

## BFF in troubled water over Jamie Day wages

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh national football team coach Jamie Day has claimed that world football's governing body, FIFA, has stopped issuing development funds to Bangladesh Football Federation over his payment disputes with the federation.

The English coach had a contract running till August 2022, but the 43-year-old was sacked by the BFF in September 2021. Day was in constant contact with the federation to recover his unpaid wages before eventually lodging a complaint with the FIFA late last year.

FIFA gave the verdict in October 2022 asking the BFF to clear the dues of Day, who has claimed more than \$86,000 in unpaid wages. A deadline expiring on December 27 was also given to the BFF to abide by FIFA's verdict.

"In October 2022, the FIFA Players' Status Committee heard the case between the BFF and me and determined that I was owed compensation of \$86,000 plus interest due to the BFF's failure to comply with the terms of the employment contract between us.

"The BFF did not appeal FIFA's decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, and so FIFA's decision is final and binding.

"FIFA imposed a deadline upon the BFF of 27 December 2022 to comply with its decision and pay the outstanding amounts.

"The BFF has chosen to ignore FIFA and this deadline and to date, no amounts have been paid. As a result, the BFF now faces a restriction on receiving a percentage of development funding until they decide to comply with FIFA's decision," Day claimed in messages sent to media in Bangladesh.

BFF, however, claimed through a press release, that FIFA has not halted its instalment of development fund. It claimed that BFF received the latest tranche in January this year and it was working on clearing the dues of Day.

BFF's senior vice president and finance department head, Salam Murshedy, responded by saying that they don't have the means to make the payment and were seeking bank loans to help them out of the situation.

"We are seeking help from the banking sector in terms of loans to help clear his wages," Murshedy said.

Previously in 2016, FIFA had instructed the BFF to clear the due wages of sacked Dutch coach Rene Koster, which amounted to 80 thousand euros, including the interest accrued over the unpaid period. Back then, the BFF was also ordered to pay 8000 Swiss francs to FIFA and Koster as proceedings of the case. Ultimately, the BFF took more than a year to transfer payments to the Dutch coach.

## Bangladesh women to play against Singapore

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's football team will play a FIFA friendly match away to Singapore on February 18 and will likely host Cambodia for two matches in March, confirmed Bangladesh Football Federation's women's wing chairman Mahfuza Akter Kiran.

Bangladesh senior women's team's last international match was in September last year when they played and won the SAFF Women's Championship title in Kathmandu. Following the success, there was demand from football fans to allow the women's team more international matches, and BFF officials had promised to arrange matches in FIFA windows.

"We had been saying for some time that we were trying to arrange a match against Singapore during a FIFA window. Singapore tried to arrange a tri-nation tournament involving Bangladesh and another team, but they couldn't convince the other team," Kiran told reporters in Kamalapur yesterday.

"Now we will play a Tier-I match against Singapore in Singapore on February 18. We will play another unofficial match there the following day. We will also try to play two matches against Cambodia in Dhaka in March. However, the matches have not been finalised as yet," Kiran added.

Bangladesh are currently ranked 140th in FIFA ranking, a jump of seven places following their SAFF success.



Bangladesh defender Surma Jannat tries an audacious flick in front of India goal during their SAFF U-20 Women's Championship fixture at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. The match ended in a goalless draw after (bottom) Nepal thrashed Bhutan 4-0 in the day's first match.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED/BFF

## Resilient Rupna and Co hold off India

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite the game ending in a nil-nil stalemate, hosts Bangladesh and defending champions India played out a hotly contested affair in their second fixture of the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship in Kamalapur yesterday.

Earlier in the day, a hatrick from Amisha Karki ensured a convincing 4-0 victory for Nepal against bottom dwellers Bhutan at the same venue.

Bangladesh now sit at a comfortable second position in the four-team table behind India and ahead of Nepal. The result means the hosts can afford to draw in the next and final round-robin league match against Bhutan tomorrow and still qualify for the final.

The game at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium was a fast-paced one from the onset. The girls in red and greed were keen on pressing high on India's half and both sides attempted to win every loose ball across the pitch.

However, the first opportunity -- the best of the half -- fell on India's lap in the seventh minute when Sumati Kumari found herself through on goal from the left. She had only the keeper to beat from inside the box but Rupna Chakma brilliantly denied Sumati's shot on target with outstretched legs, reminiscent of Argentina's Emiliano Martinez's last-gasp save in Qatar World Cup final.



The Bangladesh No.1 stayed busy throughout the first half -- grabbed on to several aerial balls, broke down counters in a sweeper role, and also got hurt during a collision near the end of the half. Meanwhile, the defending champions stamped their authority, especially with their captain Martina Thokchom pulling the strings from midfield.

