

Booters back Maruful

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh captain Mamunul Islam believed that Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) made a correct decision by sacking Italian coach Fabio Lopez and also backed the appointment of Maruful Haque.

"The BFF has taken the right decision timely, as we have an important tournament, the SAFF Championship, ahead," said Mamunul after the booters returned yesterday from a disappointing campaign in the Yunnan International football tournament in China. "A good coach never does such extreme experiments ahead of an important tournament. He [Lopez] changed the positions of players regularly and we had to suffer for it during the tournament in China."

"It was not possible to put up better performances in such anxious circumstances," said Mamunul, who had been in Fabio's experimental group during the Italian's two-and-a-half month tenure.

Before their departure for China, Mamunul said that they had no option but to prove themselves either in the Yunnan International football tournament or the SAFF Championship following their dismal performances in the World Cup and Asian Cup Qualifiers.

Under Lopez, the booters suffered two successive defeats which eventually resulted in his termination. Bangladesh, however, ended that campaign with a win in the last

group match.

Mamunul said that sans Fabio they won the match against Hebei since the players played in their previous position.

The Sheikh Jamal DC captain believes they will now be able to play more comfortably under the guidance of Maruful, who has coached them in different clubs in the domestic league.

"We [players and coach] know each other very well and I think Maruful can bring out the best from the players, who will also give their hundred percent in the SAFF Championship," said Mamunul.

Left-back Wali Faisal echoed Mamunul's sentiments.

"We could not produce good results in the tournament in China because of the constant positional changes of the players. I think we could have produced something good had the coach [Fabio] not experimented with the players," said Faisal.

Wali said that the confidence of the players was shattered due to the positional changes but they dared not approach the coach.

"Maruful is a good motivator and I believe he can help the players regain their confidence ahead of the SAFF Championship," said the Sheikh Russel KC defender.

Without going into details, defender Nasirul Islam said that there have been some positive and some negative changes in the team during Lopez's stay.

The preparation for the SAFF Championship will get underway from Sunday at the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan.



Juventus striker Mario Mandzukic (R) scores the all-important goal against Manchester City during their Champions League encounter in Turin on Wednesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

KOOL-BSJA MEDIA CUP Tournament begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

Kool-BSJA Media Cup football tournament, organised by Bangladesh Sports Journalists Association, is set to begin at the BFF Artificial turf today.

A total of 24 media houses, split into eight groups, will play the round-robin matches and the top team from each group will advance into the quarterfinals. Both the semifinals and final will be held on December 1.

The announcement was made at a press conference at the Bangladesh Olympic Association auditorium yesterday. Head of marketing of Square Toiletries Ltd, Malik Mohammad Sayeed, unveiled the jerseys for the participating teams.

On the opening day, eight matches will be held while Malik Mohammad Sayeed and newly appointed national coach Maruful Haque are expected to be present during the opening ceremony.

MINISTER FRIDGE C'SHIP

Baridhara draw against Police

SPORTS REPORTER

Police AC played out a goalless draw against Uttar Baridhara Club in the opening match of the Minister Fridge Bangladesh Championship League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

State minister for youth and sports Biren Sikder inaugurated the second-tier professional football league, which got underway after 16 months. BFF vice president and professional league committee chairman Abdus Salam Murshedy was also present on the occasion.

Isco banned for 2 games

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid midfielder Isco was handed a two-game suspension on Wednesday for his wild kick on Barcelona's Neymar that saw him sent-off in Madrid's miserable 4-0 defeat at the weekend.

The Spanish international was on the field for less than 30 minutes having come on as a second-half substitute before taking his frustration out on Barca's brilliant Brazilian.

Blatter feels victimised

AFP, Geneva



Sepp Blatter said Wednesday that he was the target of "an inquisition" by FIFA's ethics committee, which has suspended him for 90 days and called for further sanctions over corruption charges.

Blatter, who led for FIFA for 17 years until his suspension in October, appeared in several Swiss media on Wednesday, defending himself against a range of allegations that have sparked widespread calls for reform at the top of world football.

Speaking to the Zurich-based Sportinformation news service, Blatter invoked his faith and portrayed himself as the victim of an attack.

"As a good Christian, I have to say that what the ethics commission is doing with me, it's like an inquisition," the sanctioned FIFA boss said in quotes distributed by the ATS news agency.

Those comments followed an interview aired on the SF DRS television station in which Blatter insisted the burden of proof was on his accusers.

"It's not me who has to prove my innocence," the Swiss national said.

He claimed he deserved an honourable exit from FIFA, because, he said, "I am not a bad man."

Blatter is the target of a criminal investigation by Swiss prosecutors over possible mismanagement at FIFA and a \$2 million payment made in 2011 to his would-be successor, UEFA boss Michel Platini.

The Swiss criminal probe spurred FIFA's internal ethics watchdog to launch its own inquiry.

