

Two Flame Girls Club players try to catch a Laxmibazar Rugby Club player from scoring a try during a game of the Sheikh Kamal U-18 Club Cup (Sevens) Rugby Competition at the Paltan Maidan yesterday. Flame Girls won the match 33-0 to kickstart the campaign and followed up that victory with two more to set up final against SFX Club today. Four clubs are competing in girls' section while seven clubs are competing in boys' section of the two-day competition.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Afghanistan footballers set to land tonight

SPORTS REPORTER

Afghanistan national football team are scheduled to land in Dhaka tonight, around eight days before their first of two FIFA-friendly matches against hosts Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, booters from Bashundhara Kings joined training camp yesterday following their AFC Champions League engagement. The Abahani-affiliated ones, after playing AFC Cup, are set to join on August 27, a couple of days before captain Jamal Bhuiyan reunites with the group.

The majority of Afghanistan's 25-member squad are supposed to arrive first, while their foreign-born players from the Netherlands, Australia, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and others will start reaching the country from Sunday onwards. It has been learnt that two of their players will arrive in Bangladesh on the first match-day.

The visitors are supposed to check in at Amari Hotel in Banani and train either at the Kings Arena or Bangladesh Police ground, subject to availability.

The two FIFA-friendlies are scheduled to be held on September 4 and 7 at Bashundhara Kings Arena. Afterwards, Afghanistan will fly out here on Sept 8 to play another friendly against hosts Philippines on September 12.

Bangladesh-Afghanistan matches will serve as a tune-up for the two sides in their preparation for October's World Cup pre-qualifiers, where Bangladesh will face Maldives and Afghanistan will play against Mongolia.

Under the guidance of Kuwait coach Abdullah Almutairi, Afghanistan recently played two matches in CAFA Nations Cup. There, Afghanistan suffered 3-0 defeat to Kyrgyzstan – a game which saw Afghanistan refuse to play after 97 minutes with Kyrgyzstan leading 1-0 – followed by a 6-1 thrashing by Iran.

Since 2008, Bangladesh could hold Afghanistan to a draw four times but suffered defeats twice: 4-0 in 2015 SAFF Championship and 1-0 in 2021 World Cup Qualifiers.

Budding booters up for BPL AUCTION

SPORTS REPORTER

The upcoming season of Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) is all set to mark a new chapter as Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) puts up its budding players from BFF Elite Academy for an auction for BPL outfits ahead of the upcoming season.

The auction of 10 players – Md Asif, Md Azizul Haque Ananta, Sajed Hasan Jummon Nijhum, Md Mirajul Islam, Chandan Roy, Asadul Mollah, Sirajul Islam Rana, Md Rubel Sheikh, Md Imran Khan and Suman Soren – will be held at the InterContinental Hotel this afternoon.

The aforementioned players have been divided into two categories: the base price corresponding to six A category players was fixed at Tk 5 lakh, while the remaining four players were each valued at a minimum Tk 4 lakh.

In the past, BPL outfits usually signed players as per their requirement. However, three top clubs – Mohammedan SC, Sheikh Russel KC and Brothers Union – have expressed their desire to rope in BFF Elite Academy players on loan for the upcoming 2023-24 season before the transfer window opened on August 1.

The clubs also mentioned their desired players and offered prices. However, following the common



demand of individual players, BFF has been forced to put those players on auction. Mohammedan wanted four players, while Sheikh Russel and Brothers sought seven and 10 players, respectively.

Although only three clubs showed their interest in the academy players, BFF invited all BPL outfits to participate in the auction. Apart from Mohammedan, Sheikh Russel and Brothers, a few other clubs are likely to take part in the auction.

Explaining reasons to hold the auction, BFF development committee chairman and vice president, Aatur Rahman Bhuiyan Manik, told The Daily Star, "If the committee distributes players as per the clubs' requirements, there will be questions raised.

"We, therefore, decided to put

the players through an opening process. The club with the highest bid will get a player on loan for a season."

In operation since 2021, BFF Elite Academy products played in the second-tier Bangladesh Championship League (BCL) as a team in the last two seasons and are set to play their third season in 2023-24. The previous BCL edition saw BFF Elite Academy stand second among 11 teams – improving from their position, fourth, in the season prior that had 12 teams.

The last season saw Sheikh Russel show their intention to draw a few academy players in their ranks. BFF, though, did not release the players. However, forward Mirajul Islam was given the clearance to play for Mohammedan for Tk 10 lakh in the 2021-22 season.

