

FAF loving local food

SPORTS REPORTER

Former South Africa captain Faf du Plessis arrived for his very first stint in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) and has found local cuisines part of the attraction since coming here while also being able to take in the experience of coming to Bangladesh.

Du Plessis talked to the media after a practice session at Mirpur Academy Ground yesterday.

"I've been trying to come over for a few years now. The last time I tried, we had a series to play with South Africa and unfortunately couldn't get released.

"Then obviously the last two years was Covid so just delighted to be here. I have enjoyed my time in Bangladesh whenever I was with the national side and it's just another experience with different cultures and different teams and I really enjoy that. That's the journey I am on now," he said.

While he is Comilla's biggest star this term, he will be under the captaincy of the experience Imrul Kayes.

Faf said that sharing experience with local players was part of the charm.

"Obviously you want to get to franchises where you can be successful. Players like myself want to win trophies and it's a big part of why we play the sport.

"So I have experience I can share with the guys here, from a batting point of view and also from a captaincy point of view."

Asked if he has learned a Bangla word yet, he responded: "Not yet. I am just getting in some local food. Had biryani yesterday so it's good. Seen guys making guava with chilli and lime and its very nice," he said.



Minister Group Dhaka opener Tamim Iqbal swivels on his feet to smash one towards the third man boundary during their Bangabandhu BPL fixture against Khulna Tigers in the second match of the opening day at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Tamim scored 50 off 42 balls as Dhaka posted 183 for six.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

BPL begins again with low-scoring affair

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The eighth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) got underway with Shakib Al Hasan's Fortune Barishal taking on Mehedi Miraz's Chattogram Challengers at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday.

And despite the latter skipper shone much brighter but Miraz's four-wicket haul was not enough eventually as Barishal seized a four-wicket win with eight deliveries to spare.

The first match of the BPL began in the day with a low-scoring affair although shot-selection from some of the batters left much to be desired. When Kennar Lewis hit the very first ball of the innings from Nayeem Hasan for six, it appeared a storm could be imminent but it was quickly stifled by the two spinners Nayeem and Shakib. Afif Hossain was caught behind trying to flick away an Alzarri Joseph delivery and then Sabbir Rahman departed to Shakib as the powerplay produced just 36 runs for three wickets.

Benny Howell seemed to have the right idea on such a wicket, watching a few early deliveries while his side kept losing wickets at regular intervals. He targeted the pacers, hitting Dwayne Bravo and Joseph for a handful of fours and sixes during a 20-ball 41 with a better approach than his teammates as Chattogram ended at 126

for 6.

Chasing a small total, Barishal tried to force the issue but both Najmul Hossain and Shakib departed to regulation deliveries from Miraz. Opener Shykat Ali applied himself with the ball not quite coming onto the bat and his 39 off 35 went a long way to Barishal clinching the match. Despite a three-wicket over, Ziaur Rahman (19 off 12) punished Chattogram at the end to seize the win. Still early days and it remains to be seen whether BPL

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continues its pattern of low-scoring affairs like some of the previous editions.

Miraz, Shakib at opposite end of spectrum
Shakib's economical spell, producing just 9 runs in four overs, was crucial but it was his younger counterpart Miraz, who turned the game on its head. Having removed Shanto and Shakib in his first spell, Miraz bagged Shykat and Irfan Sukkur in one over which also saw a run-

out. Chattogram found what they wanted from their skipper but Miraz was a tad disappointed.

"We were 25 runs short in my opinion. It was spinning a touch, but our bowlers kept it a bit short. Yes, I got four wickets, but would have been happy if we would have won the match," Miraz, who scalped four for just 16 runs to bag the player of the match award, said at the post-match presentation.

Shakib, who now has 399 wickets in T20s, was happy with the outing despite not turning up with the bat. "I thought we bowled brilliantly, but we could've been a little better. Very happy with the way we played this game, but there are areas we can improve on. We needed some momentum to get going in the tournament," the Barishal skipper said.

