

## Cabrera eyes maiden victory

SPORTS REPORTER

After showing a bit of competitiveness in the Asian Cup Qualifiers nine weeks ago, Bangladesh football team's coach Javier Cabrera is hoping to get a maiden win under his belt when his charges play against Cambodia and Nepal in FIFA friendly matches next month.

Since the appointment of the 37-year-old coach in early January, Bangladesh haven't tasted any win in the six matches they played against Maldives, Mongolia, Indonesia. However, the team held Mongolia and Indonesia to draws before putting up fights against Bahrain, Turkmenistan and Malaysia in the Asian Cup Qualifiers in June.

"Hopefully we are going to start the camp on August 26. We are lucky that we have enough time before the matches [against Cambodia on September 22 and Nepal on September 27]. We are getting three weeks to prepare in Dhaka before going to Cambodia and Nepal," Cabrera told reporters after meeting with his coaching staff and BFF's technical director Paul Smalley.

"We have to play to win the games as you are saying in the last few games, we obviously went for the results but we could not get. But they were very strong teams and we were able to compete well against them," the Spaniard said.

In the Asian Cup Qualifiers, 176th-ranked Nepal suffered defeats in all three matches while 174th-ranked Cambodia held Afghanistan to a 2-2 draw after losing 2-0 to India and 3-2 to Singapore. Cabrera sees Bangladesh's chances to register victories over both Cambodia and Nepal though he believes the match against Nepal will be a difficult one because of high altitude of Kathmandu.

"Cambodia is more of a team to have initiatives from the back which is more 4-3-3 formation," Cabrera said. "Nepal is a more aggressive team and comfortable with good blocks and waiting for the transition. They are ready to punish you halfway if you lose possession of the ball."

"I think being at our level and compete the way we have done previously, we are going to have chances to win the matches," Cabrera said.

The Spaniard is happy with the current crop of players, however, he hinted that there may be changes made to the squad.

"I am very with the players coming into the camp and I am hundred percent sure that they have enough level to compete at this level. They are going to perform and do well to get positive results. New players will probably have changes if they are put into the system," Cabrera said.



Bangladesh T20I captain, Shakib Al Hasan, acrobatically negotiates a yorker during a preparatory match at Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. [Below] Tigers' newly appointed Technical Consultant Sridharan Sriram is seen in jolly mood while discussing with the other coaching staffs.

PHOTO: STAR/BCB

## Domingo no-show as Asia Cup preparations kick into gear

SPORTS REPORTER

Jamie Siddons, Bangladesh batting consultant, was there and so were other members of the coaching panel in Allan Donald, Shane McDermott and Rangana Herath. Team director Khaled Mahmud walked down the side line, passing on instructions but head coach Russell Domingo was nowhere to be seen yesterday during Bangladesh's preparatory practice match for the Asia Cup, played between Bangladesh Red and Bangladesh Green, at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium.

Where was Domingo with Bangladesh's preparations in full swing? While he attended the training session the day before, his absence was noted by the media present at the stadium.

With rumours floating around that Domingo will not be at the Asia Cup, during the practice game, the newly appointed technical consultant Sridharan Sriram came to the field for a meeting at BCB offices. Later he met with the senior players and it was his presence and Domingo's absence at Mirpur that left a mark.

Mosaddek Hossain's words all but confirmed the scenario unfolding behind the curtains regarding Domingo's future.

"I don't have any idea regarding this issue. It's the board's decision and we don't have any idea regarding it," Mosaddek told the media after the game when asked regarding Domingo's absence.

Mosaddek, however, cited that a new setup is to arrive in the T20 format. Asked on his evaluation of Domingo and adjust-

ing to the new setup, Mosaddek said: "We have worked with him [Domingo] for so long and maybe a new setup will obviously arrive. Obviously, it will be difficult to adjust to that and perform but as a professional cricketer I believe everyone will do that."

It was learned that Domingo was called in by the BCB president, Nazmul Hassan, at his resi-



dence yesterday. The meeting today with everyone concerned was slated to reveal what would happen to Domingo's future with BCB, and it appears part of that discussion might have already taken place.

Asked if Domingo would be missed, Mosaddek said: "When you work with someone for two-three years, obviously, it's normal to miss them. From what I heard in the media, he will probably stay with us in Tests and ODIs. So maybe we will miss him in the T20s but he will be in the other formats."

Shakib Al Hasan was dictating terms in the practice game, trying out match scenarios. While captaining the Red team, he made some batting-order changes as well. Batting first, the Reds put up 165 for 7 with Shakib twice coming in to bat. At his first opportunity, the newly appointed T20I skipper fell to Ebadot Hossain after a 13-ball 17.

Anamul Haque Bijoy, who came in to open the innings, departed for four but came in at number five later to hit 19 off 10 before falling to Mehedi Hasan Miraz. The experienced Mahmudullah Riyad and Mushfiqur Rahim scored 12 and 2, respectively, before Shakib's 24-ball 36 and Mosaddek's 17-ball 30 saw them reach 165.

