

WATFORD 'SAVED' ELTON'S LIFE

British rock legend Elton John says Watford football club were his unlikely saviour as he experienced the "worst period of my life" in the 1980's. The 72-year-old Englishman -- known for his hits such as 'Rocket Man' and 'Goodbye Yellowbrick Road' -- has been chairman of The Hornets twice. He says in his new autobiography 'Me' Watford 'might have saved my life' in his first spell as chairman (1976-1990) when they enjoyed huge success under the late Graham Taylor rising from bottom of the old fourth division to the heights of being runners-up to Liverpool in the 1982/83 title race and beaten by Everton in the 1984 FA Cup final. "I was chairman throughout the worst period of my life: years of addiction and unhappiness, failed relationships, bad business deals, court cases, unending turmoil," he writes. "Through all of that, Watford were a constant source of happiness to me. For obvious reasons, there are chunks of the eighties I have no recollection of -- but every Watford game I saw is permanently etched on my memory."

--AFP



Onus on a new golfing generation

ATIQUE ANAM



Bangladesh national team golfers have been spending a busy time at the Kurmitola Golf Club for the last three months. They are training to emulate what their predecessors had achieved nine years ago.

Golf was included in the South Asian Games roster for the first time in the 11th South Asian Games in Dhaka in 2010. Hosts Bangladesh made a clean sweep in the individual event while taking the gold in the team event. Dulal Hossain, Shakhawat Hossain, Sohail, Zamal Hossain Mollah and Jakiruzzaman made the country proud by winning four medals, including two golds, during that competition.

Amateurs at the time, Dulal, Zamal, Sohail and Jakir have since turned professionals and won many a tournament at home and abroad. The onus has now shifted to a new generation of amateurs to fly the red and green flag as golf returns to the SA Games, which will be held in Nepal from December 1 to 10, after being dropped in the last edition in India three years ago.

Mohammad Farhad, Shafique Bagha, Liton Mondol, Mohammad Suman, Shahab Uddin, Sonia Akter, Nasima Akter, Liza Akter and Zakia Sultana are the nine golfers who have been training at KGC in the national team's camp under local coach Abdul Matin for the last three months.

Lieutenant Colonel (ret'd) Abdul Bari, Bangladesh Golf Federation's coordinator and KGC general manager, hoped that the team can bring success for the nation.

"It is difficult to say who will win in golf. But we are hopeful that these players will make the nation proud. The players are currently training under a local coach with assistance from academy trainers. However, we are trying, through the Bangladesh Olympic Association, to bring an Australian coach for one month to help hone the skills of these players," Abdul Bari told The Daily Star.

The training camp started on July 15, along with most of the other 23 disciplines in which Bangladesh will have representation. The BGF will conduct a trial by November 15, where one male golfer and one female golfer will be excluded from the final seven-member list. Bangladesh



will participate in all four events of the Games -- the men's individual, men's team, women's individual and women's team events.

It is rare that amateur golfers get complete access to the country's premier golfing venue due to the numerous events that take place here round the year. However, the likes of Farhad and Sonia are quite fortunate that they are getting to train from early morning till sunset for six days a week as there are currently no events at the club. They hit around 200 to 300 balls per day at the driving range

Games would be an opportunity for them to come to the limelight. "This tournament is very important for us since we don't often get the focus, because of our amateur status. However, if we can do well at the SA Games, it will be a big statement of confidence from our side. We definitely want to bring success from Nepal," Shafique said.

The lives of Farhad and Shafique have been anything but rosy. Like most of the leading golfers of the country, these national team golfers climbed the ladder from being ball-boys, then working as caddies before becoming golfers themselves. But the financial demands of the game have been a strain on themselves as well as their families.

However, Farhad, Shafique, Liton, Suman and Samrat fortune to have recently been ensured a regular stream



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bangladesh national team players, who are preparing for the South Asian Games, pose for a photograph with coach Abdul Matin (4th from R) at the end of a training session at the Kurmitola Golf Club on Wednesday.

before playing an 18-hole round while wrapping up the day's work by training on their short game.

Farhad, the 26-year-old golfer from the Mainamati Golf & Country Club, is confident that with the opportunities they are getting from the federation and the club, they should be able to emulate the success of their predecessors. "Our target is to win gold at the South Asian Games. We want to do what our predecessors did. They are also Bangladeshi, so if they could do it, we can also do the same."

Shafique, a 23-year-old golfer from Barishal, felt that the South Asian

of income and logistical support by Business Technology and Ideas Ltd (bti), one of the leading real estate developers of the country, which is also one of the biggest patrons of golf in Bangladesh. The two-year sponsorship came at a very opportune time as the golfers were gearing up for the SA Games.

With that financial support, these golfers can now at least go to bed after a hard day's work at the golf club without having to think about how they will make ends meet the next day, concentrating instead on how they will get closer to their target.



