



Bangladesh's new bowling coach Courtney Walsh waves upon his arrival at the Hazrat Shahjalal International airport last night.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Walsh finally in Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER



A robotic hand wave, a tired thumbs up and a mere nod of the head; that's all that around two dozen journalists, who waited for Courtney Walsh at the VIP gate of the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport for nearly three hours, got to see yesterday.

Press conferences at the airport aren't always officially arranged and yesterday's certainly wasn't. However, it's common practice for sports journalists to gather at the airport whenever there's a burning issue and hope for a quote or two.

The appointment of Walsh, a bowler who once held the world record with 519 Test wickets; a bowler who used to be a nightmare for any batsmen in the 80s and the 90s, would most definitely fall under the 'burning issue' category as far as sports journalists are concerned.

And so, there they stood from 8 pm onwards. After all Walsh was supposed to land at 8:30pm. 20 minutes on and the news from inside was that the West Indian's flight had been delayed by 30 minutes. That of course, wasn't a problem. It was in fact, an opportunity for some journalist to go grab a quick dinner.

At around 9:15pm, Bangladesh Cricket

Board officials, who were there to welcome the West Indian, said that the flight had landed. That was cue for everyone to rush back at the entrance.

The tripods were assembled again and the cameramen had begun taking their 'filler' shots as they call it. And all this took place much to the disappointment of the drivers of the cars who were given just enough space to squeeze through the entrance and receive their guests. "You can get a truck to pass through here," a journalist quietly chuckled.

Unfortunately, the wait continued. Minutes later, it was revealed that Walsh hadn't received his luggage and that the officials had no clue where it was.

Finally at around 11 pm, the 6 foot 6 inch legend appeared around 30 meters in front of the cameras and acknowledged the media with his gestures for around a minute.

While turning back and heading towards his car, he almost tripped on the luggage that made him wait for so long.

Any sports journalist will tell you that there will be a lot more interaction between Walsh and the media in the coming days and some might even term the three-hour long wait at the airport yesterday as a waste.

However, the fact that journalists from nearly all the media houses were present till the end yesterday, just goes on to show how big a deal this signing has been.

De Rossi out, Bonucci returns

AFP, Bari

Italy midfielder Daniele De Rossi will miss Monday's 2018 World Cup qualifier in Israel but defender Leonardo Bonucci is expected to be available, the Italian football federation said on Friday.

De Rossi, 33, was injured during Thursday's 3-1 defeat to France in Bari and will sit out his country's opening Group G qualifier in Haifa.

Bonucci is set to rejoin his international teammates on Saturday after an improvement in the health of his two-year-old son.

Traditional ha-du-du game held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A traditional style game of ha-du-du was held in Kawkhali an upazila of Pirojpur district, Barisal on Friday afternoon.

Hundreds of locals gathered at the Ayrton Joykul High School playground to enjoy the game which had been arranged with the aid of the natives.

Though it was a hard fought victory, Young Star Club seized victory by defeating Tiger Club by the margin of 2-1.

After completion, prizes were distributed amongst both teams.

Loew banking on rising stars

AFP, Berlin



With Manuel Neuer confirmed as his new captain, Joachim Loew plans to blood Germany's next generation as part of his team's preparations to defend their World Cup title in Russia.

Germany's journey to the 2018 finals starts on Sunday at Oslo's Ullevaal Stadium in their opening qualifier against Norway.

Since winning the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, head coach Loew has lost five experienced veterans, each of whom made more than 100 appearances for Germany.

Philipp Lahm, Miroslav Klose, Per Mertesacker, Lukas Podolski and now Bastian Schweinsteiger, who bowed out in Wednesday's 2-0 friendly win over Finland, have all retired from international football.

With them went the collective experience of 604 caps and 152 goals.

But Germany's next crop of talent is knocking at the door. Loew has said they will get their chance on the road to Russia, in forthcoming qualifiers and friendlies, plus next June's Confederations Cup, against the likes of Portugal, Mexico, Chile, Australia, New Zealand and hosts Russia.

Hoffenheim defender Niklas Sule made his debut against Finland while Schalke 04's Max Meyer and Bayer Leverkusen's Julian Brandt also started in Moenchengladbach.

All three are still only 20. "They did well. You could see that we were taking a look at the future," Loew said following the Finland win.

"It was either their first game, or one of their first, and we'll be using games like that to give the players experience.

"That's how I'll most likely use the Confed Cup. "I want to increase the prospects of the younger players. From now on, the door is wide open."

For now, Loew will take no risks with the starting line-up in Oslo, but Meyer and 21-year-old Bayern Munich defender Joshua Kimmich are expected to feature.

A 2-0 defeat away to Poland in October 2014 meant Germany lost their opening Euro 2016 qualifier.

Loew will want no repeat against Norway, who lost their warm-up friendly 1-0 to Belarus in Oslo on Wednesday.

"We will field a strong team. And we will win," he insisted.

Home qualifiers against Czech Republic and Northern Ireland, a friendly away to Italy and a trip to minnows San Marino will follow in October and November.

