

SPORT



Bangladesh Test and T20I captain Shakib Al Hasan went to the BCB headquarters in Mirpur to attend the Namaz-e-Janaza of beloved BCB director Afzalur Rahman Sinha yesterday evening. The all-rounder also met with the BCB CEO to talk about surgery on his injured finger. PHOTO: STAR

Rhodes seeks bench strength

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's new head coach Steve Rhodes has the 2019 World Cup in his sights as he is chalking out plans with cricket's showpiece event in England in mind. The Englishman had a meeting with chief selector

Minhajul Abedin Nannu at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, where he expressed the need to create a group of reserve players to lend flexibility to the team combination in the upcoming assignments.

"I had a meeting with the head coach today [Friday] and the main thing Rhodes is looking for is long-term planning until the next World Cup in 2019. He wanted to know about the young players in the High Performance Squad and the A team -- pacers, spinners, batsmen and all-rounders. Rhodes will be present from the first day of the training camp," Minhajul told reporters yesterday.

According to Minhajul, the 54-year-old is eager to create a group of backup players to strengthen the base of the pipeline and

asked for a 30-member preliminary squad for the upcoming Asia Cup where he will observe the up-and-coming players currently not in the national team.

"The preparation camp for the Asia Cup [Bangladesh's next assignment from September 15 in the UAE] will start from August 27, for which we will announce the preliminary squad within next week. He [Rhodes] wanted to have a look at some new players and also asked for well-built and tall fast bowlers in the squad, keeping the Tigers' upcoming Test series in mind," he said.

Bangladesh have home Test series against Zimbabwe and West Indies to close out the year, before a full tour of New Zealand in early 2019.

The Bangladesh head coach returned with the side on Thursday, when he met with Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan and discussed first assignment in the West Indies along with strategies for upcoming series.

Hassan said after the meeting that the board will continue the policy of making the head coach a selection committee member and Rhodes's meeting with the chief selector yesterday was a reflection of that.



MINHAJUL ABEDIN

Aus doctor to see Shakib files

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Test and T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan had a meeting with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday regarding the possibility and timing of surgery to his injured left little finger, which had caused him problems during the recently-concluded tour of West Indies.

BCB chief physician Dr. Debashish Chowdhury informed that BCB physio Thihaan Chandramohan is expected to reach Melbourne today with Shakib's medical reports to consult with orthopaedic surgeon Dr. Greg Hoy.

"Thihaan Chandramohan is expected to have a meeting with Dr. Hoy over the next couple of days as he is expected to reach Melbourne tomorrow [Saturday]. We can only take a decision after consulting with the doctor," Debashish told The Daily Star yesterday.

Shakib told reporters after returning from the tour on Thursday that he would like to go under the knife before the Asia Cup, to be held in UAE from September 15, as he wants to play with full fitness.

"I feel the sooner the surgery is done, the better. I think it should be done because I don't want to play if I am not fully fit. So, if I think along those lines then having surgery before the Asia Cup is normal. Most probably it will take place before the Asia Cup," Shakib told reporters.

BCB president Nazmul Hassan, however, said on the same day that the board want Shakib's presence in the Asia Cup and added that the surgery can take place during the home series against Zimbabwe scheduled for October.

Boys' football suffering from apathy

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh U-15 boy's football team began its preparation for the upcoming SAFF U-15 Championship at Sheikh Kamal Stadium in Nilphamari yesterday, 10 weeks before the start of the regional age-group championship in Nepal.

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) picked 34 footballers from July's trial, where some 500 budding footballers from across the country took part in a two-day trial, but the game's governing body took nearly six weeks to start the residential training camp for those selected.

These boys are not as fortunate as their female compatriots as the female footballers are registering strong wins against their South Asian counterparts, thanks to a round-the-year residential training.

For the boys though, the scenario is completely different. The BFF is seemingly not as serious with the boys and, as a result, they cannot even beat the academy-based sides of India and Nepal at this level.

Since the introduction of the SAFF U-16 Championship in 2011, which later turned into an under-15 affair, Bangladesh have never beaten Nepal. The Bangladesh team lost against their Nepalese counterparts twice in semifinals and once in a third-placing deciding match while they lost against India twice in

group-stage matches even though they managed to beat them 4-2 in a tiebreaker in the 2015 final in Sylhet.

The boys in red and green proved their worth at this level by winning the title of the SAFF U-16 Championship in Sylhet on the back of 10 months of rigorous training at the BFF academy in Sylhet.

But that academy does not exist anymore and there is no development programme for the young boys, who are being picked as raw talent and given two to three months of training ahead of international assignments. And eventually these boys disappear from the scene due to a lack of international engagement.

In the last edition of the SAFF U-15 Championship, the boys beat Sri Lanka 4-0 and Bhutan and 3-0, but they were beaten 2-4 by Nepal in semifinals before finishing third with a 8-0 win over Bhutan. Afterwards, those boys, under the guidance of Parvez Babu, lost to Yemen 2-0 before beating Qatar by a 2-0 margin in the AFC U-16 Championship Qualifiers. They eventually narrowly missed out on qualification for the final round due to goal difference.

Parvez has once again been given the responsibility to guide the under-15 side. He is optimistic about grooming the players within two-and-a-half months, but not confident

enough about beating Nepal and India in the championship.

"India and Nepal follow more systematic and planned ways and they have started training for this championship from January. So the grooming of the players in those two countries is better than ours. The players in those countries develop a good understanding among themselves due to long-term training," Babu said. "If you conduct long-term training, players improve and react better on the pitch, compared to those who get less training."

While India and Nepal are fielding their academy-based players in age-level tournaments, Bangladesh

arrange open trails with unknown players, who play football at their own interest, owing to no school or youth football tournaments across the country.

