



Bangladesh players take part in a training session at the Persikabo Stadium in Indonesia's Bogor Province yesterday, ahead of their Asian Games Group B opener against Uzbekistan today.

Booters make their bow today

SPORTS REPORTER from Jakarta



The Asian Games proper may still be four days away, but the football event has already hit the ground running. For Bangladesh, the games begin today when the under-23 booters take on Uzbekistan in their first match of Group B.

The match will kick off at the Pakansari Stadium in Bogor regency, around 60 kilometres south of Indonesia's capital Jakarta, at 3:00pm Bangladesh time.

Bangladesh and Uzbekistan had met in the group stages of the last Asian Games in Incheon too, with the Central Asian nation running away with a comprehensive 3-0 victory.

The men in red and green had in fact made a promising start to that event four years ago, beating their imperious South Asian rivals Afghanistan by a solitary goal but that defeat against Uzbekistan, followed by a narrow 2-1 defeat against Hong Kong, denied Lodewijk de Kruij's charges qualification for the knock-out rounds.

This time though, there will not probably be much of an expectation with the Bangladesh team as they have two other strong opponents in

the group in the form of Thailand and Qatar. The top two finishers of each of the six groups plus four of the best third-placed teams will move to the Round of 16.

The other reason for not having much expectation is the fact that the footballers did not have any long-term preparation for these games and they have not played a single competitive match since their defeat against Bhutan in October, 2016.

The booters displayed a fairly good performance in a 1-1 draw in a friendly match against Laos in March under former coach Andrew Ord, but Ord's sudden departure set the team back considerably. Under new coach Jamie Day, Bangladesh have had less than eight weeks of training, although they did have two preparation camps in Qatar and South Korea, with mixed results in the practice matches they played there. Injuries to some key players has also played its part in setting a humble target.

"The players had practice sessions over the last couple of days that we are here in Indonesia. The coach is just trying to work with his formation and see if the players can apply on the pitch what they have been learning in training," team manager Satyajit Das Rupu said on the eve of the opening match.

"We all know Uzbekistan are a strong side.

What we want is that the players keep fighting till the end, which is what they have been doing in the recent practice matches," Rupu added.

However, the Asian Games is perhaps not the most important assignment for Day and his charges, rather it is the SAFF Championship in September and the Bangabandhu Gold Cup in October -- both to be played at home -- that hold more importance to the team. Hence the Asian Games, where under-23 teams participate with three overage players available in the squad, is being treated as a platform to judge the team's current standing and iron out the frailties of the side.

Hence the coach's expectations for this particular event are very realistic. "We need to play at our best for that [get results] to happen as we are playing against three very good teams," the 38-year-old coach has been saying in the build-up to these games.

His team combination seems to be set, with defenders Tapu Barman, Tutul Hossain Badsha, Rahmat Mia and Bishwanath Gosh, holding midfielders Jamal Bhuiyan and Masuk Mia Jonny, midfielders Rabiul Hasan, Mohammad Abdullah and Mahbubur Rahman Sufil and lone striker Saad Uddin most likely to slot into a 4-2-3-1 formation.

PHOTO: BFF

Jakarta gearing up

ATIQUÉ ANAM from Jakarta



With the 18th Asian Games on the doorstep, co-hosts Jakarta is gearing up for the second-largest multi-sport event after the Olympics as well as it can. The other host city of Palembang being a bit of a backwater town, both literally and figuratively, the spotlight will be squarely on this megacity, which is going to host the event for the first time since 1962.

The extravaganza will officially get underway on August 18 and curtains will fall on September 2 -- both at the iconic Gelora Bung Karno Stadium -- and during those two weeks, medals in 482 events of 42 disciplines will be settled by athletes from 45 Asian countries.

The streets and sporting establishments have been adorned with massive banners and posters, welcoming the games to these shores for the second time.

