

Done with shooting, Shakil embarks on coaching

SPORTS REPORTER

Shooter Shakil Ahmed, a gold medallist in South Asian Games and a silver medallist in Commonwealth Games, has put an end to his shooting career after being assigned as an assistant coach of Bangladesh pistol team for the upcoming Asian Olympic Qualification, scheduled for January 5-18 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The 29-year-old will work under Iranian head coach Najafi Charandabi Ahmad, who has been working with the Bangladeshi shooters since before the Asian Games last year where Shakil had participated in 10m air rifle event. Shakil finished 40th out of 56 shooters with a score of 564 points.

Since the completion of Asian Games in September-October, Shakil hasn't grabbed his pistol to train at the shooting range as he has been working as assistant coach of Najafi to groom upcoming players. Even though Shakil has participated in many competitions abroad as a shooter in the past, this is the first time he is accompanying the shooters as a coach.

"Actually, Shakil could not improve his score and seemingly stuck at a point. So our general secretary [EntheKhabul Hamid Apu] pushed Shakil to call time and work as a coach to groom younger players by working as an assistant coach of the national pistol team," Bangladesh Shooting Sport Federation (BSSF) member and camp commandant Mustaque Waiz told the Daily Star, adding that they are trying to bring other successful shooters into coaching profession.

Shakil emerged from nowhere to win a 50m pistol gold medal in the 2016 South Asian Games and then bagged a silver medal in the same event in 2018 Commonwealth Games but failed to carry the momentum in the last five years.

The lad from Khulna, though, never did well in his pet event of 10m pistol and in recent past struggled in the World Championship, World Cup, Asian Airgun Championships – scoring between 558 and 571 which were not good enough to see him into the final round.

Before participating in a two-day pistol training course in Dhaka in December last year, Shakil had also participated in another eight-day pistol training course in Kuwait during the ninth Asian Youth Pistol Training Camp in February last year.

BFF withdraws BKSP suspension

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation's appeal committee exempted Bangladesh Krira Shikha Protisthan (BKSP) from a one-year suspension and monetary fine of Tk 100,000 after the country's lone sports education institute appealed against the decision of BFF disciplinary committee.

Though the decision was made on December 28, the game's local governing body disclosed the development yesterday.

On December 10, the BFF, upon recommendation from the disciplinary committee, banned BKSP from taking part in any of its competitions for one year due to forgery and falsification of players' identities. BFF had also penalised and suspended two BKSP coaches along with four players for different tenures.



Marking his singles comeback since a second-round loss at the Australian Open last year, fit-again Rafael Nadal celebrates winning in straight sets, 7-5, 6-1, against former world number three Dominic Thiem in a round of 32 fixture at the Brisbane International tennis tournament in Brisbane yesterday.

PHOTO: X

Elgar looking to bow out on top

REUTERS, Cape Town

Dean Elgar will be looking to conclude his international career on another high as he unexpectedly captains South Africa in the second and last Test against India, which starts at Newlands on Wednesday.

Just days before the first Test in Pretoria, the 36-year-old Elgar announced he would retire from international cricket after the conclusion of the brief series against the top ranked Indians.

After a man-of-the-match performance in the first Rest, when his knock of 185 laid the platform for South Africa's innings and 32 run victory, he will be hoping to



sign off with another win.

Although there were significant contributions from the bowlers, South Africa's emphatic victory at Centurion had much to do with Elgar's dogged determination at the crease.

It helped ensure that the hosts cannot lose the brief series to India, who had targeted this trip, dubbed the 'final frontier, to win a series in South Africa for a first time.

Injury to Temba Bavuma also thrust Elgar back into the captain's role that was taken away from him last February.

South Africa's young side can expect something of a backlash in

conditions that will be a little less intimidating than in Pretoria and where a chastised Indian side have promised a better performance.

Captain Rohit Sharma fended off home criticism by pointing out previous success away from home. "We might have put in this performance here, but don't forget what we did in Australia and England," he said.

"We won the series in Australia on the back of our batting. We drew the series in England through our batting and bowling both. These performances can happen. It doesn't mean we don't know how to bat outside India. Sometimes the opposition performs better than us," he told reporters

India will likely have all rounder Ravindra Jadeja returning after upper back spasms kept him out of the first Test and could make other changes among their underperforming seamers.

South Africa are unbeaten in six previous Tests at Newlands against India but face a tough examination despite being in a buoyant mood after their success in the Boxing Day Test.

"We've proven that we can produce players, but sometimes we are too humble as a group. We are so quick to talk up other players and we don't give our players enough credit," said coach Shukri Conrad in an effort to pump up his players even further.

