

SPORT

U-18s take on Maldives today

Players urged to keep momentum

SPORTS REPORTER

Following an incredible 4-3 win over regional powerhouse India in the opening game of the SAFF U-18 Championship, the Bangladesh team is in an upbeat mood and determined to carry their good form to the next game against Maldives, which kicks off at the Changlimithang Stadium in Bhutan at 7:00pm Bangladesh time today.

Despite going down 3-0 in the first half, the boys in red and green kept their nerve to turn the tide and scored four goals in the second half to notch an unbelievable win, which put them in pole position in the five-team round-robin league tournament.

The high pressing football from the Bangladesh players in the second half kept the opposition on their toes and that pressure eventually paid off, with four goals coming in the space of 35 second-half minutes.

Winger Jafar Iqbal, also a member of the national team, was excellent up front as he scored two goals and set up another while midfielders Al-Amin and Sohanur Rahman played key roles in midfield after some defensive lapses had put them in danger of a heavy defeat.

Following the victory, the players had some wild celebrations but the team management calmed them



The Bangladesh players go through a training session at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu yesterday on the eve of today's SAFF U-18 Championship match against Maldives.

PHOTO: BFF

down and asked them to keep their feet on the ground as their aim now is to win the title.

"The boys were excited after beating India and they have been asked to stay focused as we have only won a match, not the title," coach Mahabub Hossain Roxy said. "During my playing career I have seen Bangladesh perform poorly after making a good start. The players have been asked to keep the spirit they showed against India till the last match of the championship."

Roxy also believes that the expectation is high now and that it would be a challenge for his side to keep the tempo.

"Bangladesh will play positively till the last minute and show their attacking attitude. Whether or not we win the match, we will play with a positive attitude and the players are being prepared that way," said Roxy, who is being advised by national team head coach Andrew Ord.

The coach informed that they worked on the defensive errors

through a video analysis session and also worked on set-pieces. The coach claimed there might be one or two changes in the starting line-up against Maldives.

"Maldives are a good side as they played good football before eventually losing 0-1 against Bhutan. So there is no reason to take them lightly. Besides, at age-group level, all teams are almost of equal strength, however, we will play to keep our winning momentum," concluded Roxy.

'Don't take BD lightly'

Philander out of first Test against Tigers

AGENCIES, Johannesburg



New South Africa coach Otis Gibson faces a fast bowling crisis ahead of the two-Test home series against Bangladesh that starts on September 28, as he plots a path to return the side to number one in the International Cricket Council's five-day rankings.

West Indian Gibson left his post as England bowling coach to take up the top position with South Africa, but already faces a challenging start with several top performers sidelined by injury.

"We have four quality fast bowlers injured. That's a problem straight away," Gibson said at his first press conference as coach on Tuesday.

"You can't really develop a team with that type of injury list. We have to take 20 wickets consistently to win Tests. We need a group of fast bowlers ready to perform."

"I don't want us to go to the series against Bangladesh with the mentality of taking them for granted."

"I was how Bangladesh played against Australia."

"It was in Bangladesh with England last year and they won a Test match."

"They are a confident international Test team and we can't go there with a mentality of being in the comfort zone."

"They are going to be tough."

"They have Courtney Walsh on their technical staff as the bowling coach and their head coach is doing a fantastic job, which makes them a tough opposition."

Dale Steyn's return has been delayed again, this time indefinitely, after he suffered a set-back in his recovery with a strained

muscle in his problematic shoulder.

Vernon Philander has also been ruled out of the first Test, at least, with a back problem sustained in the recent 3-1 Test series loss in England, while all-rounder Chris Morris will miss both games also because of a back injury.

Promising youngster Lungi Ngidi, who

earliest on the scene in Twenty20 cricket

earlier this year, is also out until mid-

October with a stress fracture in his back.

It means Kagiso Rabada and Morne

Markel are the only two fit seamers with

significant Test experience, leaving Duane

Olivier, Wayne Parnell and Andile

Museveni to likely fight over the other

two positions in the side.

Injuries aside, Gibson feels he has the

players to return South Africa to the top of

the Test rankings.

"My philosophy over the next two years is

taking the Proteas back to the top of the

(Test) pile first of all, then hopefully win-

ning the 2019 World Cup," he said.



OTIS GIBSON

Rubel still in limbo

SPORTS REPORTER



Rubel Hossain's visit to South Africa is still under clouds after the Emirates flight which carried the Tigers to Johannesburg on September 16 refused to issue a boarding pass to the Bangladesh fast bowler, who did not have immigration clearance.

The cricketer had not received clearance from the South African immigration department till Tuesday and it is still uncertain whether Rubel will be able to catch a flight in time for the Tigers' three-day practice match, which is slated to begin on September 21 before the first of two matches Test series starts on September 28.

According to BCB Cricket operations committee chairman Akram Khan, there was a problem with Rubel's date of birth and he informed that it would take a further one or two days to obtain clearance.

"There were some errors during Rubel's visa process which were actually made by the South African visa authorities. There are some issues with his date of birth which caused the problem. It will take another one or two days to resolve the situation and hopefully he will be able to reach South Africa before the Test series," Akram told media yesterday.

It was earlier learned that a person named Rubel Hossain was on the South African visa authorities' blacklist, which caused the confusion.

BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury informed that the board was in constant touch with the airlines and the South African visa authorities and the cricketer would take the earliest flight once he received clearance.

Nazmul lauds England experience

SPORTS REPORTER



Although four of the seven matches on the Bangladesh Cricket Board High Performance (HP) team's tour to the UK were washed out, 19-year-old Nazmul Hossain Shanto shone brightly with the bat and smashed consecutive centuries, including an unbeaten 144-run knock which helped the visitors chase down 295 with six wickets to spare against Nottinghamshire Second XI.

