

Youth hockey returns after five years

SPORTS REPORTER

The Arafah Islami Bank 27th National Youth Hockey Championship gets underway tomorrow at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium, bringing back the youth competition to the hockey turf following a five-year gap.

Some 57 teams including four education boards and Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishthan (BKSP), split into nine zones, will play in the zonal matches and the top two teams from each group will qualify for the 18-team final round, which is expected to be held in the latter part of November.

BKSP and Dhaka Education Board were the champions and runners-up of the last edition, which was held in 2017. Al Arafah Bank is providing Tk 1.5 crore for the championship.

The matches of other zones – Mymensingh, Narail, Faridpur, Khulna, Cumilla, Chattogram, Dinajpur and Joypurhat – will get underway gradually and will be completed before October 18.

Bangladesh Hockey Federation's acting general secretary Mohammad Yousuf informed that they have planned to pick 100 players from the tournament for a long-term training.



Nepal striker Anjan Bista (R) jumps in the air to celebrate one of his three goals during a 3-1 victory against Bangladesh in a FIFA Friendly at the Dasarath Rangasala in Kathmandu on Tuesday. PHOTO: TWITTER

India, SA look to gain confidence before T20 WC

AGENCIES

India are coming off a fine series win over Australia and will be eager to do an encore when they meet against South Africa in the first T20I of the three-match match series at the Greenfield International Stadium in Thiruvananthapuram today.

After clinching the T20 series against Australia 2-1, India now shifts focus to South Africa, the last team they will face before flying out for the T20 World Cup in Australia.

While the batting line-up looks rather

settled, a lot still remains unanswered as far as the bowling is concerned. Indian bowlers have been leaking runs in the death overs, which has been the biggest worry for skipper Rohit Sharma.

The visitors, who held India to a 2-2 draw in the last T20 series in June this year, are also looking to experiment but have an eye on the upcoming T20 World Cup.

But unlike the previous series against the Proteas, this time the home side will field a full-strength team.



Bangladesh women's cricket team, led by Nigar Sultana Joty, returned home yesterday after an undefeated triumph in the ICC T20 World Cup Qualifiers in the UAE. The Tigresses will now shift their focus to the Women's T20 Asia Cup, to be held in Sylhet from October 1 to 15. PHOTO: BCB

Nepal hit BD for three after 38 years

SPORTS REPORTER

After vowing to repeat the feat of the Bangladesh women's football team in Kathmandu, the Bangladesh men's team suffered a 3-1 defeat against hosts Nepal as Anjan Bista hit a first-half hat-trick in a friendly at the Dasharath Rangasala Stadium yesterday.

Following a 1-0 win over Cambodia in the prior friendly, Javier Cabrera's team promised to carry their momentum into the Nepal tie and repeat the women's team's feat, who beat Nepal in the final of the SAFF Women's Championship recently.

But the men in red and green surrendered meekly against Nepal, who were playing their first international game since the Asian Cup Qualifiers in June.

After Nepal defeated Bangladesh for the first time in 20 years during the 2011 SAFF Championship by a 1-0 margin, matches between the teams have become evenly-contested. Nepal beat Bangladesh thrice while Bangladesh won twice since, with three matches, including their last meeting in the 2021 SAFF Championship, ending in draws.

The one saving grace was that Bangladesh had not conceded three goals against the Himalayan nation in 38 years since a 4-2 loss in the 1984 South Asian Games. But that too dissipated as Jamal Bhuiyan and Co. produced

a dismal performance in front of the 9,000-strong crowd in Kathmandu.

Spanish coach Cabrera made three changes to the side that beat Cambodia, with defender Rimon Hossain, midfielder Hemanta Vincent Bishwas and forward Sazzad Hossain replacing Tariq Raihan Kazi, Atiqur Rahman Fahad and Suman Reza.

The new combination did not work. Jamal Bhuiyan played deeper to allow Hemanta, who returned to the international arena after a long gap, to take up the attacking midfield position, but the latter proved less effective than Jamal in the position.

The defence also looked lackluster against counter-attacks and when it came to negotiating set pieces.