Covid cases still not a crisis
Barishal reported three Covid cases in their ranks with wicket-keeper batter Nurul Hasan Sohan testing positive on 17th January while batting consultant Nazmul Abedeen Fahim and batter Munim Shahriar turning positive the next day. Sohan tested negative yesterday and another such test result today will see him return to squad. According to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) sources, the tournament should go on without any hitch as per their protocols.

2022 WORLD T20

Tigers pitted against India and Pakistan

STAR SPORT DESK

Bangladesh have been placed in the same group with India and Pakistan as the fixtures for the upcoming T20 World Cup were announced on Friday.

Australia will host the 16-nation tournament, which begins on October 16 with a six-day preliminary stage of two four-team groups where Sri Lanka and Namibia in Group A, and West Indies and Scotland in Group B will be joined by four qualifiers yet to be determined.

The top two teams from both Group A and Group B will move forward to join Bangladesh and the other seven automatically qualified nations in the Super 12 stage.

England, New Zealand, Australia and Afghanistan have been drawn together in Group 1 while India, Pakistan, South Africa and Bangladesh are clubbed in Group 2.

The arch-rivals Pakistan and India will lock horns at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) on October 23, a day after Australia begin their title defence against New Zealand in Sydney.

The final of the mega event will be played at the MCG on November 13.

U-19s eye QF berth



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Defending champions Bangladesh replied strong with a comprehensive eight-wicket victory against Canada in Basseterre on Thursday following a heavy defeat against England earlier in their opening Group A fixture of the ICC Under-19 World Cup.

The young Tigers will play their next match against the UAE today. Both teams, on equal points, will look to win in order to qualify for the quarterfinals alongside group leaders England.

Bangladesh will look to keep the momentum after the U-19s eased past their Canadian counterparts, who piled up 136 runs on the board after electing to bat first. Opener Anoop Chima top-scored with 63 runs off 117 deliveries.

Off-spinner SM Mehrob caused the most damage with the ball, dismissing four of the first six batters. Medium pacers Ripon Mondol and Ashikur Rahman picked the remaining wickets with Mondol bagging a four-wicket haul as well.

In reply, the young Tigers chased their target comfortably in 30.1 overs with eight wickets in hand, riding on Iftakher Hossain and Nowrose Prantik Nabil's 76-run stand for the second wicket. Opener Iltakher remained unbeaten on 61 runs off 89 balls.

