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SPORT

"The Football Association of Wales hereby confirms its withdrawal of support for the candidature of Gianni Infantino, for re-election as FIFA president for the 2027–2031 term."

Football Association of Wales withdraw support for **Infantino**'s FIFA presidency bid



Rest before rehab for Rana; Shoriful on track

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh speedster Nahid Rana returned home from Australia on Monday after a medical assessment, with the pacer prescribed at least a week's rest before beginning rehabilitation for a Grade 2 side strain.

Rana, who sustained the injury on July 17, was ruled out of the upcoming two-Test series in Australia. He also underwent scans for a shin bone issue alongside the side strain.

"There was a shin bone issue but following assessment, everything turned out to be okay and looks in good condition. For his side strain, he has been prescribed rest for a week at least before rehabilitation begins," a Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) medical department source said.

The pacer will undergo further assessments after a week before entering the main phase of his recovery, with the rehabilitation period estimated at eight weeks from the date of injury.

"During the first six weeks, the body naturally heals the torn tissue. Physios use manual therapy, gels and targeted treatments to make the tissue elastic and flexible again.

"There are a few steps to recovery. Firstly, we check whether the pain has gone completely, next we go for strength building, and then he can begin progressive bowling. Once he is able to bowl at 100 percent intensity, the bowling coach, fitness coach and physiotherapist will assess his workload.

"From what I understand, it will take at least two-three weeks more. Bowling can create strains on the side but I feel he will make a quicker comeback if he does his rehabilitation well."

Coach **Alamgir Kabir** on Rana

"Finally, the workload and fitness phase will gradually build his bowling workload until he is ready for competitive cricket," the source said, adding that the BCB medical department would not clear him to play until he completed the required bowling workload.

Rana's childhood bowling coach, Alamgir Kabir, is optimistic about the 22-year-old's recovery.

"From what I understand, it will take at least two-three weeks more. Bowling can create strains on the side but I feel he will make a quicker comeback if he does his rehabilitation well," he told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, BCB remains optimistic about Shoriful Islam's recovery who began his bowling workload on July 29 after progressing through the same phases. The left-arm pacer is due to undergo a fitness test on August 12 before selectors decide on his availability for the second Test, starting on August 22.

"His [Shoriful] progression is going as well as Litton [Das]. But since he is a pacer, they need to complete a bit more work... But I am hopeful we will get him for the second Test," chief selector Habibul Bashar had said before departing for Australia on Sunday night.



PREPARATIONS UNDERWAY FOR DARWIN TEST

Bangladesh opener Shadman Islam leaves a delivery during the Tigers' first training session at the DXC Arena in Darwin yesterday ahead of the two-Test series against Australia. The visitors will need to demonstrate patience and skill to negotiate Australia's pace attack, spearheaded by [Inset] Mitchell Starc, who also trained with the hosts in Brisbane ahead of the first Test in Darwin on August 13. PHOTO: BCB/ICC

Three more coaches to join national football team

SPORTS REPORTER

Ahead of the September-October FIFA international window, two German coaches -- Reinhard Stumpf and Kristian Barbuscak -- along with Vietnam's Nguyen Hoang Lan are set to join the Bangladesh national football team's coaching staff.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Bangladesh Football Federation's National Teams Committee last Thursday. The committee, headed by BFF president Tabith Awal, recommended appointing the three coaches on an assignment basis for one year.

Reinhard Stumpf and Nguyen Hoang Lan will serve as assistant coaches to German-American head coach Thomas Dooley, while Kristian Barbuscak will take charge as goalkeeping coach.

Among the three, UEFA Pro Licence holder Stumpf is the most experienced, having worked as head coach of several Saudi Arabian clubs, including Al Hilal, Al Draih, Al Shabab and Ettifaq FC. He has also coached clubs in Tunisia and Turkey, as well as German third-tier side Wacker Burghausen.

Nguyen Hoang Lan, despite holding an AFC C Licence, has experience as assistant coach and performance analyst with the Guyana Football Federation. The UK-based PESA-certified analyst also worked as a scouting coach for the Guyana senior national team.

Barbuscak, meanwhile, has worked as a goalkeeping coach with clubs in Germany's lower divisions as well as top-flight sides in Iceland and Australia between 2003 and 2026.

"The meeting recommended appointing them on an assignment basis. That means they will join the national team whenever Bangladesh have international engagements over the next one year," NTC member and BFF executive member Sayeed Hasan Kanon told The Daily Star on Monday.

Merit and positions over reputation

New hockey coach Gerhard's selection mantra

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh hockey coach Peter Gerhard wants to pick the final squad based on positions rather than reputations or clubs as the national team prepare for next month's Asian Games in Japan with a training tour of Germany.

Since arriving in Dhaka on Friday, the 78-year-old German coach has assessed all 38 players, including six senior players called up recently, through several match simulations. The national team, split into two groups, played a six-quarter match against the Bangladesh U-20 team at Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

"I select by positions, not by names and not by clubs. For me, the club is Bangladesh. So, I don't care which club it is or who is supporting whom. I look at my players and see how many I need," Gerhard said when asked about selection for the Germany tour.

