

Who employs Oliver Kurtz?

SPORTS REPORTER

German hockey coach Oliver Kurtz has been sitting idle in the capital for the last two days as an appointment as Bangladesh national team's head coach has stalled over a row between the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) and one of its vice presidents.

The national team's preliminary squad started its training camp at the BKSP yesterday as part of their preparation of March's Hockey World League Round-2, and the German coach was supposed to take charge of the camp on Thursday, but he has refrained himself as the agreement is yet to be signed.

In his absence, BKSP's athletics coach Abdullah Hel Kafi conducted endurance training session on Friday with 28 players, with Rassel Mahmud Jimmy, Mohammad Khorshedur Rahman and Pushkor Khisa Mimo missing the first day's training.

It has been learnt that BHF vice-

president Shafiullah Al Munir, who had earlier signed a deal with Kurtz on behalf of his business enterprise during Bangladesh's AHF Cup campaign, wants to sign the coach again under his company's name, bypassing the federation. The federation officials, however, want the agreement signed between the coach and the federation.

"The standing committee will sit for a meeting tomorrow [Saturday] to discuss about the agreement of Kurtz and as soon as we take a decision, Kurtz will take charge of the squad," BHF general secretary Abdus Sadeque told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Previously Kurtz had signed a contract with Mr Munir but this time the coach will pen the deal with the federation and Munir is likely to sponsor the coach. He [Kurtz] can't be the coach of a company, he must be under the federation. However, it is good for the federation if he [Munir] provides money for the coach," said Sadeque adding that they would arrange the coach's salary if Munir doesn't provide it.



Members of Bangladesh women's cricket team sweat it out at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar ahead of today's second ODI against South Africa.

PHOTO: STAR

V-Day Tennis starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

AIUB Victory Day Tennis Tournament gets underway today at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna with a total of nearly 200 players taking part.

The players will compete in 13 events over six days in this tournament, which features men's singles and doubles, women's singles and doubles, singles for boys and girls for U-16, U-14, U-12, U-10 and U-8 age group. A total of Tk 232,000 will be distributed among the winners as prize money.

Bangladesh Tennis Federation's general secretary Mir Khurshid Anwar disclosed the information at a press conference at the federation headquarters where BFT advisor Ajmat Moeen, tournament director Khaled Salahuddin were also present.

Real set new unbeaten record

AFP, Madrid

Karim Benzema struck deep into stoppage time as Real Madrid set a new Spanish record by extending their unbeaten run to 40 games in a thrilling 3-3 draw at Sevilla to progress to the Copa del Rey quarter-finals on Thursday.

Holding a 3-0 first leg lead, a Cristiano Ronaldo-less Real looked set for defeat for the first time in eight months as an own goal from Danilo and second-half strikes from Stefan Jovetic and Vicente Iborra saw Sevilla lead 3-1 inside the final 10 minutes.

However, Sergio Ramos's penalty and substitute Benzema salvaged Madrid's run, which now surpasses the 39-game unbeaten run set by Barcelona last season.

Kruse escapes injury after car crash

AFP, Berlin

Germany international Max Kruse admitted he was lucky to have walked away from a car crash having reported for training hours after wrecking the vehicle he was driving on Thursday.

The accident happened at 0400 local time (0300 GMT) in north Germany, but Kruse still reported punctually for training at 1000 with struggling German league club Werder Bremen.

The 28-year-old won the last of his 14 caps for Germany in October 2015.

Joy terms Bhutan debacle an accident

SPORTS REPORTER



Deputy minister for youth and sports Arif Khan Joy termed Bangladesh's defeat at the hands of Bhutan in the Asian Cup Qualifiers playoff as 'an accident' and blamed the then coach for wrong team selection.

"Bhutan result was an accident. Brazil lost to Germany 1-7, so anything can happen in sports," said Joy during a press conference titled 'Government's overall activities in sports in the last three years' at the Dhaka Club yesterday.

Asked whether he and the sports ministry have any responsibility as the country's football hit its lowest FIFA ranking in history, Joy said: "Whatever success we have achieved are all yours and any failure is ours. There was no motivation [among the players] in the match against Bhutan and coach de Kruij [should be Tom Saintfiet]

fielded non-division players and the selection was not right. We will bounce back within a year."

While the deputy minister claimed a lot of successes have been achieved in the last three years, referring mostly to cricket, women's football and hockey, he did not make any mention of other sports which are in dire condition.