England begin Allardyce era

AFP, Trnava



Sam Allardyce's tenure as England manager begins on Sunday when his side launch their bid to reach the 2018 World Cup against former Euro 2016 foes Slovakia in Trnava.

Allardyce, 61, was handed the role he had long coveted after Roy Hodgson stepped down in the immediate aftermath of England's humiliating Euro 2016 elimination by Iceland.

It was England's most dismal loss since a 1-0 defeat by the part-timers of the United States at the 1950 World Cup, but Allardyce believes the experience will make his young team stronger.

"For me it is about going out and the players showing not just how passionate they are, but how skilful they are at international level," he told reporters this week.

"We were the youngest squad at the Euros and I think the experience they have gained in that tournament -- some of them for the first time -- will give them a better determination and next time round they will be much better."

England would not have encountered Iceland in France had it not been for a frustrating 0-0 draw against Slovakia in Saint-Etienne in their final group game.

Hodgson received a torrent of criticism after making six changes for the match, in which England failed to score despite dominating proceedings.

Several players who lined up in England red at the Stade Geoffroy-Guichard on June 20 have seen their statuses change significantly in the two months and two weeks since.

Goalkeeper Joe Hart is now on loan at Torino after being frozen out by Pep Guardiola at Manchester City.

He at least got a place in Allardyce's first squad, unlike Everton's Ross Barkley and new Bournemouth loanee Jack Wilshere, both of whom were overlooked.

Chris Smalling, an ever-present at centre-back throughout the Euro, is not currently getting in Manchester United's team and Daniel Sturridge has had to get used to a watching brief at Liverpool.

Ryan Bertrand, the left-back in Saint-Etienne, is injured and 18-year-old sensation Marcus Rashford has dropped to the Under-21s after seeing his place taken by Zlatan Ibrahimovic at United.

But Raheem Sterling, lambasted for his performances in France, is in the form of his life at Manchester City and, like his new club-mate John Stones, is a strong contender for a starting role.

West Ham United midfielder Michail Antonio, meanwhile, could win his first cap.

Captain Wayne Rooney is to be used in the number 10 role, having laboured in midfield at the Euro, and has vowed that this qualifying campaign will be his last.

Already his country's record goal-scorer, Rooney will earn his 116th cap at Trnava's Stadion Antona Malatinského, taking him past David Beckham as England's most capped outfield player.

Slovakia coach Jan Kozak, whose side fell to

Germany in the last 16 at the Euro, has also made adjustments to his squad.

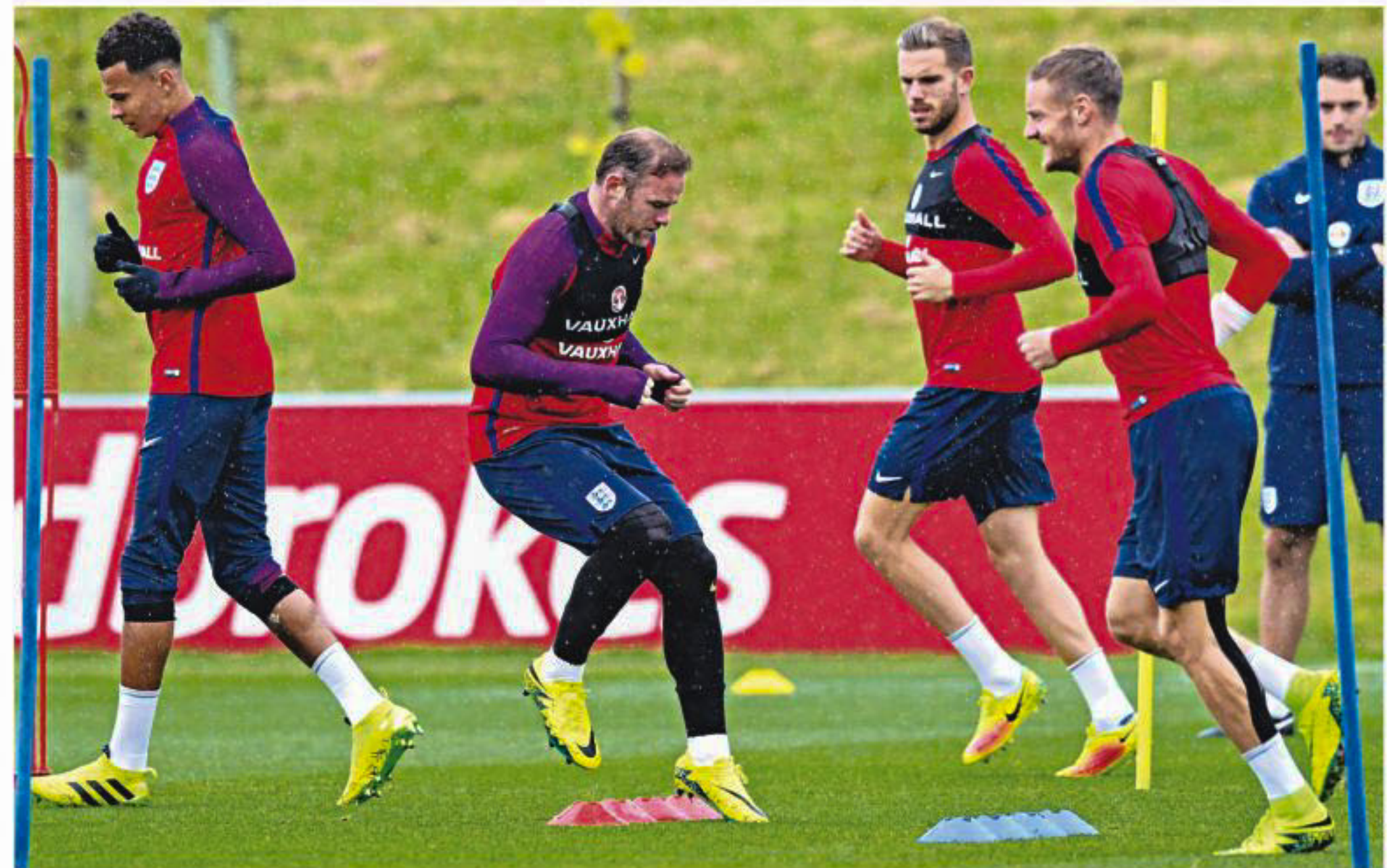
Goalkeeper Jan Mucha and winger Miroslav Stoch missed the cut, the latter after falling out with Kozak, Stanislav Sestak has retired from international football and several players are injured.