"I need three deep defenders, four midfielders, three backs and four forwards, just as an example. That's the way I'm looking. I'm not looking for names," he added.



The exclusion of senior players such as Rasel Mahmud Jimmy, Pushkor Kisha Mimo and Nayeem Uddin had raised questions over the previous ad-hoc committee's selection, prompting the newly appointed committee to give six experienced players a chance to prove themselves in camp. Those players joined on Saturday and featured in the trial matches over the last three days.

"I can't tell you whom I see before we announce. We will sit together and decide who will go to Germany. It's not about saying this one was good. The unfair story would be to say the six were not fit or did not do what the others did. But they could show their skills and understanding of the game. That's how we have to measure it," Gerhard said.

The veteran coach has prioritised match practice over extensive tactical and technical sessions, with an 18-20-member squad set to leave for Germany on August 12 for a month-long tour. They are expected to play around 16 matches against club teams and national sides before returning home on September 10.

"Look, a match is like practice for me. This is a practice hour. So, we are practising two or three times a day. We continue that until the end. When I do it the right way, they will not be exhausted; they will be very fit, and we go like we want. There's no reason to say 16 matches is too much. It's not too much; it's more or less the same," Gerhard said, adding that his target is to finish fifth or sixth at the Asian Games.



Cape Verde's World Cup hero Vozinha arrived in Chile yesterday to join Primera División leaders Colo-Colo, receiving a rapturous welcome from supporters in Santiago. The 40-year-old goalkeeper, whose heroics helped Cape Verde reach the Round of 32 on their World Cup debut before a narrow defeat to Argentina, will sign a six-month contract with the option of a one-year extension after completing his medical. He became a household name during the mega event with his performances, boosting his Instagram following from around 50,000 to 17.4 million. PHOTO: X



ARSENAL-LINKED VINI BACK AT REAL

Amid strong rumours linking Vinicius Junior with a move to Arsenal, the Brazilian winger took part in his first training session with Real Madrid at the Ciudad Real Madrid training complex yesterday. Joining Vinicius for the first time were new signing Bernardo Silva and Brahim Diaz, with all three returning under new coach Jose Mourinho after vacations following the World Cup. However, Vinicius, who is in the final year of his current contract with the Spanish giants, is yet to sign a new deal, with reports suggesting Los Blancos have already made their final offer and are unwilling to improve the terms any further. Real Madrid will play preseason friendlies against Deportivo (August 13) and Schalke (August 16) before beginning their LaLiga campaign away to Espanyol on August 23. PHOTO: REAL MADRID

Borrowed boots, UNBREAKABLE DREAM

STAR SPORTS DESK

Auqib Nabi yesterday became the first cricketer from Jammu & Kashmir to be named in the India Test squad when he was called up for the upcoming two-match series against Sri Lanka. The first Test begins in Galle on August 15.

But before he could even dream of wearing the India jersey, Nabi had to borrow a pair of boots just to take part in the Under-19 trials. The first pair did not last long, as the friend who had lent them failed to make the squad and took them back. Left with no choice, Nabi borrowed another pair from someone else and completed his maiden Under-19 tournament in patched-up boots.

Nabi, hailing from Baramulla, always knew adversity would be part of the journey. But if he wanted to play for India, he believed excuses had no place.

The son of government schoolteachers, Nabi's cricketing journey began with tennis-ball cricket. However, when he switched to the hard-ball game, Baramulla's underdeveloped cricketing infrastructure became a major obstacle. Opportunities to train on turf wickets wearing spikes were almost non-existent. However, instead of complaining about the lack of facilities, he travelled one and a half hours every morning to Srinagar for training, driven by a simple belief: if you dream of playing for the national team, you have to stop making excuses.



The turning point came in 2023 when he began working with Jammu and Kashmir bowling coach P Krishnakumar during the Buchi Babu Trophy. Although he already possessed an effective outswinger, subtle adjustments to his bowling biomechanics soon helped him develop a sharp inswinger and master the scrambled seam. Combined with an excellent wrist position and an impressive ability to read match situations, those additions quickly made him a far more complete pacer.

Rather than obsess over taking wickets, Nabi learned the value of relentless consistency. Whether the ball was new or old, whether the pitch offered assistance or none at all, he focused on hitting the right areas.

The rewards followed swiftly. Across two successive seasons, he claimed 104 wickets, playing a key role in Jammu and Kashmir's historic Ranji Trophy triumph. His outstanding domestic performances earned him an India A call-up, and after taking six wickets in two first-class matches on the tour of Sri Lanka, he finally realised his ultimate ambition of wearing the India jersey.

For a journey that began in borrowed boots, every step has been built on resilience and determination. Today, the pace sensation from Baramulla stands on the threshold of Test cricket, carrying not only his own dreams but also the hopes of an entire region.