

## Pressure is on India: Bhuiyan

ANISUR RAHMAN from Kolkata

Bangladesh coach Jamie Day had surprisingly announced that he would play for a win at home against Asian champions Qatar but the 39-year-old tempered expectations on the eve of the joint qualifier for the World Cup and Asian Cup against India at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata today.

Day may be familiar with the rivalry between the neighbouring countries, which gives India a clear edge in terms of results. Bangladesh have only beaten India thrice, with the last victory coming about 16 years ago in the 2003 SAFF Championship in Dhaka when Bangladesh won 2-1 in the semifinal. On the other hand, Bangladesh have lost 12 games in the 25 meetings between the two sides since 1978. 10 others were drawn.

"If a match is on our home ground, I want to win. But it is being played in India so they have the advantage," Day told a packed pre-match press conference yesterday. "They played well against Qatar and have confidence. We need to do well defensively and not concede early in front of what will possibly be a strong crowd. We need to be solid and stand against them as long as possible and take our chances."

Although the British coach did not proclaim that Bangladesh could win the match, his charges have had good experiences against the fast-improving India, who needed to come from behind to draw their last two matches against Bangladesh -- one in the 2013 SAFF Championship in Nepal and the other in a FIFA friendly in 2014. Sunil Chhetri struck the equaliser on both occasions.

Asked if Bangladesh could break their 16-year jinx against India, Day said: "If

Bangla TV & Star Sports 2 will show the match live from Salt Lake Stadium, Kolkata at 8:00pm (BST)

you look at the history of Bangladesh and India over the past, India have improved massively in domestic football which helped their national team. We competed against Qatar very well and if we do so again -- if we can perform at that level -- it will be a very close match. India also have to play well. If we play well, then we have a chance to get a result. If we don't play well, India win. But it's going to be a tough game. If we get one or three points, it will be good result for us."

This group in this team have been under Day for nearly a year-and-a-half and showed their character against Qatar with a good team effort. That will bolster confidence in the fight against India, who come into the match on the back of a goalless draw against Qatar.

Midfielder Jamal Bhuiyan, who played tremendously against Qatar and Afghanistan, believes India will feel the pressure to perform.

"We don't have pressure. The pressure is on India because they have to play at home. If they don't perform well, the spectators will turn against them. I will tell my players to go out there and enjoy. They may never get another chance to play in front of a big crowd and collect three points."

Jamal had previously said that his team would have a good chance against India by exposing their weaknesses in defence. At the same time, he and his teammates will be tasked with stopping the prolific striker Chhetri, who is fit to play against Bangladesh after missing the match against Qatar.



Bangladesh captain Jamal Bhuiyan (3rd from R) believes India will feel the pressure to perform in front of what is expected to be a capacity crowd in Kolkata. However, the midfielder will know that his side must perform almost flawlessly if they are to come away with a result today. PHOTO: BFF

## Bangladesh proved themselves against Qatar: Stimac

Booters play against India in Kolkata today

SPORTS REPORTER from Kolkata

After holding reigning Asian champions Qatar to a goalless draw, India coach Igor Stimac urged the Kolkata spectators to turn up in numbers to the Salt Lake Stadium to back India for their first win in the joint qualifiers of the World Cup and Asian Cup.

The Croatian also showed immense respect to opponents Bangladesh yesterday, saying that the men in red and green had proven themselves against Qatar and urged everyone not to underestimate them.

"I would not like any of you to underestimate Bangladesh. It is not a good thing to do at all. Believe me, I have a lot of experience. Those who never show respect to others do not get good results," Stimac told an overcrowded press conference at the Novotel Hotel, where over 50 Indian journalists had turned up.

"Bangladesh have proven themselves in defeat also, especially against Qatar. They could have won against Qatar through the chances they created. They [Bangladesh] also have expectations; they also have dreams. They haven't come here to lose, they have come to win

the match.

The veteran also pointed to the areas where Bangladesh had improved, before imploring those gathered to 'not make things harder' for his team.

"They advanced the game enough. They have stood together for the past 14 to 15 months

respect to Bangladesh," ended the 52-year-old, who helped Croatia qualify for the 2014 World Cup and, perhaps even more impressively, took the Vatreni to number four in the FIFA Rankings.

When asked by Indian journalists if he was going to score a hatrick against Bangladesh, India captain Sunil Chhetri said that the team were looking to securing three points and not bothering about who it would be that got their name on the scoresheet.

"Why three? You can expect six goals but your expectations will not help me. What I have done in the previous game sadly won't help me either. The important thing is that I am experienced enough to know why you are asking me this question. The only thing that we have to do is play as a team and get three points. If India lose the match 4-3 and I score a hatrick, nobody in this room -- except for the people from Bangladesh -- will be happy," Chhetri said.

"Tomorrow, we just need to win the match. The boys played a beautiful game against Qatar and we need a very good performance against Bangladesh. You can't guarantee a result. We are just looking forward to being as good as possible and being difficult for Bangladesh. If we can win the match and Sunil gets a hatrick, I will be happy."

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under new coach. They worked six to seven days before their last game. They are a very organised side at the moment. They are very disciplined. They enjoyed success in U-23 AFC tournament and they have many talented players, as do we. They will play with a lot of passion.

"So please keep calm and support us as you are. But don't make it adverse for us. Don't make it harder for us. Let's play the game with great



(From L) Bangladesh coach Jamie Day and captain Jamal Bhuiyan stand beside their Indian counterparts Igor Stimac and Sunil Chhetri on the eve of their match in the joint qualifiers of the World Cup and Asian Cup in Kolkata yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

## An imbalance in strike force

ANISUR RAHMAN from Kolkata

On September 3, 2013, during a match of the 10th SAFF Championship at Halchowk Stadium in Kathmandu, India's prolific striker Sunil Chhetri robbed Bangladesh of a much-deserved win by curling a free-kick over the wall and past Bangladesh goalkeeper Mamun Khan to rescue India in stoppage time after having gone down 1-0 in the 82nd minute.

