

BFF contacts Shome, calls up young overseas talents

SPORTS REPORTER

Following the successful introduction of Sheffield United midfielder Hamza Choudhury into the Bangladesh national team and the hype created by the England-based footballer's arrival and performance against India, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is spreading out its search for more Bangladeshi-origin footballers from Europe and other parts of the world.

Along with Hamza, there are quite a few overseas players' whose names have been spoken of with much fervour by the Bangladeshi football fan base for quite a long time. Among them is Shamit Shome, a Canada-based footballer of Bangladeshi origin who has played for Canada's age-level teams as well as the national team. However, his two appearances for Canada's senior team came way back in 2020.

BFF's vice-president Fahad Karim said they have contacted Shamit to know whether he would be interested in representing Bangladesh.

"We have contacted with Shamit Shome yesterday [Friday] and wanted to know whether he was interested to play for Bangladesh. He asked for two weeks' time to talk to his coach and others to decide on the issue," Karim told The Daily Star.

According to sources inside the BFF, the 27-year-old midfielder had previously shown reluctance to commit to Bangladesh, but now with Hamza coming, he may have a change of mind, which is what prompted the game's local governing body to contact him again.

As the inclusion of senior players who have represented another country takes a long process to complete, BFF is focusing more on scouting young players who play at a decent level in top leagues around the world.

"We are trying our best to find and nurture talent, whether foreign-based or local. There is a round-the-year scouting for talents by BFF coaches inside Bangladesh. Now we are reaching out, for the first time, to foreign-based players," Karim said.

The BFF vice-president informed that they have called for a four to five-day-long trial towards the end of June to try out around 30 players from Europe and North America.

"These players, who are all aged between 16 and 20, play between second and fourth tiers in their respective countries of residence. We will take their trial and let the technical committee decide on the next course of action. Most of them are from Europe, but there are a few from North America as well.

In Miami, legends cross paths



Argentina great Lionel Messi and his family watched tennis legend Novak Djokovic dominate Grigor Dimitrov in the Miami Open semifinal yesterday. After the match, Messi visited the locker room, meeting Djokovic and Czech teen Jakub Mensik. The 19-year-old, starstruck, joked about not washing his hand after shaking Messi's, believing it brought him luck. Inspired, Mensik stunned Taylor Fritz to secure a Masters 1000 final against Djokovic. After his win, he scribbled, "Thank you Leo" on the camera. Meanwhile, Djokovic, chasing his 100th title, expressed his delight on social media: "An honor to meet greatness."

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

DPL clubs brace for key absences in business end

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

The ongoing Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League (DPL) has struggled to generate excitement this year, with issues such as a sharp decline in players' salaries, a lack of competitive matches, and the challenges of travelling long distances during the month of Ramadan – when players tend to fast during games – dominating discussions rather than the cricket itself.

As the league enters its business end, with eight rounds completed and only three remaining before the Super League and relegation battles, the competition faces another setback as the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr break will be followed by player absences.

The national team are set to host Zimbabwe for a two-match Test series from April 20 to May 2, with preparations beginning as early as April 10. As a result, DPL clubs will soon lose key players selected for the Test squad, forcing them to rely on less experienced backups.

The Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) has already issued the itinerary for the remaining three league rounds, with matches resuming on April 6 before the Super League phase begins on April 15. According to Prime Bank Cricket Club head coach Talha Jubair, national team players will be available until April 9.

"What I know is that Test squad members can't play any matches in the league [after April 9]. We can't do anything about it," said Talha, whose side are currently in fourth position with 10 points from eight games.

Talha admitted that while his team have backup options, replacing potential Test call-ups like Zakir Hasan, Shahadat Dipu, Hasan Mahmud, and Khaled Ahmed would not be easy.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) cricket operations in-charge, Shahriar Nafees,

Struggling Brazil left reeling: Who will replace Dorival Junior?

AGENCIES

Once the gold standard of world football, Brazil are now a team in crisis – rudderless, rattled, and searching for direction.

The five-time world champions hit a new low this week, sacking head coach Dorival Junior just three days after a crushing 4-1 defeat to eternal rivals Argentina. It was not just a loss – it was a humiliation that symbolised the Selecao's ongoing decline, exposing tactical confusion, a lack of identity, and a widening gap between past glory and present reality.

Dorival's brief stint, which began in January 2024, was meant to steady a ship already shaken by post-World Cup uncertainty. Instead, it added to Brazil's spiraling woes.

