

Silva to leave PSG after 8 years

Paris St Germain captain Thiago Silva is to leave the Ligue 1 champions after eight years at the club, French media have reported. The Brazilian defender Silva was hoping to remain with PSG for two more years but was informed by the club's sporting director Leonardo that his contract would not be extended beyond the end of the Champions League campaign, L'Equipe reported late on Monday. The 35-year-old joined the French side from AC Milan in 2012 and made over 300 appearances, winning seven league titles, five League Cups and four French Cups.

-- REUTERS



Windies' arrival in England a 'huge step forward' for cricket

AFP, London

West Indies captain Jason Holder said international cricket will take a "huge step forward" following the coronavirus shutdown as his team arrived on Tuesday for a Test series in England.

Fans who have had to make do with months of television repeats can now look forward to the real thing again, with England captain Joe Root saying of the West Indies' decision to tour: "It must be extremely scary and I think the whole cricketing world will be grateful to see some cricket again."

The three-match contest was originally meant to be played in June but will now start on July 8 instead because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This is a huge step forward in cricket and in sports in general as we travel over to England for this series," said Holder. "A lot has gone into the preparations for what will be a new phase in the game."

But rather than matches before crowds at The Oval, Edgbaston and Lord's, a now back-to-back series will take place behind closed doors at the more 'bio-secure' Ageas Bowl



PHOTO: COLLECTED

West Indies pacer Kumar Roach walks out of the Manchester Airport on Tuesday after their cricket team arrived in England for a three-match Test series. It will feature the first international cricket match since Covid-19 wreaked havoc around the world when the first Test begins on July 8.

and Old Trafford.

Whereas players usually spend evenings during a Test away from the ground, they will now instead find themselves in a protective bubble at two venues which both have onsite hotels.

Southampton's Ageas Bowl will stage the series opener from July 8, with the next two at Old Trafford.

All the West Indies players

have tested negative for the virus, although they will be retested when they arrive in Manchester. Health measures, including a ban on applying saliva to the ball set to be rubber-stamped at an ICC meeting on Wednesday, will be in place.

"Our main objective is to deliver a safe environment for all stakeholders," said England and Wales Cricket Board events director

Steve Elworthy.

Yet there is no escaping the financial impact of the virus.

Going ahead with major matches is seen as vital, with the ECB estimating it could lose 252 million if there are no fixtures at all this summer.

One of cricket's poorest major teams in the West Indies is now helping one of its wealthiest, despite the Caribbean outfit's cricket board having to impose a 50-percent pay cut on all players and staff.

The West Indies, who hold the Wisden Trophy after beating England at home last year, have selected a 25-strong squad.

They will complete a 14-day quarantine period combined with initial training at Old Trafford before heading south from Manchester for the first Test.

Despite the ECB's efforts, three West Indies players -- Darren Bravo, Shimron Hetmyer and Keemo Paul -- declined to tour, with Cricket West Indies insisting it will not hold this against them.

Former interim head coach Floyd Reifer will fill in as batting coach for Monty Desai, who is based in India and cannot join the tour due to travel restrictions.



35 booters to start six-week camp

Players, coach want half of it abroad

ANISUR RAHMAN



With the joint qualifiers of the 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup likely to resume in early October, Bangladesh head coach Jamie Day has designed a six-week preparation camp with 35 players ahead of the booters' game against a visiting Afghanistan. But a smooth preparation depends on the improvement of the coronavirus situation.

The British coach would usually get 10 days with his side before any international engagement but this time around he has sought a six-week training period at both home and abroad, including three to four practice matches. His charges, who have been out of action since mid-March, will be idle for another two months before starting the national training in August.

"At the moment I have already recommended to the BFF [Bangladesh Football Federation] what should be done [ahead of the tie against Afghanistan]. It is a five-six weeks training camp with three or four friendly games before the World Cup Qualifier on 8th October," Jamie told The Daily Star from England.

The 40-year-old wants to have the first four weeks of training on foreign soil and two weeks at home and believes six weeks is enough for footballers to regain fitness.

Captain Jamal Bhuiyan also backed Jamie about training outside of Bangladesh.

"I think six weeks is enough with a proper training camp. Of course I think half of the training camp should be held outside of Bangladesh. And if we can arrange some friendlies, then we can get match fitness back," Jamal told The Daily Star, saying preferred destinations would be Thailand or Qatar.

However, National Teams Committee

chairman and BFF vice-president Kazi Nabil Ahmed is hesitant about sending the booters aboard due to the worsening situation of coronavirus as well as bans on international travel.

"We are thinking of an isolated training camp in Bangladesh first, subject to improvement of the current situation. We will then consider whether to send the booters outside of Bangladesh after discussing with the coach, who will have to come to Bangladesh first," Nabil told The Daily Star.

"At the moment, there are a lot of issues in arranging the training camp abroad because there is a question of how to go beyond borders and return home. Then we also have to look at the current coronavirus situation in the country where we want to train as well as look at the training facilities and possibility of playing practice matches there," added Nabil.

"Everything will depend on the situation and we have to wait till next month to see the situation and then we will take a decision on how to start the training camp."

Jamie believes the present condition of the players is fine as they have been following training schedules at home. The advice for players now is to mentally prepare for upcoming matches. He also said the preliminary squad of 35 players would be shortened over time.

