

Tigers' CT camp starts a day after BPL final

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh team will start their preparation camp ahead of the ICC Champions Trophy from February 8, a day after the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) final, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) cricket operations officials confirmed.

"The camp will start from the 8th and all 15 players [of the Champions Trophy squad] have been called up for the camp. A few other bowlers would assist during the camp. Two of our coaching staff are already in Dhaka and one more will return soon," BCB's cricket operations in-charge Shahriar Nafees informed.

The camp will begin with fitness drills as part of players' physical performance assessment at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka.

The tournament is slated to begin from February 19 in Karachi while the Tigers will begin their campaign on February 20 in Dubai against India.

Bangladesh have been placed in Group A alongside India, Pakistan and New Zealand.



Opener Mohammad Naim was one of the few cricketers who participated in Khulna Tigers' individual practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, preparing for their Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) Qualifier 2 against Chittagong Kings at the same venue today. Naim, who has been enjoying a purple patch in the tournament as he tops the run-getters' chart with 492 runs in 13 innings at an average of 44.72, will look to achieve a personal milestone while helping his side to the all-important final. Naim needs to score 25 runs more to leapfrog Najmul Hossain Shanto, whose 516 runs in 15 innings for Sylhet Strikers in 2022-23 remains the highest by a Bangladeshi batter in a single BPL season. Rilee Rossouw holds the record for most runs by a cricketer in a single edition of BPL, scoring 558 runs for Rangpur Riders during the 2018-19 edition.

PHOTO: KHULNA TIGERS

SHORT CORNER

Mbappe out for Real Madrid cup game

Carlo Ancelotti said Kylian Mbappe would miss Real Madrid's Copa del Rey quarterfinal against Leganes on Wednesday with a bruised calf.

Mbappe was hacked down by Espanyol's Carlos Romero during their 1-0 La Liga defeat on Saturday with the defender avoiding a red card and going on to score the winning goal against the league leaders. "He has a bruised calf, he trained normally but tomorrow he will not be available for the game," Ancelotti said on Tuesday.



'I am the most complete player ever'

Al Nassr's Portuguese star Cristiano Ronaldo has never been shy of making grand statements about his greatness and has declared himself the best ever to play the game of football many times. In a recent interview on Spanish TV

Channel La Sexta, the five-time Ballon d'Or winner once again placed himself above all the past greats and gave himself the title of the 'most complete player ever'.

*Read full stories on The Daily Star's website

'No one remembers No. 2'

Chittagong Kings pacer Khaled Ahmed has remained almost stoic in the face of personal tragedy and emerged as his team's highest wicket-taker in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) with 19 wickets. The 32-year-old pacer will be leading his team's charge in today's second qualifier against Khulna Tigers. But before that, in an interview with The Daily Star's Abdullah Al Mehdi on Tuesday, he talked about the BPL, his experience with Chittagong and much more. Here are the excerpts:



DS: How would you describe your journey in this year's BPL so far?

Khaled Ahmed: The journey started from NCL [first-class tournament]. Since I wasn't picked for the West Indies tour, I aimed to do well in domestic games. The target was to become champions [with Sylhet Division] which we accomplished. I also thank the BCB for organising the NCL T20. I practiced bowling some deliveries there which I later used in the BPL. If I hadn't tested them out in domestic cricket first, I wouldn't have bowled them in BPL. The tournament has also gone well so far but I would like to take the team to the final and then maybe I will feel satisfied.

DS: What was your target in this BPL?

KA: My target was to be economical. Everyone wants to be the best because no one remembers number two. Taskin [Ahmed] became the highest wicket-taker [25 wickets] and everyone remembers him. Throughout the tournament he sent down some of the best deliveries I have seen him bowl. If catches weren't dropped, he would have gotten more. Same way, I also tried to focus on being number one. Maybe I won't catch up to him in terms of wickets but he got seven wickets in a game, so you never know.

DS: How's your experience been with Shaun Tait?

KA: I grew up watching Tait and Shaobir Akhter. I even told Tait that he was my favourite since childhood. He texted me when I was in India [with the Bangladesh

team] and told me that he has picked me [from the draft] and watched me play.

He motivates me. I knew I was doing well but I asked him how to be the best. I have worked on yorkers and am more confident now. More importantly I understand what to bowl to particular batters. He talked about keeping things simple. He for instance would say that if bouncers are working, stick to it. If you look to try too many things, your focus waivers.

DS: You suffered a personal tragedy during the BPL. How did you cope with it?

KA: When I picked up the phone after the match in Chittagong, I learned that my mother's pulse was weakening and then she left us. I came to the team hotel and informed the team and everyone including the owner came by. They told me to go home. There was no flight or transport available at that late hour. They provided transportation for me to go to Sylhet.

If I had stayed at home, I would still be reeling. So, my friends and brothers suggested that I should head back to the team. I spoke with the management and said I wanted to return. My mother is always watching me, wherever she is now. I always pray and think of her wherever I go.

DS: Has the payment issues this BPL affected you?

KA: Actually, I don't like speaking about this. While playing in a tournament, my focus is on cricket and that's where I like to keep my focus. Obviously, the team management is doing their best to pay everyone in due time.

Sunny reported for suspect action

SPORTS REPORTER

Chittagong King's left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny has been flagged by the umpires for suspect bowling action in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), after teammate Aliss Al Islam faced the same fate.

Sunny's action was questioned by on-field umpires Masudur Rahman Mukul and Ravendra Wimalasiri in Chittagong's final league phase match against Fortune Barishal on Saturday.

"He will have to go for an assessment inside seven days," BPL technical committee's chairman Raqibul Hasan told The Daily Star yesterday.

