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They [Bangladesh] have played some good cricket recently, but they have also shown vulnerability in other series. We have come here confident that we can play a good game of cricket, knowing that Bangladesh will bring a strong style of play. They have some very good players and are tough to face in their home conditions. So, it's going to be a great challenge for our guys. But we wouldn't be here if we didn't think we could win some games.

Current Netherlands head coach and former Bangladesh fielding coach **RYAN COOK**



What to WATCH

Sony Sports 1
Asia Cup Hockey
Bangladesh vs Chinese
Taipei
Live from 1:30 pm
T Sports

Bangladesh vs Netherlands
1st T20I
Live from 6:00 pm
Star Sports 1 and 2
US Open
Live from 9:00 pm

Star Sports Select HD1
Premier League
Chelsea vs Fulham
Live from 5:30 pm
Man Utd vs Burnley
Live from 8:00 pm

SHORT CORNER

Europa League, Conference League draws held

Aston Villa will host Coppa Italia winners Bologna and visit Feyenoord in the Europa League opening stage, while Scottish sides Celtic and Rangers will both welcome AS Roma as Friday's draw also set up a clash between Nottingham Forest and Porto. Meanwhile, FA Cup winners Crystal Palace, who were demoted from the Europa League, are set to host Strasbourg and visit Dynamo Kyiv in the third-tier Conference League.

Messi prepares for final WC qualifiers

Lionel Scaloni has unveiled Argentina's 29-man squad for their last two World Cup qualifying fixtures, but all eyes are fixed on Lionel Messi, who is preparing for what could be his final home qualifier in the Albiceleste shirt. Argentina, already qualified for the 2026 World Cup, will host Venezuela on September 4 before travelling to Ecuador on September 9.

Fenerbahce part ways with Mourinho

Jose Mourinho's contract at Fenerbahce has been terminated, the Turkish club said on Friday, bringing an early end to the Portuguese coach's tenure in Istanbul. Mourinho's side failed to seal a Champions League spot after they lost 1-0 against Benfica on Wednesday night in their play-off tie.

Read full stories on *The Daily Star's* website.

Red-ball pace trio helps Tigers prepare for Dutch attack

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

Despite having five pace bowling options in the squad, Bangladesh are carrying three extra pacers in Nahid Rana, Khaled Ahmed and Ebadot Hossain in Sylhet to better prepare for the Netherlands pace attack they are set to face in the three-match T20I series starting today.

Bangladesh have four pacers in Mustafizur Rahman, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Taskin Ahmed, and Shoriful Islam, and one fast-bowling all-rounder in Mohammad Saifuddin for the Netherlands series.

The same squad will then travel to the UAE to take part in the Asia Cup, scheduled to start on September 9.

Despite not even being in the standby list for Asia Cup, Nahid, Khaled and Ebadot – who mostly play red-ball cricket for the Tigers – have been practicing with the side in Sylhet in the preparation camp.

"The reason they are here is because they bowl and train with us. And also because our batters will get that level of practice before the game that we know they [Netherlands] will offer us in the games," Bangladesh head coach Phil Simmons told *The Daily Star* yesterday.

The Dutch pace attack will be led by Paul van Meekeren, who was the player-of-the-match in Netherlands' 87-run win over Bangladesh in the 2023 ICC World Cup in India with figures of 4-23, and also features Fred Klaassen, Ryan Klein and Kyle Klein.

HOCKEY ASIA CUP

Bangladesh face Chinese Taipei in do-or-die clash

SPORTS REPORTER

Smarting from a 4-1 defeat to Malaysia in their AHF Men's Hockey Asia Cup opener on Wednesday, the Bangladesh team are determined to put up a gritty performance in today's crucial encounter against Chinese Taipei in Bihar.

"Our target is to finish third in the four-team group, so the match against Chinese Taipei is a do-or-die affair for us," head coach Moshirul Rahman Biplob told *The Daily Star* over the phone from Rajbir yesterday.

"If the boys can stick to the game plan while maintaining team structure and shape, I believe we have a good chance of winning the match," said the former national player.

Chinese Taipei, who suffered a crushing 7-0 loss to South Korea in their opening match, came into the tournament with better preparation. They finished runners-up in the qualification tournament held in March. In contrast, Bangladesh had just three weeks of preparation after being called in on short notice to replace Pakistan.

However, history favours the men in red and green. Bangladesh beat Chinese Taipei comfortably in their previous two encounters – a 4-2 victory in the AHF Cup in 2016 and a resounding 11-3 win in the Asia Cup in 2013.

Bangladesh fared better against Malaysia than they did in the previous edition in Jakarta in 2022, where they suffered an 8-1 defeat. The margin could have been even narrower this time if the forwards had capitalised



on opportunities during counter-attacks.

"Our strategy was to play quarter by quarter, keeping the scoresheet clean and looking to exploit counter-attacks. We succeeded in the first quarter and even took the lead in the second, but the boys couldn't maintain the momentum against an opponent ranked 13th in the world," said Biplob, adding that Malaysia scored three of their goals from transition moments.

Biplob is optimistic that his players will improve as the tournament progresses.

"The artificial turf is very fast, which led to a lot of missed passes and made it difficult to control the ball. But I believe the boys will adapt and get better with each match," he said.



"Losing against a team that is lower down on the table is not a bad thing, because if we don't play well on the day, we deserve to be criticised," Simmons said at the pre-match press conference in Sylhet yesterday.

"We don't think about losing to anybody. We think about how we play and the standards we want to set. And I'm sure if we play to that level, we will win," he added.

Simmons was also very specific about the standard he wanted his team to match, setting the 2-1 triumph over Sri Lanka in Sri Lanka as the benchmark over their recent-most series win over Pakistan in Mirpur by the same margin.

"I'm looking for us to continue the

levels that we have set in Sri Lanka. Taking away a little bit from Mirpur, I don't think the wicket was as good as Sri Lanka. But the standards we set in Sri Lanka, that's what we're looking to continue," said the former Caribbean international.

Even after the Pakistan series in July, it was reported that Simmons wasn't satisfied with the Mirpur wicket despite their series triumph.

The series against the Netherlands is taking place in Sylhet, which is known to produce the best sporting wicket in the country.

But recurrent rain has been an issue in the lead up to the series as it hampered both team's outdoor training on Thursday and remains a threat throughout the series as well.

Yesterday, however, the sun was out in Sylhet and both teams completed their outdoor training without a hitch.

Meanwhile, Simmons also informed that all-round Shamin Hossain might not feature in today's match as he is still recovering from fever and declared opener Parvez Hossain Emon fit to play.

Opposing team's head coach Ryan cook, who has worked with the Tigers previously as their fielding coach, vowed to play their best cricket to beat the hosts. "We believe that if we play a good game of cricket, we can beat any team on any day and we've shown that we are capable of doing that. Of course, we are confident that we can do it."



Third seed Coco Gauff displayed great resolve to overcome another shaky performance that reduced her to tears in her US Open second-round fixture against Donna Vekic on Thursday. Gauff wiped away a flood of mid-match tears after a litany of service errors to defeat the unseeded Croatian 7-6 (7/5), 6-2, later revealing that she drew inspiration from the presence of gymnastics icon Simone Biles, who was among the crowd at the Arthur Ashe Stadium.

PHOTO: REUTERS