Though it was a press conference of the youth and sports ministry, state minister Biren Shikdar was absent. Former national footballers Jakaria Pintu, Kaisar Hamid, Jewel Rana and Iqbal Hossain were present at the podium as the deputy minister delivered his speech.

Joy said that they have expanded the BKSP by setting up two new branches and including five new disciplines while he also mentioned about the NSC's talent hunt programme at grassroots level apart from the renovation works at all district stadiums.

Prodigy Isak makes history

AFP, Stockholm

Teenage striker Alexander Isak -- dubbed the next Zlatan Ibrahimovic -- on Thursday became the youngest international goalscorer in Sweden's history at 17 years and 113 days.

Days after making his international debut, Isak netted in the 19th minute of a 6-0 thrashing of Slovakia in a friendly in Abu Dhabi to underline the rich potential that has attracted interest from Europe's biggest clubs.

Isak, who plays in Sweden with AIK, beats the Swedish mark set by Erik Dahlstrom more than a century ago -- he scored aged 18 and one day against Finland in 1912.

Teenager Isak on Sunday became the youngest Swedish international in more than 100 years when he came on as a substitute in a 2-1 friendly defeat to Ivory Coast.

Kohli will do better than me: Dhoni

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA from New Delhi



Indian wicketkeeper Mahendra Singh Dhoni indicated today that the reason behind his surprise decision to quit as captain of the limited-overs formats was that he did not agree with having separate skippers for Tests and the shorter versions of the game.

Dhoni, who announced his decision to step down as captain ahead of the ODI series against England which begins Sunday, simply said: "I don't believe in split captaincy."

"For the team there has to be only one leader. Split captaincy doesn't work in India. I was waiting for the right time. I wanted Virat Kohli to ease into the job. There is no wrong decision. This team has potential to do well in all three formats. I felt it was right time to move on," Dhoni said in his first media interaction since stepping down from captaincy a fortnight ago in the western Indian city of Pune.

Recalling the chain of events leading up to the decision, Dhoni said he had informed the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) well in advance. He said he had been toying with the

decision since he quit Test captaincy during a tour of Australia in 2014.

"I believe that one player leading the team is crucial. It was on my mind when Virat took over the Test captaincy. I wanted him to take over and ease into the job. I wanted to be around for some games and now I finally decided that it was time to move on and give Virat captaincy [of the limited-overs sides as well]," he said.

Asked how quitting captaincy would impact his role in the side, Dhoni said he would continue to give his suggestions and opinions to Kohli.

"The wicketkeeper is always the vice-captain of the side. I will have to keep a close eye on what the skipper wants. I already had a chat with Virat on where he wants his fields. I will have to be aware," he said.

"I will be there to give as many suggestions to him as and when he wants," he added.

"Virat and this team will win more games than me. I feel it will be the most successful team ever. That's the kind of experience and potential they have. They have played in knockout tournaments, they have played under pressure. I firmly believe that this will be the team that will rewrite history. They will do very well," Dhoni concluded.



Air vice marshal Mashiuzzaman Serniabat, assistant chief of air staff, Bangladesh Air Force inaugurates the prestigious Aga Khan Gold Cup Golf Tournament at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

MU brace for Reds showdown

AFP, London



Manchester United have a golden opportunity to haul themselves into the Premier League title race at the expense of bitter rivals Liverpool this weekend, while leaders Chelsea will look to steady their nerves at Leicester.

United go into the Old Trafford showdown in fine fettle after beating Hull in the League Cup semi-final first leg in midweek to extend their winning streak in all competitions to nine matches.

Jose Mourinho's sixth-placed side still trail Chelsea by 10 points and lag five behind second-placed Liverpool.

But victory on Sunday, with Mourinho calling for United fans to raise the roof, would be a significant statement of intent.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic has been a key figure in United's recent surge and despite his team's current position the Swedish striker has set his sights on adding a Premier League medal to the

league titles he won in Spain, Italy, France and Holland.

"I'm chasing the head trophy, the Premier League, that is my aim," said Ibrahimovic, who has 13 league goals this season.

"I try to help the team and do what I'm best at -- scoring goals, playing good and creating chances for my team-mates."

In contrast to United, Liverpool -- after emerging as title contenders thanks to a four-match winning run in December -- have suffered a dip.

A draw at Sunderland in the League

was followed by an FA Cup stalemate against fourth-tier Plymouth and a 1-0 defeat in the League Cup semi-final first leg at Southampton.