The games have their obvious challenges though, not the least of which comes in the form of traffic control. Jakarta is notorious for its traffic, and the main streets turn into gridlocks on working days. However, it must be said that the traffic is maintained in a disciplined and systematic way, with various options available, quite unlike some of the megacities of South Asia. There have been major projects taken just to make sure that these Games are held without any major blips as far as communication and transpor-



The main media centre in co-host city Jakarta is a hub of activity ahead of the Asian Games, which will get underway on August 18. Palembang is the second city that will host events of the multi-sports extravaganza in Indonesia.

PHOTO: ATIQUÉ ANAM

U-19s seek to be match-hardened



U-19 coach Naveed Nawaz (C) briefs the players during a training camp at the BCB Academy ground in Mirpur recently.

PHOTO: STAR FILE

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Under-19 cricket team will have a busy schedule ahead as the youngsters, who just have gone for a break after a four-week training camp, will report to head coach Naveed Nawaz on August 29 in Chittagong.

Bangladesh will host the upcoming Asia Cup slated for September 29 in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar and the cricketers are preparing for the regional tournament, which also involves India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.

Assistant coach Mahbub Ali Zaki said that the team management has started mapping out the oppositions' strengths and weaknesses.

"We are collecting video footage of the opponents. So far we have only gotten footage of the Sri Lankan team, but we are trying to get the footage of all our opponents and are making plans accordingly," said Mahbub.

He also informed that it is a big challenge to work with a totally new set of cricketers and that the team management will focus on match-based preparations to enhance performance ahead of the upcoming ICC Under-19 World Cup in South Africa in 2020.

"The difference between this under-19 group and the previous one is that these players are going to play a lot of matches compared to the last batch. We are going to work a lot on match-oriented things and are planning to go forward phase by phase. We are not only working on skills but are also focusing on match performance -- so it is challenging," he said.

Mahbub said that there are quite a few talented cricketers in the 27-member squad in the likes of pacer Shoriful Islam, who is now in Ireland with the A team, and leg-spinner Rishad Ahmed.

"As you already know we have pacer Shoriful and Rishad in the under-19 squad, and we will get to know some more after we play matches in the future as this is totally a new set of players and we need to observe them. I am sure as time progresses there will be a quite a few more cricketers from this group who will announce themselves for the World Cup," Mahbub added.

Bangladesh's third-place finish in the 2016 Under-19 World Cup under Mehedi Hasan Miraz at home is the best performance so far by the youths.

After the Asia Cup, the management is eyeing a tour of Sri Lanka to play two four-dayers and five one-dayers and will later also host England in January next year. The young Tigers will then take part in a tri-nation series with New Zealand as the second team.

Jimmy a 'special commodity'

AFP, London



Joe Root said James Anderson was a "special commodity" who should be enjoyed for as long as possible after England's leading all-time Test wicket-taker showed his class yet again in an innings and 159-run hammering of India at Lord's.

The overcast conditions and green-tinted pitch, as much a consequence of a sudden change in the weather after a prolonged dry spell as anything else, were ideal for Anderson.

But the 36-year-old Lancashire swing specialist exploited them expertly in a match haul of nine for 43 that saw him become the first bowler to take 100 Test wickets at Lord's.

"He's a special, special commodity, isn't he?" said Root of Anderson after England won the second Test in emphatic fashion to go 2-0 up in a five-match series. "He's something that doesn't come along very often and we've got to enjoy him while he's around."

"There's been chat about his longevity but at the minute he's bowling better than he ever has before. Time and again, he puts in fantastic performances. For him to be performing as he is, is something else."

"Even though the conditions suited [him], you've still got to put the ball in the right area and ask the right questions of the batters. Throughout the whole game he did just that, he set the tone well with Stu (Broad), as a whole bowling group we were really, really good."

Yet it was Chris Woakes who was named man-of-the-match after starring with both bat and ball.

Woakes, selected after England omitted Ben Stokes because of his fellow pace-bowling all-rounder's ongoing trial for affray, made 137 not out -- his maiden Test century -- and shared a partnership of 189 with Jonny Bairstow (93) that helped the hosts recover from 89 for four to an eventual total of 396 for seven declared.

He also took match figures of four for 43, with his haul including the prize scalp of India captain and star batsman Virat Kohli for just 23 in the tourists' meagre first-innings 107.

