



READY FOR RESUMPTION: Preparations were underway at Allianz Arena as the Bundesliga gets back to business after a two-month break due to the coronavirus pandemic. Borussia Dortmund host Schalke in the first game back Saturday at the Signal Iduna Park. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Dortmund brace for 'most unusual' derby upon return

AFP, Berlin

Borussia Dortmund's young stars Erling Braut Haaland and Jadon Sancho will be hunting more goals on Saturday in "the most unusual derby in history" against Schalke as the German Bundesliga returns behind locked doors.

Dortmund usually expect 82,000 spectators at Signal Iduna Park for a derby, but the stadium will be near-empty with only a handful of media and officials admitted. Even national team coach Joachim Loew will not be allowed in.

"It will be the most unusual derby in history," former Dortmund captain

Sebastian Kehl said. Normally, a home derby against Schalke comes alive "through the fans, from their emotions, from the enthusiasm in the stadium," Kehl added.

Dortmund are looking to close the four-point gap behind leaders Bayern Munich, who visit Union Berlin on Sunday.

While league action in England, Spain and Italy is still at least a month away, the German Football League (DFL) has drawn up detailed hygiene guidelines to restart.

The Bundesliga is set to become the first top European league to return during the pandemic.

At games around the country, substitutes will wear masks, celebrations will be replaced by

elbow taps while handshakes and hugs before kick-off are a no-go.

"A lot of things will start from scratch on Saturday," Dortmund winger Julian Brandt told Sky. "There will be no real advantages and disadvantages to playing home or away. In the end, it depends on who best accepts this situation and can best deal with it."

The pressure is on Haaland, 19, and Sancho, 20, to continue their goal-rich partnership, despite the empty terraces, and steer injury-depleted Dortmund to victory.

Haaland was in stunning form when the league was suspended in mid-March with nine goals in eight Bundesliga appearances since joining from Salzburg. Sancho also

terrorised defences with 14 goals and 16 assists in 23 league games.

At third-placed RB Leipzig, Timo Werner is aiming to move closer to his goal target for the season against Freiburg on Saturday.

"Not many players my age have scored 20 goals in a season and I've done it twice," said the 24-year-old who has netted 21 times this term. "I'd like to score 30 in a season."

Julian Nagelsmann's Leipzig trail leaders Bayern by five points following draws against Leverkusen and Wolfsburg.

Robert Lewandowski, the league's top scorer is back from injury, and looking to add to his 25 goals this season on Sunday against Union in Berlin.

Reminiscence: The match I did not witness

With our first bit of coronavirus-induced sports nostalgia – each of us recounting our first live match experiences – out of the way, let's flip to the other side of the coin. Sports fandom is built as much upon first-hand experiences as it is tapping into folklore, sampling stories and events that were before our times, and getting caught up in the drama and romanticism seen through the most vivid lens – the mind's eye. This current round of reminiscence calls upon those at The Daily Star Sport and beyond to revisit sports stories that they have only heard or read about, and left the rest up to their imaginations. One small rule: no looking up of scorecards – just recounting from memory.



India skipper Kapil Dev bludgeons one to the leg side while scoring 175 not out and in the process lifting India from dire straits to a tide-altering win during the 1983 World Cup match against Zimbabwe in Tunbridge Wells. PHOTO: COLLECTED

SAKEB SUBHAN in Tunbridge Wells, 1983

Nine for four. 17 for five. 266 for nine. 129-run last-wicket partnership. Do-or-die, the captain steps up with 175 not out. All these figures, except the first two and the last, may be woefully wide of the actual.

It is an obvious one because those who turned up at Tunbridge Wells that day were the only ones to have seen perhaps the most important innings in history. As far as I can tell, the BBC was covering a concurrent match elsewhere, so there were no video cameras at Kent to capture the action.

What I know is gleaned from Idols, a book written by Sunil Gavaskar in the 1980s that, ridiculously now it seems, bracketed non-Test players like Rajinder Goel and Padmakar Shivalkar with the likes of Garry Sobers, Viv Richards, Dennis Lillee, Imran Khan, Ian Botham, Richard Hadlee and Kapil Dev. A bit of the rest is from Kapil Dev's autobiography Cricket My Style.

