

A QUIET HOMECOMING

ATIQUE ANAM

What a massive difference a month can make to the fortunes of and the perception regarding a team!

Last month, the Bangladesh under-18 women's football team were hailed as heroes as they returned from a triumphant campaign of the SAFF U-18 Women's Championship. They were received at the airport with garlands and sweetmeats upon their arrival, and were handed hefty monetary rewards by the Prime Minister.

In a matter five weeks, the women's national team, which is almost the same as the under-18 team, returned to Dhaka on Wednesday night, but to very little notice this time. They were whisked through the arrival terminal, although there were no prying eyes of the media or any football federation officials waiting to receive them.

And that was not unexpected at all, for they have gone through two devastating campaigns in the meantime -- the AFC U-19 Championship Qualifiers and the 2020 Women's Olympic Qualifiers. In the two tournaments where they were playing against full-fledged national teams, they lost four out of six matches, all by big margins, while managing a win against Tajikistan and a hard-fought draw against Nepal.

The two positive results were trumpeted by head coach Golam Rabbani Choton as 'historic achievements' even though the broad realisation of the team management is that these girls are not yet up for the rigours of a senior team.

The Bangladesh team that played in the latest tournament in Myanmar -- the 2020 Women's Olympic Qualifiers where senior sides participate -- featured eight players of the under-16 team, 11 from the under-18 team and one overage player. In the starting eleven of the three matches, at least five or six of the players were below 16 years of age and they were playing against some of the seasoned campaigners of the opposition teams, who were much older and physically a lot stronger for this stage.

Bangladesh lost their second match against India 7-1, with six of those seven goals scored by two of their stalwarts who have more than a decade's experience in international football.

Mahbubur Rahman Litu, the assistant coach of the Bangladesh team with almost a decade's experience in women's football, explained the

No matter how much trumpeting Choton does to paint a rosy picture of the future of women's football, even he would concede that the development that takes place at the age-group level, thanks to the Bangabandhu Gold Cup primary school tournament and the subsequent training by football's local governing body, is stunted or even reversed when the players reach the senior level.

The 7-1 defeat against India should be a wake-up call when one considers that Bangladesh had managed to hold the Indians to a draw just two years ago. While the Indian senior team has certainly become more experienced with their exposure to women's league and national team assignments, the Bangladesh senior team has only grown weaker.

Some of the senior players that represented Bangladesh in the 2016 SAFF Women's Championship where they drew against India -- goalkeeper Sabina Akter, midfielders Suinu Marma and Mainu Marma, former under-18 captain and centre-back Trishna Chakma and strikers Aumraching Marma and Mirona Akter -- have left football, in most cases due to being marriage.

The game's local governing body is committing to being more conscious about this issue currently as it is trying to convince the parents of these players to not get them married off at such promising stages of their career. Some of the players have in fact got into payroll of BJMC or Ansar and get a monthly salary to keep themselves interested in the game.

However, there is a more worrying trend which is perhaps not being addressed properly.

Many of the under-16 players are continuously outperforming the under-18 players. Some of the players who were part of the qualifying campaign and the final round of the AFC U-16 Women's Championship two years ago are losing their sheen. Four or five players of that team have already lost their place in the side while promising players, like Sanjida Akter, are losing their place in the starting eleven. Krishna Rani Sarker, the best striker of that time, hardly shows the same level of skill she did two years ago.

This is happening due to the fact that the focus was firmly on the under-16 team while the players above that age group had largely remained out of international matches even though they were training with the rest of the players.



The Bangladesh women's football team had a quiet return on Wednesday from Myanmar, where they endured a horrid campaign in the 2020 Olympic Qualifiers.

PHOTO: BFF

defeat this way: "Some of the goals that we conceded were due to mistakes of the players. The first goal came from a penalty which was due to the mistake of our left-back Rituporna Chakma. But you can't blame her; she is still a player of the under-15 team. She played very well at the under-16 and under-18 teams but against such senior and experienced oppositions, she was helpless."

And needless to say, most of the others in the team were helpless as well.

