



## GRIMSBY REAPER

PHOTO: REUTERS

This is the first time that Manchester United have lost an EFL Cup tie against a fourth-tier opposition.

Grimsby's squad is worth £3.1m, compared to United's staggering £765m squad valuation.

"I'm a United fan, so I'm half-fuming, to be honest. But nights like this are exactly why you play football." -- Christy Pym, Grimsby goalkeeper



Manchester United's Bryan Mbeumo holds his head after missing in a marathon shootout, as Grimsby Town stunned Ruben Amorim's side 12-11 in the League Cup second round at Blundell Park on Wednesday. Mbeumo, who had earlier scored his first United goal after they fell 2-0 down inside 30 minutes, saw his effort crash off the bar following Harry Maguire's late equaliser and an 18-minute penalty drama where 15 consecutive spot-kicks were converted before his miss sent the home fans into delirium.

## Rain disrupts training, clouds Sylhet series

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN from Sylhet

Recurrent rain interruptions in Sylhet has majorly disrupted the Bangladesh team's preparation camp ahead of the three-match T20I series against the Netherlands, which will be followed by the Asia Cup, and raised a question over the logic of holding a series in late-monsoon in the most rain-soaked region of the country.

Bangladesh cancelled their practice session in the evening at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium on Thursday due to poor weather. Players like Saif Hassan, Nurul Hasan Sohan and Jaker Ali Anik trained at the indoors under the supervision of senior assistant coach Mohammad Salahuddin after the regular practice got called off.

This was far from a one-off incident as since the team's camp began on August 20, persistent rain and wet outfield has forced the players to leave the field and train indoors on quite a few occasions.

Even the Netherlands team's preparation got hampered by the

weather as after coming to the ground in the afternoon to conduct their first practice session yesterday, they could only warm-up before rain spoiled their training.

Bangladesh usually don't host international cricket during this time of the year. Since 2017, the Tigers have played only three home series in the August-September window – a two-Test series against Australia that year and back-to-back T20I series against Australia and New Zealand in 2021.

As the Tigers have not played any international games since mid-July and the Asia Cup is coming up, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) arranged this series as an exception.

But the good intentions behind holding the series could get washed away as persistent rain in Sylhet has made it difficult for the grounds men to prepare good sporting wickets.

Moreover, according to the weather forecast, there is a high probability of rain during all three matches, scheduled on August 30, September 1 and 3.

BCB's head of turf management

Tony Hemming seemed very much aware of the constant rain threat.

"I can't comment on the wickets due to protocol... But I think this will be a series where there is chance of rain every day," Tony told The Daily Star on Thursday.

Bangladesh skipper Litton Das, however, did not want to fuss about the weather as it is not in their control and instead, wanted to focus on using this series to prepare for the Asia Cup.

"Every international match is a challenge. The Netherlands are also a good team. Maybe they don't play much in these conditions, but if the match is played on a good wicket, they are used to playing on good wickets. So, there will be challenges for both sides," said Litton.

"If we have the opportunity to check some players before the Asia Cup, we will do that. But at the same time, it's international cricket, so you have to go out there to win," he added.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Hasaranga in as SL name Asia Cup squad

AGENCIES

Despite doubts over star all-rounder Wanindu Hasaranga, Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) kept the leg-spinner in their 16-member squad for the Asia Cup, scheduled to be played in the UAE from September 9 to 28.

Batting all-rounder Charith Asalanka will lead the defending champions in the eight-team continental tournament.

Hasaranga was not picked for the two-match ODI series away to Zimbabwe, starting today in Harare, and was also left out for the subsequent three T20Is. That intensified doubts over his participation in the Asia Cup, which will begin just two days after Sri Lanka's T20I series against the African nation.

Hasaranga sustained a hamstring injury during the T20I series against Bangladesh in July and has not featured since. He replaces uncapped spinner Vishen Halambage, while all-rounder Dushan Hemantha was also left out of Sri Lanka's Asia Cup squad.

Sri Lanka, placed in Group B, will start their campaign against Bangladesh at the Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi on September 13 before taking on Hong Kong and Afghanistan in their remaining group stage fixtures on September 15 and 18, respectively.



## Kings in tough group in AFC Challenge League

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Premier League giants Bashundhara Kings face a daunting task in the group stage of the AFC Challenge League after being drawn into a formidable Group B on Thursday.

