

What to WATCH

DAY'S EVENT

SONY ESPN

Pakistan v Bangladesh

First Test, Day 1

Live from 11:00am

STAR SPORTS 3

ICC U-19s World Cup

Fifth Place Play-off

West Indies v Australia

Live from 2:00pm

SONY SIX

South Africa v England

Second ODI (D/N)

Live from 5:00pm

TEN 2

Serie A

AS Roma v Bologna

Live from 1:45am (Saturday)

I THOUGHT I'D BE A FISHERMAN: CR7

Cristiano Ronaldo celebrated his birthday in Turin but dialled into Canal 11 in Portugal to do an interview to look back on his career. Asked where he thought he'd be at 35 when he was growing up, Ronaldo said: "At 35? I thought I was going to be a fisherman in Madeira. This never came into my mind. I wanted to be a professional football but I didn't think I was going to win everything I've won." Ronaldo admits that it's hard to pick his favourite goal but "the chilena [overhead kick] was the most difficult" he has scored. That goal came against his current club and was in the running for the Puskas goal of the season. As for the future, 18 years after his debut, Ronaldo continues to dream of more achievements.

--AGENCIES

Bangladesh Cricket League

Four-day Match, Day 1

East Zone v South Zone

Venue: Cox's Bazar

Central Zone v North Zone

Venue: Sylhet

Our fast bowling is a threat, says Azhar

AGENCIES, Rawalpindi

Skipper Azhar Ali hopes Pakistan will strengthen their credentials -- both as a team and as hosts -- when they face a depleted Bangladesh side in the first Test in Rawalpindi starting today. The match will further Pakistan's efforts to host Test cricket, which returned to the country just two months ago after a 10-year gap with a series against Sri Lanka.

International cricket was suspended in Pakistan after a militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore in March 2009, forcing them to play home fixtures in the United Arab Emirates.

"Credit to the two boards for making this series possible," Azhar told reporters. "Hosting matches in Pakistan will send a strong message that we are a safe country," said Azhar.

Azhar Ali said that the team "is not taking [Bangladesh] lightly". "Bangladesh can be a very competitive side, can surprise you, so we are not taking them lightly. They have match winners in their team," he said during a press conference yesterday.

Azhar went on to say that he feels the side "has the opportunity" to win Test matches on the home ground. "We will try our best," he added.

Speaking of the inclusion of fast bowlers in the composition, the Pakistan Test captain said that home matches "are played

according to your strength. At the moment we feel that our fast bowling is a threat for our opposition."

Speaking about the difference in the Bangladesh Test squad when compared to the 2015 side, Azhar said: "Obviously they are missing a couple of their key players, but as I said earlier, as a home advantage, we can have an upper hand [...] but nothing is won off the field. We have to do it on the field."

Bangladesh will be without Shakib Al Hasan, who is banned for one year in a spot-fixing case, and Mushfiquir Rahim, who opted not to tour Pakistan over security fears.

Pakistan are currently fourth in the championship, which features the top nine Test nations and is currently led by world number one India (360 points) followed by Australia (296) and England (146).

HEAD TO HEAD

Bangladesh				v		Pakistan			
Head to Head in Bangladesh									
M	W	L	D			M	W	L	D
6	0	5	1			6	5	0	1
Head to Head in all Tests									
M	W	L	D			M	W	L	D
10	0	9	1			10	9	0	1

Last meeting in Tests: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Dhaka, May 6, 2015. Pakistan won by 328 runs.



Bangladesh Test captain Mominul Haque (L) and his Pakistani counterpart Azhar Ali pose for a photo with the trophy ahead of the start of their two-match Test series, starting today at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. Today's match will be part of Bangladesh's World Test Championship campaign, but the goal for the Tigers will be to improve in the game's longest format.

