

SPORT

BFF gets Aussie windfall

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A cash-strapped Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has earned approximately Taka one crore from Bangladesh's World Cup qualifying home match against Australia on Tuesday.

The BFF earned the bulk of the money by broadcasting the match live for the viewers in Australia.

A BFF official yesterday said that they had sold the rights to the Australia FA for US 200,000 dollars through an agent the BFF has employed for its four home games of the qualifiers.

"Although we are yet to complete the accounts, we are expecting to earn nearly Taka one crore from the match between Bangladesh and Australia," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag.

He added that the figure is excluding the production cost of the match and the agent's 20 per cent fees.

Bangladesh's home game against the Socceros drew almost a packed audience and Shohag said that the BFF has earned about Tk 10 lakh from ticket sales.

Apart from that, they earned around Tk 8 lakh from advertising billboards.

When asked, Shohag said a Singapore-based company, equipped with high-tech cameras, was involved in the production of the game in line with the demand from the Australia FA.

He said that the BFF had also earned US 25,000 dollars (including the agent's commission) from Bangladesh's home game against Jordan.



The stage is all set for some of the biggest names in the entertainment industry -- from Bangladesh and India -- to light up the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium as the Bangladesh Premier League's opening ceremony begins at 4.30pm today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Hrithik to star cricket-tainment

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Prior to the batting and bowling fireworks, the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur will be illuminated by the pyrotechnics of Hrithik Roshan. The Bollywood superstar will be the main attraction of a grand opening concert to mark the return of the glamorous Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) at the home of Bangladesh cricket today after two years.

Chief coordinator of the BPL opening ceremony and Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) director Sheikh Sohel informed during a press conference yesterday that local artist Mou will kick-start the concert at 4.30pm, which will be followed by renditions from popular bands Chirkut and LRB. Then the evergreen folk singer Momtaz Begum will arrive on stage, before Indian playback singer KK enters to enthrall the audience.

After KK's performance, BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon will officially



HRITHIK ROSHAN

declare the third edition of the tournament open. It will then be time for Sri Lanka-born Bollywood beauty queen, Jacqueline Fernandez, to captivate the audience before the final attraction comes on stage; which will be none other than Hrithik, who has never performed in a live show in Bangladesh. Although the manager of the Bollywood superstar, along with his dancing troupe, arrived in the city yesterday, Hrithik has decided to take an early morning flight to Dhaka today for his much-anticipated performance.

Sohel informed that they had to increase their budget for the mega event to nearly Tk 3.50 crore including taxes, and according to close sources two-thirds of that amount will be paid to the Indian showstopper. The grand opening ceremony will be ended with a fabulous laser show and fireworks, but the organisers promised that the crowd will have everlasting memories of the one and only Hrithik Roshan.

"We are selling four to five thousand tickets and there are only few complimentary tickets as we have decided to give the

fans the most opportunity [to watch the event]. We chose Friday, a public holiday, for the event so that most people can watch. We believe if the opening ceremony is a hit, then the tournament will also be a hit," said Sohel at a press conference which was arranged to declare DBL as title sponsor for the grand opening ceremony.

DBL Group chairman Abdul Wahed said that they accepted the offer to become title sponsors for the opening event as it seemed like a lucrative venture. "We are excited and we hope that it will be a grand success," said Wahed.

After the opening ceremony, the tournament will roll onto the field from November 22 and apart from Mirpur the matches will also be held at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong. Six teams will feature in this season's tournament and the fans will be looking forward to seeing some entertaining cricket during the 24-day extravaganza that will feature the likes of Chris Gayle, Kumar Sangakkara and Shahid Afridi. But all that blends into the background because today is not a day for cricket, today

BPL PREVIEW: BARISAL BULLS

Ridin' on the Gayle storm

SPORTS REPORTER

The highlight of the Barisal Bulls is none other than Chris Gayle. The dangerous left-handed batsman still holds the record for the two highest scores in the Bangladesh Premier League. He has played just six BPL games and has three hundreds to his name and with an average of a 100.50, the BPL seems to be Gayle's forte.