The trophy of the third edition of the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup, scheduled to begin tomorrow, was unveiled at a hotel in Chattogram yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

SHEIKH KAMAL INT'L CLUB CUP

Gokulam FC to replace Abahani?

SPORTS REPORTER



Six-time professional football league champions Abahani pulled out of the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup, putting preparations for the tournament in jeopardy.

The Dhanmondi-based club, which was founded by Bangabandhu's eldest son Sheikh Kamal, sent a letter to the organising committee of the tournament on Wednesday evening, with the official line being their inability to field a strong team for this tournament.

"We are not able to participate in the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup due to not being able to put together a strong team," said the official letter, signed by the club's acting director Kazi Nabil Ahmed.

It has been learnt that Gokulam Kerala FC, an I-league club, have been invited to replace Abahani. Although the Kerala-based outfit have given their verbal consent to participate, organisers Chattogram Abahani could not confirm without a written statement from the club.

Abahani were pitted in Group B of the eight-team tournament, with Bangladesh Premier League champions Bashundhara Kings,

I-League champions Chennai City FC and Terengganu FC of Malaysia being the three other teams.

Group A features defending champions TC Sports Club of Maldives, first-edition champions Chattogram Abahani along with Kolkata giants Mohun Bagan and Young Elephant FC of Laos.

The tournament is scheduled to be held from October 19 to 30 at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chattogram. The winning team will receive 50,000 dollars as prize money while the runners-up will get 25,000 dollars. Each of the eight teams will get 10,000 dollars as participation money.

Federer to feature in French Open

AFP, Paris

Swiss tennis legend Roger Federer said yesterday that he will play the French Open in Paris next year.

"I will play the French Open. I probably won't play much before that because I need some time away from it (tennis) and I need some time with the family," the 38-year-old told CNN.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion returned to Roland Garros this year after a three year absence, falling to Rafael Nadal in the semifinals.

Federer confirmed he will compete at next year's Tokyo Olympics after Wimbledon and prior to the US Open.

But his priority before the French Open which he has won only once in 2009 will be a family vacation.

"We need a vacation, we need a break, and especially if I am playing the Olympics and all that," he said.

In Tokyo he will be in competition for a men's singles gold medal, the only major prize he has yet to win.



Ganguly invites Hasina, Modi to Eden

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA from New Delhi

President elect for the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Sourav Ganguly, has invited Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi to watch the second of a two-match Test series between the two countries, to be held at Eden Gardens in Kolkata from November 22 to 26.

Bangladesh are also set to face the hosts in a three-match T20I series ahead of the two Tests in India.

A senior official of the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi informed The Daily Star that Ganguly, as President of the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB), has already sent separate invitations for both Hasina and Modi directly to their offices.

"Now a decision will be taken by the two PMs, keeping in mind their other engagements," he added.

The second Test, which will be hosted by the Cricket Association of Bengal, will mark only the second time that to two sides have squared off in a Test at the historic Eden Gardens.

The last time a cricket match in India was attended by high-profile individuals was the 2011 World Cup semifinal in in Punjab, where India played against Pakistan with the then India Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his Pakistan counterpart Yousaf Raza Gilani and other delegates cheering from the stands.

'They need to win big tournaments'

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's Virat Kohli is captaining an enormously talented team, but the players need to adjust their mentality to win big tournaments, having failed in the last seven, ex-captain Sourav Ganguly said as he prepares to head the national cricket board.

Kohli's men lead the World Test Championship table but India have not won any global tournament since lifting the 2013 Champions Trophy under Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

"It is a very good side. My only thing is that they need to win big tournaments," Ganguly, president-elect of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, told reporters in Kolkata.

"I'm not saying they need to win every time. It's not possible. But we have gone through seven big tournaments without winning one."

"They are a much better side than that. That is the only area where they need to get themselves ready mentally."

"Talent is enormous, otherwise they couldn't have played so well in the World Cup till the semi-finals. So that's an issue which Virat needs to address. And that doesn't happen in the boardroom."

Markram out of 3rd India Test

AFP, Mumbai

Opening batsman Aiden Markram is out of the third and final India Test after hurting his wrist when he "lashed out at a solid object", Cricket South Africa said on Thursday.

This week, Australian all-rounder Mitchell Marsh was also ruled out of the opening Pakistan Test after injuring his hand punching a wall, with coach Justin Langer branding him "an idiot".



The trophy and the logo of the maiden Bangamata Asian Senior Women's Volleyball Championship 2019, set to begin from November 9, was unveiled at a hotel in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Always beside those who pursue excellence

PROUD SPONSOR OF

Bangladesh National Golf Team

building technology & ideas Ltd.®

since 1984

in pursuit of excellence...

btibd.com | 16604

AA2 Credit Rating FIXED PRICE REHAB MEMBERSHIP 001 ISO 9001:2015 CERTIFIED