

****The 10th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League will have the Decision Review System (DRS) available throughout the tournament for the first time since the competition's inception in 2012.**

****In order to enhance the viewer experience, this edition of BPL will also see the use of Spidercam and Buggy Cam for the very first time.**

****A website – bpl.t20.com.bd – for the tournament has also been launched from this edition.**

****A total of seven teams will be participating in the tournament consisting of a total of 46 games. The final will be played on March 1 in Dhaka.**

****Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka, Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, and Chattogram's Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium are the three usual venues for this edition of BPL. Also, as usual, promises of preparing sporting wickets have been made by the tournament's technical committee.**



The Academy Ground at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium became a center for a meet-and-greet as most teams share the venue for training. Durdanto Dhaka skipper Mosaddek Hossain and Sylhet Strikers batter Najmul Hossain Shanto, the highest run-getter of the 2023 Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), were in a jolly mood ahead of their respective matches on the opening day of the BPL today. Meanwhile, three of Khulna Tigers' West Indian recruits -- Shai Hope, Oshane Thomas, and Evin Lewis -- also joined in for their training session on Thursday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

WHAT THEY SAID

The main purpose of this tournament is to help the local cricketers develop. This is the only tournament that gets such coverage and that's why this is called the best platform for us. If we perform well here, we get highlighted. And that's why all the local cricketers try to steal the spotlight by performing well in BPL.

MOHAMMAD MITHUN, VICE-CAPTAIN OF SYLHET STRIKERS



It is normal to still have a bit of rustiness. To be honest, I did not have much practice in the past three months. I have been doing batting practice for the last two-and-a-half weeks, and I have been improving day by day.

TAMIM IQBAL, CAPTAIN OF FORTUNE BARISHAL

Last year, the Mirpur wicket behaved very well. This time as well we hope for a good, sporting wicket that will aid both the batters and bowlers. We always want wickets that will benefit both batters and bowlers.

SHUVAGATA HOM, CAPTAIN OF CHATTOGRAM CHALLENGERS

BPL beginning in familiar 'local style'

SPORTS REPORTER

There was not much hype in the cricketing fraternity as it was business as usual for cricketers and organisers yesterday on the eve of the 10th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL). Even a day prior to the start of the country's lone franchise-based tournament, the atmosphere remained impalpable with the BPL Governing Council's press conference done in the usual manner, fielding questions regarding the limitations that cause the tournament to be run in a smaller stature.

The BPL Governing Council's presser was moved from the designated press conference room to the area in front of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) offices, perhaps a testament to how quickly things change in the BPL. Already a new franchise -- Durdanto Dhaka, which was not originally part of the seven teams that submitted the EOI (Expression Of Interest) in 2022 for three years -- has landed, making it a seven-team competition this time around.

Even the tentativeness of assigning captains has been on view with most franchises only confirming their captains at the last moment.

Sustainability and prioritisation of national team assignments came up during the BPL Governing Council's press meeting, with member secretary IH Mollick mentioning that the BCB's stance of not following the revenue-sharing model for the tournament might change if the franchise fee gets increased 10 fold

then the current amount of one and a half crore taka per year.

"Whether we will go for revenue sharing is a matter for the BCB and the board gives us a guideline and we follow that in running the tournament. Our experience was not good in the first two years.



The 10th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League commences at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium today, with defending champions Comilla Victorians taking on Durdanto Dhaka. Ahead of the latest season, The Daily Star's Sports Podcast Pitch Perfect points out factors associated with the franchise tournament which are far from ideal.

"If the franchise fee was 15 crores [per year] then the board would not have had a problem with revenue sharing," Mollick said regarding the revenue-sharing model, which was brought into light by

Comilla Victorians owner Nafisa Kamal ahead of the start of the tournament.

Mollick also mentioned that they "have to keep in mind the financial and economic condition" and run the BPL according to the "country's style", meaning that they have to follow the current model which is sustainable in Bangladesh's context.

From what Mollick said, one thing that could be ascertained is that the BPL that had begun over a decade ago in 2012 has still yet to see implementations of the global standards.

While the organisers were still stuck in the age-old debate over finalising a stable model for the tournament, the competition kicks off today with defending champions Comilla Victorians taking on Dhaka in the first match before Sylhet Strikers play Chattogram Challengers in the evening game.

