



Hemanta Vincent Biswas (C) must have been consoling his senior teammates Zahid Hossain and Zahid Hasan Emily, who were left out of the national team's squad announced yesterday. The trio, though, will be looking to get that out of their head as their adopted team, Chittagong Abahani, take on De Spin Ghar Bazan of Afghanistan in the first semifinal of the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup today.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Hosts face Spin Ghar today

ANISUR RAHMAN from Chittagong



Without naming any names, De Spin Ghar Bazan coach Waheedullah said that they would need to stop three players of Chittagong Abahani when the two sides meet in the first semifinal of the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup today.

One of those three players must be Zahid Hossain, playing on loan from Sheikh Russel KC, who has almost single-handedly taken the hosts to the semifinals. After the opening match defeat against East Bengal, the veteran winger scored four goals in two matches as Chittagong Abahani pipped their Dhaka namesake for the second qualifying spot from group B.

Zahid was allowed some freedom in the match against Karachi Electric Club where he scored a hat-trick, but he might have a different role in today's match.

"We have watched the matches of Chittagong Abahani and pointed out some of their weaknesses. There are three players we need to restrict. We are now working on it and hopefully we will win the match tomorrow (Tuesday)," said Waheedullah yesterday.

Waheedullah's counterpart, Chittagong Abahani coach Shafiqul Islam Manik, is aware of it too and he has a different gameplan.

"Football is a game of 11 players who

need to perform collectively. Someone will have to show something special like Zahid did in the last two matches. If Zahid is confined, someone else will have to take the responsibility. I think there are players like Eleta Kingsley, Zahid Hasan Emily and Mithun Chowdhury, who can perform and take the team to the final," said Manik.

Manik may have good attackers in his side, but his defence -- marshalled by Atiqur Rahman Meshu, Rezaul Karim, Sohel Rana and Beybeck Fonibagne -- is not that solid and was blamed for the three goals they conceded in the tournament. Manik admitted that he has something to worry about with this defence.

"Yes, there was a little problem in backline because the midfielders were not quick to defend during the attacks of the opposition, but I am working on it to make sure less number of mistakes happen in the next match," said Manik.

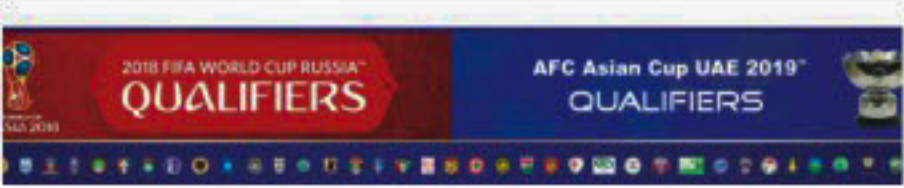
"However, we have reached the semifinal from the group of death and the players are more motivated after the last two matches. If the boys can maintain the tempo, it is possible to beat De Spin Ghar Bazan," said Manik, who however admitted that the Afghan champions have a definite physical advantage.

The match will kick off at 7:40pm and will be telecast live from the MA Aziz Stadium on Channel 9.

No place for Zahid

Emily too overlooked; Nasir, Yeasin return

SPORTS REPORTER



Forwards Zahid Hasan Emily and Zahid Hossain were overlooked while four senior players were recalled when Bangladesh national team's head coach Fabio Lopez yesterday announced a 30-member preliminary squad for next month's World Cup qualifier against Tajikistan.

Both Zahid and Emily, who were in the preliminary squad for last month's away match against Kyrgyzstan but later pulled due to injury and illness, failed to find a place in the squad despite the former's excellent performances in the ongoing Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup. Lopez did not consider them for the squad as he felt the two senior players lacked fitness.

However, defenders Nasiruddin Chowdhury, Yeasin Khan, Keshto Kumar Bose and midfielder Sohel Rana, all of whom missed the last fixture due to either

injuries or illness, made a comeback alongside three other players. The players of the final 23-member squad which had travelled to Bishkek earlier this month all retained their places. The preparation camp will get underway in Dhaka from tomorrow.

Mohammedan goalkeeper Ashrafur Islam Rana, the fourth goalkeeper of the squad, was also recalled while midfielder Mashuk Mia Johnny, who was with the under-19 team during the national team's last engagement, has been included in the list. The only new face in the squad is Mohammedan left-back Nurul Naim Faisal, whose performance during Sunday's clash against Kolkata Mohammedan is believed to have impressed the Italian coach.

Currently nine players of the preliminary squad are involved in the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup and these players will join the camp as soon as their club's campaign is over. Meanwhile, Mohammedan and national team winger Jewel Rana left Chittagong yesterday due to jaundice and is likely to miss the start of the camp.

SA Games now from Feb 6 to 16

SPORTS REPORTER

The 12th South Asian (SA) Games, which was deferred from its initial starting date of January 10, will now be held from February 6 to 16, informed Bangladesh Olympic Association's secretary general Syed Shahed Reza last night.

"We have received an e-mail this evening from the Indian Olympic Association where they confirmed that the SA Games will be held from February 6 to 16. There has been no change in the venue though," Reza told The Daily Star when contacted last night.

