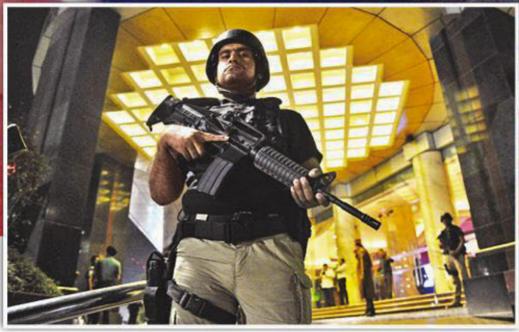


# SPORT

## MATCH INFO

**Kick-off:** 5:30pm  
**Venue:** Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka  
**Television broadcast:** Channel 9

**FIFA Ranking:**  
 Australia: 60, Bangladesh: 180  
**Previous meeting:**  
 Australia 5 - 0 Bangladesh  
 Perth, 03 Sep, 2015



A seemingly stunned Tim Cahill, Australia's star football striker, takes photos of the security personnel arranged in front of The Westin upon the team bus's arrival at the hotel yesterday. Inset: A photo of a security person outside the hotel.

PHOTOS: FIROZ AHMED

Australia are from a different world. We can't compare with teams like Australia, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. But we will try to do our job.  
**-- Bangladesh coach Fabio Lopez**

I want to give hundred percent and I hope the other players will give their best. Let's hope we can take advantage of the home conditions.  
**-- Bangladesh vice-captain Jamal Bhuiyan**

We treat every opponent the same. We prepared according to our strengths and weaknesses, and concentrating on our game.  
**-- Australia coach Ange Postecoglou**

Tomorrow is something new as we haven't played here. But we have experienced similar circumstances elsewhere. Our sole focus is getting three points.  
**-- Australia captain Mile Jedinak**

## The biggest day yet

### Booters take on Socceroos today

ATIQUÉ ANAM



The wait is finally over. The Australia national football team, affectionately called the Socceroos by their fans at home and across the world, are in Dhaka. And the Socceroos will be taking on Bangladesh team at the Bangabandhu National Stadium at 5:30pm today in a World Cup qualifying fixture, which has been the most anticipated tie for all Bangladeshi football fans ever since the draw was made in April this year.

No other World Cup playing nation and no other reigning Asian champions, at full-strength, have previously come to Bangladesh to take on the home side. Yes, Lionel Messi's Albiceleste did come here four years

ago, but they were playing against a Nigeria team, which hardly have any fan following here.

The Socceroos might have raised a bit of hullaballoo about coming here, but that will hardly be an issue for the spectators, who are eager to see Mamunul Islam and Co take on the new generation of Socceroos led by Mile Jedinak who have won the Asian Cup earlier this year. Tim Cahill, the most celebrated footballer to come out from the land down under and the only man standing from the Socceroos' golden generation, will undoubtedly be at the centre of attention, however, the raucous home support at an expectedly full-house BNS will work as a motivation for the home team.

As far as outcome is concerned, there won't probably be too much expectation on the hosts, who are languishing at the bottom of Group B with a single

point from six matches and suffered a 5-0 defeat against the same opposition in their away fixture in September.

There was not much conviction in the voice of Bangladesh coach Fabio Lopez, who has seen his reputation take a severe dent after a 5-0 drubbing at the hands of Tajikistan last week. The Italian coach, who had led Bangladesh to a 'respectable' 2-0 defeat against Kyrgyzstan in his first assignment, said he had acquired a side which was 'already out of reckoning in these qualifiers' and that he was looking to 'continue his experiment' as his main target is a good result in December's SAFF Championship.

Vice-captain Jamal Bhuiyan, who has been a constant fixture for Bangladesh over the last two years, was a bit more optimistic than his coach.

"I want to give hundred percent

and I hope the other players will give their best too. If we give 90 percent, Australia will easily kill us," the defensive-midfielder said. "We are home team, and Australia will not be used to the conditions here. Let's hope we can use this to our advantage."

