

Bhutan's 'Ronaldo' set to dazzle

SPORTS REPORTER



Bhutan's star striker Chenchu Gyeltshen believes that the experience he gained while playing for some big clubs in the subcontinent, including Bangladesh, can help guide his teammates to their target in the SAFF Championship, which begins on Tuesday at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Gyeltshen, who is affectionately called CG7 in Bhutan, played in the 2016-17 Bangladesh Premier League season for Chittagong Abahani. He scored five goals in seven matches to guide the port city outfit to their second place finish, behind champions Dhaka Abahani. Gyeltshen then joined an Indian League side, Minerva Punjab, and helped them become champions by scoring seven goals and two assists. He now plays for another Indian Super League side, Bengaluru F, who became last season's runners-up.

"I got more experience by playing at big clubs in the recent years. Maybe I can guide new players of the team, make them push harder and play as a team to achieve the target," said a smiling Gyeltshen after the Bhutan national team checked in at a city hotel yesterday afternoon.

"It will be an advantage for me [playing in Chittagong Abahani] because I know almost all the players of Bangladesh and I even know their playing style. I'm also very used to winning at this Stadium, which will help me for sure," said the 22-year-old striker, who wants his team to reach the SAFF Championship final.

"Most of the players are new in our squad. We still have to win at least two or three matches to qualify for the knockout stage though our target is to reach the final if it is possible," said the lanky striker.

However, Gyeltshen believes that Bangladesh are still the favourites of Group A even though he struck a brace in their 3-1 win over Bangladesh in the 2016 Asian Cup Qualifiers play-off in Thimphu.

"The host team are favourites in our group. I don't think Bangladesh are behind Bhutan, Pakistan and Nepal. This time Bangladesh will play at home and will get support from their fans," Gyeltshen said. "It will be a very interesting match [against Bangladesh] for the audience to watch. We won against Bangladesh before but we are not underestimating them because they have many new players in this side. Football is something where you cannot underestimate opponents. We will try to fight them till the final whistle."

No footballer from Bhutan has ever drawn as much attention as Gyeltshen, who gradually got the media's attention through his goal-scoring abilities as well as by playing beyond the Bhutan league.



PHOTO: STAR

Bhutanese star striker Chenchu Gyeltshen.

Left-arm spinner Nazmul Islam had his first full-length bowling session at Mirpur yesterday since he got injured during the third T20I against West Indies in Florida last month. He had 25 stitches on his bowling hand.

PHOTO: STAR



High strike rate the aim Focus now on skills

SPORTS REPORTER



Wicketkeeper-batsman Mohammad Mithun's journey with the Bangladesh team since making his debut in 2014 has not been a smooth one. Although he has played 13 T20Is and three ODIs, Mithun did not have the benefit of playing a string of matches for the national side in order to settle in.

Despite starting his career as an opening batsman, Mithun was an integral part of the middle order for Bangladesh A on their recent tour of Ireland.

The right hander scored two fifties with a strike rate well over 100 and also struck a match-winning 39-ball 80 to seal the three-match T20 series against Ireland A.

The 27-year-old was eventually rewarded for his fine form and was included in the 15-member Bangladesh squad for the upcoming Asia Cup, but this time with a totally different role.

According to chief selector Minhajul Abedin the team management is hoping that Mithun will bat at number six or seven and score quick runs in the latter stages of the innings.

"I have always tried to play positive cricket since the start of my career -- not take much time to settle at the wicket. I try to keep up the momentum and the run flow and look to rotate the strike. When you come to bat at number six or seven it's important to rotate the strike, which is in my nature, so I am not worried about my new role.

"I used to open the innings against the new ball



MOHAMMAD MITHUN

and maybe I had to take some time to get set, which I will not get in the middle order. But I have to bat at a strike rate of 110-120 and even 130 at number six or seven. It depends on the situation but I think it will help me if I can bat at such high strike rates," Mithun told reporters after the skill training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

With Sabbir Rahman's prolonged poor form and off-field disciplinary issues resulting in the middle-order batsman being dropped from the Asia Cup squad, the Tigers's think tank is hoping that Mithun will be able to grab the opportunity and fill the vacant space.

"Look, I don't believe in replacing anyone as he had a different role and I will play a different one. I am a totally different person -- I might play better than him but I have to have the confidence and look to have the mentality to give my best," he added.

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With the Bangladesh cricket team's skills training having started yesterday, the remaining members of the Tigers' coaching staff -- batting consultant Neil McKenzie, bowling coach Courtney Walsh and newly appointed fielding consultant Ryan Cook -- are set to join the camp within the next couple of days.

Spin bowling coach Sunil Joshi reached Bangladesh on Saturday and has already joined the camp, accompanying head coach Steve Rhodes on the first day of the skills training camp at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur ahead of the 50-over Asia Cup starting from September 15.

McKenzie, who is expected to reach Dhaka yesterday, will join the training camp today while Walsh is set to land in Bangladesh today and will start working from tomorrow.

Fielding consultant Cook is expected to join the camp from September 5. In his absence, Rhodes worked on the fielding department with the cricketers since the start of the training camp on August 27. Physio Thiha Chandramohan and trainer Mario Villavarayan were also there from the start of the camp.

The selectors have already named a 15-member squad for the six-nation Asia Cup in UAE, where the Tigers will take on Sri Lanka in the tournament opener in Dubai. Bangladesh will also take on Afghanistan in the second group game on September 20 in Abu Dhabi.