However, Raqibul also informed that there is no restriction in Sunny bowling in the tournament, meaning he could feature for Chittagong King's qualifier match against the Khulna Tigers today.

Sunny, who has played 16 ODIs and 10 T20Is for Bangladesh, had received a ban for faulty bowling action during the 2016 ICC T20 World Cup before he overturned the ban three months later.



Sumaya claims receiving 'death and rape threats'

SPORTS REPORTER

"Over the past few days, I have received countless death and rape threats—words that have shattered me in ways I never imagined," Bangladesh women's team footballer Matsushima Sumaya wrote on Facebook yesterday, detailing the abuse she is receiving for her involvement in the ongoing players' protest against head coach Peter Butler.

"I don't know how long it will take for me to heal from this trauma, but I do know that no one should have to go through this just for following their dreams," she added.

Sumaya is one of the 18 national team players who have boycotted the ongoing training camp, demanding the removal of Butler. Last Wednesday, the protesting players submitted a three page letter to the media, outlining their grievances against Butler.

In response, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) formed a special committee to investigate the matter. The players told the committee that Sumaya penned the letter but a member of the committee told The Daily Star on Monday that they feel some external forces had influenced its creation.

BHF ready to face controversy for hockey's progress

SPORTS REPORTER

Ahead of the national hockey team's preparation camp for April's AHF Cup, the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) has taken its first step by appointing a three member coaching panel on Monday. However, the decision to exclude veteran player Rasel Mahmud Jimmy from the upcoming fitness test has sparked debate within the country's hockey fraternity.

Citing concerns over his age, the BHF sidelined 38-year-old Jimmy from the fitness test (Cooper test) on February 20, while around 60 players were selected. The preparation camp is set to begin on March 1 at Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium, with the AHF Cup scheduled in Jakarta from April 17-25.

In an effort to bring professionalism to the team, the BHF's newly formed ad-hoc committee interviewed eight of the 11 shortlisted candidates before selecting the coaching panel. New contracts aim to clarify the roles and responsibilities of both the coaches and the federation.

Asked about the exclusion of Jimmy, the committee's general secretary Lt Col (rtd) Riazul Hasan said, "We have been given the responsibility by emphasising development. If we talk about development, it consists of both the present and future."

"Besides, the international calendar is going to be busy in the coming days, so we have to think about the younger players."

"It doesn't mean we don't prefer senior players. We also have many senior players in the list, but Jimmy is no doubt much more senior than them. If you look at other countries like India and Pakistan, the average age of their players is between 30 and 33, because much older players

can't cope physically at the international level."

The ad-hoc committee is prepared to shoulder the controversy for the sake of hockey's development.

"What we have tried to do is development. Perhaps, in striving for development, there will always be some sacrifices that have to be made at times. At times, you have to get into some controversies," Hasan said.

"As long as we are here, we will do what we think is best for the development of hockey. If controversy arises from it, we will shoulder it because we don't have any individual interests here," added the former hockey player.

Asked about the possibility of Jimmy retiring officially at the AHF Cup, setting a precedent, Hasan admitted, "Personally, I haven't thought about it this way," adding that their primary focus had been securing funds for the preparation camp. However, joint secretary Kazi Abu Jafar Tapan said the committee may consider the option and discuss it further.

City splash big in winter transfer window

Manchester City easily topped the spending charts in the winter transfer window, which closed on February 3, with the signing of Spanish midfielder Nico Gonzalez on Deadline Day to complete a busy month for the ailing Premier League champions. While City splashed the cash, Premier League leaders Liverpool made no signings and second-placed Arsenal also failed to bolster their forward line despite injuries to Gabriel Jesus and Bukayo Saka. Elsewhere, many other significant big names switched teams, including Neymar, who returned to his childhood club Santos from Saudi Pro League's Al Hilal.

BIG SPENDERS (TOP TEN)

Manchester City (England): **217m**
Al Nassr (Saudi Arabia): **77m**
Stade Rennais (France): **74.65m**
PSG (France): **70m**
Al Ahli (Saudi Arabia): **59m**
RB Leipzig (Germany): **55.5m**
Como (Italy): **49.20m**
Brighton (England): **48.74m**
Palmeiras (Brazil): **36.65m**
Zenit (Russia): **33m**

NOTABLE TRANSFERS

ENGLAND

Manchester City: Nico Gonzalez (from Porto, 60m); Omar Marmoush (from Frankfurt, 70m); Vitor Reis (from Palmeiras, 36m); Abdukodir Khusanov (from Lens, 40m)
Manchester United: Patrick Dorgu (from Lecce, 30m)
Aston Villa: Marcus Rashford (Man Utd, on loan); Donyell Malen (from Dortmund, 24m); Marco Asensio (from PSG, on loan)
Italy: Randal Kolo Muani (from PSG, on loan)
AC Milan: Kyle Walker (from Man City, on loan); Santiago Gimenez (from Feyenoord, 32m); Joao Felix (from Chelsea, on loan)
Spain: Real Betis: Antony (from Man Utd, on loan)

BRAZIL

Santos: Neymar (from Al-Hilal, free agent)
Germany
Bayer Leverkusen: Emiliano Buendia (from Villa, on loan)
Borussia Dortmund: Carney Chukwuemekwa (from Chelsea, on loan)
France
PSG: Khvicha Kvaratskhelia (from Napoli, 70m)
Turkey:
Galatasaray: Alvaro Morata (from Milan, on loan)
Saudi Arabia:
Al Nassr: Jhon Duran (from Aston Villa, 77m).

** Spendings shown in Euros