It is not yet known whether Stokes will be available to play in the third Test in Nottingham starting Saturday, but Warwickshire's Woakes proved himself to be far more than a mere 'stand-in'.

"Ben is obviously a huge part of this squad, so it's a miss him not being here this week," said Root.

"But what it did was create an opportunity for Chris to come in and perform. He was outstanding. That's something we really want to harness as an example to the guys in and around the squad -- when you get your chance, make it as hard as possible to leave you out."

"It's a great headache to have for us, going into next week."

Root, having seen England beat India by just 31 runs in a see-saw first Test at Edgbaston, was in no mood to take anything for granted.

"India are doing everything they can, but...we've given them nothing. I don't see any lack of fight, or lack of trying (from them)."

"Obviously, it would be a dream to put in five complete performances and have five wins. But it's important we don't get complacent, arrogant."



England swing sup-remo James Anderson once again showed that there is no bowler more dangerous in favourable conditions.

PHOTO: AFP

'Paupered' by a 'crafty maestro'

AFP, New Delhi

India's media on Monday lashed out at "abysmal batting" that led to a crushing innings defeat by England in the second Test at Lord's.

Mail Today called India's performance a "humiliating defeat" while The Hindu newspaper's headline said "Another abysmal batting display sends India to its doom" after the team were bowled out for 107 and 130.

A Hindustan Times headline read: "India shamed at Lord's as bastmen surrender again".



"For the World No.1 Test team that vowed to play aggressive cricket, its credentials in tough overseas conditions lay tattered amid a batting crisis," the newspaper added.

The Times of India headlined its story "India turn paupers at Lord's." It hailed England pacer Jimmy Anderson, who took nine wickets in the match, as a "crafty maestro".

Former Test batsman VVS Laxman said on Twitter that "caught in unfavourable conditions, not reading what the opposition threw, saw India lose the Lord's Test tamely without showing a fight. Hopefully lessons are learned quickly and the rest of the batsmen start applying themselves."

WHAT THEY SAID

I think we got the combination a bit off before the game. 2-0 down, the only option is to come out positive, make it 2-1 and make it an exciting series.

- Virat Kohli

Can't imagine any team in the world faring any better than India have (including England if they had to play themselves!)

- Graeme Swann

Excellent spells of fast bowling by @jimmy9 and @StuartBroad8, with a fine performance by @chriswoakes. We've got to pull up our socks and produce better cricket.

- Sachin Tendulkar

Kohli looks like he is in a lot of pain but also looks better than anyone else

- Harsha Bhogle

Bangladesh A win first T20

SPORTS REPORTER

The visiting Bangladesh A team registered a four-wicket win over the Ireland A team in the first of a three-match T20 series at the Clontarf Cricket Club Ground in Dublin yesterday.

Chasing 153, Bangladesh A reached the target for the loss of six wickets and with two overs to spare.

Another positive for Bangladesh A is that opener Soumya Sarkar finally managed to end his lengthy lean patch by scoring a fifty. Bangladesh A now lead the three-match series 1-0.

Bangladesh A lost their other opener Zakir Hasan off the very first ball of the innings for a duck but Soumya, alongside Nazmul Hossain Shanto, added 62 runs for the second wicket to lay the foundation for the victory.

Although Nazmul was dismissed on 38 runs off 23 balls, featuring seven fours, Soumya went on to reach his half century but after a 41 ball 57 run knock, laced with five fours and three sixes, he became Andy McBrine's second victim.

Young Afif Hossain finished the job for the visitors as the left-hander remained unbeaten on 35 runs off 21 balls, striking four boundaries and a six.

Right-arm off-spinner McBrine picked up three wickets while right-arm seamer Peter Chase took two for Ireland A.

Earlier, after taking the first guard Ireland were all-out on 152 in 20 overs. Simi Singh top scored for the side with 41 runs off 37 balls.

None of Ireland A's other batters were able to put up significant scores as the team kept losing wickets at regular intervals with Shariful Islam, Taijul Islam and Mohammad Saifuddin bagging two wickets each for the visitors.

Bangladesh A will take on Ireland A in the second match of the T20 series tomorrow.