FIFA investigators finalised their probe over the weekend, turning evidence over to the ethics committee's judges, who will issue a verdict next month.

The investigators have called for a lifetime ban against Platini, but the requested punishment against Blatter is not yet known.

In a separate interview aired on the RTS television station, Blatter voiced regret that he did not quit FIFA after the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

Drogba keen to manage Chelsea

BBC ONLINE

Former Chelsea striker Didier Drogba says he has an agreement to return to the club once he finishes playing and wants it to be as manager.

Drogba, who now plays in Canada, scored 164 goals in two spells with the Blues.

"I want to give back to the club which has given so much to me. I have agreed that with the club directors," the 37-year-old told BBC Africa.

"Why not manager? Why not sporting director, trainer at the academy or maybe an advising role for strikers?" asks Drogba.

He scored the penalty that won the Champions League for Chelsea in 2012 and won his fourth Premier League title on returning to the club last season before he joined Montreal Impact in Major League Soccer.

Drogba has given his support to manager Jose Mourinho, saying he is the "still the right man" for the job and insisted that he believes the players also still back him, despite rumours of divisions within the dressing room.

Mandzukic fires Juve

AFP, Paris



Last season's beaten finalists Juventus joined Paris Saint-Germain, Atletico Madrid and Benfica in clinching qualification for the last 16 of the Champions League with one round of group games to spare on Wednesday.

Mario Mandzukic turned in Alex Sandro's cross to give Juve a 1-0 win over Manchester City in Turin and ensure that the Italian champions joined City in qualifying from Group D.

City had already secured their progress before the game but the defeat leaves them two points behind Juventus with one match remaining and therefore staring at the prospect of finishing second in the group and facing a tougher last-16 draw.

As it happened, Juve would have been through regardless of their result because Sevilla lost 4-2 to Borussia Moenchengladbach in Germany.

Lars Stindl scored twice for Gladbach either side of a brilliant Fabian Johnson goal and a Raffael strike with Vitolo and Ever Banega, from a penalty, replying for Sevilla.

Sevilla, Europa League winners in each of the last two seasons, now must beat Juve in their final game and hope Gladbach don't defeat City just to claim the consolation of dropping into the secondary competition.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic captained PSG as he returned to face Malmo, his hometown team and the club where

RESULTS		
Malmö	0 – 5	PSG (Rabiot 3, Di Maria 14, 68, Ibrahimovic 50, Lucas 82)
Shakhtar (Alex Teixeira 78-pen, 88, Dentinho 83)	3 – 4	Real Madrid (Ronaldo 18, 70, Modric 50, Carvajal 52)
CSKA Moscow	0 – 2	Wolfsburg (Akinfeev 67-og, Schuerle 88)
Man United	0 – 0	PSV Eindhoven
Astana (Twumasi 19, Anicic 31)	2 – 2	Benfica (Jimenez 40, 72)
Atletico Madrid (Griezmann 13, 65)	2 – 0	Galatasaray
Juventus (Mandzukic 18)	1 – 0	Man City
M'gladbach (Stindl 29, 83)	4 – 2	Sevilla (Vitolo 82)

his glittering career began, and he was among the scorers in a 5-0 romp that took the French champions through from Group A.

Adrien Rabiot and Angel Di Maria netted in the first half before Ibrahimovic finished past Johan Wiland early in the second period.

Markus Rosenberg missed a penalty for Malmo before Di Maria scored again and substitute Lucas curled in a free-kick to complete the rout.

However, Real Madrid, who had already qualified, secured top spot in the group with an entertaining 4-3 win away to Shakhtar Donetsk in Ukraine.

A Cristiano Ronaldo brace either side of a Luka Modric goal and a delightful Dani Carvajal chip had Madrid out of sight but Shakhtar set up a grandstand finale with three goals in the last 13 minutes.

Alex Teixeira scored two of them, the first a penalty, while Dentinho also scored, but Rafa Benitez's under-pressure side held on.

Shakhtar are out but have third place and a Europa League place in their hands.

Atletico and Benfica will meet in Lisbon in two weeks to decide who finishes top of Group C after both qualified for the next phase on Wednesday.

Atletico eased to a 2-0 win over Galatasaray at the Vicente Calderon with Antoine Griezmann scoring both from Gabi assists, while Benfica came from two goals down earlier in the day to draw 2-2 at Astana.

Ghanaian forward Patrick Twumasi put Astana ahead in Kazakhstan and Marin Anicic doubled their lead on 31 minutes.

However, Mexican forward Raul Jimenez pulled one back before half-time and then levelled the scores in the 72nd minute, and a draw against Atletico will see Benfica win the group.

In contrast, there is still all to play for in Group B with Manchester United playing out a disappointing 0-0 draw against PSV Eindhoven at Old Trafford.