Comilla have a star-studded line-up but will have to contend with players leaving early due to other rival tournaments.

Liton Das, skipper of Comilla, said there was no concern over foreign players' availability for the first match.

It is hoped that once the tournament begins, cricket will take centre stage. Wickets too will go a long way in inducing excitement while the main aim is still preparing the national players for the upcoming T20 World Cup in June.

There are positives as well as the Decision Review System (DRS) is set to be available from the beginning of the tournament while the commentary team also holds star value.

SHORT CORNER

Rybakina crashes out after longest tie-break

Third seed Elena Rybakina's bid to reach back-to-back Australian Open finals ended in a 6-4 4-6 7-6(22-20) second-round defeat by Russian Anna Blinkova after a record-breaking super tiebreak that lasted more than 30 minutes yesterday.



Head, Hazlewood corner Windies

Travis Head smashed a rapid 119 and Josh Hazlewood blew away the West Indies top order in their second innings to put Australia on course for a comprehensive victory on day two of the opening Test at the Adelaide Oval yesterday.

Henderson reportedly leaving for Ajax

Jordan Henderson has moved a step closer to ending his much-criticised spell with Saudi club Al-Ettifaq by undergoing a medical with Dutch side Ajax, a source close to the negotiations told AFP yesterday. The 33-year-old England midfielder has been with the Saudi club for just six months since leaving Liverpool, whom he captained to their first league title in 30 years in 2020 and also to Champions League glory in 2019.

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ICC U-19 WORLD CUP 2024 Rising stars set to shine

AGENCIES

The 15th edition of the ICC U-19 World Cup commences today in South Africa, featuring 16 countries split into four groups and five venues staging 41 matches.

Group A and Group B action begins on the opening day, with Ireland meeting the USA in Bloemfontein while the hosts meeting the West Indies in Potchefstroom.

Former champions Bangladesh, who stunned Australia in the warm-ups after losing to Sri Lanka, take on defending champions India tomorrow to get their campaign underway.

With five titles to their name, India have been the most successful side in the tournament, since its inception in 1988,

GROUP A - Bangladesh, India, Ireland, USA

GROUP B - England, Scotland, South Africa, West Indies

GROUP C - Australia, Namibia, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe

GROUP D - Afghanistan, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan



followed by Australia with three titles. Pakistan have won it twice, while Bangladesh (2020), England, South Africa and West Indies have all won it once.

The event will welcome a new format for this edition, in line with the one used in last year's Under-19 Women's World Cup. The top three teams from each group will progress for the next round, the Super Six stage, where the 12 teams will be divided into two groups of six each -- for example, teams from Group A and D will be pitted together.

The teams play two matches in this phase, and avoid the team that finished in the corresponding position in the other group. The top two teams from each group will advance to the semi-finals.

Cricket fan Butler wants improved football in Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Peter James Butler is excited to take on the job of coaching BFF Elite Academy, and the UEFA pro-license holder is well aware of Bangladesh's passion for cricket, a discipline he also enjoys.

The former West Ham United player, who arrived in the capital yesterday, interacted with BFF Elite Academy players at Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Dhaka yesterday.

Asked about his initial perception of Bangladesh football, he said, "I have spoken to quite a few people involved with Bangladesh football after being asked whether I was interested in working there. But I think it is an emerging country. It is a country where I know they love cricket, and I love cricket because I am a Yorkshireman."

"But you know there is also a great love [for football] and it is good to see the ladies team moving upwards and forwards. But I do believe as long as there is a will to learn and create a learning environment, it is super important for these young lads and the lads coming below as it gives them the impetus and an opportunity to improve," he added.

The 56-year-old has gathered extensive coaching experience in Africa and Asia, having guided Liberia and Botswana national teams as well as Malaysian and Indonesian clubs. Showing his enthusiasm in contributing towards the development of Bangladesh football, Butler



PHOTO: BFF

described himself as a strong believer in youth development and discipline.

"Some people may say I am overqualified [for the job], which I disagree with. I think you know you can learn something from everybody."

"I think if I can only educate the young players and pass on my knowledge and show these coaches and players another way of doing things, then development will carry on over

my period," said Butler, who signed a one-year contract with BFF.

During his first conversation with the academy players, the Englishman told them that it is not possible to improve 10 to 20 percent overnight, adding that they should look to stay in a learning environment, absorb basic information and retain it, otherwise they will be replaced.