The Socceroos are in a bit of sticky situation of their own as a 2-0 defeat in Amman last month has seen the Asian champion relinquished the top position to Jordan, who have 13 points from five matches. In fact it was that defeat which egged them to take this game very seriously and bring a full-strength side -- albeit without the injured trio of Tom Rogic, Tomi Juric and Matthew Spiranovic -- to Dhaka last night.

So those who are coming to the 'Big Bowl' today, do expect an hour-and-thirty-minutes of entertaining football, and do hope the home side

## A wish granted

SPORTS REPORTER

When Lionel Messi and his Argentina came here four years ago, fans in their thousands greeted the superstar and his team at the Shahjalal International Airport. There was an even bigger crowd that waved at the Argentina team bus as it moved down the airport road to the team hotel.

On Monday night another high-profile team (not as popular as Argentina) arrived in Dhaka to play their World Cup qualifiers against Bangladesh. But the Socceroos got a completely different kind of reception in their maiden visit to Dhaka. They were whisked off from the airport to the Westin Hotel in Gulshan, with the security personnel making every effort to clear the five-odd kilometer road, so that no one could even get the slightest clue of what was happening, let alone any football fan waving at them. The scenario at the Westin Hotel last night gave someone the impression that the country was having a never-seen-before security drill in and around that hotel.

Amidst that blanket security provided by SWAT, the Socceroos disembarked from the team bus and entered the hotel. However, a few players, who looked curious about all those activities happening around them, took

pictures while sitting in the bus. Interestingly though it was the kind of security and a total detachment from adoring fans, a taste of which the Socceroos are expected to experience at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today, they had probably wished for and granted. There was also a brief press briefing at the hotel at around 10pm where Socceroos coach Ange Postecoglou said that the players remained focused for their match against Bangladesh despite security concerns.

"From our perspective it was a long trip from Australia, and it was good to break it up. We're looking forward to the conditions tomorrow [today] whatever they are and it's always a challenge when you play away from home. We understand tomorrow there will be two goals and grass on the ground and we'll play our game. So there's no surprises," said Postecoglou on security and not getting to know the conditions.

"One of the joys of playing for the Australian national team is that you go and play in all sorts of places and circumstances. Tomorrow [today] is something new as we haven't played here before. We don't want to let that upset anything or anyone like that. We'll do everything we can to try not to make the conditions a big deal," added Australia captain Mile Jedinak.

## 'Security comparable to Argentina-Nigeria match'

ANISUR RAHMAN

The security arrangements for today's World Cup qualifier between Bangladesh and Australia at the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS) can be compared only to the one taken for the friendly between Argentina and Nigeria, hosted at the same venue in 2011, said Sheikh Mohammad Maruf Hasan, DIG of Police.

The high official of police said 'four-layer security arrangement' has been ensured by the security team, in accordance with FIFA's recommendations and in co-ordination with the Bangladesh Football Federation and its Australian counterparts.

"Four-layer security measures have been taken at the venue -- at the gallery gates and outer gates, in the gallery as well as inside the ground. There will also be security personnel deployed on the roof-tops of high-rise buildings surrounding the stadium," said Maruf during a press briefing at the BFF House yesterday.

The shops and offices at the BNS and adjacent Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium remained closed yesterday and will stay closed today as well.

Maruf informed spectators will go

through both manual and electronic checking at the outer gates as well as the gallery gates, and they will have to leave their vehicles quite a distance away from the venue. The spectators will be allowed entry with only match tickets and mobile phones as no other electronic devices or food items, bottles, etc, will be allowed inside the venue. Snacks and beverages will however be sold at selected spots of the stadium, added Maruf, who is also the security head of Bangladesh Football Federation and a security officer of AFC.

Seating arrangements for around 120 Australian fans have been made at the VIP Gallery (Section 2 & 3), informed a BFF official, adding that those who are yet to buy match tickets, can do so from the BFF House in Motijheel or from in front of the outer gates of the stadium.

All the gates will open at 2:30pm, three hours ahead of the kick-off, informed the BFF officials.