PHOTO: AFP



With Bangladesh missing two key players in the form of Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiquir Rahim, youngsters such as (FROM L) Nazmul Hossain, Liton Das and Saif Hasan will have to step up in the first Test against Pakistan, starting today.

PHOTO: AFP

'Ready to break the jinx'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh players, on the back of some impressive domestic performances, will be hoping to brush off their recent dismal run in Tests when they take on Pakistan in the first World Test Championship fixture starting today at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

The extent of their Test haplessness can be gauged from their record in 2019, when their best result was a thumping 224-run defeat against Afghanistan at home in September. The other four Tests played last year all saw the Tigers at the receiving end of innings defeats.

However, the only positive for the Tigers will be the fact that four of the players -- Mahmudullah Riyad, Mominul Haque, Tamim Iqbal and Liton Das -- who travelled to Pakistan for the second phase of a three-stage tour smashed tons in the opening round of the ongoing Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL). The presence of Tamim -- fresh from his first ever first-class triple hundred -- will perhaps be the biggest boost.

Meanwhile Bangladesh, who haven't been able to win their last five Tests, also don't have

HIGHLIGHTS

Bangladesh lost all five Tests played last year. Their best result was a 224-run humiliation against Afghanistan at home with the rest being all innings defeats.

More than 16 years later, Bangladesh still rue the day when Inzamam-ul-Haq scored an unbeaten ton and handed Bangladesh a one-wicket loss in Multan in September, 2003. That was the closest Bangladesh came to winning a game against Pakistan, losing nine of the 10 games with a solitary draw.

Bangladesh have been on the receiving end of four innings defeats by Pakistan so far.

a very good record against Pakistan. Playing a total of 10 Tests, Bangladesh lost nine with the only draw coming at home in 2015 at the Sheikh

Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna. However, skipper Mominul Haque was positive about breaking the jinx and getting back to winning ways.

"Look, we need to break the jinx at some point. So, we are ready to break it. Everyone prepared well for the Test and as a result we are very hopeful regarding this fixture," said Mominul during the press-conference following their first and only practice session in Rawalpindi yesterday.

Mominul, who himself is yet to prove his abilities overseas, also mentioned Bangladesh's struggles while playing Tests away from home.

"Expectation is to play good cricket. You know we are not good at playing overseas. So, we are trying to improve here," continued Mominul.

For Mominul, who is still very fresh as a captain, having led the side in just two Tests -- during the India tour in November last year -- faces an uphill task as the skipper looks to steer the struggling team to a better position in the longer format.

The challenge for Mominul will be immense as the Tigers will be without Shakib Al Hasan, who is banned for one year, and Mushfiquir, who opted not to tour Pakistan over security fears.

Sylhet to host Afg-BD match

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is set to shift the venue for the 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup qualifying tie between Bangladesh and Afghanistan from Dhaka to Sylhet due to an Independence Day programme at the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS).

The BNS is scheduled to host Bangladesh's second home match of the 2022 World Cup Qualifiers on March 26, the same day the country's premier venue usually hosts a state-run to mark the country's Independence Day.

"We received preliminary approval from FIFA to host the March 26 match in Sylhet instead of Dhaka. We hope to get final approval by mid-February. We have sent an eight-page form to host the match at the Sylhet District Stadium. We filled up the form and sent photographs of the stadium, which has never hosted a FIFA or AFC match," BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag said.

"Representatives from FIFA may come here to inspect the venue if they are not satisfied with the form we sent to them, but we are confident that stadium will meet criteria," said Shohag, adding that rest of Bangladesh's home matches against India and India at the BNS would remain unchanged.

Bayern power into quarters

AFP, Berlin



Thomas Mueller weighed in with a goal and an assist as holders Bayern Munich edged a 4-3 thriller with Hoffenheim on Wednesday to reach the German Cup quarter-finals.

Mueller's golden run continued at the Allianz Arena to leave him with seven goals and nine assists in the 14 games since Hansi Flick replaced Niko Kovac as coach last November.