Rubiales refuses to resign over kiss scandal

REUTERS

Spanish soccer boss Luis Rubiales refused to quit on Friday for kissing World Cup star Jenni Hermoso on the lips after Spain's World Cup victory, fuelling anger among players and government ministers who decried his actions as unacceptable macho behaviour.

Speaking at an emergency meeting of the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF), Rubiales complained that "false feminists" were "trying to kill me".

"Is a consensual peck going to take me out of here? I won't resign. I will fight until the end," Rubiales said, drawing applause from the predominantly male audience.

The Spanish government confirmed on Friday it will take the incident before a sport tribunal where, if it can be proven the kiss was non-consensual, he could be tried under a sexual violence law introduced by the ruling Socialists last year.

Rubiales, 46, said he asked Hermoso if he could give her "a little peck" and she said "OK".

Borja Iglesias of Real Betis, who last played for Spain's men's team in 2022, announced on X he quits the national side over the issue.

US Open to deploy Video Review system

REUTERS

The U.S. Open will be the first Grand Slam to use a Video Review (VR) system to assist chair umpires when calls are challenged at this year's tournament, with the system already generating positive feedback at various ATP events.

The system will allow players to challenge a range of decisions, such as those relating to double bounces and foul shots, and will use various camera angles to get the best view of an incident, according to a document on the U.S. Open media site.

"The VR official and VR operator will then send the video to a screen on the chair umpire's chair as well as stadium screens when available," the document said.

Chair umpires will review the evidence to determine if the original call has to be overturned or confirmed. If there is no clear evidence to change a call the initial decision stands.

The ATP has had a VR system in place at its Finals, Next Gen Finals and ATP Cup in recent years and a source at the men's governing body said its use was widely considered positive.



Kylian Mbappe was seemingly upbeat in Paris Saint-Germain's practice session on Friday ahead of their Ligue 1 home clash against Lens today despite Carlo Ancelotti ruling out any possibility of Real Madrid signing the French forward this season the day before.

PHOTO: PSG

United seek a lift-off against Forest

AGENCIES

Hope that Manchester United can challenge for their first Premier League title in 11 years has already dwindled after a sloppy 2-0 defeat at Tottenham followed a woeful season-opening performance at home to Wolves, despite escaping with a 1-0 win on that occasion.

Seeking to pick themselves up from a disappointing start, Manchester United play host to Nottingham Forest at Old Trafford on Saturday afternoon.

Erik ten Hag's men have suffered from a lack of cutting edge up front in the absence of new striker Rasmus Hojlund, out with a back injury.

The Dane misses the visit of Nottingham Forest on Saturday, but another injury to Mason Mount may simplify things for Ten Hag.

Fitting captain Bruno Fernandes and Mount, a close-season signing from Chelsea, into the same midfield has proved problematic in the opening weeks of the season.

United lost just two of 25 games in which the trio of Fernandes, Cristian



Eriksen and Casemiro started in midfield last season.

United will also miss Luke Shaw, the starter of their first two games, as a muscle injury is set to sideline the defender for a number of weeks.

Forest, meanwhile, are looking to claim their first top-flight away win since January and end their 29-year wait for a victory over the Red Devils.

The Red Devils will welcome a return to Old Trafford where they have not lost in the top flight since the opening day of last season against Brighton & Hove

Albion, and they will be confident of success against Nottingham Forest on Saturday having won each of their last 10 meetings by an aggregate score of 36-3.

Meanwhile, Mikel Arteta's Arsenal, who have seen off stern challenges from Nottingham Forest and Crystal Palace to join Brighton and Hove Albion and Manchester City on maximum points, will host Fulham in Saturday's London derby.

As was the case in the second half of their opening Premier League encounter with Nottingham Forest, Arsenal struggled to click into gear against a well-drilled Palace defence and had their backs against the wall for the final few moments on Monday night.

On Saturday, however, fans will expect to see a more free-flowing iteration of Arteta's side.

With forward Gabriel Jesus still sidelined, the Gunners are looking for alternative sources of inspiration in attack. Leandro Trossard could come in, having recorded three assists in Arsenal's last meeting with Fulham in March.



Danielle Williams of Jamaica gathers herself as she is interviewed on the track following her shock victory in the women's 100m hurdles final at the World Athletics Championship in Budapest on Thursday. The 30-year-old, who previously won the title in Beijing in 2015, timed 12.43 seconds to edge out Olympic champion Jasmine Camacho-Quinn of Puerto Rico (12.44sec) with Kendra Harrison of the United States taking bronze (12.46). Her victory was even more remarkable as she had only just sneaked into the final as one of the two fastest losers.

PHOTO: REUTERS