

SPORT



The Bangladesh team toiled tirelessly during training at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday ahead of the opening match of the inaugural Bangamata Under-19 Women's International Gold Cup against United Arab Emirates on Monday. PHOTO: STAR



GROUPINGS

GROUP A

Mongolia
Tajikistan
Laos

GROUP B

United Arab Emirates
Bangladesh
Kyrgyzstan

FIXTURES

Date	Match	Time
April 22	Bangladesh v United Arab Emirates	6:00pm
April 23	Tajikistan v Mongolia	6:00pm
April 24	United Arab Emirates v Kyrgyzstan	6:00pm
April 25	Mongolia v Laos	6:00pm
April 26	Kyrgyzstan v Bangladesh	6:00pm
April 27	Laos v Tajikistan	6:00pm
April 29	First Semifinal	6:00pm
April 30	Second Semifinal	6:00pm
May 3	Final	TBC

* Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

BANGLADESH SQUAD

Rupna Chakma, Mahmuda Akter, Yeasmin Akter, Masura Parvin, Nargis Khatun, Akhi Khatun, Sheuli Azim, Mishrat Jahan Mousumi (C), Shamsunnahar Sr, Nilufar Yeasmin Nila, Nazma Akter, Maria Manda, Monika Chakma, Israt Jahan Ratna, Marzia, Rajia Khatun, Sanjida Akter, Sirat Jahan Swapna, Krishna Rani Sarker, Shamsunnahar Jr, Sajeda Khatun, Tohura Khatun, Mosammat Sultana.

THE ACTION STARTS TOMORROW

Hosts Bangladesh have eye on the title

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will start the first Bangamata Under-19 Women's International Gold Cup tomorrow with an eye on the title. The hosts will begin their campaign with a match against Group B opponents United Arab Emirates at the Bangabandhu National Stadium tomorrow in this six-nation invitational tournament -- the first of its kind in Bangladesh women's football.

The match will kick off at 6:00pm. The other team in group B is Kyrgyzstan while Group A features Mongolia, Tajikistan and Laos.

After the group matches, the top two teams from each group will reach the semifinals, which will be held on April 29 and April 30. May 3 will host the final of the tournament, which is where the hosts have their sights.

"This tournament has been organised showing faith on us. We will try to repay that faith. Since this tournament is named after Bangamata, the mother of the Prime Minister, we will keep no stone unturned to win the trophy," Bangladesh team captain Mishrat Jahan Mousumi told reporters at a press conference organised at the Bangladesh Football Federation house yesterday to apprise the home team's preparations.

Although among the six teams playing in this tournament, Bangladesh are ranked fourth (127th in FIFA rankings), with Laos and Kyrgyzstan currently not having any official FIFA rankings due to not having played enough matches over the past 18 months, the hosts are believed to be one of the strongest at the age-

group level.

This tournament is being seen as a platform to regain confidence for women's football following the debacle in the recent SAFF Women's Championship last month where the women in red and green were eliminated from the semifinals and were beaten by finalists India and Nepal by big margins. This under-19 team has all the players from that squad except for striker Sabina

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MISHRAT JAHAN MOUSUMI
BANGLADESH TEAM CAPTAIN

Khatun, with the inclusion of three new faces in Shamsunnahar Jr, Sajeda Khatun and Mosammat Sultana.

The team management feels the mistakes the team made in Nepal have been indicated and ironed out, making the current team even stronger.

"We have played two tournaments from February 27 to March 20 [the AFC U-16 Championship Qualifiers and SAFF Women's

Championship], and there was a week's recovery after that," team coach Golam Rabbani Chhoton said.

"The girls have been in training since March 28, which worked on various areas of the game including rectifying the mistakes we made in Nepal. So we will play every match with the target of winning. There will be challenges, but we will have to overcome those challenges. Our target is to win and keep the trophy at home," added the coach, who is charged with guiding all the women's teams from the age-group to senior level.

Bangladesh have never played against their first-match opponents United Arab Emirates -- the highest-ranked team in the tournament at 98 -- at either the under-19 or senior level, but these two countries met quite a few times at the under-16 level, with Bangladesh winning all those encounters quite convincingly. The most recent meeting was during the first round of the AFC U-16 Women's Championship Qualifiers in Dhaka last year, which ended in a 7-0 win for Bangladesh.

The United Arab Emirates, Mongolia and Tajikistan teams were first to arrive for the tournament while the Laos and Kyrgyzstan teams were scheduled to arrive last night. All teams will be present at the official press briefing at a hotel in Dhaka today where the tournament's trophy will also be unveiled.

All the matches of the tournament will kick off at 6:00pm and will be telecast live on RTV and NagorikTV.