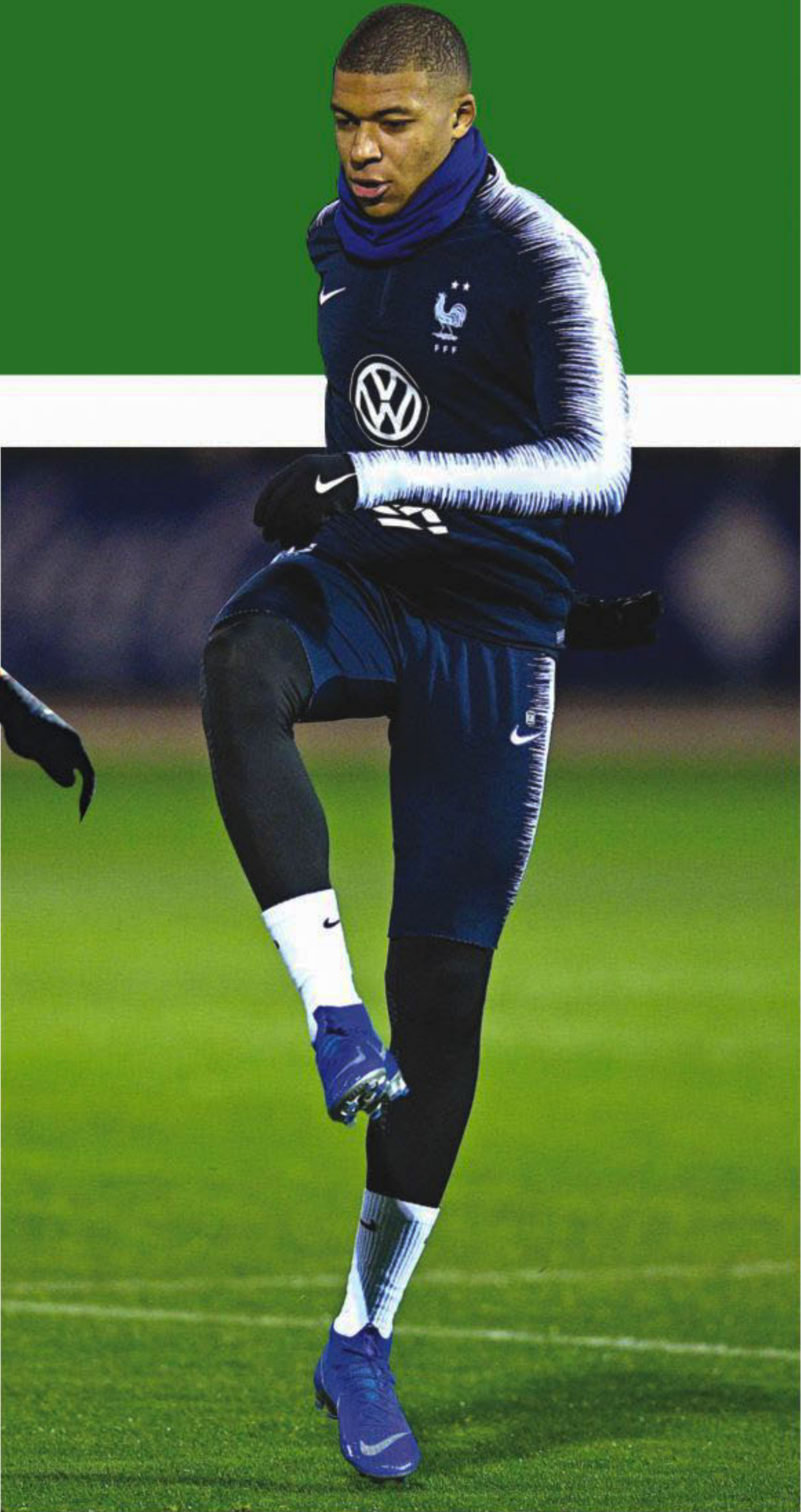
Head coach Choton, in a message after the last match against Nepal, said: "The young Bangladesh team continue to reach milestones of immense proportions. In two weeks the team and players have created and reached two historical landmarks for women's football," adding that he saw bright future for the team in a few years if the good work is continued.

Between February 2016 and November 2018, the senior team played only two matches -- during a three-nation tournament in Singapore in March 2017 where they lost both matches. As a result of the lack of matches, Bangladesh are not currently represented in the FIFA Women's Rankings and there does not seem to be much cause for optimism.

Even at home, there is no platform for these players to have match experience as the women's football league has not been held for the past five years.

Assistant coach Litu feels there is a need for the women to remain involved in competitive matches as he feels training is not enough to set them up for international matches.

