

# SPORT

## Eager to be back

Zahid, Hemanta & Yeasin looking towards Premier League to get back into national fold

SPORTS REPORTER

To get an impression of the footballers, Belgian coach Tom Saintfiet is planning a week-long training camp this month for the national team, leaving three key players, Yeasin Khan, Hemanta Vincent Biswas and Zahid Hossain eagerly waiting to prove themselves and return to the national fold for the Asian Cup qualifying playoffs against Bhutan.

Bangladesh's first attempt to advance into the final round of the Asian Cup Qualifiers was vanquished by a 6-0 aggregate defeat to Tajikistan last month, and now Bangladesh look forward to availing the second opportunity by taking on Bhutan in September and October.

The 0-5 drubbing in Dushanbe exposed the failures of Lodewijk de Kruijff's charges, namely the lack of defensive organisation and cohesion in the midfield. The absence of defender Yeasin, midfielder Hemanta and winger Zahid was thought to be the key reason behind a weakened team.

Now that Saintfiet is planning to conduct the camp from July 12 with some 35-40 players including the 12 players he has already selected, Hemanta, Zahid and Yeasin are waiting to return to the team by performing well in the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League.

Hemanta is yet to play a single match of the season while Zahid missed the Federation Cup as he accompanied his cancer-stricken father to India. Yeasin, meanwhile, is still severing a six-month suspension which will be lifted on August 2.

"I have been out of action since the middle of February, but now I am ready to make a comeback," said Hemanta, who had sustained a muscle injury during Bangladesh's match against Nepal in the

SAFF Championship and later missed two international matches against Tajikistan in June.

"I am now gearing up for the Bangladesh Premier League and hopefully can draw the new coach's attention," said the midfielder.

Yeasin, who is arguably the best centre-back in the country, is waiting for his suspension to end as well as get a recall from the national team.

"My father did not like the idea of appealing for exemption from punishment, so I did not do it. But I really felt bad not to be part of the national team in the last two international matches. Now I am ready to respond to the call after the punishment comes to an end on August 2," said Yeasin, who is also known for his goal-poaching abilities from set-pieces.

Proven winger Zahid missed the whole of the World Cup qualifying campaign due to his knee injury before being drafted into the squad during the SAFF Championship and Bangabandhu Gold Cup, but he was later handed a one-year suspension on disciplinary grounds.

And although his punishment was lifted following an appeal, Zahid missed the home match against Tajikistan to accompany his father to India.

Even though Zahid did not take part in the Federation Cup, the winger is eager to return to the national team.

BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag informed that Saintfiet would conduct the camp with 35-40 players to get an initial impression and he would also watch the premier league to select the final squad for the Bhutan ties.

"Saintfiet has already chosen some players after watching the semifinals and final of the Federation Cup and assistant coach Saiful Bari Titu will help him pick other players," said Shohag.



Switzerland's tennis legend Roger Federer cruised through to his 14th Wimbledon quarterfinal after a masterful show in his fourth-round match against USA's Steve Johnson at The All England Lawn Tennis Club yesterday.

## Roger up to 306 & into qtrs

AFP, London



Roger Federer reached his 14th Wimbledon quarterfinal and tied Martina Navratilova's all-time Grand Slam record of 306 match wins on Monday.

The seven-time champion achieved his double landmark by seeing off Steve Johnson of the United States 6-2, 6-3, 7-5 in the fourth round on Centre Court.

Later yesterday, Johnson's countrywoman Serena Williams notched her 301st Grand Slam win by beating Russian Svetlana Kuznetsova 7-5, 6-0 to move into the quarterfinals.

Federer, the third seed, next takes on Croatia's Marin Cilic for a place

in the semifinals.

Cilic, the ninth seeded Croatian, progressed to his third Wimbledon quarterfinal when Japanese fifth seed Kei Nishikori pulled out of their last-16 clash with a rib injury in the second set.

Federer has a 6-1 record over Cilic but the big Croatian stunned the 17-time major champion in the US Open semifinals in 2014 on his way to his maiden Grand Slam title.

"He brushed me off the court in the US Open a few years ago and I hope to get him back," said Federer who had former coach Stefan Edberg watching on from the player's box on Centre Court.

Johnson, the champion on grass at Nottingham this summer and

playing in his first fourth round at a Slam, was comprehensively outplayed in the first two sets.