However Barisal will have to wait a bit before they can unleash their super power because the West Indian will only be available after December 1. Until then they will have to depend mostly upon their local players because, apart from Gayle, it's still unclear how effective the other foreign players in their side can be. They have signed up Zimbabwe's Brendan Taylor, West Indians Kevon Cooper and Evin Lewis, Pakistan's Imad Wasim and Mohammad Sami and Sri Lanka's Seekuge Prasanna.

All-rounder Wasim could be handy player in Bangladesh. The 26-year-old boasts a T20I average of 60 and he also can throw in those slow left-armers which can prove to be quite effective in these conditions.

However, the effectiveness of the likes of Sami and Taylor are yet to be determined since neither has played international cricket for a while.

As a result -- like Shahriar Nafees rightly pointed out after the team's training session at Mirpur -- their local players will have to perform in order for them to reach the knock-out stages.

And the key player amongst the locals could be Sabbir

Rahman. For all the talent that the youngster possesses, he still hasn't managed to shine much in international cricket. He is yet to play a big knock in international cricket and the BPL could be his inspiration. He was promoted to number three in the absence of Shakib Al Hasan in the first T20I against Zimbabwe, which goes on to show the importance that he has in Bangladesh's T20 squad. All he needs to do now is get a move on in this tournament.



Also in the side are Mahmudullah Riyad, Al-Amin Hossain and Taijul Islam. Along with Sabbir, these will be the players that Barisal will depend upon the most, considering the fact that the rest of the players haven't played international cricket.

Also in the side is Shohag Gazi, an off-spinner who has been desperately trying to re-ignite his career after it came to a halt following his action being questioned. Gazi has been in good touch in domestic cricket and he will hope he can use this tournament as a launching pad for his return to the national side.

SQUAD

Local players: Mahmudullah, Sabbir Rahman, Al-Amin Hossain, Shohag Gazi, Taijul Islam, Shahriar Nafees, Mehedi Maruf, Nadif Chowdhury, Rony Talukdar, Mohammad Sharifullah, Sajedul Islam.

Foreign players: Imad Wasim, Mohammad Sami, Seekuge Prasanna, Chris Gayle, Brendon Taylor, Kevon Cooper, Evin Lewis

Coach: Graham Ford



Cricket-crazed fans enjoyed as the Barisal Bulls players had an open-top parade through the streets of Barisal yesterday. Fans turned out in the thousands to show their support and cheer on their favourite players.

Franchise job excites Shane

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh coach Shane Jurgensen said yesterday that he was excited with the new venture in his career as Rangpur Riders coach in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

"It is a good opportunity to get into T20 cricket. I am pretty excited. I have never really done something like this in a franchise setup. It is new for me. It is a good test of my coaching ability and to get along with the players and have a good time in a team environment. I like what I am seeing. Everything is well organised off the field, so everything has gone well so far," said Jurgensen at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Jurgensen was associated with Bangladesh for four years, so he is well-aware about the current bunch of cricketers and that may help him bring out the best from his charges.

"I think it will be a slight advantage [knowing the players better than others] but every team will be well prepared," he said.

Jurgensen also expressed his satisfaction over security saying, "It's all good. I went for a walk yesterday. I have had no concern in the couple of days I have been here so far. I think it is a shame the Australia tour and other tours didn't happen but I am sure it will work out.



Chief coordinator of the BPL opening ceremony and BCB director Sheikh Sohel speaks at a 'meet the press' event at the BGMEA Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

C'ship League from Nov 26

SPORTS REPORTER



Minister Hi-Tech Park Limited, a private electronics company, has earned the rights to sponsor the Bangladesh Championship League, a second-tier professional football league while Premier Bank, Pragati Insurance Ltd, Eastern Bank Ltd, Novo Air and Treasure Securities Ltd will be co-sponsors of the eight-team league.