Since crashing out of the 2022 World Cup to Croatia on penalties, Brazil have looked increasingly ordinary. Negative records piled up: their first-ever home qualifying loss, first defeats to Colombia and an African nation, and a Copa America exit to Uruguay on penalties – all under a rotating cast of interim and permanent coaches.

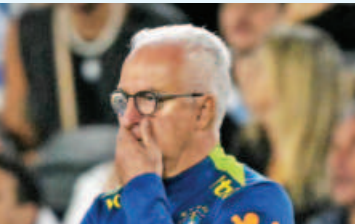
With Brazil currently clinging to fourth in South America's qualifying table – just a point above the final automatic slot –

Brazil are enduring their worst-ever World Cup qualifying campaign, sitting fourth in South America with 21 points – just one above sixth-placed Colombia.

They've suffered a record five losses in 14 games, conceding 16 goals – both all-time qualifying lows.

Their 1-0 loss to Argentina in 2023 marked Brazil's first-ever home defeat in World Cup qualifying.

Under Dorival, Brazil managed only six wins in 14 matches and exited the Copa America in the quarterfinals to Uruguay.



panic has replaced pride.

Carlo Ancelotti had long been seen as the ideal candidate, but the Italian legend reaffirmed his commitment to Real Madrid until 2026. That opens the door to a new round of speculation. Al Hilal's Jorge Jesus leads the shortlist, while Palmeiras' Abel Ferreira, another Portuguese tactician with Brazilian experience, is also in contention.

But Brazil's crisis is not just about the coach but an identity struggle. Despite a roster filled with stars like Vinicius Junior, Rodrygo, and Raphinha, the team lacks the flair and cohesion that once defined them. Injuries to key figures like Neymar, now struggling with age and fitness, have further highlighted the generational transition underway.

Dorival's lone bright moment – a debut win over England at Wembley – feels like a distant memory. His Copa America campaign flattered to deceive, and ultimately, his inability to reignite Brazil's attacking soul sealed his fate.

Whoever takes over next faces more than just qualifying pressure – they must restore belief. Brazil have not lifted a major trophy since the 2019 Copa America and have not tasted World Cup glory since 2002. For a nation obsessed with beautiful football, pragmatic results alone will not suffice.

Rizwan rues 'change of momentum' in NZ defeat

AGENCIES

A dramatic collapse after a promising start handed Pakistan a 73-run defeat in the first ODI against New Zealand in Napier yesterday – a result that left skipper Mohammad Rizwan rueing 'three-four overs' of play that turned the tables on them in the contest.

Mark Chapman struck a career-best 132 off 111 balls and Pakistan-born Muhammad Abbas hit a 26-ball 52 – the quickest half-century ever on ODI debut – as the hosts posted 344-9 at McLean Park after being sent to bat first.

In the chase, the tourists looked on track at 249-3, at that point needing 96 runs to win, with more than 11 overs remaining.

But after Babar Azam, who made highest 78 off 83 balls, became Abbas' maiden ODI wicket, the Pakistan innings crumbled as they lost their final seven wickets for



just 22 runs and were all out for 271 after 44.1 overs.

Seamer Nathan Smith, who finished with 4-60, claimed three of the final four wickets which fell for just four runs as Pakistan conceded

a convincing defeat in a match, they were on track to win.

"We started with good intent with the bat. But at the end, pressure got built. When you're closer to the target, there's more pressure. Three-four overs changed the momentum," Rizwan said at the presentation ceremony.

Player-of-the-match Chapman said that after being reduced to 50-3, they rode their luck with the bat and then the cameo from Abbas powered the Black Caps to a winning total.

"It was tricky early on [conditions], we probably aimed at something lower than this, but we then kicked on and got to a good total," Chapman said. "We just absorbed the pressure and then got into a position to put the pressure back on them. We rode our luck, got a platform and set things up for debutant Abbas to put the icing on the cake, it was a solid innings from him," he added.



HAMZA DAZZLES ON CLUB RETURN

Hamza Choudhury [R] celebrates with Gustavo Hamer after scoring the opener in Sheffield United's 3-1 win over Coventry City in an EFL Championship fixture at Bramall Lane yesterday. Despite not scoring, the midfielder, fresh from his international debut for Bangladesh, received a standing ovation in front of a 30,000-plus crowd in the 89th minute as he was substituted, following a superb all-around performance that helped Sheffield move to the top of the table.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK