



# Pochettino willing to wait on Messi

REUTERS, Paris

The arrival of Lionel Messi at Paris Saint Germain has created a positive mood at the Ligue 1 club but he is unlikely to play any part in Saturday's home game against Strasbourg, coach Mauricio Pochettino said.

Speaking at Friday's news conference ahead of the league fixture after Messi joined PSG from Barcelona earlier this week, Pochettino added his first task was to make sure a star-studded outfit began to look the sum of its parts.

PSG surrendered the French league title to Lille last season and were eliminated in the Champions League semi-finals by Manchester City despite boasting the likes of Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and Angel Di Maria in their ranks.

Adding Messi to the fold will have raised expectations among fans and the board at the Qatari-owned club, whose management have invested heavily in a bid to see the club win their maiden title in Europe's premier club competition.

But Pochettino, who took over at PSG midway through last season



It is his second day of training after a month since he last played at the Copa America. We will take things step by step, get to know each other and have him feel fit and comfortable so that he is able to make his debut when he is fully fit.

MAURICIO POCHETTINO, PSG COACH

in January, struck a note of caution after 34-year-old Messi arrived from Barcelona, his only previous professional club.

"Our challenge now is to ensure all of these top players form a team capable of meeting all the challenges ahead of it," said

Pochettino. "We want to make sure that this team becomes a strong unit."

"As for when we might see Leo Messi in action, it is his second day of training after a month since he played the last game at the Copa America."

"We will take things step by step, get to know each other and have him feel fit and comfortable so that he is able to make his debut when he is fully fit."

Messi, who won 10 LaLiga and four Champions League titles during a 17-year long stint at Barcelona, led Argentina to the Copa America title with a 1-0 win over hosts and traditional rivals Brazil in the July 11 final.

When asked about the future of striker Mbappe, who has been linked with a move to Real Madrid either during the current transfer window or next summer when his contract with PSG expires, Pochettino said: "Kylian is our player."

"We all know that Leo Messi is the best, or one of the best players in the world, without any doubt. Nevertheless we have other players as well and Kylian is also one of the best players in the world."

## WHAT TO WATCH

### T SPORTS

Bangladesh Premier League  
Rahmatganj vs Mohammadpur  
Live from 4:00 pm  
Brothers Union vs Chittagong  
Abahani  
Live from 6:15 pm  
SONY SIX & TEN 3  
India vs England  
Second Test (Day 3)

### PTV SPORTS

Pakistan vs West Indies  
First Test (Day 3)  
Live from 9:00 pm  
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1  
English Premier League  
Manchester United vs Leeds  
United  
Live from 5:30 pm

### MTV

La Liga  
Mallorca vs Betis  
Live from 11:30 pm  
Alaves vs Real Madrid  
Live from 2:00 am (Sunday)

# Tough friendlies ahead for Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

After being demoted four places to the 188th position in the FIFA World Ranking on Thursday, Bangladesh national football team are scheduled to play against two superior sides -- 101st-ranked Kyrgyzstan and 102nd-ranked Palestine -- between August 30 to September 7 of the upcoming FIFA window.

Apart from these two matches, the men in red and green are also slated to play against Kyrgyzstan U-23 side. All three matches are considered as part of the national football team's preparation for October's SAFF Championship in Maldives.



"We are going to Kyrgyzstan to play three international matches against Palestine on September 5, Kyrgyzstan on September 7 and Kyrgyzstan U-23 on September 9 under the FIFA window as part of national team's preparation for upcoming SAFF Championship," Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) vice-chairman Kazi Nabil Ahmed told the reporters in a virtual press conference after the meeting of the National Teams Committee. "We are hoping to get the final approval from FIFA by Monday about the FIFA friendlies under its window," Nabil added.

The charges of Jamie Day, who has been in quarantine after arriving here yesterday morning, are expected to fly out for Kyrgyzstan on either August 31 or September 1 following the completion of ongoing Bangladesh Premier League on August 27.

"Upcoming games will be tough but it may be an opportunity to implement tactical variations with SAFF tournament in mind," said Day while adding that he is

not inclined to bring any massive change to his 27-member squad.

Following the matches in Kyrgyzstan, the booters are expected to return home on September 11 and join a 10-day national camp for October's SAFF Championship on September 18 as the Bangladesh Football Federation will look to complete three pending premier league matches of Bashundhara Kings, who are now in Maldives to participate in the AFC Cup from August 18 to 24.

Meanwhile, Bhutan failed to get their government's permission to participate in the SAFF Championship, leaving the regional football tourney with a five-team competition in which the top two teams will play the final following a round-robin league format.

Replying to a query, BFF vice-chairman Nabil said, "As the SAFF championship will be held on a round-robin basis, our chance will be fair because we will get an opportunity to play against all participants, so our team will be able to show their real performance. Also, we are getting more time to prepare this time due to the three matches against strong teams in Kyrgyzstan and with a 10-day training camp in Dhaka."

We might not have produced good results in the past due to luck or bad performances but this time we are looking to give our best effort."

Nabil also informed that they are planning to avail the November 8-16 FIFA window to play two international matches against either Mongolia or Nepal as the discussion with the two associations is going on.