"As coaches, we also want that our female footballers play in a league or any tournament domestically so that they can be more prepared for the challenge of international football."



Netherlands captain and the most expensive defender ever, Virgil Van Dijk (L), will be tasked with stopping France's potent attack, led by the electric Kylian Mbappe, in their UEFA Nations League match tonight.

PHOTO: KNVB/AFP

Rejuvenated Dutch face France

AFP, Rotterdam



World Cup winners France and a fast-improving Netherlands under Ronald Koeman could both book places in the finals of the UEFA Nations League in matches between Thursday and Tuesday.

Kylian Mbappe can carry world champions France into the finals on Friday with a draw against the resurgent Netherlands in Rotterdam.

"We are going there for the win," coach Didier Deschamps warned. "We are the world champions and we will behave like it."

France beat the Dutch 2-1 in September

after PSG star Mbappe scored the opener and Chelsea target man Olivier Giroud clinched the three points after Ryan Babel had equalised.

Since then the Netherlands have thrashed Germany 3-0 and drew 1-1 in Belgium. Koeman is rebuilding the Dutch squad that failed to reach this year's World Cup with rookie striker Arnaut Groeneveld, a 21-year-old Nigerian-born winger, and Justin Kluivert, son of Patrick, two exciting new faces.

Two of the world's best defenders also go head-to-head as Real Madrid's Ballon d'Or contender Rafael Varane will line up for France and Liverpool's blockbuster signing, Dutch captain

Virgil van Dijk, will marshall his backline.

Deschamps will be missing stars Paul Pogba and Benjamin Mendy but has recalled Moussa Sissoko, the versatile Tottenham man who was one of their stars in their run to the Euro 2016 final.

The strongest sides will qualify for the finals next June, but all 16 group winners will get a place in the Euro 2020 qualification playoffs.

However, if those nations have already qualified for Euro 2020 through normal qualifying, the best-ranked team from a lower group will be drafted in.

Qualifying for Euro 2020 does not begin until next March.

Tigresses lose again

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh are yet to secure a win in the ongoing ICC Women's World T20 as Salma Khatun's side suffered a 25-run defeat against Sri Lanka in their third group stage match at the Daren Sammy National Cricket Stadium at Gros Islet, St Lucia yesterday.

After electing to field, Bangladesh got off to a good start as Jahanara Alam bowled Yasoda Mendis with the very first ball of the innings.

The Tigresses restricted their opponents well as Sri Lanka could only notch 17 for one on the scoreboard by the end of their powerplay.

Shashikala Siriwardene's 31 off 33 balls helped the Lankans eventually post 97 for seven. Jahanara was the pick of Bangladesh's bowlers, bagging three wickets for 21 runs from her four-over spell.

Coming in to chase, Bangladesh fell under immense pressure as Sanjida Islam and Fargana Hoque made early exits in the very first over of the innings.

The Tigresses could not recover from that initial shock and kept losing wickets at regular intervals with only three Bangladesh batters managing two-figure scores. Nigar Sultana top scored for the side with 20 runs.

After the match, Jahanara expressed her

We had a goal, that we don't want to play any more T20 qualifiers.



JAHANARA ALAM

disappointment with this defeat as it may have dented Bangladesh's chances of avoiding the qualifiers altogether next time around.

"We had a goal, that we don't want to play any more T20 qualifiers," Jahanara said. "But we still have a chance to increase our rank if we win against South Africa. Who knows, something can happen, cricket is an unpredictable game."

If they are to save some pride, Bangladesh need to win their last game of the tournament against South Africa on Sunday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SRI LANKA: 97 for 7 in 20 overs (Surangika 16, Siriwardene 31, De Silva 12; Jahanara 3-21)

BANGLADESH: 72 all out in 20 overs (Ayasha 11, Nigar 20, Ritu 11; Prabodhani 2-6, Siriwardene 2-10, Jayangani 3-17)

Result: Sri Lanka won by 25 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Shashikala Siriwardene



Brazil talisman Neymar got into his mojo and broke out the moves in training on the eve of tonight's international friendly against Uruguay in London.

PHOTO: CBF

SHORT CORNER

Messi to return for Argentina next year

Lionel Messi will play for Argentina again in 2019, according to the national team's general manager Jorge Burruchaga.

