



Taskin, Nahid gear up for CT challenge

If there is one department that Bangladesh can pin their hopes on ahead of a major tournament is the pace unit -- given how fragile the Tigers' batting line-up has been in recent times. Hence, it is no surprise that Bangladesh will hope for their pace battery -- consisting of young pace sensation Nahid Rana alongside experienced Taskin Ahmed and Mustafizur Rahman and another young gun Tanzim Hasan Sakib -- to leave a mark in the upcoming Champions Trophy, to be held in Pakistan and the UAE in a hybrid model later this month. While Taskin and Mustafizur remain the only two pacers from the current squad who have played in the previous edition of the global event back in 2017, the 22-year-old speedster Nahid will make a foray into his first ICC event through the upcoming Champions Trophy. Taskin will hope to pick up from where he had left off in the previous year -- the right-arm quick enjoyed his best year in international cricket in 2024, ranking third on the list of most wickets in a calendar year across formats behind just India's Jasprit Bumrah and Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga. Meanwhile, Nahid has played just three ODIs so far, but the pacer has already made heads turn with his unique capability of consistently clocking over 150 kph -- a trait that must come in handy in any major event. The duo of Nahid and Taskin seemed upbeat during Bangladesh's practice session in Mirpur yesterday and the Tigers would hope for their mood to only be jollier when they take on India in their first Champions Trophy match in Dubai on February 20.

PHOTO: STAR



Bangladesh's Shohaly handed five-year ban for corruption

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh national women's cricketer Shohaly Akhter has been handed a five-year ban from all cricket by International Cricket Council (ICC) yesterday after she admitted breaching five provisions of the ICC Anti-Corruption Code.

It had been reported two years ago that the 36-year-old, who represented the Tigresses in two WODIs and 13 WODIs between 2013 and 2022, made a spot-fixing offer to national cricketer Lata Mondal who was part of Bangladesh squad during the 2023 ICC Women's T20 World Cup in South Africa.

After Lata notified Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) about the offer made by Shohaly, who wasn't part of the Tigresses camp in the mega event, subsequently the board notified the ICC's Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) to take over the matter.

Although Shohaly initially denied being involved, she later admitted to the media that she had tried to convince a Facebook friend that her national teammates did not accept any fixing offers. Following a two-year investigation by the ACU, she eventually acknowledged breaching five provisions of the ICC Anti-Corruption Code.

Her offences included attempting to influence match results (Article 2.1.1), offering bribes (Article 2.1.3), persuading others to engage in corruption (Article 2.1.4), failing to report approaches (Article 2.4.4), and obstructing an investigation (Article 2.4.7).

Shohaly's five-year sanction starts from February 10 this year.



PHOTO: AFP

Australia captain Steve Smith and his Sri Lankan counterpart Charith Asalanka pose with the trophy on the eve of the first of their two-match ODI series at the R. Premadasa International Cricket Stadium in Colombo today. Fresh from a dominant 2-0 Test series sweep of the hosts, Australia will hope for a similar result in the ODI series, being played as a prelude to the upcoming Champions Trophy that will begin on February 19 in Pakistan and Dubai. Sri Lanka did not qualify for the Champions Trophy after a dismal ninth-place finish at the World Cup in India in 2023.

Musiala key if Bayern to turn away form

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich face Celtic in Glasgow in the first leg of their Champions League playoff on Wednesday knowing midfielder Jamal Musiala has added another string to his impressive bow -- consistency. And the midfielder will be key if Bayern are to rewrite their away form in Europe.

Still just 21, Musiala has established himself alongside Harry Kane as Bayern Munich's two most productive and reliable attacking outlets.

With 15 goals in 29 games in all competitions this campaign, Musiala is one shy of his best mark, set in 2022-23.

Kane has 28 goals in all competitions this season, but the quartet of Leroy Sane, Kingsley Coman, Serge Gnabry or Thomas Mueller have been able to get to double figures.

Bayern have struggled away from home in Europe this season, losing to Barcelona, Aston Villa, and Feyenoord by a combined total of eight goals to one.

Celtic Park, where the hosts have not lost since December 2023, will be an intimidating place for Bayern.

