



Golfer Siddikur Rahman, who will be carrying the Bangladesh flag at the opening ceremony of next month's Rio Olympic Games, snaps a selfie with his fellow athletes during an official photo session of the Bangladesh contingent at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

OLYMPIC TUNE-UP Siddikur off to Thailand today

SPORTS REPORT



Bangladeshi golfer Siddikur Rahman jets off to Thailand today to participate in the King's Cup which is scheduled to be held from July 28 to 31. The 31-year old stated that he has not set any specific target for the 750,000-dollar event as he plans to attend it as a preparation of sorts and to hone his skills for next month's Summer Olympic Games to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

"Like the previous few events, I am not setting any targets for this event as I want to enjoy the game. I hope it will be a good workout ahead of the Olympics," the two-time Asian Tour winner said after a photo session for the Bangladesh contingent arranged by the Bangladesh Olympic Association at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

Siddikur will return from Thailand on August 1 and fly off for Rio the following day. Siddikur is to carry the national flag at the Olympics' opening ceremony march-past on August 5 and will have quite a bit of time to acclimatize to the South American conditions, where he will compete for the first time.

"The golf event will take place from August 14 to 17, and there will likely be only two days of practice at the games' golf course. So I guess the time I will get ahead of that will be put to acclimatizing with the conditions," said the ace golfer, who also launched his official website, www.siddikurrahman.com, yesterday.

3 candidates to succeed Platini

AFP, Paris

Three candidates to succeed the disgraced Michel Platini as president of UEFA made the shortlist on Friday for the vote to take place in Athens on September 14.

The three are Slovenia's Aleksander Ceferin, Michael van Praag of the Netherlands and Spain's Angel Maria Villar.

Spanish football federation chief Villar, 66, is currently the interim president of UEFA following the ban handed down to Platini in May.

He has been the head of Spanish football for 27 years.

Ceferin, 48, has been president of the Slovenian federation since 2011 while 68-year-old van Praag is the Dutch federation chief and sits on the UEFA executive committee.

Sunderland appoint Moyes

AFP, London

Sunderland have appointed former Manchester United manager David Moyes to replace Sam Allardyce as boss at the Stadium of Light, the perennial Premier League strugglers said on Saturday.

Moyes signed a four-year contract with the Black Cats and was chairman Ellis Short's "first choice" to take over after Allardyce was named the new England manager this week.

Moyes, 53, who was sacked from Old Trafford in the immediate post-Alex Ferguson era and then had an unsuccessful stint in Spain with Real Sociedad, will be tasked with keeping Sunderland in the Premier League for another season. The Scot started his managerial career with Preston in 1998 but really made a name for himself at Everton, before his ill-fated spell at Manchester United, where he was fired after less than a season in the 2013-2014 campaign.

Moyes told the Sunderland website: "I am delighted to have joined Sunderland. I am excited by the challenge and excited by the opportunity."

Phelps hopes to bow out on own terms

REUTERS, Toronto



Having ended his career once in London on what he considered a sour note, Michael Phelps enters the Rio de Janeiro Olympics pool for his second swansong determined to bow out on his own terms.

Inspired, motivated and sober, Phelps heads to Rio with the chance to add to his record total of 22 medals and to pen the happy ending he feels he denied himself four years earlier.

At the 2012 London Olympics, which he also declared would be his last, Phelps won four gold and six medals but walked away filled with the regret that he simply went through the motions rather than embracing the moment.

"Going into '12, I just didn't want to do it," the 31-year-old said at the U.S. Olympic swim trials in Nebraska last month.

"I tried to fake it. I wanted to get in and out as fast as I could and really wanted nothing to do with it."

"That haunted me for a while. I came back because I wanted to. I wanted to do this for me. I'm enjoying the moment and I'm embracing the moment and taking it one step at a time."

"Being able to fall in love with the sport again is something that I've always wanted to do again and I did it on my terms."

Like many athletes, when his career finished, Phelps appeared lost and unprepared.