'Emotional' Nadal's strong return to centre stage

AFP, Brisbane

Rafael Nadal won his first match back from a year-long injury layoff when he defeated former US Open champion Dominic Thiem at the Brisbane International on Tuesday, calling it an "emotional and important day".

The 22-time Grand Slam winner looked in superb touch with a clinical 7-5, 6-1 victory over the Austrian in front of a full house at Pat Rafter Arena.

The 37-year-old Spaniard has not played singles since a second-round loss at the Australian Open last year, undergoing two rounds of hip surgery.

"Today, honestly, is an emotional and important day for me after probably one of the toughest years of my tennis career, without a doubt," he said.

"To have the chance to come back after a year and play in front of an amazing crowd, and play I think at a very positive level for the first day is something that makes us feel proud.

The long layoff raised fears that his career could be over, but Nadal said this week he was always determined to make it back for the 2024 season.

BCB to resolve major issues after elections

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will look to solve a few of its major issues centring on the captaincy and the national selection panel following the general elections on January 7, informed BCB's cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus yesterday.

Having capped off their international duties with the last of the three-match T20I series against New Zealand away from home on December 31, the focus for the national men's team players now shifts to the Bangladesh Premier League, country's lone franchise-based T20 tournament, beginning on January 19.

"We are going to sit after the elections about these issues, not before that," Jalal told The Daily Star.

BCB's position on the captaincy issue is at loggerheads with what all-format captain Shakib Al Hasan had said regarding his role.

The board had reiterated last month that it considers regular skipper Shakib as the captain of Bangladesh in all three formats despite the fact that the star all-rounder stated in an interview just before the October-November World Cup in India that he wished to hand down the responsibility after the megaevent.

The 36-year-old, who is rehabilitating from an injury while also contesting in the country's general elections, was forced to miss successive home and away series against New Zealand, allowing Najmul Hossain Shanto to take over as captain.

Meanwhile, the tenure of the current national selection panel led by Minhajul Abedin Nannu has also run its course. The board is yet to decide whether to shuffle or make changes in the lineup comprising Nannu, Habibul Bashar and Abdur Razzaq.



Kylian Mbappe shares a laugh with Keylor Navas (R) during Paris Saint-Germain's training session in Poissy yesterday, on the eve of their French Super Cup final against Toulouse. Mbappe, whose PSG contract expires in June, is expected to be the centre of attention in the January transfer window, with English giants Liverpool emerging as a serious suitor alongside their Spanish counterparts Real Madrid.

PHOTO: AFP

City unaffected by upcoming continental tourneys

REUTERS

Manchester City could have an advantage in the Premier League title race through January as their rivals face up to losing key players to the African Cup of Nations and Asia Cup.

As the Premier League emerges from a frantic set of festive fixtures with only six points separating the top five, managers will be busy drawing up contingency plans. Some will likely deem it necessary to dip in to the transfer market to make up for the loss of some top performers.

City manager Pep Guardiola does not have a single player jetting off to either the Ivory Coast or Qatar for the continental tournaments that start on Jan. 13 and Jan. 12 respectively and run for almost a month.

Leaders Liverpool, who head Aston Villa by three points after their win over Newcastle United on Monday, will wave goodbye to Salah who with 14 goals is the joint-top scorer in the Premier League this season, equal with Erling Haaland.

They will also be missing combative midfielder Wataru Endo who will join up with Japan. Meanwhile, surprise title challengers Villa will only lose squad player Bertrand

Traore to Burkina Faso but fourth-placed Arsenal will be harder hit with Mohamed Elneny (Egypt), Thomas Partey (Ghana) and Takehiro Tomiyasu (Japan) all heading off for an unspecified amount of time, depending on the progress of their nations.

Tottenham have been bedeviled by injuries in the last couple of months and now manager



Ange Postecoglou will have to adapt to captain Son, who has scored 12 league goals, representing South Korea. Tottenham also lose midfielder Yves Bissouma to Mali while Pape Sarr, who was injured against Bournemouth on Sunday, is part of Senegal's squad.

Manchester United's under-pressure manager Erik Ten Hag could do without losing Andre Onana (Cameroon), Sofyan Amrabat (Morocco) and

Amad Diallo (Ivory Coast) as he tries to turn around what has been a dreadful season so far.

The Premier League takes a breather this weekend with the FA Cup third round taking precedence while all clubs will have one of the two following weekends off in a mini winter break.

By that stage the group stages of the AFCON and Asia Cup will be virtually over, meaning some players may be heading back.