"It would have been better had we got all academy-based players, but what we have is some players who train at academies in different districts and some players who are from BKSP. It is too early to comment on the current squad, but I will be able to make a comment about their standing after a couple of weeks of training," the former national footballer said, adding that they will be conducting uninterrupted training till the championship starts on October 25 in Nepal.



Bangladesh U-15 boys' football team pose for a group photo prior to the start of preparations for the upcoming SAFF U-15 Championship at the gallery of Sheikh Kamal Stadium in Nilphamari yesterday. PHOTO: BFF

India shot out for 107

AFP, London

James Anderson took five wickets and Chris Woakes dismissed Virat Kohli as India were bowled out for just 107 on the second day of the second Test against England at Lord's on Friday. Anderson's return of five wickets for 20 runs in 13.2 overs left him just one dismissal shy of

becoming the first bowler to take 100 Test wickets at Lord's.

Woakes removed India captain Kohli (23) and Hardik Pandya (11) in extraordinary fashion. In both cases he had the batsmen caught by Jos Buttler the very next delivery after the second slip had dropped each of them, with the ball going for four.

Rain, which meant there was no play at all on Thursday, saw just 40

minutes' action, featuring 8.3 overs, before tea. But that was time enough for India to be 15 for three.

England captain Joe Root decided to field when he won the toss, a combination of cloudy skies and a green-tinged pitch ideal for Anderson, who struck with just the fifth ball of the match when Murali Vijay was undone by late outswing and bowled for a duck.

Vijay's exit brought in Cheteshwar Pujara, who could only watch as Anderson had KL Rahul (8) caught behind by wicket-keeper Jonny Bairstow. Soon afterwards, rain stopped play, with Pujara and Kohli then both one not out. When play resumed for just 12 balls between lunch and tea, Pujara was run out off the last ball when Kohli responded, only to change his mind and retreat.

Then there was a fresh downpour and it was not until 5.10pm that the match restarted. At 49 for three Kohli, on 23, edged a full-length Woakes outswinger and this time Buttler made no mistake.

Sam Curran took the fielders out of the equation when the left-arm swing bowler bowled Dinesh Karthik with a ball that cut back late to reduce India to 62 for six. Ravichandran Ashwin top-scored with 29 before he was plumb leg before to Broad before Anderson ended the day's play when No 11 Ishant Sharma was lbw for nought.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: First innings 107 all out (Ashwin 29, Kohli 23, Rahul 18; Anderson 5-20, Woakes 2-19)

Series shared after Wolves beat BD A

SPORTS REPORTER

Skipper Andrew Balbirnie's unbeaten century guided Ireland Wolves to a series-leveilling eight-wicket win against Bangladesh A in the fifth and final one-day at the Clontarf Cricket Club ground in Dublin yesterday. With the first match being washed out on August 13, the Wolves' win meant the series is shared between the two second-string sides 2-2.

Balbirnie was unbeaten on 160 off 144 balls, hitting 18 fours and two sixes, as the hosts chased the target of 284 with 20 balls to spare. Balbirnie and Andrew McBrine added 197 runs for the second wicket before the latter was dismissed for a 103-ball 89.

Earlier, Fazle Rabbi top-scored with 74 and wicket-keeper batsman Mohammad Mithun added 73 runs as the visitors posted 283 for eight in 50 overs after electing to bat. Right-arm pacer Peter Chase picked up five wickets for Ireland.

Bangladesh A will next take on the Wolves in the first of the three match T20 series on August 13.

Stokes 'blacked out'

AFP, London



England cricketer Ben Stokes told a court yesterday he was "absolutely not" an angry man who lost all control in a street brawl and admitted his faltering recollection of events was due to a "significant memory blackout".

International star Stokes and Ryan Ali, both 27, are being tried for affray over a brawl that erupted in Bristol, southwest England, in the early hours of September 25 last year.

The cricketer faced cross-examination from the prosecutor Nicholas Corsellis on the fifth day of the trial at Bristol Crown Court. Stokes said he intervened because Ali and his friend Ryan Hale had directed alleged homophobic abuse at gay men William O'Connor and Kai Barry as they walked away from Mbargo nightclub.

He could not recall what was said, but "I am very clear that the words that were used were homophobic", he told the court. Corsellis asked Stokes if he had a "significant memory blackout" from the night in question. The sportsman replied: "You could say that, yes."

Stokes and other England cricketers, including Alex Hales, went out celebrating beating the West Indies in a match in Bristol on September 24. Stokes said he would have had a bottle of beer after the match, two or

three pints at the hotel, five or six vodka and lemonades and then "potentially had some Jaegerbombs" in Mbargo.

The prosecutor asked: "You don't really remember significant parts of this incident, for example knocking Mr Ali out? Is that because you were really very drunk?"

Stokes replied: "No. I think the whole incident would have been clouded because it was such... there was a lot of people around... a lot of shouting. I don't remember every little detail. It's clearly in my statements that I admit to throwing multiple punches."

Stokes insisted that after he told Ali to stop the verbal abuse, Ali told him to shut up "or I'll bottle you".

Looking at security camera footage from outside the nightclub, Stokes said it was not possible to tell if he was angry.

"I might just be looking at the night sky," he said.

Corsellis asked: "Who were you speaking to when you were looking at the night sky?"

Stokes replied: "God?" Corsellis said: "When you saw Mr Ali had a bottle and that he was threatening to hit Alex Hales and hit Kai Barry on the shoulder, you decided to get involved."

"After you had been on the ground and he [Ali] was disarmed you thought, 'I am going to show you what violence is'. Is that not the truth?"

Stokes replied: "Absolutely not."



England's leading Test wicket-taker Jimmy Anderson took his 26th five-for to help bundle India out for 107 on a rain-marred second day of the second Test at Lord's yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS