe Bin Mortaza in white was once anybody's dream, but with his fitness demons proving to be a major roadblock, a return to Tests remains a big question.

PHOTO: STAR FILE

desperately want him to at least lead the Tigers in the 2017 Champions Trophy in England.

When chief selector Faruque Ahmed's

attention was drawn to Mashrafe's desire, he said, "This is his opinion. He has to prove himself and perform in the domestic circuit before reviving his Test career. My

opinion is that we need his services in the shorter-version of cricket as much as possible and I would love to see him extending his shorter-version career."

Chappell's argument for Bangladesh

CRICINFO

A week after Australia called off their tour to Bangladesh citing "security fears", former Australia captain Ian Chappell has said the ICC needs to step in and coordinate security efforts. He also said he believed the decision might have been a "little different" had a similar situation arisen ahead of a tour to India.

"The ICC and the cricket boards need to set up a committee, which has a security background," he said on his bi-weekly show 'Chappelli Calls It' on ESPNcricinfo. "It's got to get information from all the countries and relevant parties but by doing that you are taking it out of the hands of the individual boards, who look at different situations differently."

Chappell said while it was easy to "say no" to a tour to Bangladesh, the prospect of "far greater ramifications" of a pull-out from India would make it "not so easy" to make a similar decision. "The obvious one

is about India, they will be very reluctant not to tour India. If it was the IPL, for instance, and the decision was on the heads of the individual players, it would be interesting to see what decision was taken then.

"I guess it's very hard to ignore government advice on matters of security," Chappell said.

"The question I would ask is if the same situation was occurring on a tour to India, what would happen then? That makes me wonder if the decision might have been a little different. As long as you have the individual countries making that decision, whether we will or we won't, you're always going to have a situation where you are going to say for a tour to Bangladesh, it's pretty easy to say no. For a tour to India, it's not so easy to say no, because the ramifications are far greater."

As the fate of the tour hung in the balance after Cricket Australia received specific information from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade about a possible security risk to Australian interests in the country, the Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan assured that Australia would receive



2017 C'ships Bolt's last

IANS, New York

Jamaican sprint icon Usain Bolt has reaffirmed his decision to make next summer's Olympics in Rio de Janeiro his last, also revealing that he plans to retire from the sport after the 2017 World Athletics Championship in London.

The 29-year-old announced he will begin preparations for Rio from next Monday after enjoying a break away from athletics.

"I start training for the Olympics on October 12. It will be my last Olympics," Bolt said on Wednesday.

"I should have one more World Championships but I'm not too sure what I want to do after retiring. Some people say I should try acting but I think I will stay in sport and figure out what I can do," the six-time Olympic champion added.

IN A NUTSHELL

NBA player attacks coach

Basketball franchise New York Knicks coach Derek Fisher was attacked in Los Angeles by NBA bad boy Matt Barnes, who drove 95 miles when he found out Fisher was with his estranged wife.

The 6-foot-7 Barnes, who now plays for the Memphis Grizzlies, made a fast break from his team's California training camp when he was tipped off that Fisher was making time with "Basketball Wives LA" star Gloria Govan in the home Barnes once shared with her.

The NBA is investigating the brawl. Sources said that Barnes became incensed when his 6-year-old twin sons, Carter and Isaiah, called to tell him that Fisher was at the house.

"Barnes went crazy. He got in his car and went to the house and went after Fisher," one source said. "Matt then drove down there to beat him."

Fisher and Barnes were teammates on the LA Lakers for two seasons. Barnes found Fisher, Govan and about 10 other people around a bonfire in the back yard, sources said and fight broke out between the pair, although everything had cooled down by the time the police arrived.

Bret Lee on red carpet

Former Australia fast bowler Brett Lee's first movie as an actor, a Bollywood-themed romantic comedy "unIndian", has held its first premiere in his country.

The romantic comedy casts Lee as a teacher who introduces migrant students to the basics of language and culture.

The film was launched on Wednesday in Lee's home town of Sydney. The film will be released in Australia on October 15.

"I had to go through about 190 pages of dialogue, so that was a really hard part," said Lee.

Yuvraj eyes comeback

India batsman Yuvraj Singh has revealed that he is determined to make a comeback to the national side.

"I was speaking to Sachin last year and he said that the most important thing is to play for India but don't forget to enjoy the game," said Yuvraj.

"As kids we always played the game to enjoy it, we never knew that we were going to play for India. So as long as I am enjoying it, I want to play," added Yuvraj.

Compiled by Star Sport Desk

India-SA third T20I abandoned

AFP, Kolkata

The third and final Twenty20 international between India and South Africa was abandoned without a ball being bowled due to a wet outfield at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata on Thursday.

The match held only academic interest with the tourists having already clinched a decisive 2-0 lead in the series.

A spell of heavy afternoon rain water-logged the outfield, which the ground staff failed to dry under cloudy skies.

The Proteas had won the first match in Dharamsala by seven wickets and the second in Cuttack by six wickets.

India and South Africa will now contest five one-day internationals starting on Sunday before a four-Test series opens on November 5.