Not to be outdone, Mueller's strike partner Robert Lewandowski claimed two goals in the third-round tie.

However, Hoffenheim's Israeli

forward Munas Dabbur caused Bayern a few nervous moments with two late goals as the visitors threatened a fightback from 4-1 down.

"In the second half, we gave too much ball away and let them come back into the game," admitted Bayern winger Serge Gnabry. "We have to look at that, however we had a lot of fun going forward in attack."

It was Mueller who had calmed Bayern's nerves, forcing an own goal from Benjamin Huebner to equalise after Bayern defender Jerome Boateng had turned the ball into his own net.

Mueller then gave Bayern a 2-1 lead before Lewandowski netted either side

of half-time to extend their lead before Hoffenheim's late fightback.

Bayern are the biggest name into the last eight after RB Leipzig and Borussia Dortmund both crashed out on Tuesday.

Lewandowski has scored in all four of Bayern's matches so far in 2020 and boasts a season tally of 35 goals in 29 games in all competitions.

Union Berlin are also through after seeing off fourth-tier minnows Verl with a 1-0 win thanks to a late goal by midfielder Robert Andrich.

A goal by Argentinian striker Lucas Alario helped Bayer Leverkusen to a 2-1 win at VfB Stuttgart.



Bayern Munich striker Robert Lewandowski continued his hot streak, netting twice against Hoffenheim in the German Cup on Wednesday to take his tally to seven goals and nine assists in 14 games.

PHOTO: FC BAYERN

Abahani confident of turning the tide

SPORTS REPORTER



After coming back from behind twice to secure a 2-2 draw at home, last edition's zonal semifinalists Abahani are looking forward to finishing the job against Maziya S&RC in Male and advancing to the preliminary play-off stage of the AFC Cup.

However, Abahani's recent record against Maldivian clubs is far from impressive -- they lost to Maziya S&RC and New Radiant in both home and away matches in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

"We don't want to look back. We want to look forward positively and do something better in the away match in Male because we believe in ourselves. We believe we can perform better than we did at home," midfielder Sohel Rana said after an individual training session yesterday, when all the other players were rested.

"We played against some big teams in the last edition of the AFC Cup and no one expected us to qualify for the zonal semifinals. But we did it after getting away wins against them," the lanky national midfielder said, adding that he believed the long break in the domestic circuit left them a little rusty in the match against Maziya S&RC, who came here after completing their league on January 28.

Sohel believes the Sky Blues will be under pressure in the away match, but said they were determined to turn the tide.

"It is simple that there will be pressure in the away match anywhere because Maziya will be playing at their home ground on the back of two away goals in Dhaka. We have no alternative but to win the match if we want to stay in the competition," continued Sohel.

"What we realised after the first leg is that we should have won the match because they weren't an exceptional side. We conceded goals due to mistakes and we also squandered opportunities because we

What we realised after the first leg is that we should have won the match because they weren't an exceptional side. We conceded goals due to mistakes and also squandered opportunities because we took to the field after a long gap.

SOHEL RANA
ABAHANI MIDFIELDER

took to the field after a long gap and could not perform well."

Abahani manager Satyajit Das Rupu echoed his sentiments, saying that the absence of any domestic competition for over one month put the players in trouble.

"The players faced some problems after coming to play their first match in five weeks and it affected them. They did not have urgency to take the match away from the visitors by availing opportunities," said Rupu, who however was worried about the weather in Maldives.

"I'm worried about the weather in Maldives because we have to play in 30 degree Celsius after travelling from the cooler weather in Dhaka. In my experience, we could have struck six to seven goals against New Radiant in the first half [in 2018] but we missed all opportunities and got tired in second half due to the hot conditions. I expect we will not repeat the same thing this time around," said Rupu, who added that his forwards have the ability to score goals in the away match but that they would need to keep a clean sheet till the 70th or 80th minute to win the match.