Youngster Mahfizul Islam and Miraz came in to open the innings and provided a flying start to Bangladesh Green with a fifty partnership in five overs. However, the Green's innings fell through after they departed.

Shakib then shortened the target to 148 for the Green side in the 17th over. Afterwards, Mohammad Saifuddin contributed with 26 while Mahedi Hasan, who batted for the Red team in the first innings, was brought in to test death-over batting skills and he responded well by hitting an unbeaten 31 off 16 deliveries.

Shamim Patrawari ended the chase with a six off the penultimate delivery as Bangladesh look to find a new avenue and gear up for a change in their T20 setup.

Meanwhile, pacer Mustafizur Rahman didn't feature in the match as he is undergoing injury rehabilitation and is unlikely to play today's match.

## I should have won, says tearful Joshua

AFP, Jeddah

A tearful Anthony Joshua rued his second straight defeat to Oleksandr Usyk after the supremely talented Ukrainian fought back to retain his world heavyweight titles in Saudi Arabia on Sunday.

Joshua hurled two of Usyk's belts to the canvas and stormed out of the ring in a fit of pique after letting slip a golden opportunity to hand the Ukrainian his first professional loss.

The 6ft 6ins (1.98m) Briton scented victory when he had Usyk hanging on in the ninth round, only for the mobile southpaw to come firing back and control the final stages for a split-decision win.

Joshua, 32, let fly a string of expletives -- in front of the deeply conservative country's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman -- in an impassioned post-match speech.



"I just spoke from my heart. It has been so tough. You see AJ holding it together. I'm a hustler, so I try to keep things together, try work hard. Make sure my team is good,"

he said.

"It comes at a cost. It would never break me but it takes real strength and tonight there's a little crack in the armour."

While Joshua is left trying to rebuild his career after his third defeat, Usyk retains the IBF, WBA and WBO titles and will now seek a unification showdown with WBC champion Tyson Fury.

"I should have won," lamented Joshua, who was too emotional to speak for part of his post-fight press conference.

"I adapted, I made the change that I needed to give him more of a competitor. It wasn't enough but I left everything in the gym," he added.

"If I would have left everything in the ring I would have won."

## MotoGP to introduce F1-style sprints

AFP, Spielberg

MotoGP is to follow Formula One's lead and introduce Saturday sprints to race weekends next year, the sport's governing body FIM announced on Saturday, an initiative denounced as "stupid" by world champion Fabio Quartararo.

In contrast to F1, which is staging only three sprints this campaign, MotoGP plans to hold one on the eve of every grand prix throughout 2023.

And in another marked difference, the sprint, half the normal race distance with half the points on offer, will not serve to shape the grid for the following day's grand prix.

With its arrival a rider who wins the sprint and the race itself can collect 37 points -- as opposed to the 25 on offer at the moment.

"It's time to give (MotoGP) more exposure not only on television but also to the fans," FIM president Jorge Viegas told a press conference at this weekend's Austrian MotoGP in Spielberg.

"We need more fans, we need a better spectacle and we are going to fill up Saturdays," he added.

The new weekend sprint schedule has been tweaked, with only two, longer, practice runs before the traditional two-part qualifying session.

Q2 comprises the 10 best combined practice times, plus the two quickest riders from Q1.

The qualifying result will shape the grids for both the sprint and the grand prix itself 24 hours later.

## Warner wants CA to discuss his captaincy ban

AGENCIES

Big-hitting Australian batsman David Warner Sunday signed a two-year deal with Sydney Thunder, ending a nine-year absence from the Big Bash League.

The 35-year-old opener has not played in the domestic Twenty20 competition since 2013 and said he wanted to get involved again to help support the next generation.

The Thunder are yet to settle on a new captain since the departure of Warner's Test opening partner Usman Khawaja to the Brisbane Heat during the off-season.

Warner hasn't yet had any discussions with the club around the captaincy but said he would be keen sit down and have a conversation with the Cricket Australia board around his lifetime leadership ban that was imposed in the wake of the Cape Town ball tampering scandal in 2018.

"I'm a leader in the side anyway without having the title," he said.

"(My Thunder teammates) can pick my brains in any way, my phone's always

there, they've got my number and they can (also) see me when I'm at the practice facilities.

"It's upon the board to reach out to me and open their doors.

"The board has changed since 2018 when all those sanctions were dealt. It will be great to have a conversation with them and see where we are at."

However, several former and current players, including Test skipper Pat Cummins, have called for Warner's life ban to end.

"That hasn't really been brought to the table," Warner was quoted saying by a website.

"As I've said plenty of times off the record, it's upon the board to reach out to me and open their doors. Then I can sit down and have an honest conversation with them," he added.

Warner, Smith and batter Cameron Bancroft were banned from playing domestic or international cricket as punishment for their roles in the infamous ball-tampering scandal.



Liverpool and Manchester United meet at the Old Trafford tonight in what is supposed to be the first big battle of the season. However, neither team is in a great state at the moment. While the Reds come off two draws in their first two matches, the Red Devils are yet to open their account and have a lot of issues to sort out on an off the pitch.

PHOTO: TWITTER

