

## A tennis family with a difference

ATIQUÉ ANAM

It is not often that a local tennis tournament garners much media attention in our country. Even the biggest tennis events staged here, the annual ITF International Junior Tennis Tournament, gets only a decent amount of coverage. However, this time the 30th edition of this tournament, which sees budding tennis players aged below 18 from across continents participate, has drawn quite a bit of attention even before the tournament got going. And that is not because the star value of this tournament has suddenly garnered, rather, due to the presence of a very 'resourceful' tennis family.

Katie LaFrance, the top-seeded female tennis player of the tournament, caught the attention of media way before the tournament started as she, along with her parents and coach, arrived in Dhaka on a chartered flight, just in time to make the pre-tournament press conference. Katie's father, Stephen, who deals in real estate, says it is business as usual for them.

"We accompany our daughter, who is our only child, to all the countries she plays," Stephen told this reporter as Katie warmed up to take on India's Muskaan Ranjan in her first round match at the Ramna National Tennis Complex yesterday. "Before coming to Bangladesh, we were in Thailand and before that we were in Malaysia and Taipei. So just to make sure we avoid travel-related complications like flight delays or cancellations, we prefer to hire chartered flights when there are back to back tournaments."

This time the tournament sees players from 12 different countries participating, and most of those youngsters from the overseas nations are accompanied by either



**Katie LaFrance (L) sits alongside her father (C) and her mother at the Ramna National Tennis Complex yesterday where she is playing in the ITF International Junior Tennis Tournament. Behind them stands one of their hired security guards.**

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

one of their parents or coaches. And all of them are quite at ease with the security provided by the tournament hosts. However, for Katie's family, things are different. The 17-year-old's family is under constant guard by a couple of well-armed private security officials all through the day. Stephen tried to explain the context of the security arrangements.

"It is not about this country. If we're going to a country I'm familiar with, we don't take extra security. But if we're going to some place completely new, like in Bangladesh, we always ensure security this

way. We have arranged such security when we were in Thailand and in Egypt, just to be sure," said the Los Angeles native, who himself was once a tennis player of sorts. "My wife Wendy and I both used to play tennis, but we were more of recreational tennis players and never played at the level Katie is playing at. So we take pleasure in watching our daughter play at this level and try to make sure she is happy and be the best she can be. However we don't put any extra pressure by setting any specific targets for her."

Katie herself seems to be taking a cue from her father's book, taking a calm yet

meticulous approach to the game. The 17-year-old, who idolises Caroline Wozniacki and Roger Federer, wrapped up her first round tie in straight sets in around ninety minutes before meeting the reporters' demands.

"I want to take things one match at a time and play my best and see what happens," she said. "But there are other things I take interest in, and travelling to places for tennis is certainly one of those. I'm enjoying my stay here very much as the people are very friendly, and I would certainly love to return with a good memory."

## Brothers thrash Team BJMC

SPORTS REPORTER



A brace from Nigerian Nkowcha Kingsley powered Brothers Union to an emphatic 4-1 win over Team BJMC in their JB Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Haitian Augustine Walsom and Shahfiquel Islam also found the back of the net as Brothers raised their tally to 17 points from 13 matches. Eleta Kingsley scored for Team BJMC as they suffered a fifth defeat in 13 outings. Brothers are now ahead of seventh-placed BJMC, who have 14 points.

The margin of the match may give the impression that it was a lopsided affair, but the reality was completely different. BJMC enjoyed the lion's share of possession throughout the game, but a lack of killer instinct in front of goal let them down.

BJMC had shaped up to play attacking football from the onset, but that mentality cost them as Shahfiquel Islam scored in just the third minute. The midfielder availed a long-ball and advanced to the edge of the BJMC box before firing home past advancing goalkeeper Arifuzzaman.

**BROTHERS 4 - 1 TEAM BJMC**  
**MUKTIJODDHA 0 - 0 ARAMBAGH**

BJMC had a good opportunity to level proceedings in the 27th minute. However, Samson Iliasu saw his shot float harmlessly over the post from inside the box.

Samson would frustrate BJMC again from close range before Walsom doubled Brothers' lead in the 62nd minute with a free-kick from 20 yards. BJMC finally hit back as Kingsley found the back of the net with a deflected strike in the 68th minute.

Nkowcha then gave Brothers the lead in the 88th minute before sealing the deal with a second in stoppage time, to take his goal tally to 13, just one behind top-scorer Sunday Chizoba of Abahani.

In the second match, Muktiyoddha Sangsad played out a goalless draw with Arambagh in an even contest under floodlights.

The result meant that neither teams moved along the table, with Muktiyoddha still in fifth and Arambagh just behind on 19 points each.

## Kroos out for Germany

AFP, Berlin

Real Madrid's Toni Kroos is the latest Germany star ruled out of Friday's 2018 World Cup qualifier away to San Marino with a fractured foot.

The 26-year-old misses the qualifier, four days before Germany's friendly against Italy in Milan, with a hairline fracture of the metatarsal bone.

Spanish sports daily Marca say the German international may need surgery and claims Kroos could be ruled out for up to three months.

