



Four of the captains of the Asia Cup pose with the glittering piece of glory at a local hotel yesterday. The fight for regional cricket supremacy, which also involves Pakistan, will commence at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Sk Jamal suffer heavy defeat

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Jamal DC went through a bitter experience in their opening match of the AFC Cup as the Bangladesh Premier League champions suffered a 4-0 defeat at the hands of Tampines Rovers of Singapore at the Jalan Besar Stadium in Singapore yesterday.

The team management had big concerns over the defence, and it proved right as the defence allowed the opponent to strike in the very second minute before defender Tapu Barman struck his own net to complete the visitors' misery.

Sheikh Jamal's much vaunted attacking line-up comprising was also not up to the mark throughout the game.

Coach Shafiqul Islam Manik strengthened the backline sending on Kesto Kumar in place of Vietnamese midfielder Nguyen Hang Tchenuko in the 36th minute after Billy Mehmet and Hafiz Bin Sujad struck in the second and 33rd minute, but the five-man backline marshalled by Tapu, Yeasin Khan, Yeamin Ahmed, Kesto and Mohammad Linkon could not stop the attackers of Singapore League runners-up.

Afiq Yunus made it 3-0 in the 52nd minute before Tapu struck his own net two minutes later.

In the other match of the same group yesterday, Ceres La Salle FC of Philippines were held to a 2-2 draw by Malaysia's Selangor FC.

Sheikh Jamal will play their next match against Ceres La Salle FC of Philippines in Dhaka on March 8.

Pogba close to €40m deal

AGENCIES, Milan

The war for the services of Juventus midfielder Paul Pogba appears to be over as he has reportedly rejected a 10-year deal from Nike to sign for its rivals, Adidas, instead.

The 22-year-old Frenchman is set to sign a deal with Adidas which will make him the face of the company's new laceless football boots, La Gazzetta dello Sport reports. Those are the same boots worn by Arsenal's Mesut Ozil and Barcelona's Ivan Rakitic.

That deal will land him a massive payday of 40 million euros, as the bidding war inflated his price.

Although Pogba has stayed without a boot sponsorship in recent years, Nike would have been hopeful of snapping him up considering that he has mostly worn Nike boots on the pitch, including custom-made ones which he himself designed with the company.

City's eyes on the prize

AFP, London

Joe Hart insists Manchester City can win the Champions League this season despite their injury woes and recent poor form.

Manuel Pellegrini's side travel to face Dynamo Kiev in the first leg of their last 16 tie in the Ukrainian capital on Wednesday.

But City goalkeeper Hart and his teammates boarded the flight with morale low after three successive defeats in all competitions.

Back to back losses in the Premier League have dented City's title challenge, while they were also routed 5-1 by Chelsea in the FA Cup fifth round on Sunday following Pellegrini's decision to field a weakened team as the Chilean prioritised European success.

However, beating Kiev would take City into the Champions League quarter-finals for the first time and Hart feels his team can go all the way if they believe in themselves.

"We've got to believe that [City can win it], or else there is no point in turning up on Wednesday," Hart told City's website.

"It's the best of the best, and if you're not at your best you will lose, simple as that, in this competition. So it's all about peaking for the game and being in the right place at the right time.

"It's an amazing competition. It's something we really look forward to as a team. But we're very lucky that we're involved in a lot of competitions. The majority of the time when it comes to the Champions League we're still fighting on all fronts, and this is a good time to be a Manchester City player and a good time to be fighting."

Because of a lengthy injury list and a busy week that culminates with the League Cup final against Liverpool, Pellegrini did not want to risk the fitness of any of his senior stars, including Hart, against Chelsea.

Defenders Eliaquim Mangala and Bacary Sagna were both involved in training, raising the possibility they could be in contention in Kiev.

Kevin De Bruyne, Jesus Navas, Samir Nasri, Fabian Delph and Wilfried Bony remain on the sidelines.

FACTFILE

COACHES:
 Dynamo Kiev - Serhiy Rebrov (UKR) -- 41 yrs
 Manchester City - Manuel Pellegrini (CHI) -- 62 yrs

LEADING SCORERS IN ALL COMPETITIONS:
 Dynamo Kiev - Andriy Yarmolenko (13 goals)
 Manchester City - Sergio Aguero (18 goals)

DOMESTIC LEAGUE PERFORMANCE:
 Dynamo Kiev - Second in the table, trailing leaders Shakhtar Donetsk on goal difference. Have won five games on the bounce since their solitary defeat, 3-0 at home to Shakhtar in October. Have conceded only six goals in 16 league outings. Action resumes in early March after a three-month winter break.
 Manchester City - Fourth in the Premier League, six points behind leaders Leicester City with 12 games left and six points ahead of Manchester United in fifth.

GROUP STAGE PERFORMANCES:
 Dynamo Kiev - Second in Group G behind Chelsea
 Manchester City - Winners of Group D ahead of Juventus

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE BEST PERFORMANCES:
 Dynamo Kiev - semi-finals 1977, 1987, 1999
 Manchester City - last 16 2014, 2015, 2016

PREVIOUS MEETINGS:
 Dynamo Kiev 2-0 Manchester City - 2010/11 Europa League last 16
 Manchester City 1-0 Dynamo Kiev - 2010/11 Europa League last 16

TIB prescribes better BCB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Specific legal provisions should be created to criminalise match-fixing, spot-fixing and other forms of cheating and corruption in cricket, recommended Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) in a report yesterday.