That means the games will take place simultaneously in Guwahati and Shillong. However, according to a report by the Press Trust of India (PTI), the sporting extravaganza will feature 25 disciplines, instead of previously decided 23.

"There would be 25 disciplines, with 17 of them scheduled to be held in Guwahati and eight in Meghalaya's capital city Shillong," Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi was quoted as saying by the PTI on Sunday.

The biggest sporting festival involving all eight countries of the South Asian region was initially scheduled for January 10 to 20, but was later deferred 'in keeping with the request of some members and also taking into account the cold climatic conditions in the hosting states during that period.'

Hamilton wins 3rd world title

AFP, Austin

Defending champion Lewis Hamilton secured his third world title on Sunday when he raced to victory in the United States Grand Prix.

The 30-year-old Briton came home 2.850 seconds clear of his Mercedes teammate Nico Rosberg to deliver his 10th victory of the season.

Hamilton now has an unbeatable total of 327 points, moving him beyond the reach of both Rosberg, and four-time champion Sebastian Vettel of Ferrari. Hamilton's success enabled him to equal the record of Jackie Stewart as the only Britons to win three drivers' world titles and the first to win two championships in succession.

Mash returns to training

ODI team likely to be announced today

SPORTS REPORTER



Inspirational Tigers captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza started training yesterday and is expected to regain full fitness well before the start of the home series against Zimbabwe early next month.

Apart from the quick recovery of Bangladesh's ODI and T20I captain from dengue, a disease he was diagnosed with earlier this month, there is also good news for the national selectors as young paceman Taskin Ahmed has been making a speedy recovery from a side strain.

While Mashrafe is set to lead the Tigers in next month's three ODIs and two T20Is against Zimbabwe, Taskin may also feature in some part of the series.

"Mash (Mashrafe) started training today and was involved in a twenty-minute cycling session. Tiredness is

still there and he has gained some weight but we hope he will be fully fit within the next seven days," said national team physio Bayjedul Islam Khan yesterday.

Mashrafe was supposed to have a long layoff. But the recent development, which forced Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to bring forward the limited-over series against Zimbabwe, after Australia had postponed its two-match Test series, has brought the paceman back to international business again. The Zimbabwe series, that also includes two Tests, was originally scheduled to take place in January next year.

Injuries to Rubel Hossain and Taskin, the two key members of Bangladesh's success story in one-day formats this year, put the selectors in a spot of bother regarding the shape of the pace attack. Although Rubel is ruled out, Bayjedul is optimistic about Taskin's return.

"Taskin bowled 10 overs today without any complain. He is making a

quick recovery and is now 90% fit. He may be available for the series. Shafiqul Islam is also all but fit," informed Bayjedul.

Meanwhile, the selectors have already finalised the team. Chief selector Faruque Ahmed will now decide whether they will announce the team for first ODI, which will be held on November 7, or for the first two ODIs. All the matches will take place at the home of cricket in Mirpur. The selectors are likely to announce the team today.

Taskin may play the warm-up match against Zimbabwe on November 5 at Fatullah and if he bowls without any complaints in that game, he may feature in the second ODI.

The selectors, as part of a backup plan, brought back pacers Al-Amin Hossain and Kamrul Islam Rabbi home from the A team's tour of Africa. Al-Amin has a good chance to make an international return while new face Rabbi may also get the senior team's nod.

Spinners seal series for SL

AFP, Colombo

Left-arm spinners Rangana Herath and Milinda Siriwardana shared seven wickets as Sri Lanka thumped the West Indies by 72 runs in the second Test on Monday to sweep the series 2-0.

The tourists, who resumed on 20-1 chasing a victory target of 244, were shot out for 171 in the post-lunch session of the fifth day's play at the P Sara Oval in Colombo.

Veteran Herath finished with four for 56 and Siriwardana took three for 25 to wreck the tourists, for whom Darren Bravo played a lone hand with 61.

The West Indies slipped to 138 for nine before the last-wicket pair of Kemar Roach (13) and Jomel Warrican (20 not out) put on 33 runs to hand a batting lesson to their teammates.

Sri Lanka had won the first Test in Galle by an innings and six runs.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SRI LANKA: 200 & 206
WEST INDIES: 163 & 171 (Hope 35, Bravo 61; Herath 4-56, Siriwardana 3-25)
Result: Sri Lanka won by 72 runs and clinched 2-match series 2-0.

Player-of-the-match: Milinda Siriwardana.
Player-of-the-series: Rangana Herath.

Shakib awaits his 'princess'

SPORTS REPORTER



It won't be a surprise if the Bangladesh women's cricket team up their training intensity by a few degrees from today onwards, for in a month's time Shakib Al Hasan and his wife Umme Ahmed Shishir are expected to be proud parents of a baby girl.

Another special all-rounder in the making? One can never rule out that idea. But jokes apart, Shakib, who has been rather tight-lipped regarding his future child, to the surprise of many, informed his fans through his facebook page that he was eagerly awaiting his 'princess.' The expected due date of the baby is on November 21.

