

Cabrera picks three fresh faces

SPORTS REPORTER

Three new inclusions – Syed Shah Quazem Kirmance, Rabby Hossain Rahul, and Taj Uddin – featured in Bangladesh national football team's 28-member preliminary squad for their World Cup Qualifiers fixtures upcoming next month, head coach Javier Cabrera announced yesterday.

Following a two-week preparation in Saudi Arabia, starting from March 3, Bangladesh will travel to Kuwait to play against Palestine on March 21 before hosting the same opponents on March 26 at Bashundhara Kings Arena in Dhaka.

Kirmance, the son of former cricketer Halim Shah, has played for Bangladesh Police FC for the past two seasons after moving from Canada. The 25-year-old midfielder, who is now a key member of Bangladesh Police FC's starting eleven, has one goal in nine Bangladesh Premier League games after scoring one in the Federation Cup.

Rahul, who has been on loan from Bashundhara Kings to Brothers Union, is now at the peak of his form, having scored five goals in nine matches in his maiden season in the country's top flight.

"Initially, I had no expectation to get a call but I grew in confidence after scoring five goals in the league, especially when senior national players have been struggling to score," said Rahul.

"The way the senior players and others are supporting me, I am confident to do well in the training sessions. Besides, I am comfortable with the senior players in the training as I trained with senior players in Bashundhara Kings. However, I will be trying my best to grab the opportunity I have been given in a bid to get into the final



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Fortune Barishal seamer Mohammad Saifuddin displayed his wicket-taking prowess as he struck twice inside the Powerplay to peg Rangpur Riders back early on in the first innings in the second qualifier of the Bangladesh Premier League in Mirpur yesterday. While Barishal dominated almost three quarters of the innings, the last quarter belonged to Rangpur's Shamim Hossain who smashed a 20-ball 50 -- the joint-fastest of the ongoing edition with Shakib Al Hasan -- as he powered five sixes and as many fours for an unbeaten 24-ball 59 which propelled Rangpur to 149 for seven.

Adair shines with maiden Test fifer

AFP, Abu Dhabi

A first five-wicket haul in Test cricket for Mark Adair put Ireland in a strong position after the opening day of their one-off Test against Afghanistan in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday.

The Northern Irish all-rounder posted figures of 5-39 to help bowl the opposition out for 155 after Afghan captain Hashmatullah Shahidi won the toss and elected to bat.

An otherwise excellent day for Ireland was dampened by the late fall of the wickets of Curtis Campher for 49, ending a 60-run third-wicket stand with Harry Tector, and of nightwatchman Theo van Woerkom.

Ireland appeared to be cruising in reply until a late Afghan fight-back led by spinner Zia-ur-Rehman left Andy Balbirnie's side four wickets down and 55 runs short of the Afghan total.

With less than half an hour of play left in the day, the Afghanistan left-armer claimed Campher, one shy of a half-century, and Van Woerkom clean bowled. Without their injured talisman Rashid Khan, Afghanistan struggled to find fluency.

BANGLADESH SQUAD

Goalkeepers

Mitul Marma, Mehedi Hasan Sraban, Anisur Rahman and Mahfuz Hasan Pritom

Defenders

Bishwanath Ghosh, Murad Hasan, Tapu Barman, Rahmat Miah, Isa Faisal, Shakil Hossain, Saad Uddin and Taj Uddin.

Midfielders

Sohel Rana, Chandan Roy, Mohammad Ridoy, Md Sohel Rana, Mojibur Rahman Jony, Rabiul Hasan, Syed Shah Quazem Kirmance, Jamal Bhuiyan and Jayed Ahmed.

Forwards

Rakib Hossain, Suman Reza, Shahriar Emon, Faisal Ahmed Fahim, Rabby Hossain Rahul, Arman Faisal Akash and Rafiqul Islam.

squad," said the forward from Jashore.

Taj Uddin, who currently plays for Sheikh Jamal DC after spending his first two seasons with Saif Sporting Club and Muktijoddha Sangsad, will be joining his elder brother Saad Uddin in the national squad for the first time.

"It's, of course, a great feeling to be called into the national squad. I had been in the squad for the Asian Games, but I was unable to travel with the team owing to an injury, which frustrated me. Since then, getting a direct call to the national squad has been an added pleasure for me. And I'm very proud to play alongside my older brother in the national team," Taj Uddin added.

Apart from the three additions, Cabrera recalled goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico and defender Tapu Barman, who missed the previous qualifiers due to sanctions by their club, while defender Saad Uddin, goalkeeper Mahfuz Hasan Pritom and midfielder Chandon Roy and forwards Shahriar Emon and Arman Faisal Akash returned to the preliminary squad.

However, two key players -- striker Sheikh Morsalin and defender Tariq Raihan Kazi, who played in Bangladesh's most recent match against Lebanon -- were left out of the preliminary roster owing to injury.

SAIFUDDIN makes hay on return

SPORTS REPORTER

The Fortune Barishal vs Rangpur Riders game had everything to pull in the crowd yesterday in what was a virtual semi-final of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL). What broke the camel's back for Rangpur batting was not only the frequent changes to batting lineup but also how Mohammad Saifuddin picked up crucial wickets at the innings' start.

Saifuddin, having returned to action late this BPL after recovering from injury, has even tried a slightly slinky action too, albeit only occasionally this BPL. Usually when on form, his smooth action produces a zip on the deliveries. He also gets swing with the new ball and has the yorkers for the death overs. But injury had been an issue, which is why the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) was not giving him No Objection Certificate (NOC) at the tournament's earlier stages. His injury has become an old but recurring problem. Saifuddin was sent to Qatar recently to complete a four-week special rehab with his back being the major issue.

