

BFF drops controversial venue for next season

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) decided to finally drop the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium as one of the venues for the upcoming season's top-tier competitions, and the BFF president revealed his intention to allocate Tk 1 crore prize money in Super Cup, slated for next year.

"Kamalapur Stadium has not been in our consideration for next season as we are mulling to hold season-curtaining tournament Independence Cup outside the capital in more than one venue. Cumilla, Mushiganj and Gopalganj have been among the initial candidates to hold the next season's Independence Cup," BFF general secretary Abu Nayem Shohag informed yesterday.

The astro-turf at the Kamalapur Stadium has virtually turned into an injury-trap for the players. One of the notable victims include national defender and Bashundhara Kings captain Tapu Barman, who is still nursing an injury he sustained in last season during season-curtaining Independence Cup.

Apart from Tapu, several foreign players also sustained injuries during the Independence Cup and, as a consequence, three clubs – Bashundhara Kings, Uttar Baridhara Club and Muktiyoddha Sangsad – withdrew from last edition's Federation Cup after the local game's governing body did not consider their appeal to arrange the Federation Cup outside the Kamalapur Stadium.

The BFF general secretary also added they have tentatively scheduled a one-month transfer window from the first week of October, before the season gets underway in the middle of November through the Independence Cup. Afterwards, the Bangladesh Premier League will commence in the second week of December, coinciding with the FIFA World Cup.

Meanwhile, the BFF president Kazi Salahuddin said that they are all set to bring back Tk 1 crore prize money for the Super Cup after 10 years with a hope to make the Bangladesh Premier League more competitive and entertain the spectators in the process.

"A total of six teams, split into two groups, will compete in the Super Cup, which is expected to take place after the completion of a second-term transfer window in April," Salahuddin said.

"Top four teams from the standings of last Bangladesh premier league table will play directly while two teams from the rest of the professional football league will come through the qualification round," added the BFF president.



Serbia forward Aleksandar Mitrovic celebrates one of his three goals against Sweden in their UEFA Nations League fixture at the Rajko-Mitic Stadium in Belgrade on Saturday. (Inset) Cristiano Ronaldo Cristiano Ronaldo receives medical treatment during Portugal's 4-0 win over Czech Republic in Prague.

PHOTO: AFP



Djokovic not 'old enough to retire yet'

REUTERS

Roger Federer's departure from tennis has raised the question of retirement of the other two members of the revered 'Big Three' but Novak Djokovic has assured that he does not feel "old enough" to consider bringing down the curtain yet.

Federer's decision was not unexpected given the 41-year-old's recent struggles with injuries and form, but it was still met with an outpouring of sadness by fans and former players when the Swiss great bid an emotional goodbye to the sport.

His exit has brought the longevity of his great rivals, Rafa Nadal and Djokovic, in sharper focus while fans and pundits have wondered how men's tennis would cope with the prospect of losing their most marketable athletes.

"I don't feel yet so old, to be honest, for my tennis career to finish," Djokovic told reporters on Saturday after returning to tennis for the first time since winning his 21st Grand Slam singles title at Wimbledon.

"I still feel my body is serving me, is listening to me well. That's the key I think when you get to 35 plus."

The so-called men's 'Big Three' revolutionised the sport with their own achievements and riveting rivalries. They have won a combined 63 Grand Slam singles titles between them.

A chronic foot issue forced Nadal to contemplate retirement in 2021 and again this year after the 36-year-old Spaniard won a men's record 22nd major title at



the French Open, playing with numbing injections before each match in Paris.

Nadal said he was not contemplating retirement at the moment after a radio frequency treatment eased pain in his foot and allowed him to play Wimbledon.

Djokovic, the fittest among the three, said he has made necessary adjustments to his schedule to look after his body.

"I'm not playing as much as I played few years ago. I want to peak at the best tournaments, biggest tournaments in the

world, which are Grand Slams and some of the biggest ATP events, playing for my country," the Serb added.

"That's what gives me the most motivation and inspires me to play the best tennis. I really want to keep going. I don't have the ending of my career on the horizon at the moment.

"I just want to keep going as long as I feel good and I can compete with the youngsters, that I could be one of the candidates to win Grand Slams."

BCB XI, A team tours adjusted with NCL in mind

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh A's tour of UAE to play Afghanistan has been cancelled and the tour will be replaced by a tour of India to play a Ranji trophy side, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) media committee chairman Tanvir Ahmed Tito told reporters yesterday.

"The Afghanistan series was unfortunately cancelled and, to make up for that, we are planning to play Ranji trophy team Tamil Nadu. The team will be heading to Tamil Nadu but the itinerary will be confirmed within the next two to three days," he said.

A BCB eleven was also supposed to tour Nepal but as the National Cricket League (NCL) will begin on October 10, the tour has been postponed, Tito informed.

"We will be missing a significant number of players if the BCB eleven goes there, it will affect our national league (NCL). The Nepal tour has been held off for now. If there is time available later, we might go there," he added.

"The local matches in the national leagues are a



big place for building players, so if the [key] players don't participate here, they won't be able to help others improve in quality. Our focus is to hold the national league with full-strength teams," he said.

A few players were set to appear for UAE T10 league, which coincides with BCL one-day version held domestically. The T10 league will also be played right before India's tour of Bangladesh later this year, and engagement in that tournament may hamper national team's preparations ahead of India's upcoming Bangladesh tour.

"We feel that the country comes first, so as professionals we know the players would like to go and play around the world. But prioritising on the country's needs, the players can go only if it does not hamper [preparations]," Tanvir said.

The NCL will begin in revamped form with BCB set to increase salaries of long-format players while the tournament will be played on Duke balls with promise of sporting wickets. The likes of Mominul Haque and Mahmudul Hasan Joy will likely tour with the A team in India, missing a few rounds of the NCL.

"It is being discussed [regarding a few players going with the A team] and when the time frame is fixed, I don't think they will be available for the national league," Tanvir informed.

Meanwhile, following evaluation of Expression Of Interest (EOI) from prospective owners, the board yesterday invited Fortune Barishal Sports Ltd (Barishal), Mindtree Limited (Khulna), Progoti Green Auto Rice Mills Ltd (Dhaka), Future Sports Bangladesh Limited (Sylhet), Toggi Sports Limited (Ramgaur), Delta Sports Ltd. (Chattogram), and Comilla Legends Limited (Cumilla) to complete the ownership procedures for the next three editions of the BPL.



Bangladesh coach Javier Cabrera watches as Mohammad Ibrahim, Jamal Bhuyan and Sumon Reza go through a training session at the Army Headquarters ground in Kathmandu on Sunday, ahead of Tuesday's FIFA friendly against hosts Nepal.

PHOTO: BFF

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