The left-hander, who is currently in America, shared a photo from his wife's baby shower on the social networking website yesterday. It created a mini-uproar of sorts amongst his fans.

The all-rounder, who is now enjoying a one-and-a-half months leave, will however return to the country earlier than scheduled in order to play the limited overs series' against Zimbabwe.

Shakib was given a choice by the Bangladesh Cricket Board regarding his desire to play in the series due in November and according to the board, the left-hander wanted to take part in the competition.

Zimbabwe are scheduled to arrive on November 2.

After the Zimbabwe series Shakib will be busy with the Bangladesh Premier League. He was signed up by Rangpur Riders in the players' auctions and was the first player to be bought amongst the icons.



Afghans take first T20I

CRICINFO, Bulawayo

Afghanistan cruised to a six-wicket victory over Zimbabwe in the inaugural Twenty20I match between the two sides at the Queens Sports Club on Monday.

Mohammad Nabi once again anchored the visitors' batting with an unbeaten 33, and he was well assisted by Najibullah Zadran, who contributed an unbeaten 37 to their unbroken 69-run stand. Afghanistan brought up their victory with five balls to spare, and their victory was set up by a superb bowling performance at the death. Both of Zimbabwe's openers reached fifty, and the hosts' hundred came up in the 13th over, but their charge was scuppered by Dawlat Zadran's pinpoint yorkers. He finished with three wickets, including two in two balls, and his efforts ensured that Afghanistan were not overly taxed in their chase.

SCORES IN BRIEF
ZIMBABWE: 153 for 5 in 20 overs (Raza 59, Chibhabha 54, Williams 16; Dawlat 3-29)
AFGHANISTAN: 154 for 4 in 19.1 overs (Shahzad 34, Sadiq 17, Asghar 18, Nabi 33 not out, Najibullah 37 not out; Chisora 1-26, Williams 1-20)

Result: Afghanistan won by 6 wickets.

Rajshahi crushed inside three days

SPORTS REPORTER



Barisal further consolidated their lead at the top of Tier Two after they completed a thumping eight-wicket win over Rajshahi at the Sheikh Kamruzzaman Stadium in the National Cricket League's fifth round yesterday. They now have 53 points from five games.

Having conceded a 192-run lead in the first innings, Mushfiqur Rahim-led Rajshahi needed to do something special on Day Three in order to escape a defeat. However, they were bundled out for just 259 runs and in the process set Barisal a simple target of 69.

Barisal promoted Shohag Gazi to the top in a bid to finish the game in quick time and that's exactly what happened as they reached home in just 7.2 overs.

Barisal medium-pace Salman Hossain, who scalped seven wickets including a five-wicket haul in the first innings and scored 45 runs with the bat, was adjudged the player of the match.

The other Tier Two encounter, between hosts Chittagong and Sylhet, is also likely to witness a victor. After gaining a 13-run lead, Sylhet reduced Chittagong to 188 for 6 by stumps. At the moment the port city outfit are 175 runs ahead. They will want to take

that score up to 250 before the exchange.

Second-placed Dhaka are in trouble as Rangpur enforced the follow-on against them. In reply to Rangpur's first innings score of 463, Dhaka were bowled out for 276 in Bogra. They ended the day on 34 for 1 and are still 153 runs behind to force Rangpur bat again.

At Fatullah, Imrul Kayes, who had an overnight score of 110, carried on and ended up posting 163. His innings helped Khulna score 367 against Dhaka Metro's first innings total of 399.

Khulna's Mehedi Hasan Miraz, who had taken a five-wicket haul in the previous innings, took three more to reduce Metro to 122 for 5 in the second.

If Khulna can claim the last five wickets early on the final day today, they might just go on to spring a surprise victory despite conceding a first-innings lead.

As far as the tables are concerned, a draw will help Khulna maintain their top-spot, considering second-placed Dhaka's precarious position at the moment.

Khulna have 39 points from five matches while Dhaka have 34 from four. This is the last round that will feature the national players. From the next round onwards, they will be busy preparing for the Zimbabwe series.

SCORES IN BRIEF

DHAKA METRO V KHULNA	DHAKA V RANGPUR	RAJSHAH V BARISAL	CHITTAGONG V SYLHET
Dhaka Metro: 399 and 122 for 5 (Maruf 44, Shamsur 42; Mehedi 3-33)	Dhaka: 276 all out in 94.1 overs (Rakibul 79; Bishwanath 3-37, Sajedul 3-71) and 34 for 1 (Majid 20; Shubashish 1-6)	Rajshahi: 119 and 259 all out in 83 overs (Forhad 66; Golam 3-40, Gazi 2-73) Barisal: 311 and 69 for 2 (Shahriar 33 not out, Gazi 33; Shanto 1-3, Sanjamul 1-36) Result: Barisal won by eight wickets.	Chittagong: 270 and 188 for 6 (Tasamul 77, Yasir 41 not out; Enamul 2-62, Khaled 1-16) Sylhet: 283