The HP team won two matches before losing the seventh and final match of the tour against Warwickshire Second XI by a huge margin of 170. However, Nazmul once again showed his talent in that game with a fifty.

According to the left-hander it was a great experience to play in difficult conditions with swing and bounce while also adapting to the chilly English weather.

"I think the experience in England helped me as there was swing and bounce in the pitch and I tried to adjust to the conditions and bat accordingly. I enjoyed all the innings I played and tried to play my natural game," the HP team skipper told reporters after returning from the England yesterday.

The cricketer from Rajshahi—who has played just a solitary Test

match, against New Zealand earlier this year—hoped that the board would arrange more tours to help younger cricketers adapt to foreign conditions so that they would gain confidence for the future.

Rated as a future prospect for the Tigers, Nazmul will join Rajshahi Division in the second round of the ongoing National Cricket League (NCL) and the youngster was also picked by Khulna Titans for the upcoming 5th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League, however, he stated that he was only focusing on the first class competition for the moment.

BANGLADESH U-19S AIM FOR AFGHAN WHITEWASH

Bangladesh's youngsters will have a chance to gain experience as the Afghanistan Under-19 team will arrive in Dhaka on September 25 for a five-match youth ODI series. The first of those matches will be played at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium on September 28 while the last game will be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on October 7.

Skipper Saif Hasan informed that his side were well-prepared and said they were hoping for a whitewash but added that they were aware of the threat the Afghani youths posed.

"We have been practising for

quite some time now and a few of us were playing in the NCL. Overall we had good practice ahead of the series. As captain I would like to win the series and look to whitewash them. However we know Afghanistan are a good unit and we have to play our best to beat them,"

Saif told reporters before his team departed for Sylhet yesterday.

The young left-hander is in fine fettle after having scored an unbeaten century in the first round of the NCL for Barisal against Dhaka Division before the game was abandoned due to rain.

Bangladesh will participate the Under-19 Asia Cup in Malaysia later this year ahead of the upcoming ICC Under-19 World Cup in New Zealand next year and according to Saif his side were working on improving step by step before the mega-event.



The Bangladesh under-19 team left yesterday for Sylhet, where they will begin a five-match youth ODI series against their Afghanistan counterparts.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Ton-up Bairstow sends WI into WC qualifiers

AFP, Manchester



Jonny Bairstow

blasted a maiden one-day international hundred as England condemned

West Indies to a seven-wicket defeat at Old Trafford on Tuesday that means the twice former champions can no longer gain direct entry to the 2019 World Cup.

West Indies, the 1975 and 1979 World Cup winners, had to take this five-match series 5-0 or 4-0 with a tie or no result if they were to avoid the indignity of a qualifying competition for the next edition in England in two years' time.

But a total of 204 for nine, in a series opener reduced to 42 overs per side after a wet outfield delayed the start by two hours, never looked enough.

England finished on 210 for three, with a mammoth 67 balls to spare.

Bairstow, who justified his retention at the top of the order, was exactly 100 not out -- his first century in 28 matches at this level.



England opener Jonny Bairstow celebrates his maiden century against West Indies during the first ODI at Old Trafford yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Abahani, MSC power on

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani and Mohammedan notched comfortable wins over Gulshan Youth Club and India Road respectively in the ongoing Women's Premier Division Cricket League in Savar yesterday.

Mohammedan sealed a comprehensive eight-wicket win over India Road, who were bundled out for just 83 in 42.9 overs with Salma Khan and Bristi Roy bagging three wickets apiece. After the exchange, Mohammedan chased down the target in 16.4 overs for the loss of two wickets.

Opener Asfiya Alam top scored with 35 of 27 balls and smashed seven fours, laying the foundation for an easy win before she was run out, while Farzana Haque remained unbeaten on 12.

In the day's other game, Gulshan were bundled out for 75, courtesy of some brilliant bowling from Happy Alam and Shohely Akter, who nabbed three scalps each.

In reply Abahani scored 50 without loss after eight overs before rain interrupted the game. Abahani eventually won the game by D/L method with openers Sharmin Sultana (25) and Sharmin Akter (23) unbeaten at the crease.

U-16s up against UAE

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh under-16 football team will be hoping to take inspiration from the U-18 boys' and the U-16 girls' teams when they begin their AFC U-16 Championship qualifiers campaign with a game against the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Qatar today.

The match will start at 7:45pm (BST) at the Grand Hamad Stadium in Doha.

The under-16 girls' team ended their AFC Women's Championship campaign with a lot of positivity after putting up brave fights against Australia and Japan while the youth side started the SAFF U-18 Championship with an impressive performance, posting an incredible win over India.

Hence, a similar spirited performance is expected from the U-16 team against UAE even though it would be a tough challenge for the U-16 team, who have never posted a win through three editions since Bangladesh's first appearance in 2009.

Incidentally Bangladesh U-16 team had suffered a 1-6 defeat against UAE in the last edition of this championship two years ago, just days after lifting the title of the SAFF U-16 Championship.

The charges of Anwar Parvez were also impressive in this year's SAFF U-15 Championship, as they posted effortless wins over Sri Lanka and Bhutan, but were eliminated by Nepal in the semifinals.

Now they are up against much stronger sides—UAE, Yemen and Qatar—with the target of showing their potential at the continental level.

"The boys have earned some experience playing the SAFF U-15 Championship and they have also prepared for the AFC U-16 Championship Qualifiers. Now I want them to play according to their standard and give their hundred percent in every match," said the coach.

"The boys have been given an idea about the way UAE plays and we want them to play according to their worth and avail opportunities from counter attacks," added Parvez.