The announcement was made at the logo unveiling programme at the BFF House yesterday. The fourth edition of the league will get underway from November 26, 16 months after the completion of the last edition.

"We could not start the league because of the unavailability of grounds. The double-leg league will commence at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. It will also take place at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur after inauguration of its artificial turf," said Bangladesh Football Federation senior vice-president Abdus Salam Mursheedy.

The eight teams taking part in the league are -- Uttar Baridhara Club, Agrani Bank Ltd Sports Club, Arambagh KS, Victory SC, Wari Club, Youngmen's Club Fakirerpool, T&T Club, Motijheel and Bangladesh Police AC. Top two teams will be promoted to the Bangladesh Premier League.

"Some of the teams like Arambagh, Bangladesh Police and Youngmen's Club Fakirerpool formed strong squads this time in a bid to qualify for the Premier League and we expect a competitive league," said Mursheedy, adding that they would show zero tolerance on match-fixing, an issue that marred the league last season.

Each participating team will be given Tk 5 lakh as participation money while the champions and runners-up will be awarded Tk 5 lakh and Tk 2 lakh respectively.

MA Razzak Khan, chairman of Minister Hi-Tech Park Ltd, hoped the participating teams will entertain the spectators with good football.

Siddikur in 84th place

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman had a torrid start to the Resorts World Manila Master yesterday as the golfer finished with two-over-par which left him languishing at joint-84th position.

Leader Nicholas Fung of Malaysia finished with under-six, hitting seven birdies and a solitary bogey, followed closely by Poom Saksansin of Thailand and Chinese Taipei's Hung Chien-yao, both at under-five.

In the US \$10,00,000 event, Siddikur hit bogeys in the 4th and 6th holes, dropping down the leaderboard. However, he seemed to have turned it around by playing two successive birdies in the 7th and 8th holes.

Unfortunately, the Bangladeshi ace could not carry on from there, carding four more bogeys and two birdies, as he concluded a lacklustre outing.

JUNIOR ASIA HOCKEY CUP

Japan blitz Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh hockey team's dream to qualify for the Junior World Cup were dashed when they suffered a 3-0 defeat to Japan in the quarterfinal of the Junior (U-21) Asia Hockey Cup at the Wisma Belia Hockey Stadium in Kuantan Malaysia yesterday.

Keeping in mind that four semifinalists of the tournament will qualify for the Junior World Cup, Bangladesh took on mighty Japan on the back of morale boosting win over Asian powerhouse South Korea in the last pool match, but unfortunately they could not carry the momentum from their previous win into the battle against Japan, whose senior team is ranked 16th in the world.

Bangladesh, although outclassed, fought neck-to-neck before conceding a goal in the 21st minute as Hiromasa Ochiai put Japan ahead with a field goal as the quarter ended 1-0.

As the game continued, Bangladesh tried their best to level the margin, but their hopes soon faded as Shota Yamada scored twice within a minute. Yamada doubled Japan's lead through a penalty and wrapped up the match by scoring a third goal in the 68th minute.

Bangladesh will play Oman to decide their position tomorrow.

Pak-Eng 4th ODI today

AFP, Dubai

Pakistan captain Azhar Ali promised his wounded team would fight hard in their must-win fourth and final one-day against England in Dubai on Friday, saying he was ready to face the music in case of a series loss.

Pakistan won the first one-dayer by six wickets but lost the next two and were left facing the must-win match to avoid a series defeat.

Ali said his players realised the importance of the match.

"It's a must-win game for us but it won't be easy because England played well in the last two games and won," said Ali of England's 95-run and six-wicket wins.

"But we all realise the importance of this game so we will do our hardest work to win and I am confident that if we play to our ability then we can definitely win this game."

Ali, who took over as captain after Misbahul Haq retired following the 2015 World Cup in March, said he would accept being replaced as captain.