



SHAMIT ADDS to Bangladesh’s midfield facelift

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh football team’s midfield facelift, which began with the arrival of Hamza Chowdhury, entered its next phase yesterday with Canada-based midfielder Shamit Shome getting called up in the 26-member

against India in the Asian Cup Qualifying opener, visibly bolstering the team’s midfield.

Hamza and Mohammad Ridoy played as pivot midfielders against India, linking the defense and attack seamlessly. But the men in red and green failed to penetrate the Indian defence in the goalless draw, seemingly missing a quality midfielder who could add an attacking edge.

With the inclusion of Shamit of Cavalry FC, who has played in Canada’s top-flight

group [AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers],” Cabrera told the reporters soon after disclosing his 26-member preliminary squad yesterday.

With Hamza more adept at backing up the defense, Shamit is expected to play the key role of delivering the final passes for forwards likes Rakib Hossain.

Italy-based winger Fahamedul Islam, who was sent back to Italy from the team’s camp in Saudi Arabia ahead of the India tie, was also included in the squad.

Cabrera, however, also urged everyone to be patient as both Shamit needed a little time to get adjusted with the weather and condition of Bangladesh.

“We have to be a bit patient because it is going to be very short time for him [Shamit] to adapt, very different weather, very long journey from Canada, so let’s be patient,” said Cabrera, adding that the 25 players barring Shamit will be available for the practice match against Bhutan on June 4.

With Shamit in the mix, Cabrera also believes Bangladesh are in a better position to secure full points against Singapore.

“The team is very strong and we have full belief in ourselves. We know we performed very well against India and we could have done much better and we can do better.

“If we are able to at least keep the same level of performance, that could be enough to get points. But we want to get the three points and we are absolutely convinced that at home, in these conditions and with the full support that we are going to get, we definitely can get three points,” hoped Cabrera.



preliminary squad for the team’s Asian Cup Qualifying tie against Singapore at home on June 10.

Hamza, an English Premier League (EPL) midfielder signed under Leicester City and who was on loan to Championship side Sheffield United last season, dazzled in his Bangladesh debut on March 25

football for nine years, that missing link in the midfield could potentially get filled.

Head coach Javier Cabrera was evidently excited to add Shamit to his midfield cavalry, and also boasted that his current midfield is the best in South Asia.

“I am sure about it [best midfield] in South Asia. [it is now] a very strong midfield with the inclusion of Shamit, especially in our

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Mitul Marma, Sujon Hossain, Mehedi Hasan Srabon

Defenders: Shakil Ahad Topu, Jahid Hasan Shanto, Rahmat Mia, Isa Faysal, Taj Uddin, Tariq Kazi, Topu Barman, Saad Uddin

Midfielders: Mohammad Ridoy, Syed Shah Quazem Kirmanee, Sohel Rana, Mojibor Rahman Jony, Shekh Morsalin, Jamal Bhuiyan, Hamza Choudhury, Shamit Shome

Forwards: Fahamedul Islam, Foysal Ahmed Fahim, Rakib Hossain, Sahariar Emon, Mohammad Ibrahim, Al Amin, Sumon Reza



Our team is very strong and we have full belief in ourselves. We know that we did a very good match, a very good performance in India and we could have done much better... If we are able to at least keep the same level of performance that could be enough to get points but we want to get the three points. We are absolutely convinced that in these conditions and with the full support that we are going to get, we definitely can get three points.



Bangladesh coach Javier Cabrera



TIGERS MISFIRE as Pak win first T20I

Bangladesh opener Tanzid Tamim walks back to the pavilion after yet another decent start in the first T20I of the three-match series against hosts Pakistan in Lahore on Wednesday. Tamim raced to 31 off 17 deliveries, hitting two boundaries and three maximums, but could not convert his start into something meaningful as he was castled by Hasan Ali in the fourth over. Tamim’s knock was reflective of Bangladesh’s lacklustre overall effort, with skipper Litton Das also departing after a 30-ball 48. The Tigers were bundled out for 164 in 19.2 overs while in chase of a 202-run target, losing the contest by 37 runs. Pakistan pacer Hasan Ali, who made a comeback to the team after more than a year following an injury, clinched his maiden fiver in T20Is as he finished with figures of five for 30 in 3.2 overs. Earlier, Bangladesh put on a bleak bowling display, failing to capitalise on some early wickets, only to see Pakistan gain momentum and cross the 200-run mark.

PHOTO: PCB

SHORT CORNER

Bangladesh, South Africa players fight on the field

A heated altercation followed by a scuffle took place on the second day of the four-day match between Bangladesh emerging team and their South African counterparts at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on Wednesday. The incident unfolded during the 104th over of Bangladesh’s innings, involving Bangladesh’s Ripon Mondal and South Africa’s Tshepo Ntuli.



