

## Kings to bolster foreign brigade for international success

ANISUR RAHMAN

Having strengthened their foothold in the domestic circuit by winning a third consecutive Bangladesh Premier League title, Bashundhara Kings are setting their sights on becoming the best club in South Asia.

Under the guidance of Oscar Bruzon, Bashundhara Kings have won six out of trophies they competed for since their debut in top-flight football in 2018-19 season, but they are yet to taste success in the international arena.

They've exited from the group stages of the AFC Cup twice after their maiden appearance was cancelled due to the pandemic.

The 45 year coach believes the club is in the right direction in their target of becoming the best club in the South Asian zone.

"The journey has been positive so far at the international competitions [AFC Cup] too as we have finished runners-up two times in the South Asian group, where champions of important leagues participate. We have lost just one game in three participations. We are well aware that the expectations around our club are huge. It is not a secret that an important goal of the club is to become the best club at the region," Bruzon told The Daily Star yesterday.

The club made a flying start in their debut appearance in AFC Cup by inflicting a massive 5-1 defeat on Maldives' TC Sports Club before the edition was cancelled due to the pandemic. In the two subsequent seasons, Kings finished behind eventual group champions ATK Mohun Bagan, falling behind on goal difference despite having equal six points the last time around.



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Bashundhara Kings coach  
**Oscar Bruzon**

Analysts say that the difference between the local players of Bangladesh and India is what makes the difference in the end at this stage. Bruzon, however, wants to keep faith in their own process to get success.

"We truly trust the process; good things take time, but the tendency of the team is positive. We follow our own path which is done with careful, distinct and solid steps," Bruzon said. "There are multiple areas of improvement at different levels, both internal and external. In our case, as coaches we work consciously towards improving those aspects we can control being very close to each and all of our players."

The club's technical director, BA Jubair Input, confirmed that they are going to recruit three new foreign players to replace Gambian forward Noha Morang, Brazilian midfielder Miguel Figueira and Iranian defender Khaled Shafei for next season after extending contract with inspirational Brazilian forward Robson Robinho by two more years.

Though Bruzon is willing to discuss about the new transfers after the completion of the ongoing league, there are whispers the club is trying to rope in Abahani's Brazilian forward Dorielton Gomes and Saif SC's Uzbek midfielder Asron Gafurov alongside a top-quality foreign defender.

It has also been learnt that Bashundhara Kings want to sign up a local centre-back, the position they suffered mostly during this season following a knee injury to top local centre-back Tapu Barman.

## Windies face India challenge

AFP, Port of Spain

West Indies and India commence a three-match One-Day International series in Trinidad on Friday with the visitors, even without their most prominent players, favoured to get the better of a struggling home side.

Fresh from a 2-1 series triumph in England, the Indians have opted to rest regular captain Rohit Sharma, key batter Virat Kohli, wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant, all-rounder Hardik Pandya and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah for this assignment.

The mega stars' absence has presented an opportunity for eager fringe players to shine at the expense of a team that was swept 3-0 by Bangladesh in Guyana last week.

West Indies captain Nicholas Pooran complained about both the quality of pitches against the Bangladeshis at Providence and the early start time which he felt conspired to favour the team bowling first too heavily for there to be an even contest.

"We have players quite capable of batting for long periods but we need to get it together and hold strong," said West Indies coach Phil Simmons.

All three ODI's will be played at Queen's Park Oval after which the teams switch format but stay in Trinidad for the first T20 International at the Brian Lara Stadium in Tarouba.

From there it's on to St Kitts for two games before the five-match series concludes in the United States with two fixtures at Lauderhill in Florida.



Paris Saint-Germain's Neymar Jr, Kalimuendo, Sarabia, Donnarumma and Danilo unearthed Tokyo's treasures while on their pre-season tour of Japan. The players enjoyed games at the arcade, indulged in authentic Japanese cuisine and met with a PSG fan club in Tokyo.

PHOTO: PSG

## 'Must forego looking for immediate results'

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Legendary Pakistan pacer Wasim Akram was in favour of scrapping the ODI format as Test and T20 cricket gain more ground across the world, fueling the flames of the ODI format's uncertain future that came to the fore when England's Ben Stokes recently chose to retire from the 50-over game.

While ODIs are the Tigers' favoured format, Bangladesh's performances and results in the other two formats have failed to inspire.