He talked of becoming a professional golfer but eventually found himself testing the waters of a swimming comeback.

That return was interrupted by a second drunk driving arrest in 2014 and a stint in rehab, which laid the foundation for his transformation from party boy to family man.

He reconnected with his estranged father, who was in the stands at the U.S. swimming trials watching his son qualify for a fifth Olympic team, and in May his fiancée Nicole gave birth to their son Boomer.

CR7 open for business

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid star Cristiano Ronaldo inaugurated his own hotel on Friday called "CR7" after his initials and shirt number, while the airport on his home island of Funchal was renamed in his honour.

Just two weeks after leading Portugal to the Euro 2016 title in France, the national team skipper appeared on a terrace of the red-coloured building overlooking the sea, wearing a white baseball cap.

"It's a little strange. I never could have imagined that I would be a hotelier at the age of 31," said Ronaldo.

Meanwhile, the president of the Madeira region, Miguel Albuquerque, said that the local airport would be named in Ronaldo's honour.

On Saturday, Ronaldo will visit his new museum which is situated on the ground floor of his hotel. A second "CR7" hotel is due to open in Lisbon later this year with two others planned in Madrid and New York in 2017.

Victory stuns Juventus

AFP, Melbourne

Italian champions Juventus were beaten 4-3 on penalties by Australia's Melbourne Victory in their International Champions Cup game in Melbourne on Saturday.

Young Spanish defender Carlos Blanco Moreno put the Turin giants ahead in the 58th minute with a spectacular long-range strike before Jay Ingham equalised for Victory seven minutes from time.

The game went to a penalty shootout with the scores level at fulltime.

Emil Audero saved from Carl Valeri to give Juventus the early advantage in the shootout before home goalkeeper Lawrence Thomas saved attempts from Roman Macek and Stefano Padovan to give Victory the win.

Moreno, the 20-year-old central defender, looked to have given Juve victory with his stunning goal from near halfway after finding goalkeeper Thomas off his goal-line.

But Ingham equalised after a series of intricate passes in the buildup gave his space to fire across Audero into the far corner of the net.

Juventus, who won a fifth consecutive Serie A championship this season, will face England's Tottenham Hotspur in their second and final ICC match in Melbourne on Tuesday.

Farah displays Olympic credentials

AFP, London



Britain's double Olympic champion Mo Farah produced a devastating 5,000m display on Saturday at the Diamond League event in London to prove he is in top form heading into the Rio Olympics.

The 33-year-old showed exactly why he is the favourite to defend his two Olympic titles in Brazil next month with a stunning example of speed and stamina at the Olympic stadium.

His time of 12 minutes and 59.29 seconds was the fastest mark of the year, and the fourth time in his career that he has dipped under 13 minutes.

Most ominously for those trying to catch him, particularly the Kenyans, this was his fastest time in the discipline since before the London 2012 Olympics.

Farah made his move after 3600m and never looked back, making the final 1400m appear almost like celebratory laps of honour. He crossed the finishing line by doing his trademark Mobot celebration.

Fellow Briton Andrew Butchart was second in a time of 13:14.85, with American Bernard Lagat third in a season's best 13:14.96.

"This is amazing, I got amazing

support from the crowd," said Farah. "I wanted to do it for them."

"This is my last chance before Rio, this track has so much meaning to me. Not many athletes can do it in their home town."

"This is my best form (heading into a major event). I am in good shape. I have to keep my feet on the ground. Anything can happen over the next two-and-a-half weeks. I have to stay patient and cool."

Dutchwoman Dafne Schippers consolidated her position as the number one sprinter in the Diamond League format by winning the women's 200m.

The world champion, who ran the third-fastest time in history in Beijing last year, crossed the line in 22.13sec - half a second ahead of American Tiffany Townsend.

Schippers, who ran into a 0.8m/s headwind, said: "The main thing is to win the race, not the time. The times will come in Rio."

"I can handle the (favourite's) tag. I am never nervous, which is good for me."