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and his troops however will fly for the UAE a week earlier on September 9 to get used to the conditions. Bangladesh were the runners up of the previous edition of the Asia Cup in 2016 at home, which was a Twenty20 tournament.

QUICK SINGLES

The following are a few samples of stories that did not make the print edition. However, if they pique your interest, you can always read them online on The Daily Star website by simply scanning the QR codes listed below:

Ronaldo Jr outshines dad with four goals on Juve debut

Cristiano Ronaldo drew another blank for a third straight Serie A game on Saturday but his eight-year-old son, wearing the number 7 of his famous dad, scored four times in a 5-1 win against Lucento.

Benzema scoring freely for Real, Atletico crash to Celta
Karim Benzema scored twice and Gareth Bale notched another for Real Madrid in a 4-1 thrashing of Leganes on Saturday.

Cremer to miss Bangladesh tour
Former Zimbabwe captain Graeme Cremer will miss his nation's upcoming tour of Bangladesh after undergoing knee surgery.

Afghanistan name Asia Cup squad
Afghanistan named their squad for the upcoming Asia Cup 2018 in Dubai, including three fresh faces in the 17-member squad.



Day strikes perfect balance

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Bangladesh coach Jamie Day yesterday made one alteration to his 20-member squad for the SAFF Championship, which begins Tuesday, bringing in third goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Ziko in place of young winger Rabiul Hasan.

Keeping three goalkeepers in the squad is mandatory for participating teams but Day had unofficially declared his squad with only two custodians -- Ashraful Islam Rana and Shahidul Alam Sohel -- on Saturday night.

The final squad will be submitted in the managers' meeting today.

"Unfortunately when I picked a squad of 20 players, I wanted two goalkeepers to be selected, preferring 18 outfield players rather than having three

goalkeepers. The ruling wasn't made fully clear until this [Sunday] afternoon. Then we had to change," said the 38-year-old, who has now chosen 10 senior players and as many youngsters.

Earlier in the morning, after a training session at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, Day backed his senior players despite their dismal performance in the recent FIFA friendly against Sri Lanka, which the hosts lost 1-0 in Nilphamari.

"We need some older players in the SAFF [Championship] because we need their experience to guide the younger ones. We've got a good bunch of young lads who are the future of Bangladesh, but we've got to make sure they get a good experience from this and learn from the old ones as well.

"The younger ones are ahead of the older ones. The best XI will play, regardless of age. Everyone is clear about

where we are and who has a chance of starting and getting in the team," explained Day, who excluded young guns like Jafar Iqbal, Rahmat Mia, Matin Mia, Fazle Rabbi and M Abdullah.

During the practice matches in Qatar and South Korea as well in the Asian Games, these young guns were not in Day's plans. The coach opted to pick all 11 footballers who played in the starting eleven of the Asian Games squad although Day sent Jafar, Abdullah and Rabiul Hasan as substitutes while Rahmat Mia played in the starting eleven against Uzbekistan in the tournament.

"They've done okay in the Asian Games. They [Jafar, Rahmat, Matin] worked hard over the last 12 weeks. They didn't play in the Asian Games. At the moment, there are better players in the squad and I've gone with the best 20 players I've seen over the last 12 weeks," added Day.



Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin (2nd from L) and Uttara Motors chairman and managing director Matiur Rahman unveil the SAFF Suzuki Cup. Bangladesh captain Jamal Bhuyian (R) and his Sri Lankan counterpart Subash Madhusan (L) also attended the ceremony that took place at the corporate office of Uttara Motors, the sole distributor of Suzuki Motor Corporation in Bangladesh, yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Ali spins England to series-clinching win

AFP, Southampton



Moeen Ali bowled England to a series-clinching 60-run win in the fourth Test against India at Southampton on Sunday.

Victory, achieved with more than a day to spare, left England an unassailable 3-1 up in the five-match series against India, the world's number one ranked Test side, ahead of Friday's finale at The Oval.

India, set 245 to win, were dismissed for 184 with recalled off-spinner Ali taking four for 71 in 26 overs on a wearing pitch, including the key wicket of star batsman Virat Kohli (58).

That gave Ali a match return of nine for 134 following his first-innings five for 63. Unsurprisingly Ali, who also made 40 in England's first-innings 246, was named man-of-the-match.

It was another star turn at Hampshire's headquarters from Ali, who took six for 67 when England beat India by 266 runs in the corresponding Test at Southampton four years ago.

Elated England captain Joe Root insisted: "The strength of character has always been a massive strength of this team. But the skill level to back it up has been phenomenal. I couldn't be more proud of the group," he added.

While India captain Kohli and his deputy Ajinkya Rahane (51) were sharing a century stand for the fourth wicket, the tourists had hope of chasing down their stiff target. But after Ali dismissed both senior batsmen either side of tea, India lost four wickets for 13 runs.

This result, however, meant India had won just one of their last nine Test series outside Asia -- and that against a struggling West Indies.

"We didn't get the start that we wanted," said Kohli. "I would have to say England were relentless with the ball."



PHOTO: AFP

England off-spinner Moeen Ali took four wickets against India as the hosts secured a series-clinching 60-run win on the fourth day of the fourth Test yesterday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 246

INDIA: First Innings 273

ENGLAND: Second innings 271 all out (Root 48, Buttler 69, Curran 46; Sharma 2-36; Shami 4-57)

INDIA: Second innings 184 all out (Kohli 58, Rahane 51, Ashwin 25; Anderson 2-33, Ali 4-71, Stokes 2-34)

Result: England won the match by 60 runs and clinch the 5-match series 3-1.

Player-of-the-match: Moeen Ali.