He suffered the injury in Sunday's 3-0 Spanish league win over Leganes and can not train for the next ten days, the German Football Association (DFB) announced Tuesday.

Kroos had the injury confirmed after a scan in Munich with the national team doctor Hans-Wilhelm Mueller-Wohlfahrt.

The attacking midfielder joins centre-back Jerome Boateng, who was forced out of Germany's qualifier after injuring the groin and knee on his right leg in Bayern Munich's 1-1 draw with Hoffenheim on Saturday.

## FIRST INDIA-ENGLAND TEST

# Kohli seeks new start as Haseeb set to debut

AFP, Rajkot



Indian skipper Virat Kohli insisted he would not be haunted by past failures against England when battle resumes on Wednesday, and said he was now a better player than during a nightmare tour two years ago.

India's Test captain is in the form of his life after hitting two double centuries in the last six months. But he has a dismal record against England, scoring just 322 runs in 17 Test match innings.

When India toured England in 2014, Kohli averaged just 13 as India lost the series 3-1 in what was the low point of an outstanding career.

But speaking on the eve of the start of a five-Test home series, Kohli said his struggle last time round had helped him improve as a batsman and neither he nor his teammates would dwell on the past.

"It was a phase when I did not perform too well," Kohli said.

"It was England but it could have been any other country in the world. It made me realise that I need to up my game."

"I am thankful to England as I have been a very improved cricketer from thereon. I just take it (that phase) as a setback in my career."

Kohli was not the only Indian to struggle in England, with the team's main spin bowler Ravichandran Ashwin taking just three wickets. But he is expected to be a different proposition back home.

For England 19-year-old Haseeb Hameed will become the youngest player to open the batting in England's Test history after being named in the starting XI for today's first Test.

England skipper Alastair Cook said Ben Duckett, who opened in the last Test against Bangladesh, would drop down the order for the match which begins Wednesday in Rajkot. The struggling Gary Ballance has been dropped.

"Unfortunately in the (last) six Test matches he (Ballance) hasn't quite scored the runs which he'd have liked to, so it has given someone else an opportunity and it's a very exciting day for a young guy who has impressed everyone so far on this trip," Cook said of Hameed.

"You often wonder if a 19-year-old coming on a tour will be overawed and he hasn't been at all. He's really looked good in the nets, the way he has trained and has gone about his business."

"Nothing seems to faze him. He is more experienced than his 19 years suggest."

"Every team he has played in, he has scored runs. He should be very proud and hopefully do well."

## Neymar nears trial

AFP, Madrid

The prospect of Barcelona superstar Neymar standing trial moved closer Monday as a Madrid judge accepted an appeal by prosecutors for corruption charges to be brought against the Brazilian, a court filing said.

The decision overturns a ruling in July that said irregularities detected in the Brazilian's 2013 transfer to Barcelona were an issue for a civil court, not a criminal one.

Neymar's parents, Barcelona president Josep Maria Bartomeu and his predecessor Sandro Rosell - who resigned over the scandal in 2014 - also face corruption charges.

Both the defence and prosecution have 10 days to present their arguments before a final decision over whether the case will go to trial will be made, a statement from Spain's National Court said.

Should he be found guilty, Neymar, 24, faces a prison sentence of between six months and two years and a heavy fine.

## Aguero hopes to redeem himself

ESPNFC



Manchester City players Sergio Aguero and Nicolas Otamendi said that stepping up their game and helping Argentina earn three points against Brazil was essential this week in CONMEBOL World Cup qualifying.

Aguero scored his 150th goal for the Premier League leaders over the weekend, but Pep Guardiola's men were not able to get past Middlesbrough after Marten de Roon headed a last-gasp equaliser for a 1-1 draw.

The Argentina striker said he hopes to redeem himself as the Albiceleste face Brazil in Belo Horizonte on November 10 and Colombia five days later in key qualifying matches.

"We must try to earn the points now and beating Brazil would give us the confidence we need," Aguero said upon landing in Brazil with teammates Otamendi and Pablo Zabaleta. "This is a great chance to earn three points and return to the top."

Aguero said he was grateful to Argentina coach Edgardo Bauza for "continuing to bet on him," despite his struggles.

After a 1-0 loss to Paraguay last month, which saw Aguero miss a penalty, Argentina

are out now of the automatic qualification spots with eight games to go as a result of a recent CONMEBOL ruling.

Last week, FIFA ruled that Bolivia must forfeit their World Cup qualifying matches against Chile and Peru after being found guilty of fielding an ineligible player. As a result, Chile climbed from sixth to fifth in the table and are now level on points with Argentina but, thanks to goals they did not concede, they now move above Argentina on goal difference.

Argentina, as a result, are now outside the qualification places for the first time since the new system was implemented in 1998. Only the top four countries qualify automatically for Russia, with the fifth-place team going to a continental playoff against a team from Oceania.

Aguero admitted he did not understand how it all transpired.

"In general, those who do not follow the rules have points taken away from them and there is nothing further," he said. "[But] we are all bunched together [in the qualification table], so we have a great chance to add three points and move up."

Meanwhile, City defender Otamendi said the only result that matters is a victory over Brazil.

"This is a clasico, and we will be trying to win and to improve," the 28-year-old said.



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