Meanwhile, Maruf informed that a similar stringent security measures have been put in place for the Socceroos, who arrived here last night and checked in at Hotel Westin in Gulshan, for their travel from the Airport to the hotel and the match venue and on their way back.

## Hom, Tasamul score 92 each

SPORTS REPORTER

Shuvagata Hom and Tasamul Haque shared 148 runs for the fourth wicket as Bangladesh A recovered from an early hiccup to finish on 246 for four before bad light stopped play on the second day of the second and final four-dayer against Zimbabwe A at the Harare Sports Club ground yesterday.

Leg-spinner Ryan Burl trapped Shuvagata in front to bring an end to the partnership. The Bangladesh A skipper returned to the dressing room after scoring 92 runs off 101 balls that contained 12 fours.

At the end of the day Tasamul was batting on 92 with Mosaddek Hossain unbeaten for 21 at the other end.

Donald Tripano gave the home team the first breakthrough by removing Rony Talukdar who scored nine runs. The pacer later took two more wickets, Mohammad Mithun (23) and Naeem Islam (0) after which the visitors began their comeback.

Earlier Zimbabwe A were bowled out 303 runs after

## Day 3 washed out too

AFP, Bangalore

The second Test between India and South Africa in Bangalore was headed for a tame draw after bad weather washed out play for the second successive day on Monday.

The umpires called off the scheduled third day's play, without a ball being bowled.



Bangladesh football team players train at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday, ahead of their dream World Cup qualifying game against the Socceroos at this historic venue today.

PHOTO: STAR

## Booters AWOL for club meeting!

SPORTS REPORTER

It was a big surprise when Bangladesh coach Fabio Lopez arrived at the pre-match press briefing with his vice captain Jamal Bhuiyan, while skipper Mamunul Islam, who was scheduled to attend, was conspicuously absent. On questioning, it was learnt that Mamunul and eight of his Sheikh Jamal club-mates were 'forcefully taken' to the club tent for a program, a little more than 24 hours before Bangladesh's FIFA World Cup qualifier against Australia.

It was learnt that the program was in fact a negotiation meeting between

the players and the Sheikh Jamal president regarding the pending wages of the players. Jamal Bhuiyan, who had already been paid off his wages for the season, was thus spared the meeting, and hence he was able to attend the press conference.

When asked, Lopez said he did not give any permission to the players to leave while team manager Amirul Islam Babu, too, echoed the same sentiment.

Bangladesh Football Federation general secretary, Abu Nayeem Shohag, explained the situation.

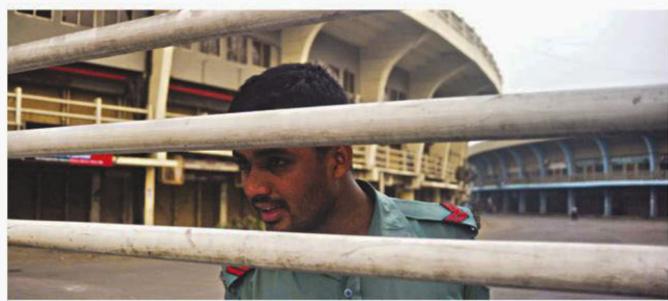
"We had asked them [Sheikh Jamal] if the program could be arranged on the morning after the match, but they didn't listen to us. There was no permission given from

us. It could be said they have taken the players forcefully," said Shohag.

But things became more stressed in the evening when Lopez had to conduct half of his pre-match training session without those nine players, before they eventually joined the rest after one-hour's delay. How good the training session and Bangladesh's preparations for their big match against Australia were, in the wake of this incident, could be anybody's guess.

BFF secretary Shohag said that the club in question could face punishment if the matter is deemed punishable by the National Teams' Committee.

Sheikh Jamal president Manzur Kader could not be reached for a comment.



The Bangabandhu National Stadium turned into a fortified fort yesterday as police beefed up the security ahead of Bangladesh's World Cup qualifying clash against Australia today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED