

Booters begin camp from May 16

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football team will play a warm-up match against hosts Indonesia on June 1 before starting their Asian Cup qualifying campaign in Malaysia from June 8.

The booters will start their preparation camp from May 16 before flying to Indonesia on May 27 to play the lone practice match in Bandung.

The national camp will start on May 16 at Sarah Resort [in Gazipur]. We will then move the camp to the Bashundhara Kings arena [on May 21]," BFF vice president and national teams committee chairman Kazi Nabil Ahmed told the reporters yesterday.

Bangladesh will also have a two-day practice camp in Indonesia before the game. After the practice match, the players will leave for Malaysia on June 4 for the Asian Cup qualifiers.



Tamim Iqbal and Anamul Haque, Prime Bank's dashing opening duo, were in festive mood during their 215-run stand against Gazi Group Cricketers in Dhaka Premier League at BKSP yesterday. Tamim would be pleased to have scored 137 runs, making the most of his outings ahead of the home Tests against Sri Lanka, while Anamul's smile should not fade away anytime soon as the wicketkeeper-batter capped his 1k-plus run-fest in style despite falling four runs short of what would have been his fourth century

PHOTO: STAR



'He's a strong leader'

AFP, London

Star all-rounder Ben Stokes was named as England's new Test captain on Thursday, replacing Joe Root, who stood down earlier this month after a string of painful defeats.

The 30-year-old, who served as Root's deputy, was the overwhelming favourite to take charge of a struggling team that have won just one of their past 17 matches.

Stokes, whose career is peppered with staggering performances with bat and ball, has been a loyal lieutenant to Root and made a point of praising his friend and predecessor in a short statement.

"I am honoured to be given the chance to lead the England Test team," he said. "This is a real privilege and I'm excited about getting started this summer."

New managing director of England men's cricket Rob Key told Sky Sports that Stokes was the "obvious choice".

"He's a strong leader, he's got a good cricketing brain. Everything he's done has got him to this point."

"He's got a hell of a lot of empathy as well... All of those traits, as well as an outstanding cricket brain, make him the obvious choice."



Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club players celebrate winning their maiden Dhaka Premier League (DPL) title with the trophy after their final game of the campaign at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Sheikh Jamal, who had ensured the title on Tuesday with a game in hand, ended the campaign with an eight-wicket defeat against Legends of Rupganj.

PHOTO:
FIROZ AHMED

Run-machine Anamul makes a compelling case

SPORTS REPORTER

As the Dhaka Premier League 2021-2022 came to an end yesterday, Anamul Haque Bijoy was standing on a massive 1138 runs. And even in his final innings of the season, he struck 96, missing out on what would have been another convincing ton.

Anamul's dreamlike season saw him turn into a run-machine. His 1138 runs made him a world record holder too as he beat Tom Moody's record of scoring 917 runs, set in 1991 for Worcestershire. His 184-run knock in the match against Shirepukur Cricket Club is the third highest individual score in Bangladesh's List A cricket.

A national team call up should be on the cards, but Bijoy finds himself in a competitive scenario with some of the best names in Bangladesh cricket.

The 29-year-old has knocked on the national team door before and had appeared in 38 ODIs since his debut in 2012 but when focus turns sharply to why he should not be in the national setup, his past misfortunes in not being able to hold his place also come up.

Having started on a high note in his debut series back in 2012, Bijoy last appeared in the national team colours during Bangladesh's tour of Sri Lanka in 2019 when he played the last match in a three-match ODI series. A year prior to that series, he relinquished opportunities after getting good starts in the tour of West Indies in 2018. There was something there to his shot selection and application which did not impress selectors for long.

However, after such a magnanimous season, there are valid reasons for a national call up. His patience in building an innings, his current form and application- all point to a cricketer who has been able to re-motivate and reinvent himself but when it comes to the national setup, balance and continuity, these factors will be in the selectors' mind too. Which format will favour Bijoy's return?

The national team have their most stable opening setup in years with Tamim Iqbal and Liton Das, thus that balance does not

make Bijoy's return any easier. Tamim is there in the Test side too and Mahmudul Hasan Joy has shown promise behind his years in the last two away Test series. The T20 format where Munim Shahriar and Mohammad Naim have recently appeared as openers, may be the most floating amongst all the formats and that is where Bijoy could make his mark.

