

SPORT

Spotlight on Tigers

Tickets go on sale from today

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With the fanfare surrounding the Under-19 World Cup having subsided, the country's collective sporting ambition now turns to the main attraction -- the Tigers. Fans will be eager to see Mashrafe Mortaza's team continue the giant strides of 2015 as they gear up for the Asia Cup Twenty20 opener against India on February 24 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The build-up to the tournament has begun in earnest with Indian brand Micromax emerging as the official sponsors and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announcing ticket rates yesterday.

The regional tournament marks another stop to the road to the World Twenty20 in India in March for the Tigers after an underwhelming 2-2 draw against Zimbabwe in mid-January.

That series was part of an experimentation

phase conducted by the team management to identify the right combination for the format, and was followed by camps in Khulna and Chittagong where drills specific to the demands of T20 cricket were conducted. After a three-day break that started yesterday, the Tigers will have a final camp in Dhaka ahead of their T20 mission.

Tickets will go on sale from February 18 for the Qualifiers at the Khan Saheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah while tickets for the main event in Mirpur will go on sale from February 21. The tickets will be available before each match day -- also on match days depending on availability -- and will be sold at different United Commercial Bank (UCB) branches.

Tickets will go on sale at the Narayanganj, Kachpur, Chasara, Mirpur branches through cash payments for the qualifiers, while tickets for the 13 Mirpur matches will be available at the Sonargaon Jonopod, Bijoynagar, Progoti Soroni, Bashundhara and Noyabazar branches and will be sold through UCash.

Ticket prices for the qualifiers will range from Tk 20-100, while prices for the main event will range from Tk 150-3,000.



The Bangladesh women's cricket team began their preparations ahead of next month's ICC World Twenty20 in India with their first practice session at the BCB Academy Ground in Mirpur yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Four hopefuls touch down

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Four teams -- Afghanistan, UAE, Oman and Hong Kong -- arrived in the capital yesterday to play the qualifier of the Asia Cup.

The qualifying matches will take place at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium on February 19-22. One Associate team will get the opportunity to take part in the main draw of the Asia Cup T20 along with Asian giants India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and hosts Bangladesh. The main tournament will kick off with the match between India and Bangladesh on February 24 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Kevon's action reported

AFP, Dubai

West Indian all-rounder Kevon Cooper was reported for a suspect bowling action in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) in Dubai on Wednesday, the first instance of this kind in the T20 league.

The 27-year-old, who has yet to play international cricket for the West Indies was reported during Tuesday's game between Lahore and Quetta in Dubai.

A PSL release said Cooper had been put on a warning list for the moment.

"Lahore bowler Cooper has been reported for suspect action by match officials," said a PSL release.

If he is reported again then he will be suspended for the remainder of the tournament.

'Under-19 is just THE BEGINNING'

BISHWAJIT ROY



Leading the team to its best finish in the ICC Under-19 World Cup, receiving the player-of-the-tournament award and getting a chance to lead the world eleven were all overshadowed by the event that took place when Bangladesh Under-19s captain Mehedi Hasan Miraz reached his home city Khulna late

Nevertheless, history has taught us that this kind of emotion or attention will not last forever, at least for an Under-19 star, until and unless he graduates to the senior level and replicates his success there. Refreshingly, Miraz was well aware of the fact.

The young man made a bold statement after being adjudged man of the tournament in the just concluded ICC Under-19 World Cup. "I am looking forward to playing for the national team,

long way to become a complete cricketer. To put it simply, I can be a complete cricketer only after playing enough longer-version cricket. I know everybody will forget someday what Miraz did in 2016 if I fail to make my presence felt in international cricket. Many cricketers showed their potential in the past at under-19 level but only a few survived."

"I am not someone who can comment on the standard of our domestic cricket or longer-version

well in domestic circuit as well as with the A team if I want to graduate to the next stage," continued Miraz, who at this moment is concentrating on his coming HSC examinations.

Miraz wants to keep a few words that he repeatedly heard from former Australian batsman Stuart Law, who worked with the team as a technical advisor. "Law always told us that you just forget what you did today and work hard for tomorrow. So there is no way that we can be satisfied with our success in any stage and under-19 is just the beginning for a player."

"I want to play for the national team in the future, I want to be the best all-rounder and a world-class cricketer like Shakib bhai and all that will only come through hard work and a bit of luck. I always follow Mushfiq bhai [Mushfiqur Rahim] because of his hard work and dedication and he is also a good human being, which is the most important thing in life," he said.