Kozak has called up two uncapped players in MSK Zilina winger Jakub Holubek and Dukla Prague holding midfielder Jakub Povozanec.

But the core of his starting XI is likely to remain unchanged, built around Fenerbahce centre-back Martin Skrtel, AC Milan midfielder Juraj Kucka and Napoli playmaker Marek Hamsik.

As in Euro 2016 qualifying, when they won 2-0 at Switzerland in their opening game, England are beginning a qualification campaign with what appears to be their most difficult fixture.

With only the top team guaranteed to qualify from Group F, which also features Slovenia, Lithuania, Malta and old enemies Scotland, Allardyce can ill afford a false start.



England captain Wayne Rooney (2nd from L) takes part in a training session at St. George's Park yesterday ahead of their 2018 World Cup qualifier against Slovakia.

PHOTO: AFP



Rafael Nadal of Spain returns a shot against Andreas Seppi of Italy during their US Open men's singles second round match at Flushing Meadows on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

Serena's record 307 win

AFP, New York



Serena Williams powered to a record 307th Grand Slam match win on

Saturday to reach the fourth round of the US Open.

Williams moved ahead of Martina Navratilova for most match wins in a major by a woman, and tied Roger Federer's mark for men with a 6-2, 6-1 pasting of Sweden's Johanna Larsson.

The American superstar, seeking a record seventh US Open title, next faces Kazakhstan's Yaroslava Shvedova, a 6-2, 7-5 winner over China's Zhang Shuai.

Polish fourth seed Agnieszka Radwanska reached the US Open last 16 for the fifth time with a 6-2, 6-3 win over France's Caroline Garcia.

Radwanska will face either 18-year-old Ana Konjuh of Croatia or Varvara Lepchenko of the United States for a place in the quarter-finals.

Novak Djokovic reached the US Open last 16 in just 32 minutes Friday when Mikhail Youzhny retired injured before fellow two-time winner Rafael Nadal also made the fourth round for the first time in three years.

Defending men's champion Djokovic was 4-2 ahead in the first set when Russian 34-year-old Youzhny called it quits suffering from a left hamstring injury.

The outcome completed a bizarre first week for world number one Djokovic.

After labouring over four sets to beat Jerzy Janowicz on Monday, he was handed a walkover into the third round when Czech opponent Jiri Vesely withdrew from their second round clash with an arm injury.

"I have never had this happen before in my Grand Slam career, getting a walkover and the next match lasting just half an hour," said Djokovic.

The top seed next faces Britain's world number 84 Kyle Edmund who

stunned John Isner of the United States 6-4, 3-6, 6-2, 7-6 (7/5) to make a Slam fourth round for the first time.

Nadal reached the fourth round for the first time since 2013 -- the year of his last New York title -- with a 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 win over Russia's Andrey Kuznetsov.

Djokovic's very brief encounter had been preceded on Arthur Ashe Stadium by women's eighth seed Madison Keys pulling off an epic comeback to beat Japan's Naomi Osaka.

Keys won the latest-ever finishing women's match at the tournament on Monday when she completed victory over compatriot Alison Riske at 1:48am.

On Friday, the 21-year-old was involved in more drama when she rallied from 1-5 down in the final set to defeat Osaka 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (7/3).

In stark contrast, German second seed and Australian Open champion Angelique Kerber closed out the night session with a 6-1, 6-1 win in just 53 minutes against American 17-year-old CiCi Bellis.