

SPORT



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Players of the Bangladesh Under-23 team and Abahani are in the midst of an aerial battle during their practice match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Ord's charges edge past listless Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh U-23 national football team had a good start to their preparation for the AFC U-23 Championship. Qualifiers as they notched up a 1-0 win over Federation Cup champions Abahani in the first of the three practice matches they are scheduled to play before the competition in Palestine from July 19-23.

Jafar Iqbal struck the decisive goal in the 38th minute of the match, during which coach Andrew Ord fielded two sets of players in a bid to finalise his 23-member squad. The team is supposed to play one practice match against a Nepal U-23 side and another against a Qatar U-23 side before facing Jordan, Tajikistan and Palestine in the group stage of the Championship.

The U-23 side was not impressive in the first half against rather a casual Abahani side, with the wing backs in Ord's 5-3-2 formation hardly making an impact. However, they had greater possession in the second half after experienced players like Soheli Rana, Rubel Mia, Hemanta Vincent Biswas, Masuk Mia Jonny, Khalekuzzaman and Mansur Amin came on as substitutes.

"I haven't chosen my best eleven yet, it may now be seven to eight players after this match. I need to watch more matches because training is one thing and a match is another. We worked hard on fitness in the training sessions over the last two weeks and

after playing the first 45 minutes, some players looked tired. We need more game time to build fitness," Ord told reporters after the match.

Though Ord's charges had good ball distribution in both halves to control the midfield, they failed to penetrate the opponents except on a few occasions. However, right wing-back Khalekuzzaman exposed the Abahani backline with his rapid runs numerous times in the second half and played some delightful crosses in.

"We penetrated a lot and a few times we played the final ball, but I must admit we could not create clear-cut chances, which was a problem for Bangladesh before I came here. We have to find goal-scors and we are trying to improve in that aspect," Ord said.

As Abahani lacked urgency in the attacking third due to a lack of fitness, the U-23 side were not tested properly. However, Abahani exposed the young side's defence a few times with Landing Darboe rattling the crossbar once and Didarul Alam squandering an easy opportunity.

"I think the defence was not well organised. We will need to cope with situations and every player needs to contribute as we are going to play three matches in five days," opined Ord, who was however happy having made a winning start.

"It was nice to win the practice game because it gave everyone belief of making a good start in the upcoming tournament," said Ord.

SL, Ind to play first full series in eight years

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka and India will play three Tests, five ODIs and one T20I in their first series involving all three formats of the game in eight years, it was announced Friday.

Sri Lanka Cricket said the first Test between the neighbours will start on July 26 at Galle and will be followed by Tests in Colombo and Kandy respectively in August.

The board added that the ODI series will begin in Dambulla on August 20 and will be followed by two ODI matches each at Kandy and Colombo. The lone T20 will be played in Colombo on September 6.

India and Sri Lanka played their only full series against each other -- three Tests, five ODIs and two T20 matches -- in India in 2009. India won the Test series 2-0, the ODI 3-1 and drew the T20 segment 1-1.

India's last tour of Sri Lanka was in August 2015 when they played a Test series which they won 2-1. India won its last ODI series 4-1 in 2012. In the same year, India won a T20 series 1-0.

Ali, Broad tighten Eng's grip

AFP, London



Moeen Ali and Stuart Broad both starred with bat and ball to leave England well-placed come the close of the second day of the first Test against South Africa at Lord's on Friday.

Ali made 87 and Broad an unbeaten 57 as England piled up 458 all out in their first innings.

The pair then shared four wickets between them to reduce South Africa to 104 for four, with Ali completing the Test all-rounder's double of 2,000 runs and 100 wickets by striking twice with his off-spin.

But Temba Bavuma and Theunis de Bruyn realised crease occupation alone would not get South Africa out of the hole they were in.

But de Bruyn fell for 48 shortly before the close and at stumps the Proteas were 214 for five -- still 244 runs behind in the first of this four-Test series.

England resumed on 357 for five, with Joe Root 184 not out in his first Test as England captain. Ali was 61 not

out and just 12 runs away from reaching 2,000 in Tests.

The first chance Root gave on Friday brought about his downfall on 190 -- the highest score by an England captain in his first Test in charge, surpassing Alastair Cook's 173 against Bangladesh in 2010.

There was no reprieve when the 26-year-old Yorkshireman was caught behind off fast bowler Morne Morkel -- denied a wicket Thursday by a no-ball.

Two balls later, Liam Dawson was lbw to Morkel for a duck.

The first over after the drinks break again saw England lose two wickets, with Ali falling in sight of a sixth Test century when bowled trying to drive Rabada.

An undaunted Broad struck shots worthy of his father Chris, the former England opener.

He pulled Morkel for two sixes in as many balls to complete a dashing 45-ball fifty.

No 11 Anderson then brought up England's 450 before he was caught behind to give Morkel his fourth wicket of the innings.

After the early loss of debutant

opening partner Heino Kuhn, Dean Elgar displayed his customary resilience during a 90-ball fifty.

But Hashim Amla, so often a thorn in England's side, was dismissed for just 29 when lbw to a sharply turning off-break from Ali.

After tea, Elgar fell for his interval score of 54 when caught off bat and pad by Gary Ballance at short leg as Ali, in his 38th match at this level, became the fifth-quickest player in Test history to do the 'double'.

South Africa's 98 for three became 105 for four when JP Duminy (15) was plumb lbw to Broad.

But Bavuma, unafraid to drive Ali down the ground, counter-attacked.