Miraz has a desire to become a complete cricketer and he believes the way to do that is by playing longer-version cricket. Miraz and Co have gotten almost all modern-day facilities in their formative years but the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) must think whether they are providing the expected standard in domestic first-class cricket for players like Miraz to fulfil their ambitions. Miraz was understandably reluctant to comment on the existing standards in domestic cricket, but just like the young all-rounder is brimming with promise yet to be fulfilled, the standards in domestic cricket are a long way away from enabling these budding cricketers to realise their potential.



If you find any kind of maturity in my approach, I gained it from my two seasons in longer-version cricket. I learned a lot playing for Khulna along with Raj bhai [Abdur Razzak], Imrul bhai [Imrul Kayes], Shakib bhai [Shakib Al Hasan] and many other senior players. You can understand the situation best if you play longer-version cricket.

Mehedi Hasan Miraz

on Tuesday afternoon.

"I still can't believe it -- around 3,000 people gathered to give me a reception. We are living in a rented house in Dakshin Kashipur of the city and the warmth and love our neighbours are showing are unbelievable," said an emotion-choked Miraz. The excitement and enthusiasm he saw among his neighbours shows that cricket is second only to religion in the country.

which is an ultimate goal for any cricketer. But I have to become a complete cricketer to fulfil my dream." What did it mean to him when he said 'complete cricketer'? Was it a spontaneous remark or a well-thought comment from a young cricketer?

His answer to these questions reveals a mature mind. "What I understand after spending a few years in cricket is that I need to go a

cricket but if you find any kind of maturity in my approach, I gained it from my two seasons of experience in longer-version cricket. I learned a lot playing for Khulna along with Raj bhai [Abdur Razzak], Imrul bhai [Imrul Kayes], Shakib bhai [Shakib Al Hasan] and many other senior players. You can understand the situation best if you play longer-version cricket. So I firmly believe that I need to do

Home failure frustrates Siddikur

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Two-time Asian Tour winner Siddikur Rahman admitted he is 'frustrated' with his current form and that he is looking forward to the Maybank Championship in Malaysia, starting from today, for a turnaround in fortunes.

The 31-year-old golfer finished in an unenviable 35th position in his home tournament, the Bashundhara Bangladesh Open, earlier this week, and he feels he needs to work harder to get his game back on track.

"I had ambitions to win the Bashundhara Bangladesh Open but didn't play good enough," wrote the golfer in his Asiantour blog after landing in Malaysia for the three-million-dollar event.

"Physically I'm okay but I need to work harder to get back on track. I'm struggling a bit with my game right now. I've having good practice sessions but when I'm on the golf course during a tournament round, I get a bit tired, have doubts in my mind," admitted Siddikur.

While unheralded Thai golfer Thitiphon Chuayprakong won his maiden title in Kurmitola with a staggering score of 21-under, Siddikur could barely finish at two-under, thanks to 14 birdies and 12 bogeys he hit throughout the week. The ace Bangladeshi golfer believes he lacks in the physical aspects of the game right now.

"I've discussed this with my coach and we've decided that we need to get physically stronger. I'm probably lacking a bit of physical conditioning now. It's normal to get frustrated I guess...Every sportsman has these bad times and we go up and down. It makes me appreciate what I have but I believe I will get back to my best form soon. I'll continue to work hard at my game to achieve this," concluded Siddikur.

IN A NUTSHELL

Club hopes mowed-down

A village cricket club has seen its preparations for the new season hit after thieves stole three of its mowers. The mowers, which are used to prepare the cricket square, were taken from Willey Wanderers Cricket Club. The club has a history dating back over 100 years.

Club chairman Alan Rudd said: "The thieves took three mowers, but they aren't like normal lawn mowers, these are special mowers which cost around 2,500 pounds. We haven't got the funds to do that, which means preparations have come to a dead halt for now."

Viv is my favourite: Baz

New Zealand batsman Brendon McCullum has named the West Indies cricket legend Viv Richards as his favourite player of all time.

"My favourite player of all time has to be Sir Viv Richards. He was the leader of cricket right around the world throughout his time; his charisma, the way he carried himself, the way he led his team and obviously the way that he played as well," said McCullum.

"I had the opportunity to meet him not long ago. Sometimes it's dangerous to meet your heroes, but not on this occasion. It was a really cool moment, and what a guy he is as well."