Cabrera focusing on relationship

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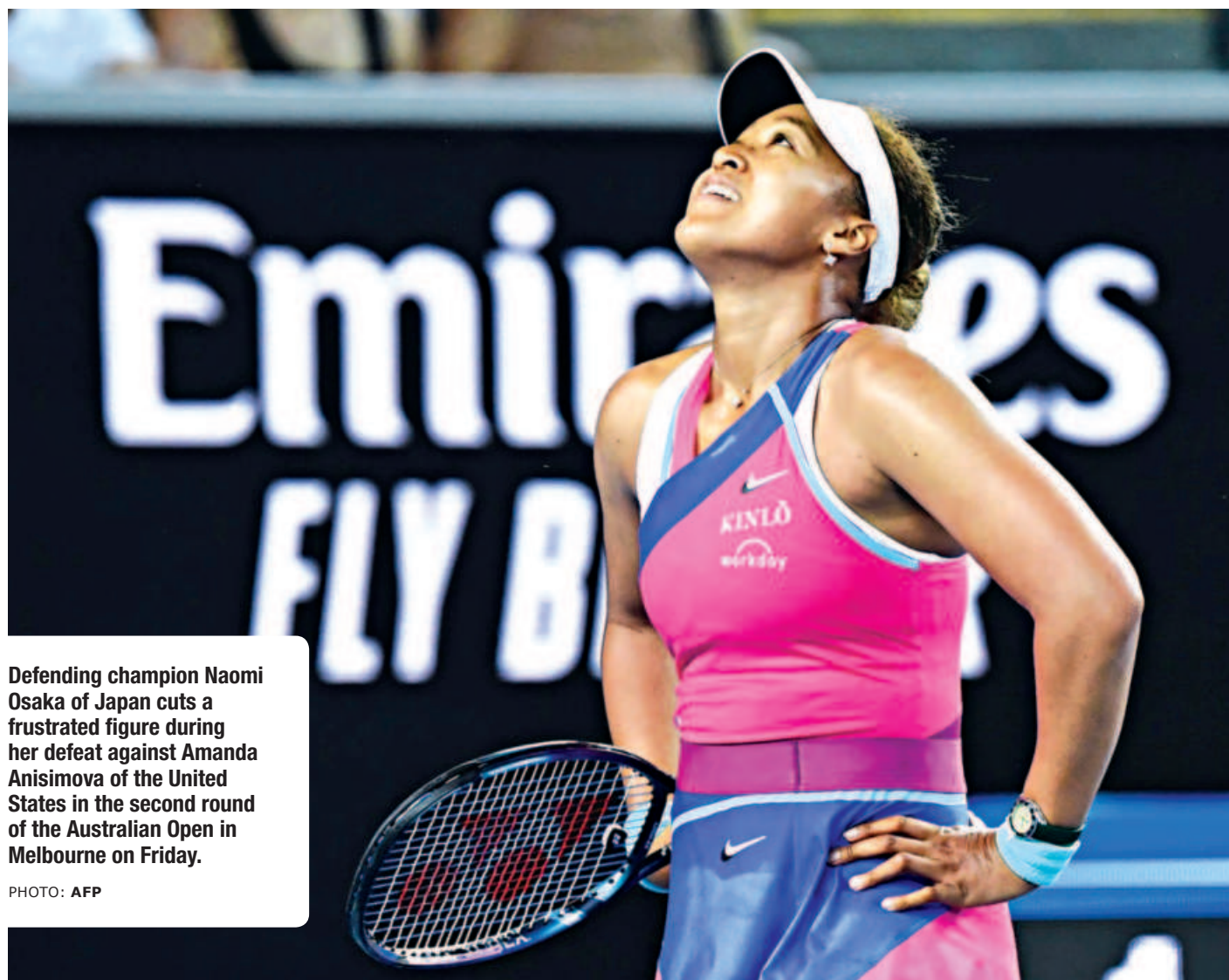
Bangladesh's new head coach Javier Cabrera yesterday promised to follow each player including the current ones of the national team closely in the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League with an aim to forming a competitive squad.

The 37-year-old Spaniard yesterday visited Abahani to watch the club's training session and met with the players, the coaches and club officials to know how the clubs works daily and to understand the context of Bangladesh football structure as he will be visiting other professional clubs in coming days in order to make a good relationship among the players, clubs and the national team.

"The message to the players of the national team was that I am going to be very close and want to create a close relationship with them. I do believe this relation between the players and coaches will give the players opportunity to perform best [on the ground] because I am going to watch them and that every single player in professional league is going to have the chance in the national team," Cabrera told reporters after speaking to Abahani players, head coach Mario Lemos and club officials at the training ground.

"I know the BPL is a very competitive league and I want disciplined players of what the game demands at this moment," said Cabrera.

"I know about Jamal [Bhayan] and Tariq [Raihan Kazi]. To me, Jamal is a very important asset of the team. Tariq is a good reference for the young players. He has great potential and I am looking forward to having training sessions with them," added the Spaniard.



Defending champion Naomi Osaka of Japan cuts a frustrated figure during her defeat against Amanda Anisimova of the United States in the second round of the Australian Open in Melbourne on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

Anisimova stuns Osaka

AFP, Melbourne

Defending champion Naomi Osaka was dumped out of the Australian Open third round on Friday by unseeded American Amanda Anisimova to open up the draw for title favourite Ashleigh Barty.

Anisimova, ranked 60th in the world, saved two match points to stun the former world number one 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (10/5) and will now face Barty in the last 16. It was a hugely disappointing end to Osaka's reign in Melbourne, having also gone out at the same stage at the US Open in September, after which she took a break from tennis.

"I'm speechless, I can't stop smiling," said the 20-year-old Anisimova.

Australia's Barty was a comfortable 6-2, 6-3 winner over Italian 30th seed Camila Giorgi, inching closer to a maiden Grand Slam crown on home soil.

"It was a pretty good performance," said Barty, 25, who is now 7-0 for the season and is yet to drop a set at Melbourne Park.