He rallied to break the 34-year-old Federer in the fourth and sixth games of the third set but the former American college champion was reeled in on both occasions.

Nishikori pulled out against Cilic suffering from a rib injury at 6-1, 5-1 down.

Sam Querrey followed up his shock defeat of Novak Djokovic by beating French veteran Nicolas Mahut 6-4, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 to reach his first Grand Slam quarter-final.

Bride-to-be Dominika Cibulkova sent world number three Agnieszka Radwanska crashing out on Monday, while Australian Open

champion Angelique Kerber cruised into the quarterfinals.

Cibulkova defeated Poland's Radwanska en route to her first grass-court title at Eastbourne last month and emulated that result with a surprise 6-3, 5-7, 9-7 fourth round victory to secure her first Wimbledon quarterfinal berth since 2011.

German fourth seed Kerber cruised into her third Wimbledon quarterfinal with a 6-3, 6-1 thrashing of Japanese world number 49 Misaki Doi.

Kerber plays Romania's Simona Halep, who fought back to reach her second Wimbledon quarterfinal with a 6-7 (5/7), 6-4, 6-3 victory against American ninth seed Madison Keys.

## PCB wants higher Indo-Pak revenue

IANS, Karachi

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Shaharyar Khan has suggested that the country should get a higher percentage of profits from games against arch-rivals India at International Cricket Council (ICC) events.

Khan believes this is one of the ways to raise funds after the terror-ravaged country was stripped of hosting international cricket and there are still no signs of the deadlock being broken with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in terms of bilateral series.

"Pakistan continues to play India in ICC events. The interest and finances that these generate are unparalleled. Tickets for the World Cup matches in Adelaide and Calcutta sold out quicker than other major sporting events - Wimbledon, the Olympics being two examples," Khan said in a paper to PCB's directors which was accessed by espnricinfo.

"Currently, all members benefit from the windfall from these matches. (The) Chairman proposed that Pakistan should be given a higher percentage of this income."

Khan presented the proposals at the ICC's recent annual conference in Edinburgh.

He also urged the ICC asking them to compensate the board for having to arrange home fixture in other countries.

They have had to play most of their home matches in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) which has placed a huge burden on the board. This in turn is affecting the development of the game in the nation, the paper stated.

"This has placed a huge financial burden on Pakistan cricket. This includes having to play host in one of the most expensive destinations in the world. Dubai, for example, was recently ranked as the most expensive holiday destination," the paper stated.

## Jos, Ben in line for Test recalls

AFP, Taunton



England coach Trevor Bayliss believes both Jos Buttler and Ben Stokes could be selected as specialist batsmen for this month's first Test against Pakistan.

The hosts are due to announce on Thursday their squad for the first of a four-Test series at Lord's starting on July 14.

Buttler lost his Test place to fellow wicket-keeper Jonny Bairstow in November while there are doubts over all-rounder Stokes's fitness to bowl as he recovers from knee surgery following an injury suffered while playing for England against Sri Lanka in May.

Stokes's worth as a batsman was underlined by his stunning 258 in a Test against South Africa in Cape Town in January while Buttler looked in good touch when making runs during England's recent 3-0 one-day series win over Sri Lanka, wrapped up in Cardiff on Saturday.

Buttler has not played red-ball cricket this year but Australian Bayliss said after England's 122-run win in Cardiff: "He could play as a bat, I'm sure... he wouldn't have any problems at all. I think he could handle it."

"He's certainly in contention, that's for sure."

As for Stokes, Bayliss said: "He's playing the next four-day game (for Durham) as a batsman and might bowl some short spells, depending on how he's gone in the last few days in the nets."

"He's a guy who has made plenty of runs in Test cricket already -- he has to be discussed, I'm sure."

England will have to make at least one change to their top order following number three Nick Compton's decision to take time out from cricket following a run of low scores in the 2-0 Test series win at home to Sri Lanka.

"Long term, I think Joe Root is our number three," said Bayliss.

"Rooty would have to want to do it -- it's a big change, and he's done well at number four."

"But my way of thinking is you put your best batter at number three."

James Anderson, England's all-time leading Test wicket-taker, is struggling with a stress fracture of the shoulder blade in his right, bowling arm.