"The Penal Code criminalises betting but match-fixing and spot-fixing is not there. So it could either be amended or a new law to deal with the irregularities in sports can be enacted," Rumana Sharmin, former TIB staff, said.

It was part of a number of country specific reports that formed the 'Global Corruption Report: Sport' launched yesterday by Berlin based Transparency International Secretariat.

Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, analysed Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) governance and the problem of match-fixing with particular focus on Bangladesh Premier League 2012 and 2013.

Alleging that BCB is subjected to government and partisan political influence, he recommended in the report that an independent Office of Ombudsman for Cricket should be set up to investigate and prosecute allegations of corruption and irregularities in the game.

Though BCB, an autonomous body run by its own constitution is affiliated with the National Sports Council, Bangladesh (NSCB) and the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS), its accountability to these bodies are not clear.

"We don't even know if they prepare annual report and submit it to anybody. Information about their activities should be made public for transparency and good governance," said Rumana.

Other recommendations by TIB included providing the Anti-Corruption unit of BCB with necessary human and technical skills and encouraging BCB board members and officials to proactively disclose their income and wealth statement and made answerable for any discrepancy with legitimate income.

Two new faces in BFF names 22-man preliminary squad

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday announced a 22-member preliminary squad for the national team's World Cup and Asia Cup Qualifier against Jordan on March 24, with the exclusion of seven players who have been served show-cause notices on disciplinary grounds.

The seven players -- Mamunul Islam, Yeasin Khan, Shahidul Alam Sohel, Sohel Rana, Atiqur Rahman Meshu, Yeamin Ahmed Chowdhury and Zahid Hossain -- have been asked to appear before a three-member board to defend themselves following fact-finding committee's report on the team's failure in SAFF Cup and Bangabandhu Gold Cup.

Those alleged players, however, can return to squad if they satisfy the National Teams Committee with their explanations.

Meanwhile, five other players -- Nasir Uddin Chowdhury, Alamgir Kabir Rana, Zahid Hasan

SQUAD

Rasel Mahmud Liton, Mazharul Islam Himel, Ashrafur Islam Rana, Raihan Hasan, Tapu Barman, Nasirul Islam, Rezaul, Kesto Kumar Bose, Wali Faisal, Shakil Ahmed, Emon Mahmud, Moneem Khan Raju, Jamal Bhuiyan, Shahedul Islam Shahed, Fazlay Rabbi, Atiqur Rahman Fahad, Masuk Miah Jony, Rubel Mia, Nabib Newaj Jibon, Shakhawat Hossain Rony, Jewel Rana and Aminur Rahman Sajib.

Emily, Hemanta Vincent Biswas and Mithun Chowdhury -- all of whom were part of the squad for the Bangabandhu Gold Cup, have not been considered for this final qualifier.

However, 10 players including have staged comebacks, with midfielder Fazlay Rabbi and defender Shakil Ahmed added as fresh faces.

"It is not the final preliminary squad. If the coach [Gonzalo Sanchez Moreno] wants anyone else, the size of the squad will be expanded," said manager Satyajit Das Rupu.

Out of the 22 players, 14 were the part of the Bangladesh Olympic team which played in the South Asian Games. The training camp will get underway from Sunday.



The winners of the Prime Bank Cup golf tournament, which concluded recently, pose with their trophies at the Kurmitola Golf Cup. PHOTO: COURTESY

Milan dent Napoli hopes

AFP, Milan

Giacomo Bonaventura hit a first-half leveller as AC Milan boosted their hopes of European football next season in a 1-1 draw that dented Napoli's title hopes on Monday.

Napoli welcomed Milan to the San Paolo looking to capitalise on Juventus's stalemate at Bologna on Friday -- victory would have put them back on top. But despite seeing Lorenzo Insigne provide a 39th minute lead with a deflected shot that just crept past teenaged goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma, Bonaventura pulled Milan level only five minutes later.

Napoli had the lion's share of the best chances in the second half but Donnarumma was decisive in the dying minutes. But Maurizio Sarri's title challengers were forced to settle for a sixth draw of the season that has left them in second, one point behind Juventus.

Milan remain sixth, eight points behind third-placed Fiorentina in the last possible Champions League qualifying place. Milan were given a special welcome by supporters of Napoli, who according to reports hit the Rossoneri team bus with stones on their way to the San Paolo.

But the incident failed to cow Sinisa Mihajlovic's men, who, with 14 points from their opening six games of 2016, have only been bettered by Juventus (18) and Napoli (15).

Milan were under the cosh but it took a deflection from a jumping Ignazio Abate for Insigne's angled shot from just outside the box to bobble past a scrambling Donnarumma and into the net.

Milan restored parity almost immediately. Callejon had failed to track back to pick up Bonaventura and when Koulibaly inadvertently nodded Keisuke Honda's cross towards the back post, Bonaventura sent a volley past Reina. Both goalkeepers were kept busy in the second half, but there was no breakthrough as they had to settle for a share of the spoils.

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