



Argentina superstar Lionel Messi (C) is surrounded by teammates Renzo Saravia (R) and Matias Suarez (L) during a training session at Manoel Barradas Stadium on Wednesday ahead of the Copa America tournament, which starts tonight. PHOTO: AFP

English expertise for BFF Academy

SPORTS REPORTER



With the planned football academy activities underway since early April, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) took a further step to hone the budding players' skills by appointing high-profile coaching staff for the duration of one year.

Football's local governing body picked up some 61 players, aged under 15 through 18, through trials earlier this year. The players were then sent for a long-term training camp at the Fortis Sports Ground, located at Beraid in Badda, to prepare them for the upcoming SAFF U-15 and U-18 Championships as well as the AFC U-16 and U-19 Championships Qualifiers.

The newly appointed coaches were introduced at the BFF house yesterday with BFF technical and strategic director Paul Smalley briefing the media on their responsibilities.

Robert Martin Ryles, Andrew Peter Turner, Robert Andrew Mimms and Stuart Paul Watkiss all are UEFA- A licensed coaches and have vast experience of working with different professional clubs as well national associations.

"The gentlemen here have top qualifications in both senior performance football as well as development football," Smalley said.

"The question may raise as to why we looked into all English expertise. It is not for their citizenship, rather they superseded other candidates who applied for the position. Bobby [Mimms] will be responsible for the goalkeepers on all national teams, Stuart [who is the assistant coach of the senior national team] will

lead the U-19 team while Andrew Turner and Robert Ryles will look after the U-14 to U-16 groups.

"Robert's has medical expertise and also physical conditioning expertise," explained Smalley, who acknowledged Fortis Group and K-Sports for building up the BFF academy, which has been functioning well for the last six weeks.

"For the academy, we brought some foreign expertise to compliment the local experts, who have also been working at the academy. It is a very comprehensive programme for age-group players of the U-15, U-18 levels for the SAFF Championship and U-16 and U-19 levels for the AFC Championship Qualifiers," he continued.

"Since I played professional football and have worked with a number of professional academies in England, I think my experience will help me to work here at this federation as well as Forties Academy. I will certainly give my best and I will certainly give as much enthusiasm and effort as I can to help Bangladesh football as well as the national team," said Turner, who once played for English Premier League sides Tottenham Hotspur FC Portsmouth FC.

"It is a great honour to come here. This is not something that I take lightly. I blasted the opportunity in the English Premier League with leading international players and worked at academies with U-15 players to senior level. So I was given the opportunity in England and also travelled the World over with English international teams. Hopefully I will be able to bring the education, experiences and development boost that will make technically good, professionally good attitude players here," explained Ryles, who will be head coach of U-15 and U-16 teams.

Neymar trouble overshadow kick-off

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil should have been gearing up for another major home sporting spectacle with renewed optimism that star forward Neymar would help bring to an end a 12-year trophy drought.

But instead, the Selecao's golden boy is dominating the build-up to a tournament he will miss due to an ankle injury for all the wrong reasons.

Neymar is embroiled in a rape scandal in which he has been accused of forcing himself on a model he met through social media in a hotel room in the French capital, where he plays his club trade for Paris Saint-Germain.

It's tarnished the festive atmosphere of South America's footballing showpiece with an ugly affair that shows no sign of going away, despite Najila Trindade Mendes de Souza's rapidly unravelling case.

It all blew up on June 2 when Neymar published a seven-minute video on Instagram, where he had first been in contact with Trindade, revealing that he had been accused of rape.

The scandal quickly snowballed and three days later, after a senior Brazilian federation official had said he would "bet" that Neymar would pull out of the Copa, the PSG forward injured ankle ligaments in a 2-0 friendly victory over tournament invitees Qatar.

Even so, Brazil's ability to concentrate on

the task at hand has been hampered by the Neymar rape soap opera.

Coach Tite insists that Brazil are still in fine fettle ahead of the tournament, which they haven't won since 2007 when a team inspired by former Real Madrid and AC Milan forward Robinho outclassed Lionel Messi's Argentina 3-0 in the final.

Tite admitted Neymar would be missed, saying "it's a shame to not have one of the

7-0 thrashing of 10-man Honduras in which Neymar's absence certainly wasn't felt, with his substitute David Neres scoring in the rout.

Manchester City forward Gabriel Jesus and Liverpool's Roberto Firmino also got in amongst the goals while Everton's Richarlison provided several assists.

The hosts open the tournament in Sao Paulo on Friday against Bolivia, winners on home soil in 1963.

With Neymar out, the tournament's biggest star will be Messi, who at 31 is running out of time to finally land a major international honour with Argentina.

He has been on the losing side in three finals, including the last two against Chile, and the 2014 World Cup in Brazil when Germany triumphed.

They warmed up for the tournament in similar style to Brazil, thumping Nicaragua 5-1 in a friendly with Messi, recently named the world's highest paid sportsman, bagging a brace.

"We showed a clear game plan and in-form players," said coach Lionel Scaloni, who brings a young and inexperienced squad to Brazil, despite the presence of Barcelona's Messi, Manchester City's Sergio Aguiero and Angel Di Maria of Paris Saint-Germain.

"With the forwards we have and our defensive solidity, we're going to wage war in the Copa."



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three best players in the world."

"After Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, he's comparable only to (Eden) Hazard, with one advantage: he's quicker. That's the player we're missing," said Tite last week.