"There will be an ongoing assessment between now and the Test, giving him every chance to make himself available," said Bayliss.

England have one fixture before the Pakistan series begins, a lone Twenty20 against Sri Lanka at Southampton on Tuesday.

## Amir on song despite Cook's warnings

AGENCIES, UnDATED



The sub-plot of the England cricket summer, as Pakistan turn the screw on Somerset on the second day of their first practice match of the tour on Monday, is how

Mohammad Amir will fare and be received upon his return to the country where he served a jail term in 2010.

The young left-arm pacer's exciting career came to a shuddering halt at Lord's in 2010 when he was caught bowling no-balls to order on the instructions of captain Salman Butt as part of a tabloid newspaper sting operation.

Amir has served a five-year ban from cricket and served three months in an English young offenders institute.

England Test skipper Alastair Cook weighed in on the issue yesterday, saying Amir will face a tough reception from fans should he return to Test cricket at Lord's later this month.

"I'm sure there will be a reaction and that is right," said Cook at a sponsor's event.

"That is part and parcel, that when you do something like that there are more consequences than just the punishment -- that is something for him to cope with, whatever comes his way."

Cook also said that if it was up to him, he would have preferred a life ban for the offender.

But at Taunton, after Pakistan had made 359 for eight declared on the second morning of three, Amir took the new ball and there was nothing but polite applause when his name was announced on the public address system.

He made an immediate impact on the game with two wickets in quick succession, including that of former England opener Marcus Trescothick to mark his maiden senior wicket on English soil for six years.

Trescothick blocked his first ball and took two fours off Amir's opening over, a push through cover-point and another down to third man. But Amir struck with his 14th ball as left-hander Trescothick, on eight, could only edge a superb outswinger that moved late and wicket-keeper Sarfraz Ahmed held an excellent diving catch.

Amir struck again when a full-length inswinger bowled first-class debutant Adam Hose (10).

He added the wicket of Peter Trego, bowling the right-hander after Lunch before Pakistan bowled out the home side for a paltry 128.

Amir finished with three for 36 in 11 overs, while Sohail Khan also picked up three and Rahat Ali and Yasir Shay picked up two each.

## 'He must enjoy the game'

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan legend Wasim Akram says expected hostility from England fans will not deter convicted spot-fixer Mohammad Amir from leading his country's bowling attack when he returns to the scene of his crime at Lord's next week.

Wasim, who was a key part of Pakistan's three Test series wins in England in 1987, 1992 and 1996, said his fellow left-arm pacesman has what it takes to sparkle on the field and should brush aside expected taunts.

"It won't be easy for him," the 50-year-old said on Monday. "My advice to him will be to enjoy the game, he has got pace and skill so go out and try to do his best."

He added that Amir could form a deadly partnership with leg-spinner Yasir Shah, Pakistan's highest ranked bowler who is returning from a doping ban.



India Test captain Virat Kohli makes a diving attempt at a catch during the team's practice session at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bangalore yesterday, ahead of their West Indies tour.

## Kohli aggression excites Kumble

AFP, Bangalore



India's new coach Anil Kumble on Monday said he loved Virat Kohli's aggression, backing his captain to play his natural brand of cricket which has come in for criticism in the past.

Kumble was speaking ahead of India's four-Test tour of West Indies, his first assignment with the national team since his appointment last month.

"I love his aggression. I was no different. I was also aggressive (though) very different in terms of the way we probably come across on the field," he said at a news conference in Bangalore on the eve of departure.

"I'd be the last person to curb someone's natural aggression. But of course we all know how important it is to be the ambassador of India and to be a part of the Indian cricket team," said the former spinner, who was India's most successful bowler in Test

and ODI cricket.

Kohli, 27, who took over as Test captain from Mahendra Singh Dhoni against Australia last year, was at the forefront of on-field confrontations during that series, prompting tough scrutiny of his leadership style.

While some critics tagged him as firebrand and a spoilt brat, Kohli has been credited with instilling a more positive mindset among the team, currently ranked second behind Australia in the Test rankings.

Kumble however cautioned his players from crossing the "thin line" and reminded them of their status as role models to adoring fans back home.

"Of course we all know how important it is to the ambassadors of India and to be a part of the Indian cricket team," he said.

"That everybody in the team understands and we will ensure that," he said.