Wolfsburg are now top of the group after Andre Schuerle came off the bench to provoke an Igor Akinfeev own goal and score one of his own in a 2-0 defeat of CSKA Moscow in Russia.

As a result, United now need to win their final game at Wolfsburg on December 8 to be certain of a place in the knockout phase, with PSV also still in contention.

ICC a victim of Big 3 bullies

AGENCIES, Mumbai



International Cricket Council (ICC) chairman Shashank Manohar has flayed the imbalance of power within the governing body and criticised last year's revamp which, he believes, allows India, England and Australia to "bully" the organisation.

Cricketer's global governing body approved wide-ranging changes last year, effectively placing the 'Big Three' in charge of the game, while promising more revenues for everyone.

The revamp entitled the three powerful nations to permanent seats in the executive committee while former Indian cricket board (BCCI) president Narayanaswami Srinivasan took over as the ICC chairman.

"I don't agree with the three major countries bullying the ICC," BCCI president Manohar told the Hindu newspaper in an interview.

"That's my personal view, because as I have always said, an institution is bigger than individuals," said Manohar who took up the ICC job after BCCI cut short Srinivasan's tenure by withdrawing him.

"The ICC constitution, as it stands today, says that in all the major committees of the ICC, these three countries will be automatically there," Manohar said.



SHASHANK MANOHAR

"So all the financial and commercial aspects and the executive committee will be controlled by the representatives of these three countries, which according to me is wrong."

"You should have the best man, whether he comes from Zimbabwe, or West Indies, or even from an associate or affiliate to work on a committee, who will promote the interests of the ICC," said Manohar.

Manohar also criticised the new revenue distribution formula favouring the Big Three.

"I don't agree with the revenue-sharing formula, because it's nice to say that India (BCCI) will get 22 per cent of the total revenue of the ICC (4,000 crore Indian Rupees in 2016-2023 cycle), but you cannot make the poor poorer and the rich richer, only because you have the clout."

"Secondly there is another angle to it

which nobody has thought of. India generates money because the other countries come and play in India. If you do not have fierce competition, the broadcasters are not going to pay you and sponsors are not going to sponsor your events. So whatever you generate through bilateral series is because there are good teams playing against you."

"If all teams are of the standards of the low placed ninth and tenth team and India is a good side, who is going to pay you; what interest would be left with the spectators to watch a game, if it's a one-sided game always?"

The lawyer from Nagpur found "many flaws in the ICC constitution" and felt the dual roles of ICC officials like him who also represent home boards presented a case of conflicting interests.

"When I am at the ICC as a BCCI representative, it's my paramount duty to protect the interests of the BCCI; then how can I protect the interests of the ICC, sitting as its chairman."

"If there is a conflict between the interest of the BCCI and the ICC, I will have to protect the interest of the BCCI. Then I am failing in my duty, sitting there as chairman of the ICC and not protecting its interests," said Manohar.

Kader demands Tk 1.44 crore from BFF

SPORTS REPORTER



Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club president Monjur Kader yesterday demanded Tk 1.44 crore from the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), claiming that both he and his club are owed the money from the governing body of country's football.

Kader's letter, six days after he was show-caused along with Mohammedan SC director-in-charge Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan following their derogatory comments against BFF, contained a demand of Tk 82 lakh as pending prize and participation money for the club and Tk 62 lakh, which he claimed was a personal loan to the BFF. He also demanded the disbursement of the dues within 48 hours.

He also demanded the resignation of National Teams Management Committee chairman Salam Murshedy, claiming that the footballer-turned-organiser 'is not only hatching a conspiracy against his club but also tarnishing the image of the country's football'.

Reacting to Kader's two demands, Murshedy said that the BFF would pay the pending participation and prize money to Sheikh Jamal soon. However, he said that he was not aware of any personal loan from Kader. Murshedy also declined to make any comment on the demand of his resignation.

Meanwhile, BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag informed that Kader replied to the BFF show-cause notice yesterday, adding that Lokman responded to it on Wednesday.

LVG a source of discontent?

AGENCIES, London

A Manchester United player has given an extraordinary off-the-record briefing to a high-profile football journalist which is ruffling feathers among fans.

The player, speaking on condition of anonymity, told the Daily Telegraph's Jason Burt that he feels that he is only "half the player he can be", because of manager Louis van Gaal's tactics and approach.

"I've got to be careful what I say here," Burt told the BBC in a radio interview. "I've spoken to one player at United who told me he's half the player he can be here at the moment, because of the way they're playing."

"He doesn't feel it's fair on him, he doesn't feel it's fair on the fans. He can't express himself properly and he finds it very difficult to play here."

When asked, Burt added that United's young, up-and-coming stars such as Memphis Depay and Anthony Martial, do "absolutely not" feel they can raise their concerns with the manager.