It was the summer of 1983. India were outsiders. Rank. They were supposed to be bundled out of the tournament. They were abject in the 1975 and 1979 world cups, having failed to win a single match. On this day in Kent, the 'dull dogs' of ODI cricket were on the brink of exit – Test babes Zimbabwe could well have been statistically proven to be a superior team.

In a must-win match, they had India four wickets down on nine runs. One of the bowlers who wreaked early havoc on a green pitch was Kevin Curran; the name of the other seamer has by now escaped memory.

At nine for four, out strode that outlandishly gifted individual: captain Kapil Dev. In the remembered words of Gavaskar:

he knocked it about for a while. Gavaskar recalled how everyone was nervous in the dressing room, because Kapil had a reputation for going hell for leather when backed against the wall. But that summer's day, where the show was reserved only for the eyes of those present, was different.

As partners kept deserting him, he moved past his century. This was a 60-over match -- that was the format for the first three World Cups. Before the innings ended, there was a lunch break. At any rate, the players went in before the innings ended, and captain Kapil was fuming -- Gavaskar thought the ire was caused by the ineptitude of the top-order batsmen. By the time Kapil came into the dressing room, however, he found it empty with only a glass of cold water on the table.

As he said in his autobiography, he took that as the team asking him to cool down. If he did, it was not evident in what followed. He hammered the very bowlers that caused his teammates so much trouble and with Kirmani, took the score past competitive to a winning one. In the process he overtook Glenn Turner's 164 and his eventual 175 not out was the then highest score in ODIs.

It remains his only century in ODIs. But it changed the world. That was the spark that ignited India's march to an astonishing World Cup triumph, beating the mighty West Indies in the final. India's cricket market boomed and the path was set for India to become the predominant superpowers of world cricket that it is today.

It may have been against lowly Zimbabwe, but the circumstances under which the innings was played and the impact it continues to have makes it the most seminal knock in limited-overs cricket – at least in my mind's eye.

WI won't be coerced to tour England

AFP, London

West Indies cricketers will not be "coerced" into touring England if they are reluctant during the coronavirus crisis, according to West Indies chief executive Johnny Grave.

They are due to travel to play a three-Test series, which has been postponed until July at the earliest.

Grave said a "wide pool" of players had been consulted and none of them would be obliged to tour.

"There will be no coercing players into this tour," Grave told BBC Radio, adding that he was optimistic the series would go ahead but would depend on whether it was deemed safe.



Barcelona forward Antoine Griezmann and Real Madrid midfielder Luka Modric continued to work on shaking off any rust that may have built up during their unexpected break from football, as teams across La Liga hold individual training sessions in anticipation of a restart to the season. PHOTO: COLLECTED



Alli robbed at knifepoint

REUTERS

Tottenham Hotspur and England midfielder Dele Alli was robbed at knifepoint at his London home in the early hours of Wednesday and the assailants got away with hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of valuables, British media reported.

Alli, 24, and his adopted brother Harry Hickford were reportedly hurt in the incident after two men wielding knives broke into the player's home in Barnet and threatened them.

"Two males gained entry to the property and stole items of jewellery, including watches, before fleeing," the Metropolitan Police said in a statement. "Two male occupants at the property suffered minor facial injuries after being assaulted. They did not require hospital treatment. No arrests; enquiries into the circumstances continue."

Alli and Hickford's girlfriends as well as a friend were also in the house when the incident occurred, the reports said, adding that the occupants were playing cards when the robbers broke in.

"Thank you for all the messages," Alli wrote on Twitter. "Horrible experience but were all okay now. Appreciate the support."

Alli is due to return to training with Spurs next week ahead of a possible resumption of Premier League matches in June following the coronavirus pandemic.

Tottenham urged anyone with information to assist the police after reports he was attacked by robbers and ordered to hand over valuables.

