



We think it's important, wherever we think that when we are on the world stage and in a venue like Qatar, to bring awareness to these issues. We recognise that Qatar has made major strides and there has been a ton of progress but there is some work to do.

USA coach Gregg Berhalter explained why his team are displaying a rainbow logo at their training base in Qatar, where homosexuality is illegal.

I wished I played in the World Cup of course, but that's the reality now (that) I don't do (that), but I will relax my body and my mind a lot and then I will train.

Norway and Manchester City forward Erling Haaland

Although football is and should be our main focus, the FIFA World Cup is also about values and causes that extend far beyond the pitch and we are delighted that football stars past and present have joined us to promote and highlight these topics, which also unite the whole world.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino again urged teams to focus on the football.



Denmark will 'focus on football' in Qatar: Hjulmand

AFP, Copenhagen

Denmark's head coach Kasper Hjulmand said Monday the team would 'focus on football' in Qatar, after FIFA rejected the country's request to wear special jerseys advocating human rights at training.

Speaking to reporters on the eve of the Danish squad's departure for the World Cup, Hjulmand said that they had as a group "decided we will focus on football."

"Now we are here, the day before we travel, and for us our expectations are that we land and we do our job," Hjulmand said.

Last week FIFA denied the Danish request to be allowed wear jerseys bearing the message "Human Rights for All" during training sessions in Qatar.

"We won't be wearing that jersey at all," Jakob Jensen, CEO of the Danish Football Association (DBU) told AFP Monday.



After publicly deriding his club Manchester United in an explosive interview, Cristiano Ronaldo returned to surroundings where the Portuguese feels more welcome, joining the national team ahead of the Qatar World Cup and posing for a smiling photo afterwards.

PHOTO: TWITTER

Ronaldo 'always happy' when playing for Portugal

AGENCIES

Cristiano Ronaldo is "always happy" when playing for Portugal and his problems at Manchester United will not damage the country's prospects at the World Cup, international teammate Joao Mario said on Tuesday.

The superstar forward blasted United in an explosive TV interview days before the start of the tournament in Qatar, saying he felt "betrayed" by the club and does not respect manager Erik ten Hag.

In an explosive interview with TalkTV on Sunday Ronaldo, who made his name at Old Trafford, said he felt "betrayed" by United and that he believed senior club figures were trying to oust him.

In another part of the interview released on Monday he continued to wage war on the club where he made his name during his first stint at Old Trafford from 2003 to 2009.

The forward, who returned to the club last year, said he does not speak to the Glazers, the Americans who have owned United since 2005, and they do not have the club's best interests at heart.

"The Glazers, they don't care about the club... professional sport. As you know, Manchester is a marketing club," he said.

"They will get money from the marketing -- the sport, it's, they don't really care, in my opinion.

"The fans, they're always right. I think the fans should know the truth, should know that the players want the best for the club. I want the best for the club. This is why I came to Manchester United."

Ronaldo, 37, is now preparing to lead

Portugal at a World Cup for what is almost certain to be the final time.

"He's always happy when he is in the national team," Benfica midfielder Joao Mario told reporters after the squad trained in Lisbon.

"I saw him yesterday and he was quite fine as always. As he has said before, for him it is always a pleasure to be here. He's totally focused on the national team.



"I don't see a problem with the timing (of the interview) because everyone always speaks about Cristiano, so it's fine for us."

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner has been a peripheral figure for United this season under new manager Ten Hag.

He was disciplined after refusing to come on as a substitute in a 2-0 win over Tottenham last month.

But the Portugal superstar had

returned to the side in recent weeks and even captained the Red Devils in a 3-1 loss at Aston Villa.

However, he was absent from the squad for Sunday's 2-1 victory over Fulham in United's final match before a six-week break for the World Cup.

Ronaldo, the all-time top scorer in international football, has started just four games in the Premier League this

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season and scored only once.

His Portugal side open their World Cup campaign against Ghana in Doha on November 24 and will also face Uruguay and South Korea in Group H.

In a message posted on social media on Monday, along with a photo of himself and some of his international team-mates, Ronaldo said: "Total and absolute focus on the work of the national team."

Uttara make Abahani work for win

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Abahani began their Independence Cup campaign on a winning note, beating lightweights Uttara FC 2-0 in the Group C opener at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Flight Lt Matiur Rahman Stadium in Munshiganj yesterday.

After Bashundhara Kings blazed to a record 14-0 win over Bangladesh Championship League (BCL) outfit Fakirerpool Youngmen's Club on Monday, there was apprehension about what Uttara FC, another second-tier outfit, would have in store for them. However, they left with a respectable margin of defeat that featured one own goal.

On the other hand, Bangladesh Air Force could not escape the blues in the group's other match, losing 5-1 to Muktijoddha Sangsad.

Boosted by new players that made up a majority of the starting eleven, Abahani got off to a bit of a slow start against a team playing sans foreigners. They enjoyed the lion's share of the ball but could hardly make any decisive moves.

The young Uttara team fought neck-and-neck before Abahani finally broke the deadlock in the 34th minute. Maraz Hossain ran down the right flank and whip a cross that fell to the team's new Brazilian recruit, Getterson, who found the back of the net with a snapshot.

Eight minutes later, Uttara defender Rakib Hossain headed a Colindres corner into his own goal before Getterson squandered a good chance in the 58th minute.

In the group's other match, Muktijoddha Sangsad got off to a flying start with a convincing 5-1 win over Bangladesh Air Force at Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium in Cumilla. Faisal Ahmed struck a brace while Golam Rabbi, Aminur Rahman Sajib and Taj Uddin netted one goal apiece. National forward Suman Reza scored a consolation goal.

Williamson unsure of England's influence

REUTERS

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson does not expect teams to blindly copy the template England provided after winning the T20 World Cup in Australia with their unbridled aggression.

An England side teeming with power-hitters and all-rounders suffered a shock defeat to Ireland in a rain-marred contest, but otherwise blew away oppositions en route to their second World T20 title. They plundered runs in powerplays, barely relented in the middle overs and accelerated again in the death overs, maintaining the kind of tempo which their opponents could only dream of.

Williamson insisted teams would plot strategies according to their strength and weaknesses. "The English team has a very strong side and they're playing a strong brand of cricket, which is very aggressive," the 32-year-old told Indian journalists on Tuesday.

"I think it suits the balance of their side. Every team is always trying to be nice and clear on the strengths in their team and play according to those and put out their best performances."

Many observers believe England have revolutionised how cricket's shortest format is played, but Williamson, whose team lost to Pakistan in the semi-finals, was not so sure.



After an impressive T20 World Cup performance in Australia, Taskin Ahmed returned to the field in Mirpur as the Tigers began preparations for their upcoming assignment at home against India. It was also an opportunity for coach Russell Domingo, who joined the team after a vacation, to gauge the 27-year-old's progress.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Tamim to miss third round of BCL

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh ODI captain Tamim Iqbal will miss the third round of the Bangladesh Cricket League, slated to begin on November 20th.

The one-day version of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) was set to begin on November 26th but was rescheduled to November 20 to ensure that players from Bangladesh A are available. The next two rounds are scheduled for November 22 and 24 before the final on November 27. Tamim, who is going to attend the FIFA World Cup match between Brazil and Serbia on November 24th, will miss the third round's match for East Zone, a team official confirmed yesterday.

A majority of the national team's players will play the BCL one-day version to gear up for the ODI series against India, slated to begin from December 4. The BCB is reconsidering whether to play the longer-version of the BCL between December 5-30 as had been earlier informed since it may clash with the national team's preparation camp for the India ODIs.

Shakib Al Hasan, Mustafizur Rahman and Nurul Hasan Sohan had been handed NOCs to appear in the Dubai T10 league and will miss the BCL one-day version. Sabbir Rahman was one of the players missing in the players' draft announced

yesterday while pacers Khaled Ahmed and Abu Jayed were also absent. But the latter two are expected to feature for Bangladesh's A team against India A.

"We rescheduled the BCL (one-dayers) as the national team has an ODI assignment. If they can play the BCL before that, it will be advantageous. We have two windows for the longer version of the BCL in December and February and we will look to hold the tournament in December. If that's not possible, we will hold it in February," BCB tournament committee chairman Ahmed Sajjadul Alam Bobby told reporters yesterday.

Walton Group had been part of BCL since its inception but they will not participate in the tournament, leaving Islami Bank East Zone as the only franchise-owned team in the tournament. The three remaining teams will be run by the BCB.

"It is a little unfortunate. The thing is that the whole world is recovering from a crisis and Walton let us know that they are going through financial constraints. When they overcome it, they will come again," Ahmed added.

Head coach Russell Domingo, who arrived in the country on Monday, oversaw Tamim, Mahmudullah Riyad, Taskin Ahmed and Mohammad Saifuddin's individual sessions yesterday at the Sher-e Bangla National Stadium in his first day back on the field.