India had another chance to break the deadlock with an open header in the 20th minute but the nearest India forward failed to connect. On the other hand, it took 26 minutes for Bangladesh to strike their first shot on target. Sapna Rani left-footed drive, albeit a weak one, from outside the edge of the box had the India goalkeeper fumble it to a corner, following which a flick shot went over the post.

Unlike India, the charges of Golam Rabbani Choton lacked conviction and composure in possession and they only appeared threatening when Shaheda Akter Ripa attempted to find space with her quick feet and then linked up

with captain Shamsunnahar on the right flank.

The second half saw India introduce a string of substitutes in time while Bangladesh kept their eleven unchanged up until in the last quarter of the game. The two sides had kept their tail up to assert control post-interval.

India had a sniff at goal in the 62nd minute when substitute Neha's side-volley from inside the box went over the bar after Sunita broke through from the right flank and crossed.

Couple of minutes later, Bangladesh had their best chance to score when Shamsunnahar, following good movement outside the box involving Ripa, was one-on-one with the goalkeeper but her accuracy from close-range was not up to the mark as the shot was deflected off India's goalkeeper, Anshika.

The game did not produce any late drama as the defence of both teams nipped threats in the bud.

## Osimhen sends Napoli 16 clear

REUTERS, La Spezia

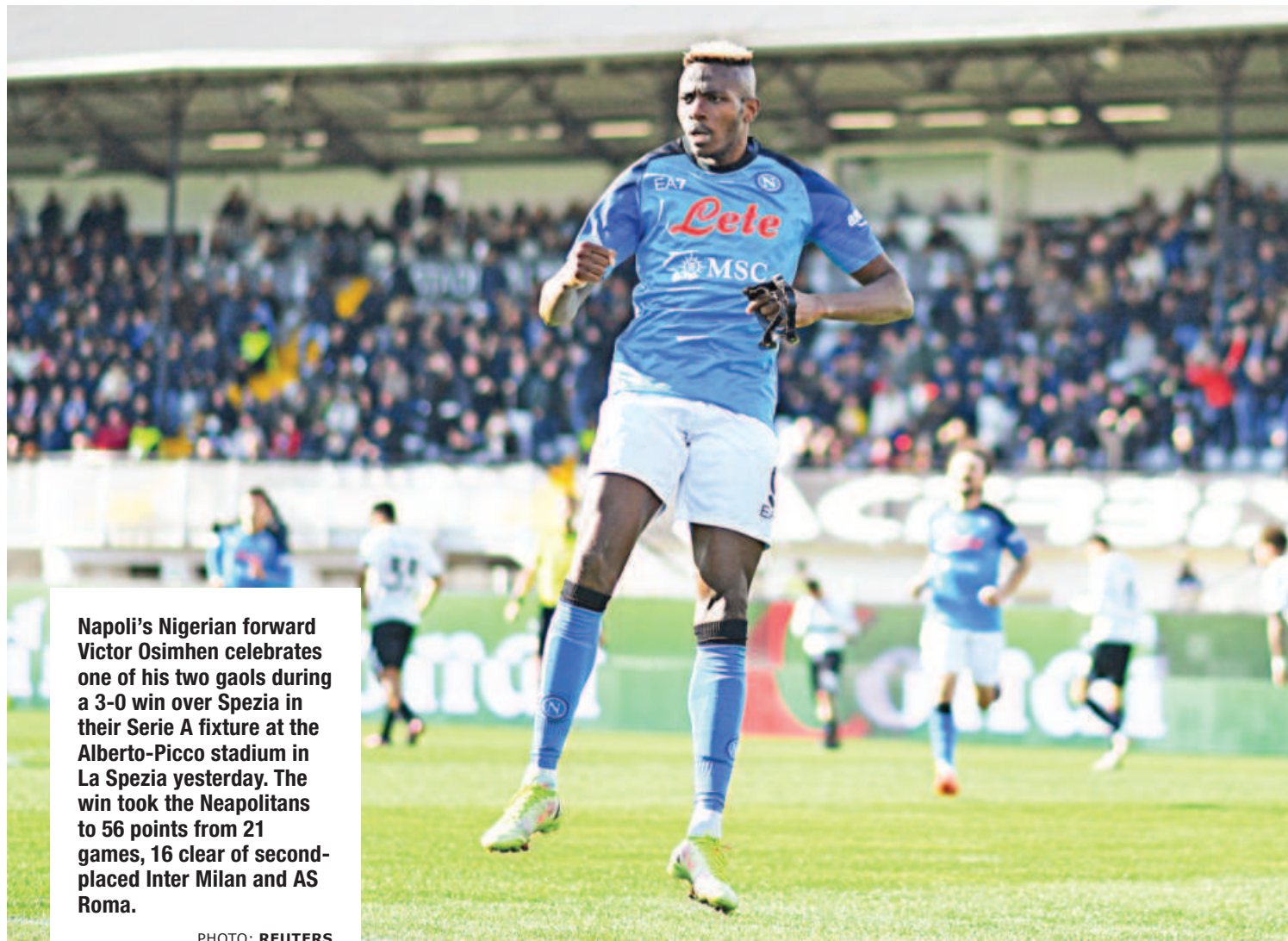
Two goals by striker Victor Osimhen helped leaders Serie A Napoli to a comfortable 3-0 win over struggling Spezia on Sunday, condemning the hosts to a third consecutive defeat.