Yamal extends Barcelona contract until 2031

Barcelona’s teenage star Lamine Yamal signed a new contract until 2031 with the Catalan giants on Tuesday after a spectacular season. The 17-year-old winger is already one of the club’s key players and helped them land a domestic treble of La Liga, the Copa del Rey and the Spanish Super Cup.

Messi teams up with Suarez in Uruguayan club venture

From their glory days at Barcelona to reuniting at Inter Miami, Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez have now brought their enduring partnership into a new chapter, co-founding Deportivo LSM, a club set to compete in professional Uruguayan football.

***Read The Daily Star website for full stories.*

Acerbi the warrior driving Inter’s history bid

AGENCIES

Francesco Acerbi’s journey to the pinnacle of European football is more than a tale of persistence; it is the story of a man who had to lose everything to truly live.

Now 37, the Inter Milan defender is on the cusp of the crowning moment of his career: a Champions League final appearance against Paris Saint-Germain on Saturday night. That he got here at all feels miraculous. That he may lift the most coveted trophy in club football is something even he once thought impossible.

Acerbi was not always the player with the warrior spirit who stunned Barcelona with a stoppage-time equaliser in a Champions League semifinal thriller. Not long ago, he was a man adrift—lost in grief, drowning in alcohol and hollowed out by depression.

The turning point? Cancer.

“Cancer saved me,” Acerbi once said. “It gave me something to fight against again. I saw things clearly.”

It began with the death of his father while he was at AC Milan, a period he now calls his rock bottom. Football lost all meaning. He drank to feel something—anything. Then came the diagnosis: testicular cancer. Not once, but twice. And that, paradoxically, brought him back to life.

“I asked myself, ‘what if it comes back?’ And I decided—I would face it again.”

From that darkness emerged a new man. One who no longer chased dreams, but built goals brick by brick. One of those goals was to represent Italy again. And he did at the age of 31. He has since become a steady presence at Inter and a leader not by flash but by



fire-tested resilience.

His unforgettable goal against Barcelona—his first ever in the Champions League—came with a hole in his boot and a heart that had survived hell. It was a moment that changed everything for Inter and reminded the world what Acerbi has always been: a fighter.

Now, in the twilight of his career, he stands on the verge of a historic triumph. Not just for the club, but for himself; a symbol that survival isn’t just about staying alive but learning how to live again.

Acerbi may never be the poster boy of glamour, but in a world hungry for heroes, his is a story of redemption, of scars turned to strength.

He didn’t just beat cancer. He let it remake him. And that may be the greatest win of all.

Playoffs beckon as KOHLI CHASES IPL GLORY

AFP

Virat Kohli can fulfil his dream of finally winning the Indian Premier League when the playoffs begin this week, desperate to banish the “heartbreak” of losing the final as captain nine years ago.

Kohli’s Royal Challengers Bengaluru face table-toppers Punjab Kings on Thursday in Mullanpur after securing second place by

chasing 228 to beat Lucknow Super Giants on Tuesday.

The winners go straight into the final in Ahmedabad on June 3.

But even if Bengaluru lose that encounter, they will have another chance to reach the final against the winners of Friday’s “eliminator” between Gujarat Titans and Mumbai Indians.

The 36-year-old Kohli recently retired from Tests having already walked away from

T20 internationals after India’s World Cup triumph last year.

But the hunger to lift the IPL trophy still burns bright for the two-time World Cup winner, who played a leading part in India’s 50-over Champions Trophy victory earlier this year.

“I had two heartbreaks in my life in 2016,” Kohli told Indian broadcaster JioStar.

“First was the World T20 and then the IPL final.”

Affectionately known as “King Kohli”, he has scored more runs than anyone in IPL history and is the only player to have spent all 18 seasons of the league with one team since its inception in 2008.

He has been on the losing side in the final three times, in 2009, 2011 and 2016, but fans believe that it is an omen that Kohli wears number 18 on his shirt -- and that it will be 18th time lucky this year.

He has been in vintage form as he pursues his goal: his 54 on Tuesday that set up victory against Lucknow was his eighth half-century of a season in which he has made 602 runs at an average of 60.20.



Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz overcame a brief scare to beat Fabian Marozsan—who upset him in Rome two years ago—6-1, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2 and reach the French Open third round. [Inset] Jasmine Paolini touched Rafael Nadal’s newly unveiled Court Chatrier footprint—installed last Sunday—before defeating Ajla Tomljanovic 6-3, 6-3.

PHOTO: REUTERS



PLAY-OFFS FIXTURES

May 29: Punjab v Bengaluru in Qualifier 1, Mullanpur

May 30: Gujarat v Mumbai in Eliminator, Mullanpur

June 1: Loser of Qualifier 1 v winner of Eliminator in Qualifier 2, Ahmedabad

June 3: Winner of Qualifier 1 v winner of Qualifier 2 in the final, Ahmedabad