'I'm the luckiest among my peers'

Cricket is undoubtedly the most beloved and followed sport in Bangladesh. People across the country get excited just to see the likes of Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim in action and to know their stories. It is the men's team that is often highlighted but during this nationwide lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic, The Daily Star tried to contact women cricketers and shed light on their struggles and hardships and to ask why they chose the profession. In today's entry, we unveil the story of opening batter Sharmin Sultana, who made her debut in a win against South Africa at home in 2017.

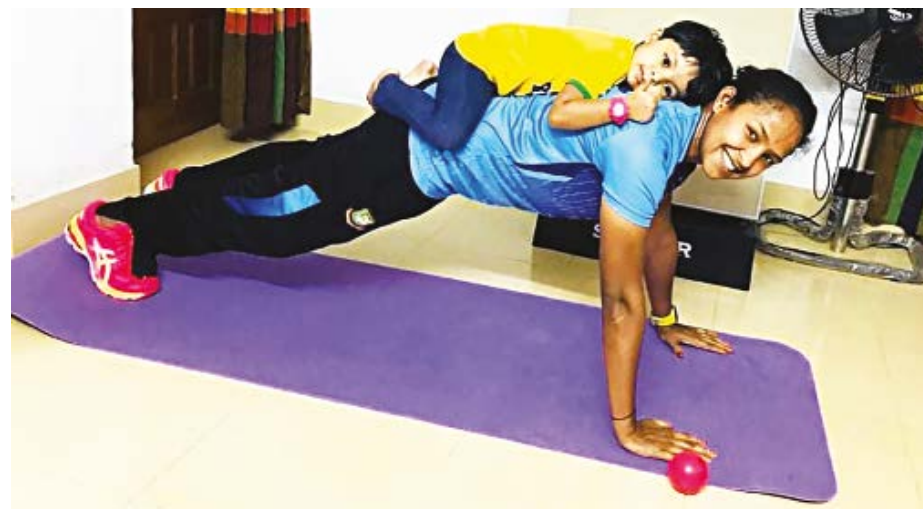
MOSTAFA SHABUJ

The backstory of most athletes usually entails the struggles and hardships they faced before realising their dreams. Even most of the players who made it to the Bangladesh women's national squads had either to fight against their families' will or against the taunts from a male-dominated society -- sometimes they both.

However, Sharmin Sultana, who played 13 ODIs for Bangladesh since her debut in 2017, considers herself to be one of the luckiest players as she had the support of her family and everyone around her.

"I am probably the luckiest among [women] cricketers as I did not face any obstacles when I chose cricket as a career. My family members, relatives and even my neighbours supported me," said Sharmin.

It is quite usual in Bangladesh that when growing up with a male sibling, the female is often at a disadvantage, but it was very different for Sharmin, who grew up with her elder brother Rashedul Islam in Bogura.



Bangladesh opener Sharmin Sultana doing push ups with her nephew on her back -- completely safe and relaxed -- perfectly depicts how the right-hander's family always created a supportive environment to help build her career. PHOTO: COLLECTED

"My family supported me the most in my decision to play professional cricket. There was no discrimination between us

between Sharmin and I. If I got a shirt, they would get her one too. If they bought a bat for me, then Sharmin too would get one. There was a sense of building up her confidence as she grew," said Rashedul, an immensely proud older brother who makes it a point to remind everyone that his sibling is a national cricketer.

In Bangladesh and throughout the subcontinent, people will be hard pressed to find female children playing sports -- an activity usually reserved for the boys. But not this one. She has a history of playing around the neighbourhood and in different localities ever since she was a kid.

Just after her SSC exams in 2010, Sharmin saw an ad in a newspaper saying there was a club tournament in Dhaka. "Ritu [Moni] Apu from Bogura was playing for Azad Sporting Club in the tournament and to say the truth, I did not know back then that girls in Bangladesh could play cricket [professionally]."

Sharmin immediately told her parents and brother that she also wanted to play cricket for her nation and her family agreed and helped her in every way possible.