Winger Khvicha Kvaratskhelia put Napoli in front from the penalty spot two minutes into the second half, after the ball struck defender Arkadiusz Reca's arm inside the area.

Osimhen netted in the 68th minute with a close-range header following a mistake by Spezia defender Ethan Ampadu.

Another error by the Spezia defence gifted Osimhen the chance to make it 3-0 in the 73rd minute with his 16th league goal of the season, a personal record.

Napoli provisionally increased their advantage over second-placed Inter Milan to 16 points.



Napoli's Nigerian forward Victor Osimhen celebrates one of his two goals during a 3-0 win over Spezia in their Serie A fixture at the Alberto-Picco stadium in La Spezia yesterday. The win took the Neapolitans to 56 points from 21 games, 16 clear of second-placed Inter Milan and AS Roma.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Siddikur 69th in Saudi Arabia

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's top golfer Siddikur Rahman finished 69th out of 71 players who made the cut in the PIF Saudi International, which concluded yesterday.

The 38-year-old golfer carded two-over par in the final two rounds at the Royal Greens Golf and Country Club in King Abdullah Economic City to finish with an aggregate score of four-over-par (284) in the 5m-dollar event.

Siddikur, the two-time Asian Tour winner, will next play in the International Series in Oman from February 9 to 12.

He will then play in another International Series event in Qatar from February 16 to 19 before returning home.

Meanwhile, Abraham Ancer of Mexico, who led the leaderboard since the opening day, trudged to a three-stroke victory after carding two-under par (68) in the final round. The Mexican aggregated 19-under-par (261) over the four rounds.

Cameron Young of USA finished second at 19-under-par (263) while Lucas Herbert of Australia finished third, two shots further behind.

## Roles yet to be sorted after coach appointment

SPORTS REPORTER

There has been insinuations and suggestions in the country's cricket fraternity that incoming Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha's assistant could feature someone from the local background.

When the question was placed to Comilla Victorians head coach Mohammad Salahuddin on Saturday, he outright rejected the notion that he wanted to be involved with the national setup.

"I think those that are working with the board would fit well. When I want to work somewhere, I need to have an idea of what the coach is like. I don't know what kind of coach Hathurusingha is.

"The age I am at, I don't know if I have the mentality to adjust. I have been working as a head coach for five-ten years and I have to see whether I have the capability to work as an assistant coach



now," said Salahuddin during a press conference while also stating that Hathurusingha might just have a magic wand, given the way the BCB sought him out for a return as head coach.

"Since I have been working for a long time and also worked with the national team before, the board will decide on that. I am not currently thinking of it," Sohel Islam, the Rangpur Riders head coach and mentor to many of the national cricketers, said on Saturday.

The question, however, remains whether an assistant coach appointment will have to be run by Hathurusingha first. The Sri Lankan had not been known to actively seek local coaches as a medium to communicate with players during his previous stint with BCB. However, in Khaled Mahmud Sujon who was the team manager back then, he had an assistant coach who not only was well adept at communicating with the players but also managing them.

Without Mahmud in the picture at the moment, would the BCB appoint someone they see fit?

It was learned that the BCB are still looking at the assistant coaching role although related departments are yet to mention any names of local coaches being approached.

"There are certain aspects of role distribution that we have to finalise. We have to figure out what role will be handed to Jamie Siddons and after that we will sort things out regarding other roles," a BCB higher-up told The Daily Star on conditions of anonymity.

Siddons had returned to the Bangladesh team as a batting consultant, having previously served as the head coach. The Australian had expressed his wish to work with age-level players in development before, and thus it remains to be seen what role is attributed by the BCB now.

However, it is understood that the coaching positions will be sorted by BCB this time around and not everything will go through Hathurusingha.