Among all five participants of SAFF Championship, Bangladesh are only ahead of 205th-ranked Sri Lanka but behind 105th-ranked India, 158th-ranked Maldives and 168th-ranked Nepal.



## Domingo's contract extended till 2023

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo advocates opting for the typical strategy of utilising the home conditions to gain confidence, even if the victories may seem pyrrhic.

Now that Domingo, appointed on a two-year contract earlier back in August 2019, got his contract extension till the end of 2023, it will be interesting to see how, and if, his mindset changes with the vision of the long-run.

"Yes, we have decided to extend Domingo's contract till the end of the ODI world cup [October-November, 2023]. And regarding other members of the coaching staff, we will arrive at a decision soon," Akram Khan, one of the selectors of Bangladesh cricket, told The Daily Star.

Prior to the Zimbabwe tour this year, doomsday had loomed large for the Tigers under Domingo as they were desperate to return to winning ways after a string of inconsistent performances across the formats, especially in the Tests, at home or otherwise.

When push came to shove, the thinking once again took the go-to approach of preparing slow and low pitches for the home series against Australia. Eventually it all paid dividends though, as Bangladesh went on to register a historic 4-1 series win over the Aussies for the first time in the shortest format.

Domingo admitted that Bangladesh has a lot of room for improvement in T20 cricket, and pressed the need to instil confidence through the act of winning

matches as well.

However, there were questions concerning on whether the sluggish pitches in Mirpur, which produced low-scoring totals throughout the latest series, can be part of an ideal preparation for the Tigers ahead of the ICC World T20 later this year, and with that in mind, should there be better sporting tracks for the upcoming home series against New Zealand?

"The runs depend on which type of pitch you are playing as chasing 200 runs was not that difficult in Zimbabwe and I know that we have to score big runs but that should be in good wickets. I am hoping for a better pitch against New Zealand however I know that we won't be getting a pitch that will have seam movements. So I am looking forward to a sporting wicket for the batsman. Whether you score 140 or 180, wins always gives you confidence. So please try to remain positive, okay? Be positive," Domingo told the media.

Despite being surprised at not seeing any members of the New Zealand World Cup squad for their upcoming Bangladesh tour, the South African believes the conditions in Bangladesh are not that far from being ideal in preparing for the world cup, which will take place in the Middle East later this year.

"There is a scope to beat any opponent from such a series and it is very important to gain self-confidence. I know the fact that we still have to improve a lot in all the departments," he said. Now, it remains to be seen whether Domingo keeps sticking to his confidence-gaining mantra at home over the next couple of years and more as Bangladesh is yet to become a consistent side while touring abroad.

# Saif beat Abahani after four years

SPORTS REPORTER

A brace from Nigerian forward Kenneth Ikechukwu helped Saif SC to a 3-2 win over six-time champions Abahani after four years in a Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

On their debut season in 2017-18, Saif surprised Abahani with a 1-1 draw in their maiden meeting during the Federation Cup before beating the country's most successful club 2-1 in the reverse fixture Bangladesh Premier League following a 3-2 defeat in the first league meeting. It was Abahani's second league defeat at the hands of Saif SC in six league matches.

Saif SC, however, were lucky to register their 11th win in 20 matches as Abahani forwards Faisal Ahmed

Shitol, Jewel Rana and Kervens Belfort squandered numerous chances before Saif capitalised on two counter-attacks in five minutes to take a 2-0 lead before the break. Saif SC goalkeeper Pappu Hossain also made two brilliant saves before Nigerian duo of

Ngwoko and John Okoli struck one goal apiece.

Okoli ran down the left flank to advance into the box before chipping it to compatriot Ngwoko, who drove it in the air to find the back of the net in the 43rd minute with substitute goalkeeper Sultan

Ahmed looking helpless at near post while Okoli beat Sultan with a grounder from 25 yards in the stoppage time of the first half to double the margin.

After resumption, Belfort reimbursed one with his second effort in the 76th minute before Jewel Rana drove a cutback home to level the margin two minutes later.

Abahani goalkeeper Sultan showed incompetence in conceding the third goal when Ngwoko drove one from outside the box in the 81st minute. A third defeat left Abahani in third position, two points behind Sheikh Jamal, who have 42 points with a game in hand.

In the day's other match, Bangladesh Police beat Muktijoddha Sangsad 3-1 to raise their tally to 22 points from 20 matches, seven more than 11th-placed Muktijoddha Sangsad.



England's James Anderson celebrates taking the wicket of India's Ajinkya Rahane on the second day of the second Test at Lord's in London on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Another five-for for Anderson

AFP, LONDON

England moved to 23 without losing any wicket at Tea on the second day of the second Test against India on Friday after bowling out the visitors for 364 in their first innings. Both openers - Dom Sibley and Rory Burns - were batting on 11.

Earlier, James Anderson, England's all-time leading Test wicket-taker, took 5-62 in 29 overs to dismantle India.

It was the 31st time in 164 matches that Anderson had taken five wickets in a Test innings and the seventh occasion when the 39-year-old had done so at Lord's. Already the most successful fast bowler in Test history, Anderson now has 626 wickets in the format with only two retired spinners in Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan (800 wickets) and Australia's Shane Warne (708) ahead of him.

Earlier, India opener KL Rahul added just two runs to his overnight century before he was caught at short cover off paceman Ollie Robinson for 129.