The following year, on March 6 at the Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Margao, Goa, it was Chhetri once more who denied Bangladesh in a FIFA friendly match by striking his second in the stoppage time to help India finish 2-2.

These two instances typify how Bangladesh have often been undone by India's genuine strikers. Chhetri's predecessor Bhaichung Bhutia also played a similar role to snatch wins from Bangladesh, netting five goals against the country in four matches, including the second goals in the finals of the 1999 and 2005 SAFF Championships, which Bangladesh lost by identical 2-0 margins. In the 2005 edition in Pakistan, under the guidance of Argentinian coach Diago Cruciani, Bangladesh played fantastic football throughout the tournament but had to be satisfied with a runners-up finish.

Apart from Bhutia and Chhetri, over the years India

have also boasted forwards of high pedigree such as IM Vijayan, Bikash Panji, Krishanu Dey and others who have always held the edge over Bangladesh, as evidenced by a head-to-head where India have 12 wins and 10 draws against just three defeats. Bhutia, Vijayan and Chhetri have so far scored 10 goals between them out of the 32 India have

better if they can replicate last Thursday's performance at home against Asian champions Qatar, in which case they could return with at least a point to their name.

"India's scoring capacity is better than ours; they convert half chances into full chances," said former footballer Ashraf Uddin Ahmed Chhunu. "I still remember that we squandered

won the match because of individual charisma. Besides, they had good preparation before international matches, which we lacked before."

Former forward Elias Hossain believed Bangladesh made more mistakes than India and that the India forwards just capitalised on those mistakes, adding that Bangladesh forwards' scoring capacity was not good.

"We wasted a lot of chances against India but they had some good forwards like Krishanu, Prosenjeet, Biwhajit, Prosun who were ahead of Bangladeshi strikers and punished Bangladesh whenever the defenders made mistakes," said Elias, who struck the lone goal against Thailand in the 1985 World Cup qualifiers in Dhaka.

Former defender and coach Saiful Bari Titu believed India had a physical edge.

Chhetri, the bogey man for Bangladesh in the last two meetings, understandably loomed large.

"If they mark me, I will be happy. If I am marked by three or four, then it will be 10 versus 6. Then we will have a numerical advantage. It is not only about me; it is about Bangladesh. It is never about me. I will love it if the team marks me because there are other players like Manvir Balwant, Udanta, Ashique who have been in better shape than me. Let's see tomorrow [Tuesday]," said the 35-year-old Indian captain at the press conference yesterday.



(From L) India's Bhaichung Bhutia, Sunil Chhetri and IM Vijayan have all proven to be thorns in Bangladesh's side but the one that remains, Chhetri, is the most prolific. PHOTO: COLLECTED

struck against Bangladesh in 25 matches.

Striking power is the major area where Bangladesh lag behind their neighbours, and heading into today's 2022 World Cup qualifier against 104th-ranked India, former Bangladesh internationals feared that the men in red and green will continue to be hounded by India's attack. They however hoped that Bangladesh will fare

a lot of scoring chances in the Asian Club Championship and paid the heavy price of losing. [Then] Indian coach PK Banerjee had said that India lagged behind Bangladesh in every aspect except goal-scoring, and that still holds true."

Former defender Imtiaz Sultan Jonny said: "There were minor differences between Bangladesh and India and we fought against them neck and neck, but they

## Ganguly braced for 'great responsibility'

Former India captain set to become BCCI chief

AGENCIES, Mumbai



Former India captain Sourav Ganguly is poised to take over as the president of the country's cricket board as nominations closed Monday for elections to the sport's wealthiest and most powerful body.

Ganguly, 47, was the only candidate to file his nomination for the top post after being unanimously chosen as the presidential candidate at a meeting of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) members in Mumbai on Sunday.

One of the most successful national captains in the sport, Ganguly is set to be elected unopposed when BCCI elections are held on October 23.

The left-handed opener retired from Test cricket in 2008 having accumulated 7,212 runs. Last month, he was re-elected president of the Cricket Association of Bengal.

"I am happy with this appointment because this is the time when BCCI's image has got hampered and it's a great opportunity for me to do something. It's a big responsibility because it is the biggest organisation in the world of cricket. It will be a challenge," Ganguly told reporters after filing his nomination papers.

"That's one area that we will look into," said Ganguly when asked about India's representation at ICC. "We haven't received any money from ICC in the last few years. Money in the sense what we deserve.

Sourav Ganguly is a Bengali and also a former cricketer and so we will get some added advantage due to it. We will probably be more comfortable while discussing different issues with him. Many of us here have connections with him on a personal level and I think that will definitely be helpful. We can freely talk about the series that we could not play, some bilateral series and also regarding some junior level programmes with him.

JALAL YUNUS  
BCB MEDIA COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

"For me, my biggest focus will be first-class cricket," Ganguly revealed. "I have been very vocal about looking after the first-class players, especially the time they invest.

First-class cricket is the base, the strength. I have written so many times in the last few years that the remunerations need to increase manifold. Look at cricket structure, look how governance happens and see smooth functioning happens with no issues."

Ganguly will, however, have to go in for a cooling off period from July 2020 under the new rules. He has been holding posts in Cricket Association of Bengal for the past five years and an administrator can only serve six years on the trot.

Ganguly will be the second Indian captain to hold the top job in BCCI once elected after the Maharajkumar of Vizianagram, Vijay Ananda Gajapathi Raju, who became the president of BCCI in 1954.