Manager Jurgen Klopp will hope the return against Southampton of Brazil forward Philippe Coutinho after seven weeks out with an ankle injury provides a timely boost for his team, who were held to a 0-0 draw by United in October.

By the time Liverpool kick off at Old Trafford they could be eight points behind Chelsea, who face struggling champions Leicester at the King Power Stadium 24 hours earlier.

Chelsea's 2-0 defeat at Tottenham last week halted their 13-match winning run in the league, but the west London club received a welcome boost in midweek with the news that their plan to redevelop their Stamford Bridge stadium into a 60,000-capacity arena has been approved.

On the field, midfielder N'Golo Kante will make a first appearance at Leicester since his £30 million pre-season transfer.

FIXTURES

(1500 GMT unless stated)

Saturday
Burnley v Southampton, Hull v Bournemouth, Leicester v Chelsea (1730 GMT), Sunderland v Stoke, Swansea v Arsenal, Tottenham v West Brom (1230 GMT), Watford v Middlesbrough, West Ham v Crystal Palace

Sunday
Everton v Manchester City (1330 GMT), Manchester United v Liverpool (1600 GMT)

SL in trouble

AFP, Johannesburg



Vernon Philander and Kagiso Rabada plunged Sri Lanka into familiar trouble when they both took two wickets on the second day of the third and final Test against South Africa at the Wanderers Stadium on Friday.

Sri Lanka were 80 for four when bad light ended play for the day, still 346 runs behind South Africa's total of 426.

The first half of the day belonged largely to Sri Lanka, who have largely been outplayed in a series which they trail 2-0, as their bowlers claimed South Africa's seven remaining wickets for 88 runs.

Nuwan Pradeep took four wickets in as many overs to finish with four for 78, while Lahiru Kumara took four for 107.

Hashim Amla, who resumed on 125 not out, could add only nine more runs off 44 balls before he was caught behind to become Pradeep's third victim.

Although Dimuth Karunaratne was caught behind off Vernon Philander without scoring off the fourth ball of their innings, Kaushal Silva and Kusal Mendis put on 47 for the second wicket and saw off the new ball.

But Rabada struck soon after tea when he produced a sharply-lifting delivery which Silva had to play at, edging a second catch to wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock.

Mendis made 41 before a vicious lifter from Rabada had him fending a catch to gully. Dhyananajaya de Silva followed in the next over when he sliced a drive against Philander to backward point.

Philander took two for 17 and Rabada two for 26.

Although Pradeep was their most successful bowler, it was an impressive collective bowling performance by the Sri Lankan seamers in overcast conditions on a pitch which seemed to have more life than on the first day.

Suranga Lakmal bowled superbly from the start of play after South Africa resumed at 338 for three, conceding nine runs in seven overs, four of which came from overthrows, and having South African captain Faf du Plessis dropped by Mendis at second slip.

Angelo Mathews, who opened the bowling with Lakmal at start of play, sent down five overs for nine runs and dismissed nightwatchman Duanne Olivier.

Pradeep had a golden spell, dismissing Du Plessis, Temba Bavuma, Amla and Philander in the space of 24 deliveries.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 426 (Elgar 27, Amla 134, Duminy 155, De Kock 34, Parnell 23; Pradeep 4-78, Mathews 2-52, Kumara 4-107)

SRI LANKA: First innings 80 for 4 (Mendis 41, Mathews 11 not out; Philander 2-23, Rabada 2-26)

Faulkner, Wade propel Australia

AFP, Brisbane

Australia beat Pakistan by 92 runs in the first one-day international at the Gabba on Friday.

Matthew Wade scored a last-ball 100 to lead Australia to 268 for nine off their 50 overs.

James Faulkner took four wickets for 32 to help Australia dismiss Pakistan for 176 off 42.4 overs.

Pakistan were well placed when they had Australia at 78-5 before Wade and Glenn Maxwell (60) put on 82 runs for the sixth wicket to push on.

But the tourists could not put any pressure on the Australians in their innings with skipper Azhar Ali injuring a hamstring and Babar Azam topscoring with 33.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: 268 for 9 in 50 overs (Head 39, Maxwell 60, Wade 100 not out; Amir 2-54, Hasan 3-65, Imad 2-35)

PAKISTAN: 176 all out in 42.4 overs (Azhar 24, Sharjeel 18, Babar 33, Rizwan 21, Imad 29; Starc 2-34, Faulkner 4-32, Cummins 3-33)

Result: Australia won by 92 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Matthew Wade.

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