Former Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza made a case for Bijoy's return to the national side yesterday after his side Legends of Rupganj's match against champions Sheikh Jamal ended.

Asked which players caught his attention in the league, Mashrafe said: "You can bring 10-12 players from the league but in terms of national team focus, you can target maybe

one or two. In that regard, I think it's Bijoy. I said it before that he batted exceptionally and dominated. I think this is the time to consider Bijoy."

"If a person scores 1100 runs and doesn't get a chance, he doesn't have any more places to prove himself. So, I think he should get the opportunity."

For Mashrafe, the T20I is the most plausible format but he also reminded that Bijoy can act as the 'third opener' who can come in due to injuries or lack of form. "This is their age to perform," he added and suggested that form should be taken advantage of and it remains to be seen whether selectors feel the same way after Bijoy followed up good BPL performances with a tremendous DPL.

TOP SCORERS

Player	Matches	Runs	HS	Avg	100	50
Anamul Haque (Prime Bank)	15	1138	184	81.28	3	9
Naeem Islam (Legends of Rupganj)	15	859	124	66.07	2	5
Mosaddek Hossain (Abahani)	15	658	88	47.00	0	7
Zakir Hasan (Rupganj Tigers)	15	636	124	42.40	2	3
CS Jani (Legends of Rupganj)	15	597	122	49.75	1	4

HIGHEST WICKET TAKERS

Player	Matches	Wkts	BBI	Econ
Rakibul Hasan (Prime Bank)	15	29	4/40	4.26
Parvez Rasool (Sheikh Jamal)	15	28	5/29	3.15
CS Jani (Legends of Rupganj)	15	27	5/15	4.80
Mohammad Saifuddin (Abahani)	14	22	4/38	5.19
Tanvir Islam (Abahani)	15	22	3/35	4.58

"If a person scores 1100 runs and doesn't get a chance, he doesn't have any more places to prove himself. So, I think he should get the opportunity."

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza

Liverpool expose limitations of Villarreal

AGENCIES

Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp hailed Sadio Mane's versatility after the Senegal forward scored to help his side secure a 2-0 win over Villarreal in the first leg of their Champions League semi-final on Wednesday.

Mane, again playing in a more central role like he did in Premier League wins over Manchester United and Everton, scored in the 55th minute, shortly after an own goal had given Liverpool a second half lead. Read full story

The 30-year-old has scored 20 goals in 44 appearances for Liverpool this season, including six in his last seven, as the club seek to secure an unprecedented quadruple.

"He can play left, he can play central, both positions world class," said Klopp. He also added that Mane could be in line to win the Ballon d'Or if Liverpool win the Champions League.

"If you are not (Lionel) Messi or (Cristiano) Ronaldo you have to win probably the Champions League, which we didn't do yet so give us a few more weeks and then we will see where we end up," he said.

There is no dispute that Villarreal deserve their place in the semi-final of the Champions League but Wednesday's defeat exposed their limitations and limited options when faced with key injuries.

Spanish coach Unai Emery has rightly won plaudits for the way he has turned a collection of



relatively modest and low-cost players into a last-four team in Europe's top club competition.

By knocking out Juventus and Bayern Munich in the previous rounds, Emery showed that his side's smart defending and effective counter-attacking could cause problems for clubs with far more illustrious histories.

The Villarreal coach was described by Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp before this tie as the 'King of the Cups' and he does indeed have a remarkable record in knockout competition.

Emery won the Europa League three times with Sevilla and triumphed in the same competition with Villarreal last season, beating Manchester United in the final. He won four domestic cups with Paris St Germain.

While the Spaniard's time in charge at Arsenal was a disappointment, he still managed to take the London club to the Europa League final in 2019.

Plenty of teams in Spain and Europe can attest to how frustrating it can be to play against a defence so expertly marshalled by Pau Torres with a deep three-man midfield providing a line of protection to the back four.

For the opening 45 minutes at Anfield, there were indications that the approach might work but what was missing was the counter-attacking threat that is such a vital part of the gameplan.

Without key striker Gerard Moreno to partner him, Dutch forward Arnaut Danjuma was less of a danger than he has shown with his six goals in the competition this season.

Moreno's influence is such that Villarreal are unbeaten in this year's Champions League when he is on the field. He was missing for both defeats against Manchester United in the group stage.

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