

World number three Novak Djokovic inched closer to a record-breaking 23rd Grand Slam title by crushing Peruvian Juan Pablo Varillas 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 on Sunday to reach the French Open quarter-finals. A two-time champion in Paris, Djokovic has now reached the quarter-finals at the French Open for a record 17th time, one more than 14-time champion Rafa Nadal.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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**SPORTS REPORTER**

Bangladesh Hockey Federation's vice-president Sajed A Adeland general secretary Mominul Haque Shaeed traded blames yesterday ahead of the federation election, which is scheduled to be held on June 19.

Adel claimed that he was barred from placing his objection letter at the election commissioner's office at the National Sports Council by Shaeed and his associates. Shaeed, however, claimed that he was not even present there, adding that this could be a ploy by the vice-president to malign him.

“Shaheed told me you can't place your paper here, you better leave, Adel alleged, adding that Shaheed might have done this from fear that he might contest for the general secretary post against the incumbent one.

When contacted, Shaeed claimed these to be baseless accusations to malign him.

"I don't know why he's spreading propaganda against me. Since I was embroiled in a scandal, he's taking advantage of that," Shaeed added.

The chief election commissioner Saidur Rashid did not pick up the phone when contacted for a comment on this issue.



Ebadot Hossain (L) apparently tries to make a point to fellow pacer Taskin Ahmed and pace bowling coach Allan Donald (R) during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Bangladesh Cricket Board yesterday declared a pace-heavy squad for the upcoming one-off Test against Afghanistan.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

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SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is focusing on the mental aspect of the cricketers and the appointment of psychologist Alan Brown ahead of the Tigers upcoming one-off Test against Afghanistan seems to be a part of the process.

Brown, who specialised in utilising the individual quality of a player to a team environment, was seen working alongside Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha at the home of cricket in Mirpur yesterday. Brown, in fact, had already started working with the Bangladesh cricketers even before arriving in the country on Saturday.

"Through research, he (Brown) has been involved with the world-renowned Gallup Strength training programme, established in 1930. Mainly he works on the aspect on how to utilise the individual quality of a player to a team environment," BCB's cricket operations manager, Shahriar Nafees, told the media yesterday.

Meanwhile, the board is also planning to rope in another sports psychologist, Phil Jauncey, who has previously worked with the Tigers in 2014.

“Doctor Philll Jauncey will come to Bangladesh in August and he is a classical psychologist and worked with us before. He will work on the individual aspect of the players. Our plan is to provide such support throughout the year, whenever required. “Normally, we don’t require the support of a psychologist all the time as it takes some time for the players to practise on a specific mental aspect and after working on it, they will follow the process from time to time,” Nafees added.

Asked whether the inclusion of different sets of psychologists could create any conflict in working terms, the former Bangladesh opener replied, "Fitness is important in sports. Both fitness-trainer and physiotherapist work to enhance the players' fitness but operate on different aspects. Therefore, there is no chance for them to be in conflict and, I think, there will be coordination."

Nafees, however, was reluctant to comment whether the BCB is planning to have a permanent psychologist till the upcoming ODI World Cup in India, slated for October this year.

SPORTS DESK

On Saturday, as Manchester City coach Pep Guardiola went up to pick his FA Cup medal following a 2-1 win in Wembley – a score-line that does not justify how City never had to go beyond their second gear against Manchester United – Sir Alex Ferguson was there to greet him.

The two of the finest coaches in history shook hands and embraced a hug. Ferguson wore a smile as he congratulated the Spaniard, but perhaps there was more to it. One may also wonder what exchange of words took place between the two. More than a mere formality?

Ferguson, during his trophy-laden 26 years with Manchester United, has experienced all that a managerial career had on offer. The Scotsman, however, perhaps did not anticipate how English football was going to unfold once he retired with a fitting league title in 2013.

Ever since Ferguson stepped down and became one of United's directors and ambassadors, they still wait to get their hands on the familiar league trophy. Adding to their misery, "noisy neighbours"

SPORTS REPORTER

Liton Das is set to make his debut as Test captain, standing-in for Shakib Al Hasan who is out injured, as the Bangladesh squad was announced yesterday for the lone Test against Afghanistan, to be held in Dhaka from June 14.

The selectors have picked uncapped batter Shahadat Hossain Dipu and pacer Mushfik Hasan after the duo showed potential against West Indies A recently. Meanwhile, Zakir Hasan returned from injury and Mahmudul Hasan Joy was retained in the side and



Liton Das (Captain), Tamim Iqbal, Zakir Hasan, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Mominul Haque, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Taijul Islam, Khaled Ahmed, Ebadot Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Shoriful Islam, Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Shahadat Hossain Dipu and Mushfik Hasan.



Mushfik Hasan



Shahadat Hossain Dipu

Soaring temperatures has been a major challenge to city dwellers and people across the country and the team management are concerned about it as well. Pacer Taskin Ahmed has been rehabilitating since his side strain injury that ruled him out of the Ireland Test recently. With their ace pacer still on way to recovery, the team management were not in favour of taking any chances in terms of having enough numbers in pace attack. Thus, Taskin was picked with backups in mind.

"We are happy with the pace strength," chief selector Minhajul Abedin told The Daily Star yesterday.

"It will be a challenging series since we are playing in such intense heat and the wicket will be very challenging. So, I am hoping that our players will do well. Afghanistan are a strong side and they will be facing a very good challenge."

Bangladesh picked two spinners in Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Taijul Islam while the pace attack also consists of Khaled Ahmed, Shoriful Islam and Ebadot Hossain.

Allan Donald was working closely with the pace group yesterday as the likes of Taskin, Ebadot, and Khaled bowled at a separate net against the likes of Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiquir Rahim, and Najmul Hossain. The conditioning would be necessary while the need to improve the pacers' arsenal would have been on the agenda, given that only two spinners have been picked.

Chandika, who arrived a day before, joined the session yesterday and oversaw the batters at work, focusing on Tamim during a majority of the left-hander's net session as preparation swung into gear.



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