Anjan headed a Biman Gharti Magar free-kick home from close range in the 18th minute before doubling the margin by slotting home a rebound in the 27th minute after Anisur Rahman Zico had initially stopped a drive from Tej Tamang from a counter-attack. Bangladesh looked purposeless, adopting a high line against the speedy Nepalese side.

Anjan then completed his treble by rising high and connecting with a Bishal Rai free-kick in the 38th minute.

After resumption, Cabrera made a few changes but it had little impact. Sazzad Hossain reduced the margin with a close-range diving header from a low cross from Rakib Hossain in the 55th minute.

Bellingham gives England hope

AFP, LONDON

England will head to the World Cup on a six-game winless streak, their longest going into a major tournament, but lifted by the eye-catching performance of Jude Bellingham against Germany.

The Three Lions were denied a morale-boosting win in an enthralling 3-3 draw against the four-time world champions at Wembley on Monday.

At just 19, Bellingham stepped forward to help spark a fightback from 2-0 down to 3-2 in the space of 12 second-half minutes. The Borussia Dortmund midfielder started the move that resulted in Luke Shaw firing in England's first goal from open play in more than 520 minutes.

Bellingham then put his body on the line to win a penalty that Harry Kane converted to complete the comeback before Kai Havertz snatched a late equaliser for the visitors. "I think the biggest thing is he's got a top-level mentality to compete," said Southgate.

"Yes, he's got technical ability and he's got athletic prowess, but the thing that makes the difference with the top players is that mentality that they are never beaten. "They drive the game and they don't look like they are fazed by any occasion and that's what we are seeing."

Bellingham was in the England squad that reached a first major tournament final for 55 years at last year's delayed Euro 2020, but spent little time on the pitch.

We're happy, says Mancini after beating Hungary

AFP, Budapest

Italy, who will miss a second consecutive World Cup, again found consolation in Europe as they won 2-0 in Budapest on Monday to edge Hungary for first place in their Nations League group.

Giacomo Raspadori, who scored the winner against England on Friday, poked the ball home after Wilfried Gnonto had pounced on a poor Hungarian back pass to give Italy the lead in the 27th minute.

"We needed these matches to restore enthusiasm, even if the World Cup remains an open wound and we can not go back," said Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

"We have to start again, we have to do it for all of Italy."

Hungary, who started the final round of games top of Group A3, fought hard but Donnarumma

made two miraculous saves in quick succession in the 50th minute from Loic Nego and Adam Szalai.

Two minutes later, Federico Dimarco met a Bryan Cristante cross at the back post to smash in his first international goal and Italy's 1,500th.

Donnarumma produced another outstanding to keep out a header from Callum Styles (55th).

Italy held on to follow the Netherlands and Croatia into the Nations League final four scheduled for June 2023.

"We were excellent for 70 minutes, the last 20 I didn't like too much," said Italy coach Roberto Mancini.

"We're happy, it's important to have reached the Nations League final four for the second time."



Carlsen makes stinging allegation against Niemann

REUTERS

World chess champion Magnus Carlsen said on Monday he believed Hans Niemann had "cheated more - and more recently - than he has publicly admitted", adding he no longer wanted to play against the American and any rivals who repeatedly cheated in the past.

The 31-year-old Norwegian resigned at the Julius Baer Generation Cup last week after one move against Niemann, who lags him by almost 200 Elo points - the rating system used to calculate the relative skill levels of players.

"So far I have only been able to speak with my actions, and those actions have stated clearly that I am not willing to play chess with Niemann," Carlsen said in a statement on Twitter. Carlsen, world champion since 2013, also withdrew from the Sinquefeld Cup in St Louis, Missouri earlier this month after unexpectedly losing to the 19-year-old, sparking a furore of comments and allegations that Niemann had cheated.

Niemann has denied any wrongdoing in over-the-board games. "When Niemann was invited last minute to the 2022 Sinquefeld Cup, I strongly considered withdrawing prior to the event. I ultimately chose to play," Carlsen said.

Niemann has previously been banned from chess.com for cheating online after admitting he had not played fairly in non-competitive games on the website in his youth. "I believe that Niemann has cheated more - and more recently - than he has publicly admitted," Carlsen said on Monday.

Niemann was not immediately available to comment. "I have never cheated in an over-the-board game. If they want me to strip fully naked, I will do it. I don't care. Because I know I am clean," he said recently.