Messi has not represented his country since the World Cup, where Argentina were beaten in the last 16 by eventual winners France. Burruchaga is confident, though, that Messi will be back in the Argentina team in time for their Copa America campaign in Brazil in 2019.

"No date is scheduled right now for the return of Messi and he will not be back before the end of the year," Burruchaga said. "But it's impossible that he will not be in the national team again. This is transitory."

"I'm sure that next year, he will be in the Argentina national team again."

-- AGENCIES

Former landlord suing Dembele

Ousmane Dembele is reportedly facing a lawsuit of more than 20,000 euros from his former landlord in Dortmund for leaving his rented apartment in a "deplorable state" after his move to Barcelona in August 2017.

Gerd Weissenberg told German daily Bild that he had been forced to take legal action against the France winger for damage caused to the property. The 21-year-old Barca player also failed to leave a forwarding address, leading the German court to note that it had nowhere to send the suit.

"There was rubbish and food left all over the place," Weissenberg told Bild, to whom he provided photos. "There was rotten food in the fridge and between the wardrobes, bin bags everywhere and stains all over the floors. Behind the door was a pile of unpaid bills, so it seems I am not the only one who is out of pocket."

-- AGENCIES

Ronaldo's €31,000 wine bill

Having not joined up with Portugal for their UEFA Nations League matches, Cristiano Ronaldo and his family have been touring London over the past few days, staying at the Bulgari Hotel in Knightsbridge -- where a room sets guests back more than 10,000 euros per night -- and even catching Novak Djokovic's ATP World Tour Final match against John Isner.

The pair even headed to the Royal Opera House to watch a ballet performance. However, the most expensive part of the trip proved to be a visit to the exclusive Scott's restaurant in Mayfair, where Ronaldo reportedly dropped more than 31,000 euros on wine in just 15 minutes for him and his party.

First up was a bottle of Richebourg Grand Cru which, at 20,000 euros a bottle, is considered the world's most expensive wine. After that, the couple ordered a 1982 Pomerol Petrus, which costs more than 10,000 euros a bottle, before heading off to catch the ATP Finals game. -- AGENCIES

Vincius can be the new Ronaldo, says Cafu

Brazil legend Cafu praised Vinicius in an interview with Fox Sports Mexico, with the former AC Milan player stating he is convinced that the youngster will become a bona fide star at Real Madrid.

"Vinicius is going to triumph at Real Madrid, but he's not a star yet. He can't be compared now to Cristiano Ronaldo. Cristiano is Cristiano, with all the history [he has] at Real Madrid. He conquered everything there," said Cafu.

"Vinicius has all [it takes] to follow in his footsteps. He can be the new Cristiano, but he has to sweat a lot for that to happen."

-- AGENCIES



সভাপতি

অভিনন্দন



সাধারণ সম্পাদক

"Bangladesh Association for Medical Devices & Surgical Instruments Manufacturer & Exporter" নামক সংগঠনটিকে গত ০৯ সেপ্টেম্বর ২০১৮ তারিখে বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয় (টি.ও.-২ শাখা) লাইসেন্স প্রদান করে (লাইসেন্স নং ১৩/২০১৮)। এ প্রেক্ষিতে গত ৩০শে সেপ্টেম্বর ২০১৮তারিখে বৌদ্ধ মূল্যবান রোপানি ও কার্বে সমূহের পরিলক্ষিত সংগঠনটিকে নিবন্ধন করে, (নিবন্ধন নং টি.ও.-৯৭/২০১৮) এবং গত ২২শে অক্টোবর ২০১৮ তারিখে বি. ফেডারেশন অফ বাংলাদেশ খেয়ার অফ কমার্শিয়াল ইন্ডাস্ট্রি সংগঠনটিকে মেম্বারশিপ প্রদান করে। সকল আনুষ্ঠানিকতা সম্পন্ন করে সফলভাবে বাক্সা ভরু করার সংগঠনের সভাপতি, জনাব ডঃ রতনদাস আলম ও সাধারণ সম্পাদক জনাব, মোঃ আবদুর রাজ্জাক কে সংগঠনের সদস্যবৃন্দের পক্ষ থেকে অভিনন্দন জ্ঞাতি।

নিবেদক

সদস্যবৃন্দ

Bangladesh Association for Medical Devices & Surgical Instruments Manufacturer & Exporter