The coach believes that the tie against Afghanistan at home will be equally as difficult it was overseas, where Bangladesh lost 1-0.

"It will be a tough game as they are ranked higher and have better players than us. I am guessing there be no supporters at the match either, which would have benefited us. But we will try our best to get a positive result," said Jamie.



Argentine canoeist Sebastian Rossi trains in his girlfriend's pool due to the coronavirus disease as he prepares for the postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, in Buenos Aires on Monday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Players get assistance

SPORTS REPORTER

State Minister for Youth and Sports Zahid Ahsan Russel yesterday disbursed Tk 15 lakh among 150 athletes of 10 different disciplines who have been going through hardship due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Athletes received Tk 10,000 each. The ministry had earlier helped 600 athletes.

Russel informed that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has allocated an additional Tk 3 crore to help athletes and that they were formulating a policy to disburse the money at the grassroots level.

He added that Bangabandhu Welfare Foundation is working to provide Tk 2000 each per month to 1150 athletes and organisers in a one-year programme.

Tigers' SL tour in the balance

ICC to meet today to discuss resumption of cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

International cricket in some parts of the world is set to resume, but Bangladesh's upcoming Sri Lanka tour scheduled for July for a three-match Test series is still uncertain amid the ongoing coronavirus crisis.

With the BCB yet to make any decision regarding the series, a lot will depend on the next International Cricket Council (ICC) meeting, scheduled for today, where the future of the upcoming T20 World Cup in Australia and other key matters are to be discussed.

Even with a potential tour to Sri Lanka looming, the biggest challenge for the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will be the resumption of cricket or at least practice sessions in the country ahead of any international tours. Given the current coronavirus situation in the country -- with reported cases and deaths increasing every other day -- the players may even face the risk of infection when resuming practice ahead of the tour.

The BCB may also have to take into consideration some other factors while making a decision regarding the upcoming tour. Cricket and other sports in Bangladesh have been halted since March and the players have all been staying at home, doing their bit to stay fit with indoor workouts.

This state of affairs raises the question of how practical it would be for the players to suddenly participate in an international tour after such a long downtime.

The players will also need to adjust and adhere to the guidelines for safe resumption of cricket provided by the ICC. According

to the guidelines, apart from following a number of hygiene rules while on tour, individual players or entire teams will have to adhere to the potential measure of self-isolation or quarantine upon entering another country and after returning to their country.

BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury however ensured that the board will not make any compromises with health issues and will only make a decision after consulting with the players.

"There will be no compromise with health issues. Players are our main stakeholders. Without their consent, we will

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NIZAMUDDIN CHOWDHURY
BCB CEO

not take any decision. So, there is no point being paranoid about the upcoming tour," Nizamuddin told The Daily Star yesterday.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Test skipper Mominul Haque said players would comply with whatever the BCB decides.

"The BCB has been regularly contacting us regarding this. As it is a Test series, they have been communicating with me and other senior players continuously. At the end of the day it is the board who will be observing everything and make a decision. And we will comply with whatever the board decides," said Mominul.

Bayern target double repeat

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich can take another step towards repeating last season's German league and cup double on Wednesday, with midfielder Leon Goretzka a player transformed since the coronavirus shutdown.

Bayern host Eintracht Frankfurt behind closed doors in the semi-finals of the German Cup, three days before they could conceivably wrap up an eight successive Bundesliga title.

Hansi Flick's side have won all five games since the league resumed last month following the coronavirus suspension, including a 5-2 rout of Wednesday's opponents Frankfurt.

Germany international Goretzka has been at the heart of Bayern's impressive displays, notching two goals and three assists since the restart.

"I feel very good at the moment," said Goretzka, who set up a goal for Kingsley Coman and then scored himself in Saturday's 4-2 win at Bayer Leverkusen.

The 25-year-old said he made the most of the unscheduled break to spend more time in the gym, giving Bayern extra muscle in midfield alongside the likes of Joshua Kimmich and Thiago Alcantara.

Virus subs to be allowed in Tests

AFP, London



Test teams will be allowed to field substitutes for players displaying coronavirus symptoms, the International Cricket Council said on Tuesday.

The new regulation is one of several interim changes designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 when cricket resumes, including a ban on saliva being used to shine the ball.

As happens with concussion substitutes, any replacement would be able to play a full part in the match

but it would be down to the match referee to approve the nearest like-for-like switch.

Previously, substitutes were restricted to fielding. The regulation for COVID-19 replacements would not be applicable in ODIs or T20s.

Other changes ratified by the ICC's chief executives committee include a ban on applying saliva to the ball, a method employed by fast bowlers on one side of the ball to make it swing.

A team can be issued with up to two warnings per innings but repeated use of saliva on the ball would result in a five-run penalty to the batting side. But

the ICC explained in a statement that "the umpires will manage the situation with some leniency during an initial period of adjustment for the players".

Travel restrictions have seen the ICC relax its rule mandating that neutral umpires stand in Tests.

The ICC said given there may be "less experienced" officials on duty it would increase the number of unsuccessful appeals per innings for each team to three for Tests and two for white-ball formats.

The new regulations are set to apply for the first time when England face the West Indies.



With gyms and fitness centres around the country still closed in Sri Lanka due to the coronavirus pandemic, cricket legend Sanath Jayasuriya went to a local park and worked on maintaining his body.

PHOTO: AFP