The Tajikistan team arrived in Dhaka on Friday night to participate in the Bangamata Under-19 Women's International Gold Cup, which begins on Monday at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. PHOTO: BFF



The players' transfer event for the Dhaka Premier Division Women's Cricket League, scheduled to begin from April 25, was held yesterday in Mirpur. Ten teams will participate in single league format before the top five teams battle it out in the Super League stage for ultimate glory. PHOTO: BCB

Title there for the taking

SPORTS REPORTER

The match between Legends of Rugganj and Abahani Limited in the Super League round of the Dhaka Premier League at BKS-4 today has become all the important fixture of the season.

If table-toppers Rugganj, who have 12 wins in 14 matches, manage to beat Abahani, they will instantly become this season's champion with a match remaining.

On the other hand, a win for Abahani will keep them alive in the race for the title, which would then be decided by the last game of the season on April 23. The Dhanmondi-based club have a total of 22 points following 11 wins in 14 matches.

If Abahani beat Rugganj and then the two sides win their last respective fixtures of the league, they will finish on equal points. The two teams are also

equal on the head-to-head, beating each other once apiece in the two earlier meetings of the season. Hence, in that case the net run rate will come into play when deciding the champions.

In their previous meeting in the group stage, Rugganj totally outplayed Abahani to clinch a comprehensive six-wicket win after bundling out the Sky Blues on just 122.

Rugganj has remained consistent throughout the season, winning nine consecutive matches in the group stage to move into the Super League phase as table toppers. One of the architects behind Rugganj's prolific form is their top run getter Mohammad Naim, who stuck a total of 548 runs in 14 matches, while skipper Naeem Islam has also been in good form with the bat.

Former Bangladesh batsman Aftab Ahmed made his coaching debut with Rugganj this season and so far his charges have displayed brilliant

performances as a unit.

"I have been given more than I expected. The confidence the team showed in every game, there should not be a problem taking on any team in the remainder of the tournament I believe. We can honestly expect a big result from this team," said Aftab.

Abahani are boosted by national cricketers with even the presence of the Tigers' inspirational ODI skipper Mashrafe bin Mortaza in the side.

Despite a confident start to the league, Abahani lost their way in the latter stages of the league, losing twice consecutively to come under pressure.

Skipper Jahurul Islam and all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin have been in prolific form, however, the likes of Soumya Sarkar and Sabbir Rahman have struggled to score big runs so far.

In the days' other two games, Prime Bank will take on Mohammedan in Dhaka while Prime Dolshwar face Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club in Savar.

'We can beat any team on our day'



ICC

Brian Lara, the former West Indies batsman, believes the Caribbean side are unpredictable, and that consistency will be key if they have to perform well in the ICC World Cup.

Lara, who is in India as a part of the expert commentary panel for the Indian Premier League, backed his home side to make it to the semifinals, calling them the "surprise element" in the tournament.

"West Indies will have to play some consistent cricket. We've shown that we can beat England or India. We can beat any team on our day. But then we lose against Bangladesh or Afghanistan, and we let it all go away. So, that's what West Indies have to avoid. I would love to see them get to the semifinals," he told the Times of India.

"West Indies, over the last two [T20] World Cups, have been the surprise element. They've always been up there in the opposing team's mind. There have been too many elements joining the dots, gradually but it's happening. So, I don't think any country walks into the game against West Indies anymore thinking it's all over before it starts.

"On the other hand, we are capable of colossal failures, too. So, the surprise element works both ways and that's where West Indies need to keep working," added the left-hander.