De Bruyn offered good support until he was caught behind after carelessly pushing away from his body at Anderson.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 458 (Root 190, Stokes 56, Moeen 87, Broad 57 not out; Morkel 4-115, Philander 3-67, Rabada 3-123)

SOUTH AFRICA: First Innings 214 for 5 (Elgar 54, de Bruyn 48, Bavuma 48 not out; Broad 2-27, Ali 2-35)

10TH ASIA CUP

Rana, Pintu recalled

SPORTS REPORTER

Experienced midfielder Kamruzzaman Rana and defender Imran Hasan Pintu have been recalled to the national hockey team's preliminary squad for the 10th Asia Cup following newly appointed coach Mahbub Harun's recommendation regarding the inclusion of four senior players. With their inclusion, the number of players in the squad is 42.

"I had a meeting with Sadeque bhai [BHF general secretary Abdus Sadeque] today and demanded the full squad which played in the Hockey World League [HWL] Round-2 in March," Harun told reporters yesterday. "But he allowed me to call up only Rana and Pintu."

Rana, Pintu, Krishna Kumar and Rasel Mahmud Jimmy -- the four players Harun had specifically wanted -- were part of the WHL squad, but were dropped from the preliminary squad. The former three were dropped due to poor performances while Jimmy was not considered due to his suspension suggested by BHF working committee.

It has been learnt that Jimmy's situation will be discussed at the next BHF executive committee meeting.

Kohli's record ton seals series

AGENCIES, Kingston



Virat Kohli stroked a commanding, unbeaten 111 to lead India to a series-clinching eight-wicket win over the West Indies in the fifth and final ODI at Sabina Park on Thursday.

Responding to the home side's modest total of 205 for nine after captain Jason Holder chose to bat first in Jamaica, the visitors' skipper ensured there was to be no upset with the target reached in the 37th over to give India a 3-1 series triumph.

Stung by an 11-run defeat in the fourth match in Antigua, when they failed to reach an even smaller target of 190, the Indians were in no mood to let their opponents off the hook this time around.

An early strike by fast bowler Alzarri Joseph in removing Shikhar Dhawan at the start of the chase ushered in Kohli who immediately set about the bowling.

He put on 79 for the second wicket with Ajinkya Rahane before the opener fell leg-before to spinner Devendra Bishoo.

Dinesh Karthik joined his leader in the 19th over and was prepared to play the supporting role to a rampant Kohli, his 28th ODI century coming up off 108 deliveries with one six and 12 fours decorating his authoritative innings.

"Today was another clinical performance for us. Winning in a chase is always a nice feeling," said Kohli after receiving the man of the match award. "It's always about getting the team over the line. It's not about personal stats and personal achievements but ensuring we get to the target that's on the scoreboard."

After two low scores, Kohli was determined to make it count yesterday, and he celebrated

his 18th hundred in a chase, surpassing Sachin Tendulkar's record, with a resounding roar that was heard across Sabina Park.

"I don't like to get out in similar fashion often. The reason you succeed at international cricket is that you have to stretch the gap between your mistakes and I think a couple of mistakes from me, getting out in the same manner is something that I don't really like,"



PHOTO: AFP

India skipper Virat Kohli (L) surpassed Sachin Tendulkar's record for most ODI hundreds while chasing as he notched up his 11th, and 28th overall, against the West Indies in the fifth ODI on Thursday.

he said at the post-match press conference.

SCORES IN BRIEF

WEST INDIES: 205 for 9 in 50 overs (Hope 46, Hope 51, Holder 36; Shami 4-48, Yadav 3-53)
INDIA: 206 for 2 in 36.5 overs (Kohli 111 not out, Karthik 50 not out; Joseph 1-39)
Result: India won by eight wickets and clinched five-match series 3-1.
Player-of-the-match: Virat Kohli.
Player-of-the-series: Ajinkya Rahane.

Stokes would keep me out: Flintoff

AGENCIES, London

Former England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff believes that he would not get a game ahead of Ben Stokes if the two were playing together at the same time. The Ashes-winning player added that he considered Stokes to be even better than Test legend Ian Botham.

"Everyone compares him to me -- but he's better than me and, potentially, he's better than Botham. Beefy won't like it but who cares, we have Stokes" Flintoff said. "England are the type of team you'd love to play in -- but I wouldn't get a game!"

England won't tour if pay row isn't resolved

CRICINFO, Sydney



England will not travel to Australia to play the Ashes unless a deal has been agreed between Cricket Australia (CA) and its players' association.

Although the Ashes are scheduled to start on November 23, England are due to fly to Australia at the end of October and an England Cricket Board (ECB) spokesman confirmed they would not travel unless they could be assured of the necessary warm-up games before the Test series.

While the ECB remains confident the Ashes will go ahead, they recognise the significant divide that currently exists between CA and the Australian Cricketers Association (ACA) and have noted with some unease the decision of players to withdraw from the Australia A tour to South Africa.

The Australian tour of Bangladesh, scheduled to begin in mid-August, looks particularly precarious, with a limited overs tour of India to follow it.

The real deadline for an ECB decision over Ashes might come around mid-October, when England Women are scheduled to fly to Australia for a tour that includes an Ashes Test and begins with an ODI in Brisbane on October 22. Unless matters in Australia are resolved by then, it is possible the ECB will take the decision to cancel both tours and recoup what costs they can. The consequences -- legal and financial -- would be enormous.

Greg Hunt, the federal minister for sport, has indicated that the Australian government would be prepared to step in the row dragged on long enough to threaten the Ashes.

In response to the ECB comments, a CA spokesman said, "We are 100% confident that the Ashes will go ahead."