They will compete against Al Seeb Club of

**Group A:** Altyn Asyr FC, Al Shabab Club, Paro FC, FC Abdysht-Ata

**Group B:** Al Seeb Club, Al Ansar FC, Kuwait SC, Bashundhara Kings

**Group C:** FC Regar-TadAZ, Safa SC, Al Arabi SC, FC Muras United

**Group D:** Manila Digger FC, Preah Khan Reach Svay Rieng FC, SP Falcons, Ezra FC

**Group E:** Dewa United FC, Shan United FC, Tainan City FC, Phnom Penh Crown FC

Oman, Al Ansar FC of Lebanon, and Kuwait SC of Kuwait – all of whom are defending champions in their respective top-tier leagues.

Kings earned their place with a 1-0 win in the preliminary round against Al Karamah SC. The group-stage matches will start on October 25, with Kuwait hosting the Group B fixtures.

## U-23 ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

### Expatriate touch, senior core drive hopes

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are "mentally prepared" to qualify for the AFC Men's Under-23 Asian Cup for the first time with a squad featuring 13 senior national players and four expatriates: Cuba Mitchell and Tanil Salik (UK-based), Fahamedul Islam (Italy), and Zayaan Ahmed (US).

"Having 12 to 13 senior players is a big boost... The new players like Cuba, Zayaan and Salik have added quality, and we feel mentally prepared for the challenge," said star forward Sheikh Morsalin, tipped to captain the side in the Qualifiers event, running from September 3-9.

The squad will leave for Vietnam in the early hours of Saturday. Fahamedul, however, will join his teammates there on September 1 and thus remains unlikely to start in first fixture.

Eleven group winners and the four best runners up will advance to the 16-team finals in Saudi Arabia in 2026.

In preparation, the charges of AKM Saiful Bari Titu trained in Bahrain for over three weeks and

## BANGLADESH FIXTURES

September 3, 6pm: Vietnam

September 6, 3pm: Yemen

September 9, 3pm: Singapore

played two friendlies against Bahrain U-23 side, losing 1-0 and 4-2.

"The chemistry we built in Bahrain has lifted confidence," said Titu, adding the team are also working to adapt to the playing style which senior team coach Javier Cabrera plans to use in October's Asian Cup Qualifiers in Hong Kong.

## ASIA CUP

### Afghanistan have no 'specific targets'

AFP, Sharjah

Afghanistan captain Rashid Khan says his team have no "specific targets" despite producing groundbreaking performances in recent ICC global events, ahead of a T20I tri-series starting Friday.

Rashid's men face Pakistan in the opening game in Sharjah, with the UAE the other side taking part in the event which serves as a warm-up for next month's Asia Cup, also in UAE.

Afghanistan reached the semifinals of last year's T20 World Cup in the United States and the Caribbean, and narrowly missed out on reaching the last four at the ODI Champions Trophy in Pakistan earlier in 2025.

Those performances followed an impressive showing at the 2023 ODI World Cup, when the Afghans produced statement wins over England, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

"We do not have specific targets,



I think we have been doing well in the ICC events and although we haven't played T20I cricket over the last few months, the guys have been playing in T20 leagues and that has helped."

The Asia Cup gets under way on September 9, as teams ramp up their preparations for the 2026 T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's fortunes are dipping after they crashed out of the last T20 World Cup in the group stage before failing to win a match at the Champions Trophy.

This year they lost a T20 series in Bangladesh 2-1 but overcame the West Indies by the same margin.

Under new captain Salman Agha, Pakistan are going through a transition with former skippers Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan out of the T20 squad.

"We are trying to build a team and this tri-series and then the Asia Cup will be a good opportunity to achieve that," said Agha.

and we do not want to put extra pressure on our players," Rashid said Thursday when asked if Afghanistan are targeting the Asia Cup title.

"Our target is to play the brand of cricket we have played over the years.



Novak Djokovic gestures playing a violin with his racket, staying optimistic about tuning back to his old self after he reached the US Open third round for a record-equaling 19th time on Wednesday. Djokovic battled past Zachary Svajda 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 6-3, 6-1 to stay in the hunt for an unprecedented 25th Grand Slam singles title. He next faces Cameron Norrie tonight.

PHOTO: AFP