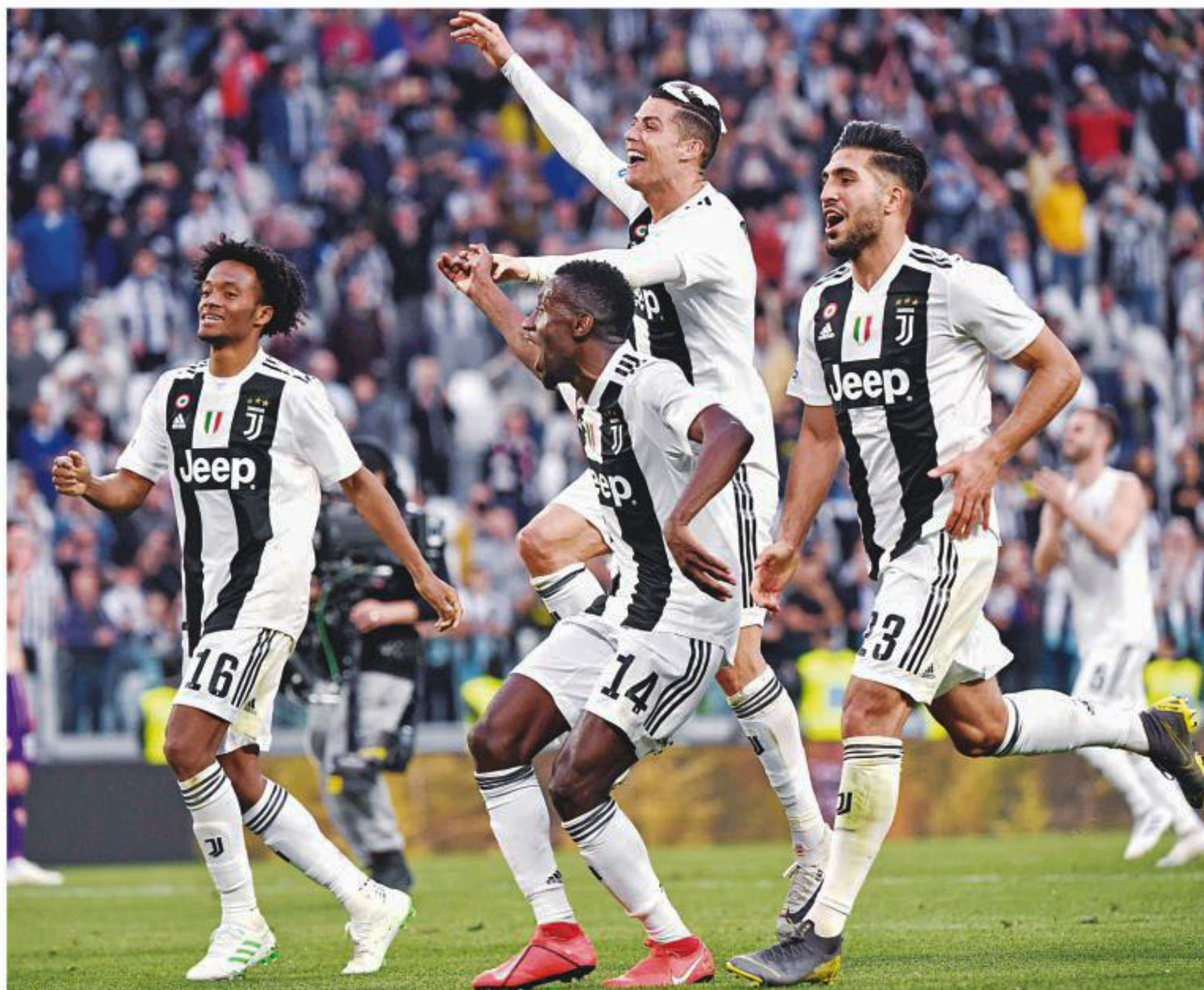
Farbrace praises Morgan

ICC

Former England assistant coach Paul Farbrace was all praise for limited-overs captain Eoin Morgan, calling him the "single biggest factor" behind England's white-ball success.

Morgan was in charge when England exited the previous edition of the ICC World Cup in 2015 at the group stage, after being defeated by Bangladesh. Since then, they have transformed into a formidable side, and are now the odds-on favourites to lift the World Cup for the first time, at home.

Farbrace credited Morgan for England's rise to No. 1 rankings. "They have the best white-ball captain in the world," Farbrace said.



Juventus superstar Cristiano Ronaldo (C) with his hair covered in foam celebrate with teammates after the Old Lady secured their 8th consecutive Serie title after winning 2-1 against Fiorentina in Turin yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Delhi cruise; RR crush MI

AGENCIES

Shreyas Iyer slammed a quickfire 58 as Delhi Capitals cruised to a five-wicket win against Kings XI Punjab in an Indian Premier League encounter in Delhi yesterday. Chasing 164 to win Delhi won the match with 2 balls to spare.

In the day's first match Steve Smith led Rajasthan Royals to a five-wicket victory against Mumbai Indians in Jaipur and kept their slim chances of making the play-offs alive.

Chasing 162 to win, a 70-run partnership between Smith (59*) and Riyan Parag (43) for the fourth wicket laid the foundation for the win as RR eventually got to the target with 5 balls to spare.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Punjab: 163 for 7 in 20 overs (Gayle 69, Mandeep 30; Lamichhane 3-40, Rabada 2-23, Axar 2-22)

Delhi: 166 for 5 in 19.4 overs (Dhawan 56, Iyer 58; Viljoen 2-39)

Result: Delhi won by 5 wickets

Man-of-the-match: Shreyas Iyer

Mumbai: 161 for 5 in 20 overs (De Kock 65, Yadav 34; Gopal 2-21, Binny 1-19)

Rajasthan: 162 for 5 in 19.1 overs (Smith 59 not out, Parag 43; Chahar 3-29)

Result: Rajasthan won by 5 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Steven Smith.