Musiala was only 14 the last time Bayern played in Glasgow, but some at the club know what to expect from the midfielder.

Rebel women footballers at a dead end?

ATIQUE ANAM

The 18 senior players of Bangladesh national women's team, who have been boycotting training since head coach Peter Butler returned to the country, seem to have shot themselves on the foot after refusing to sign contracts offered by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) on Monday.

The BFF offered new contracts to all 55 footballers in the BFF camp and 36 of those currently in training barring one who has left for BKSP, have accepted the contracts, thereby making themselves eligible for the payroll and available for consideration for the upcoming UAE tour for two friendly matches.

It has been learnt from a highly-placed source inside the federation that booking for flights to UAE has already been made.

Despite the fact the seven-member special committee formed to probe the issue found all the allegations raised by the players against Butlers to be baseless, BFF's new president Tabith Awal sat with each of the 18 players individually, trying to convince them to give up their demand of sacking Butler, assuring them that the coach would be more accommodating towards the players from now on.

As the rebellious footballers showed no signs yet of budging till yesterday, Tabith sat with captain Sabina Khatun in a last ditch effort to come to an amicable solution.

Replying to a query from The Daily Star yesterday after a one-on-one meeting with Sabina, the BFF boss spoke of his optimism regarding the impasse which has now crossed into third week.

"I definitely see hope and positive signs of ending of this impasse. It's best to be patient and committed if we want to see a positive outcome," Tabith said. "We are all committed



to resolving this situation and we will."

If the resolution does not arrive, it will be devastating for both these senior players as well as the women's football team. If left without contracts, these footballers, who were the cornerstones of two successive SAFF titles and a few more age-level successes, will eventually rot at the BFF dormitory without no regular source of income and a bleak future ahead. That will effectively undo all the good work done by the BFF over the last decade and push back women's football to a primitive stage.

While considering all efforts made by the BFF to appease the senior footballers over the last two weeks, a valid question that is being raised by former coaches and players is how it all came to this stage. Should the BFF and especially its women's wing led by Mahfuza Akter Kiron, who deservedly takes credit for the successes, have resolved the situation after the rift between the senior

players and the coach had surfaced during the successful title-defence of SAFF Women's Championship in October last year?

Kiron is now saying she is considerate towards the footballers and has been shifting all the responsibilities towards Tabith since the coach's contract extension a month ago, but wasn't it herself who categorically said that Butler should remain the head coach since his contract ran out at the end of October last year?

It has been almost three-and-a-half months since that momentous triumph and that rift was swept under the rug in the immediate euphoria of the title triumph. But as the euphoria subdued, couldn't the women's wing chairman have at least sat with the players once and heard their grievances and tried to resolve the issue before Butler's contract extension?

If that had happened, the situation might not have escalated to such an extent.



Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) signs a two-year deal with Dour, a local sportswear manufacturer, as the official kit sponsor of Bangladesh men's and women's football teams. "It is a two-year deal, but the BFF has the right to review the contract after one year. I can say that we are going to save at least Tk one crore per year which we earlier spent on the kits of the national football teams," said BFF vice-president and marketing committee head Fahad Karim, who signed the agreement at a press conference at the BFF House yesterday. Thanking the entire executive committee for completing the sponsorship deal, BFF president Tabith Awal said that the kit sponsor will also sell national teams' jerseys for fans in the coming days and BFF will get royalty from the sales.

PHOTO: BFF

BHF asked to look into Jimmy's exclusion

SPORTS REPORTER


Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) has invited around 60 players to go through Cooper Test, a fitness test, without experienced forward Rasel Mahmud Jimmy ahead of the preparation camp for upcoming AHF Cup in Indonesia.

BHF cited Jimmy's age (38) as lone reason behind his exclusion, which was covered widely in media.

Following that, the National Sports Council (NSC) asked BHF executive committee on Monday to look into the matter.

"The committee will sit in a meeting to discuss the matter and inform the NSC about the matter," BHF general secretary Lt Col (Rtd) Riazul Hasan told The Daily Star.

The Cooper Test is scheduled to take place on February 20 under the guidance of head coach Mamun Ur Rashid.



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