But he said that rather than reflect on what they're missing, "inside the squad we're much more focussed on working hard, training well, preparing for matches, which has been our main focus."

The Selecao's last warm-up match was a



Bangladesh coach Jamie Day (R) displays a national team jersey during a press conference at the BFF House yesterday. PHOTO: BFF



20 crore allocated for football

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal promised to allocate about Tk 20 crore for the development of the country's football while placing the national budget for the 2019-20 fiscal year before the parliament yesterday.

"Our government is playing an important role in the development of nationwide infrastructures for sports and culture to help organise different types of competitions and events at national, district and upazila levels.

"Talented players in various sports are being hunted and provided with long-term training. In the budget for FY 2019-20, I propose to make a special allocation of Tk 20 crore to the Bangladesh Football Federation for the development of football in the country," said the finance minister yesterday. It should be mentioned that, according to BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag, the game's local governing body sought Tk 30 crore for different activities.

"It's not good that a small amount of money has been thrown at football. Similarly, there are many such areas that could have been encouraged," said KAS Murshid, director general of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies.

The government had earlier allocated Tk 1.42 crore for the BFF to help them run the district football leagues. BFF president Kazi Salahuddin informed yesterday that they will duly distribute the money among district football associations and different clubs at lower divisions, sans the professional football league clubs, this time as well.

Bonanseia whips up WC frenzy in Italy

AFP, Turin



A brace against Australia and the praise of Italy legend Paolo Rossi, Juventus striker Barbara Bonanseia ensured the Azzurre made a dramatic return to the Women's

World Cup after a 20-year absence.

Bonanseia's stoppage-time winner gave Italy a 2-1 last-gasp victory over one of the tournament favourites Australia, and they next face debutants Jamaica in their Group C game in Reims on Friday looking to book their ticket to the knock-out rounds.

"The Paolo Rossi of women's football? Yes, I see myself a little in her," insisted Italy's 1982 World Cup hero Rossi of comparisons with Bonanseia, who turns 28 on Thursday. "She's talented, fast, and she scored two goals."

Italy failed to qualify for the men's World Cup in Russia last year, with Milena

Bertolini's side now carrying the nation's hopes on the world stage.

The Italians have qualified for the women's World Cup just three times, the last appearance in 1999 in the United States where they placed ninth, having reached the quarter-finals of the inaugural edition of China 1991.

In Valenciennes on Monday, Bonanseia was the stand-out player with her speed and technical skills in what was an unexpected success against the much-fancied Australians.

She scored the winner in the fifth minute of additional time, after also having a third goal ruled out for being marginally offside.

She was carried triumphantly aloft by her teammates, all under the eyes of her parents, who drove the 1,000km from Pinerolo, near Turin, to the north of France in a camper van as her father was afraid to take the plane.

But even if many, also in Italy, are only discovering the talented forward, Bonanseia's success has not come overnight.

After an excellent Euro 2017, she had been contacted by French club Lyon, the best team in Europe.

The opportunity seemed impossible to refuse for an Italian, not having access to professionalism in her own country.

But at the same time, Juventus launched its women's team and Bonanseia, born 20km from the city, could not ignore the call of the black and white striped jersey.

Two seasons, 50 matches and 37 goals later, she has won two Italian league titles with Juventus and one Italian Cup.

Above all, her success has mirrored the rise of women's football in Italy, where the discipline, which still has a long way to catch up, started from very far.



WORLD ARCHERY CHAMPIONSHIPS Ruman makes history

SPORTS REPORTER

Ruman Sana's stunning run in the Hyundai World Archery Championships came to an end in the semifinals of the men's recurve individual event, but not before he had earned a ticket to the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

Ruman is the second Bangladeshi athlete to enter the Olympics directly after golfer Siddikur Rahman. Siddikur earned the Olympic quota for the Rio Olympics in 2016.

Ruman suffered a 7-3 defeat to Malaysia's Khairul Anuar Mohamad in the semifinals and will play the bronze medal match against Italy's Mauro Nespoli on June 15.

The 24-year-old archer failed to carry his brilliant performances into the semifinals.



"It's a proud moment for all the people of Bangladesh. Sana made us proud. With this remarkable performance all coaching staff, federation officials, sponsors are happy. Now we are looking forward to achieve something from Tokyo," said national archery team's German coach Martin Fredrick.

To ensure the semifinal berth, 20th-ranked Ruman handed a 6-2 defeat to fifth-ranked Sjeff Van Den Berg of Netherlands, which was his best achievement at the world's top tournament.

In the pre-quarterfinals, Ruman showed his world class performance by beating the gold medalist of the 2011 World Archery Championships, Kim Woojin of Korea. He beat Woojin 6-4 set points.

UEFA enters online video market

AFP, Lausanne

UEFA launched on Thursday their own on-demand video platform which will include free Bundesliga highlights in Britain and France.

The OTT -- over the top -- service also has 60 years of archive footage of men's matches as well as women's and youth football.

From next season round-ups from the German league as well as weekly programmes for an international audience will be available on the website every Monday in key European markets as well as in the Middle East and Africa.

UEFA's director of marketing Guy-Laurent Epstein said the governing body was not planning on competing head-on with traditional broadcasters.

"We will be a supplementary offering to television channels because they do things live. We will do the behind the scenes things, press conferences, many things which are not traditionally available, to tell an extra story," he told AFP.

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