Marie-Josee Ta Lou of the Ivory Coast set a personal best of 10.96sec to cruise to victory in the women's 100m.

Trinidadian Michelle-Lee Ahye was second (10.99sec) while Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, Jamaica's 2008 and 2012 Olympic champion, was behind the pace in 11.06sec.

FRUSTRATION FOR ENNIS-HILL

In a hotly-anticipated women's long jump, Britain's Katarina Johnson-Thompson earned a rare victory over compatriot and Olympic heptathlon champion Jessica Ennis-Hill.

Johnson-Thompson, 23, produced six consistent jumps, with her winning leap a season's best of 6.84m.

The British Anguillian-born Shara Proctor was second with a 2016 best of 6.80m, while Ennis-Hill was seventh out of the eight competitors.

It was a frustrating day for Ennis-Hill, with her Olympic heptathlon title defence on the horizon.

"I would have liked to have got closer to my PB and taken some confidence from the long jump but it reminds me that there is still a bit of work to do. I have to keep focused and work hard," Ennis-Hill, 30, said.

"I think I just need to sharpen up now, I'll go into the heptathlon fresh. I will go and concentrate on the job in hand. These will be my last Olympics so I just want to enjoy it."

Another Briton, Matthew Hudson-Smith, was victorious in the men's 400m in 45.03sec, while there was even more for the home fans to cheer as their men's 4x100m relay squad produced the best time of the year.

Kerron Clement of the US edged out Puerto Rican Javier Culson in the men's 400m hurdles with a season's best of 48.40sec.

Mourinho relaxed despite drubbing

AFP, Shanghai

Jose Mourinho said he would not be rushing into judgement on his players as a result of Manchester United's 4-1 drubbing by Borussia Dortmund in Shanghai on Friday.

"Unfair to make any decision. Day by day they are starting to win my trust," Mourinho said of his players, who only returned to pre-season training 10 days ago.

Dortmund have been back for a month already, and it showed with superior levels of fitness in the International Champions Cup match played in an energy-sapping temperature of 35 Celsius despite an 8.05 pm kick-off.

"I know in pre-season the team in the advance stage of preparation looks better," he said.

"It happens year after year. It was too obvious. We knew after 10 minutes that one team started training a month ago and played four games."

Gonzalo Castro scored twice for the German side, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang bagged a penalty and Ousmane Dembele showed why the Frenchman is regarded as one of the best young talents in Europe with a superb finish.

"The reality is even in this situation we have six players still in Europe, plus (Wayne) Rooney and (Chris) Smalling who are only training. That is eight not involved."

"We had no (Zlatan) Ibrahimovic, (An-

thony) Martial, (Marouane) Fellaini, (Morgan) Schneiderlin - lots of them aren't there yet."

It was Mourinho's first defeat as United manager in just his second match, after a 2-0 win at Wigan last Saturday.

The Portuguese former Chelsea and Real Madrid boss reiterated his pre-match comments that he needed one more signing to get the balance of his side right.

"Our fundamental market is 75 percent done and when we sign one midfield player, that will be done," he said. "The fundamental market is four players and we just need that crucial one."

Mourinho's opposite number Thomas Tuchel has been busy in the transfer market in the past two days with the return to the club of World Cup-winning goalscorer Mario Goetze and Germany's former Chelsea star Andre Schurrle.

"I am very happy that the transfer (of Goetze) worked out. By making this decision and committing, Mario has chosen to take the difficult path," said Tuchel, referring to the 24-year-old striker angering Dortmund's fans by leaving for Bayern Munich two years ago.

The German also praised Schurrle as an unselfish player who would help the balance of his side.

"We urgently needed a player up front. He has special qualities. He puts his ego aside," said Tuchel.

"We define our style as attacking when we have the ball, and attacking the ball when we are defending. He can do that."



Britain's Mo Farah does his trademark 'mobot' gesture as he celebrates winning the men's 5,000 metres during the IAAF Diamond League in London last night. PHOTO: AFP