"It felt good," Saifuddin had said during a recent press conference on his return with the ball. "It didn't feel very difficult since the game is in Mirpur and it's BPL; so it's a domestic match. There are known faces surrounding me and I know what to do. That's why it didn't feel



like pressure but coming to the field after a long time was something I felt happy about," he had added.

The last competitive game he had played before finally getting on the field midway of BPL was in March last year in Dhaka Premier League.

Regarding his new action, Saifuddin gave the impression that he takes everything in his stride. "That's what I did for the new action. You have to try new things in a pressure situation. You have to have guts and then you can master it quickly," he had said.

Saifuddin has often been in the limelight for the wrong causes. His injury has been debated, especially for having missed many crucial national team tours. Yet, he looks to have built himself stronger before coming to this BPL.

An outswinging delivery to Mahedi Hasan, pitched at a good

length and accounted for the makeshift opener before he struck the hammer blow by picking up the biggest wicket of Rangpur -- that of Shakib Al Hasan as the left-hander charged at an outswinger and only managed a nick through to the wicket-keeper.

His first two overs had produced just six runs and two wickets and while he gave away 21 runs at the death overs, given the rapid stroke-play by Rangpur's Shamim Hossain, who scored an unbeaten 24-ball 59, Saifuddin can count himself to have done well with his effort as Rangpur managed 149 for seven, recovering from seven down for 77 at one stage.

Saifuddin has also turned up with the bat considerably well even as batting was not the issue during his injury. The six-ball 23 against Durdanto Dhaka is the kind of impact that his side needed and Saifuddin has delivered so far.

Nissanka to miss Bangladesh T20s

AGENCIES

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) named a 17-member squad for the T20I leg of their upcoming tour of Bangladesh.

Opener Pathum Nissanka, who was originally selected in the squad, will not tour Bangladesh due to an injury sustained during the Afghanistan series and will be replaced by Avishka Fernando.

Charith Asalanka will lead the side in the first two T20Is in the absence of regular captain Wanindu Hasaranga, who will serve a two-match ban for breaching the ICC Code of Conduct.

SQUAD

Wanindu Hasaranga (c), Charith Asalanka (vc), Kusal Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Angelo Mathews, Dasun Shanaka, Maheesh Theekshana, Dhananjaya de Silva, Kusal Janith Perera, Dilshan Madushanka, Nuwan Thushara, Matheesha Pathirana, Akila Dananjaya, Binura Fernando, Kamindu Mendis, Avishka Fernando, Jeffrey Vandersay.

Hasaranga had accumulated three demerit points and a 50 percent fine of match fee after the T20I series against Afghanistan. He remonstrated with on-field umpire Lyndon Hannibal after the match, for his decision not to call a no-ball on a high delivery to Kamindu Mendis in the final over, with Sri Lanka needing 11 from three balls.

The first T20I match between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka will be played on March 4 at Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.

Sri Lanka will also play three one-day internationals and two Tests during their tour of Bangladesh, which will end on April 3.



- 🔔 **This was Erling Haaland's eighth hattrick for Manchester City.**
- 🔔 **Haaland also became the first City player to score five goals in a game twice. His other quintet came against RB Leipzig in City's 7-0 win in the Champions League Round of 16 in 2022/23.**
- 🔔 **The Norwegian forward also became the first player to score five or more goals in an FA Cup match for a top-division club since George Best netted six for Manchester United against Northampton Town in 1970.**
- 🔔 **Haaland also equalled a City FA Cup scoring record as he joined Frank Roberts and Bobby Marshall for most goals by one player in a single FA Cup game.**

Erling Haaland roared back to his best form with a five-goal salvo as Manchester City thumped Luton Town 6-2 at Kenilworth Road to reach the quarterfinals of the FA Cup on Tuesday. The first four of Haaland's goals were set up by Kevin De Bruyne in a sensational performance by the playmaker.

PHOTO: REUTERS

USA to face Brazil in Copa America warm-up

AFP, Miami

The United States will take on five-time world champions Brazil in a warm-up friendly ahead of the Copa America, US Soccer confirmed on Tuesday.

The June 12 fixture will take place at Orlando's Camping World Stadium in Florida as the two teams prepare for the Copa, which is being held in the United States from June 20 to July 14.

"Getting the opportunity to play against Brazil is special. When you talk about wanting to challenge ourselves against the best teams in the world, you can't ask for much better than Brazil," US men's national team coach Gregg Berhalter said.

The US kick off their Copa America campaign against Bolivia in Dallas on June 23.

Brazil open their tournament at Los Angeles's SoFi Stadium on June 24.

This year's Copa America -- South American football's regional championship -- is being staged entirely in the United States and has been expanded to 16 teams to include six teams from the CONCACAF region.

SHORT CORNER



Kishan, Iyer dropped from BCCI's central contract list

Ishan Kishan and Shreyas Iyer were among the two biggest omissions from the annual player contracts list for 2023-2024 announced by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). In last year's retainer, Iyer was in Grade B while Kishan was part of Grade C.

Australia look to cap stellar season with victory in New Zealand

World champions Australia will hope to round off one of the nation's most successful seasons in cricket with victory in a rare Test series in New Zealand starting at Wellington's Basin Reserve on Thursday.

Liton fined for altercation with umpire

Comilla Victorians skipper Liton Das was fined 15 percent of his match fee and was handed a demerit point for breaching the Code of Conduct during an altercation with on-field umpire Sharfuddoula Saikat during Comilla's first qualifier against Rangpur Riders in the Bangladesh Premier League in Mirpur on Monday.

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