Kohli ducks relationship talk

Virat Kohli on Tuesday opted not to answer any questions related to his love affair during an event in Mumbai where Kohli was named the brand ambassador of Tissot.

"Relationship with who? I am not a relationship counsellor. So that's not a question you should be asking me. Ask the expert please," Kohli replied when the question was asked. When asked who he would gift this luxury watch to in Bollywood, he said: "I would gift it to someone in my family first. I don't know why that question. What's the connection?"

Compiled by Star Sport Desk

AFC U-14 GIRLS' C'SHIP Bangladesh start against Bhutan

SPORTS REPORTER



Defending champions Bangladesh have been drawn against Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Bhutan for the group phase of the AFC U-14 Girls' Regional Championship (South & Central Zone) as the draw for the championship was held in

Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Bangladesh, who became unbeaten champions from the same zone last year, had started their campaign with a draw against India before beating Bhutan in group stages.

Then they went on to beat Iran in the semifinal and Nepal in the final to become unbeaten champions. All the matches were held in Nepal. This year, though, Bangladesh will face Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Nepal and Bhutan in the group stages at the Tajik capital of Dushanbe. If they progress from the group stages, Bangladesh would then face either of India, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Iran in the semifinal. The matches will take place from April 23 to May 1.

GROUP MATCHES

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| Apr 23 | Bangladesh v Bhutan |
| Apr 24 | Bangladesh v Nepal |
| Apr 26 | Bangladesh v Tajikistan |
| Apr 27 | Bangladesh v Kyrgyzstan |

Vitori suspended

CRICINFO, Dubai

Brian Vitori, the Zimbabwe left-arm seamer, has been suspended from bowling in international cricket with immediate effect after an independent assessment found his bowling action to be illegal.

Vitori, who was reported for a suspect action during the T20 series against Bangladesh in January, underwent assessment in Chennai, where all variations of his deliveries exceeded the 15-degree level of tolerance permitted under ICC's regulations. He was left out of Zimbabwe's World T20 squad earlier this month.

In accordance with the laws surrounding bowlers who have failed to clear the ICC's independent assessment, Vitori's international suspension will also be recognised and enforced by all national cricket federations for domestic cricket events played in their own jurisdiction. However, with the consent of the board, Vitori may be allowed to play in domestic cricket events played in Zimbabwe.

Vitori, 25, can apply for a re-assessment at any stage after modifying his bowling action. Vitori has played four Tests, 19 ODIs and 11 T20s for Zimbabwe after making his international debut in August 2011.

Karachi Kings squeeze into knock-outs

STAR SPORT DESK



Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim's saw their stint in the PSL move into the knock-out stages after the Karachi Kings, eked into the last four, thanks to Lahore Qalandar's defeat against Islamabad United in the last match of the league stages last night.

Lahore's five-wicket defeat meant they finished with lower net-run rate than the Karachi Kings to be eliminated as the four remaining teams, including the Kings, made it to the knock-out stages. Earlier, the Kings had the chance to seal a place for themselves, regardless of the outcome of the later match, but they blew that chance by losing against Peshawar Zalmi by five wickets.

The Karachi outfit, which left out Bangladesh's wicketkeeper-batsman Musfiqur for this crucial match, posted a challenging total of 152 for seven, built around opener Lendl Simmons' 37-ball 49. Shakib, however, managed only 11 runs off 12 balls before falling

to a Darren Sammy delivery.

The ace all-rounder though redeemed himself somewhat with a miserly spell of three overs for 13 runs as the Zalmi innings was stifled at 70 for four after 12 overs. But then Brad Hodge, the veteran Australian batsman, shifted gears at the right time and clobbered the Kings bowlers all around the park at the Dubai International Stadium to complete the chase in 18.3 overs. Hodge remained unbeaten on 85 off just 45 deliveries. Zalmi had rested four of their front-line bowlers and the team's highest run-getter, Tamim Iqbal, for this match.

The Peshawar outfit finished on top of the points table while Karachi Kings moved through as the fourth and last qualifier.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KARACHI KINGS: 152 for 7 in 20 overs (Simmons 49, Shazaib 18, Bopara 23, Shakib 11; Sammy 1-13)

PESHAWAR ZALMI: 158 for 5 in 18.3 overs (Allenby 31, Hodge 85 not out; Bilawal 2-36)

Result: Peshawar Zalmi won by 5 wickets.