"T20 is kind of easier. Four hours, the game is over. Leagues all around the world, there is a lot more money – I suppose this is part and parcel of the modern cricket. T20 or Test cricket. One-day cricket kind of dying," Akram said during a talk with The Telegraph.

If ODIs are losing their allure, sooner rather than later, cricket organisers will have to decide whether ODIs remain relevant. What should Bangladesh do in such a scenario? Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, a mentor to many of the national team stars, felt that Bangladesh would eventually have to focus on the other formats when ODIs become obsolete.

"Test cricket very competitive at the moment. The longest format was able to overcome the arguments that it was not an exciting format. However, due to T20s, the ODI format may suffer. The general populace will be more intrigued by T20s," Fahim said.

"Many say that we won't be able to play T20I cricket due to a lack of power or other things. I don't believe that at all. I think we haven't tried anything except in ODIs in the truest sense. When we will be cornered, we will find a way. When ODIs start to fade, we will focus more on either T20s or Tests. I believe our standards will increase when we start considering T20s seriously."

Bangladesh do not have much time left to gear up for the upcoming T20 World Cup in Australia. BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon had said during a recent interview that they were looking to build a new team for the format but did not divulge when would be the right time to bring those changes.

"Those who are there will make up the squad but then question becomes why those players didn't feature in the West Indies?" Fahim asked.

"Whether we have enough players to build a new team or enhance bench strength, considering the time we have left for the World Cup, is a question. We have to think of a final team and put them in for the upcoming assignments before the big event," he said.

Fahim opined that Bangladesh must get out of the loop of getting immediate results.

"We have to step away from trying to get immediate results. Whether it's the T20 World Cup or other events, we need to focus on the rebuilding process for the next one to one-and-a-half years. We need to look at the probable players and give them opportunities. 'A' team programs should also prioritise T20s."

"If you think of the immediate future and the World Cup, you will not be able to experiment. But the stage we are in, we need to experiment. It's important to find players who show the characteristics required for T20s. If you don't have the fearless attitude, it's difficult to play T20s. We need to identify such players," Fahim concluded.

**"T20 is kind of easier, four hours the game is over. The leagues all around the world, there is a lot more money – I suppose this is part and parcel of the modern cricket. T20 or Test cricket. One-day cricket is kind of dying. It is quite tiring for a player to play one-day cricket. After T20, one-day cricket seems it is going for days. So, players are focusing more on shorter format. And longer format obviously [with] Test cricket."**

Pakistan great Wasim Akram



## Booters fly for SAFF U-20 C'ship

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Under-20 football team will leave for India this afternoon to take part in the SAFF U-20 Championship with a hope to fight for the championship of the five-team competition, which begins on July 25.

The tournament was held four times before as an Under-18 event, but the regional body raised the bar, making it a U-20 competition considering the qualification phase of the 2023 AFC U-20 Asian Cup next September.

Bangladesh lost 1-2 to India in the final of the last edition in 2019, when Bangladesh's defender Yeasin Arif was given his marching orders after receiving a second yellow for taking off his jersey to celebrate his equaliser.

Yeasin, now a national team and Bashundhara Kings players, was drafted in the initial squad of the U-20 squad along with national defender Rimon Hossain of Bashundhara Kings, but they were not part of the U-20 squad since the club did not release the players due to Bangladesh Premier League engagements.

Due to the unavailability of players engaged in the BPL, coach-cum-technical director Paul Smalley is pinning his hopes on players from the BFF Elite Football Academy and Bangladesh Championship League, but he promised to fight for a spot in the final.

Hosts India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh will play each other in a round-robin league format before the top two teams qualify for the final to be held on August 5 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

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**Neuer disappoints worn out taxi driver**

**AGENCIES**

A taxi driver in Germany was left 'bitterly disappointed' with his reward after returning Manuel Neuer's forgotten wallet.

The driver drove almost 75 miles to deliver the wallet to the German legend's manager at Tegernsee, Bavaria, along with his own contact details.

Despite the wallet reportedly containing around £680, Neuer rewarded Hazir with just a Bayern goalkeeper's shirt for his troubles. Hazir received the shirt as his reward in the post two weeks after returning the wallet, without comment or note of thanks.

He told Sky Germany: "This finder's fee is a mockery. I have four children. I can't do anything with the jersey."

By law in Germany, anyone returning property worth €500 is entitled to 5% of the value, and an additional 3% for property worth anything over that, meaning that Hazir was owed only €34 for his troubles.

But having rushed 120km to return the wallet the driver is understandably aggrieved that he was not shown any further gratitude.