

Dhaka, July 9: The national U-23 men's football team flew to Nepal for a friendly match as preparation for AFC finals in Palestine later this month.Â

This squad that has just come together since the appointment of Andrew Ord as the national head coach last month, however, is unlikely to come back triumphant from the Palestine. The English born Australian national coach, who is also in charge fo the U23 squad, said that expectations should be kept low as Bangladesh is the weakest side in the group comprising Jordan, Tajikistan and hosts Palestine. "We should be optimistic, try our best and give the maximum," said Ord.

The U23 side will play a practice match with Nepal and then go on to Qatar for a three-day training camp where they will play another friendly match. The team is then set to fly for Jordan from where they will travel to Palestine by road through Israel. The Bangladesh U23 will be playing in Group E, which has Palestine, Jordan and Tajikistan.

Noting that the U23 men's team has never won a single match in the AFC U23 Championship qualifiers, Ord said Bangladesh needs to take more effective measures. "We need to have more concentration and determination and try our best for a good start that will give us belief."

The national coach said he did not think that the preparation was over but only half way through. "We hope to have a good training camp. We have two friendlies. And we can learn a lot from there too."

As for the qualifiers, Ord said there was a long way to go. He thought that improvement in such tournaments at the international level would come gradually and slowly. The national coach said the team had certain points to prove. "It's a long way to go. You just try to make the best of the situation."

Ord said the primary goal would be to defence really really well and hang on for 90 minutes. "Try to play our way. We have our own style and we should try to get into the game in the Bangladesh way. We will have to use most of the players if not all of them."

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The final squad consists of: Sohel Rana, Rubel Miya, Md Tutul Hosain Badsha, Md Saad Uddin, Masuk Miah Zoni, Nurul Naium Faisal, Jafar Iqbal, Md Abdullah, Shushanto Thipura, Mohammad Nayeem, Md Sohel Miah, Mahfuz Hasan Pritom, Md Atikuzzaman, Md Alam Didarul, Md Khalekorzaman (Shoboz), Fazlay Rabbi, Md Toklis Ahmed, S M Monjurur Rahman (Manik), MD Asaduzzaman Bablu, Md Jewel Rana, Hemonta Vinsent Biswas, Anisur Rahman, Rahamat Mia.