Star SPORT
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AFTER 1,128 DAYS, **SORIANO MAKES TEARFUL RETURN**

Villarreal captain Bruno Soriano revealed he considered retirement after making an emotional comeback following more than three years on the sidelines. Not since May 2017 had Soriano played a game for his boyhood club -- two operations and a painful recovery leaving the 36-year-old out of action. But after 1,128 days without football, Soriano finally returned in the 88th minute of Monday's 2-2 La Liga draw at home to Sevilla. "It's been so long since I played that I almost don't know what to say," a tearful Soriano told Movistar post-match. "I'm very happy, of course. I had tried to return many times and it wasn't possible." Asked if he had ever considered retirement, Soriano replied: "There were some tough times where I thought that maybe the best thing was to stop, because there had been many disappointments in a row. But now I'm going to try to help the team." -- AGENCIES

BCB more worried by halt than finances

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and New Zealand Cricket (NZC) yesterday decided to postpone the Kiwis' two-test tour of the country, originally scheduled for August-September as part of the World Test Championship, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

There has been no cricketing activity in Bangladesh since mid-March and New Zealand's tour is the second home series – and fourth overall – to be postponed after Australia's scheduled June tour was also deferred.

Earlier, the second Test against Pakistan in Karachi scheduled in April and the Ireland and UK tour in May were also postponed for the same reason while the Tigers' tour of Sri Lanka in July-August is still in doubt.

The spread of coronavirus in the country has been getting worse, with the number of confirmed cases being 115,786 and deaths rising to 1,502 as of yesterday.

The postponement of the two home series will certainly have an impact on the BCB financially. However according to BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury the board is more concerned about the cricketing aspect than the financial losses due to the pandemic.

"If you look at the global scenario all the boards are facing the same situation but we are more concerned about the cricketing activities, which are hampered due to the pandemic. We are also placing the topmost priority on the safety of our players and personnel related to the game, and thinking about ways to come back to the field.

"Obviously, financial considerations are important, but the fact is we would not have generated much revenue through these home series. But if you talk about the cricketing aspect it has been a huge disappointment for us to postpone the series," Nizamuddin told The Daily Star.

Mushfiqur Rahim (L) and Shakib Al Hasan unsuccessfully appeal for a leg before against Brendon McCullum at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram during New Zealand's last visit to Bangladesh in October 2013. PHOTO: AFP FILE

Officials said that the BCB has the financial capability to continue operations for the next five years.

BCB finance committee chairman Ismail Haider Mallick echoed those sentiments and said that the board was not worried about losses but are more concerned with the halt in proceedings.

"To be honest we were not supposed to generate significant revenue through these two home series. Yes, there will be losses from the jersey and title sponsors and other areas, which is not huge if we talk about revenue generating. We are more concerned about the cricketing aspect, where we missed out on two crucial home series against Australia and New Zealand. From the cricketing perspective it is a huge blow for our cricket. Our main aim at the moment is to find ways to return to cricket keeping all the safety measures and also follow ICC's guidelines," Mallick said.

When it comes to generating revenue for the BCB, the majority comes from the ICC, which includes the participation money in global events. The upcoming ICC T20 World Cup which is scheduled to start from October this year in Australia is also under a huge cloud of doubt. If the T20 World Cup is also postponed for the pandemic, it will then surely have a substantial financial impact on all the cricket boards in the world, including the BCB.

Djokovic, too, tests positive for Covid-19

REUTERS, *Belgrade*

Novak Djokovic, the men's world number one tennis player, has tested positive for COVID-19, the Serbian said in a statement on Tuesday.

Borna Coric, Grigor Dimitrov and Viktor Troicki have previously tested positive after playing in Djokovic's Adria Tour exhibition tournament in the Balkan region.

"The moment we arrived in Belgrade we went to be tested," the 33-year-old said, adding that he was not showing symptoms. "My result is positive, just as Jelena's (wife), while the results of our children are negative.

"I am extremely sorry for each individual case of infection. I hope that it will not complicate anyone's health situation and that everyone will be fine. I will remain in self-isolation for the next 14 days, and repeat the test in five days."

Djokovic said the idea behind his tournament was noble and he wanted to raise funds for players in need.

"Everything we did in the past month, we did with a pure heart and sincere intentions. Our tournament meant to unite and share a message of solidarity and compassion."

Cristiano Ronaldo (R) finally got on the scoresheet after the sport's return as he netted from the spot against Bologna during their Serie A fixture on Monday. Paulo Dybala also got on the scoresheet as the defending champions won 2-0. PHOTO: JUVENTUS FC

'Don't expect great football'

REUTERS

Serie A teams are facing a trip into the unknown and fans should not expect great football between now and the end of season, Juventus coach Maurizio Sarri said after his side's 2-0 win at Bologna.

With teams still brushing off the cobwebs after a three-month stoppage for COVID-19 and facing high summer temperatures at the same time, Sarri said spectators should expect a much slower pace than usual.

"It's a completely anomalous situation and there are no points of reference, so it's very easy to make a mistake with the physical preparation," said Sarri, whose team are four points clear at the top and chasing a ninth successive title.

"You have teams in a physical condition that's not ideal and you're going to have games that will be played at very high temperatures, so I think it's going to be very difficult for all the teams," he said.

"I do not predict great football because, with the high temperatures, the pace will not be very high, and people have become used to watch high-paced games....It will be difficult for everyone with surprises possible in every match."

Sarri said the start of next season would also be tough. "After 15 days, we will be on the pitch for the new season, and, again, it's going to be special start because the preparations will certainly not be the traditional ones," he said.

All eyes will be on us, says Jofra

STAR SPORT DESK

International cricket will resume with England taking on the West Indies at home for a three-match Test series. The Caribbean players are already in England and played a warm-up match yesterday at Old Trafford. Cricket fans all over the world will be waiting anxiously for the first match to get underway on July 8th.

"It's exciting that England and West Indies will be the teams to start world cricket back up again, laying down the platform for other countries to follow," England paceman Jofra Archer wrote in his column for the Daily Mail.

Australia's Test captain Tim Paine said that he will be keenly watching the upcoming Test series between England and West Indies.

"I am fascinated like anyone is to watch some Test cricket again and to see exactly how the West Indies and England series is going to work and the different things that they are going to be doing that haven't been done before in cricket," Paine told reporters via Zoom as per cricket.com.au.

"I think it is going to be interesting and certainly for me and Justin (Langer) and the Australian international players it's something we are going to watch very closely," he added.

For England paceman Archer it will be an exciting series too as he will be playing against his native country for the first times. Archer was born in Barbados but decided to play international cricket for England, as his father is English.

Writing about the upcoming series, the young paceman said he expects a lot of people to tune in to the match as live sports is returning after long.

"Obviously as the only cricket on, all eyes will be on it, and I expect that there will be a lot more television viewers than would have been the case had things been normal.

"I expect people who don't usually watch cricket will tune in — because it's live sport, not pre-recorded. If they are like me they will have had their fill of re-runs," he added.

Earlier, West Indies pacer Kemar Roach, who played with Archer when they were growing up, said there would be friendships on the field. Archer though said that the comments shouldn't be blown out of proportion.

"Jofra made his decision and he's done a fantastic job for England so far but there will be no friendships during this series," Roach had said last week.

Archer said: "Let's not get this out of proportion. There will be rivalry there but when Kemar said there will be 'no friendships' it sounds a lot worse than it actually is."

"Obviously, we all grew up in the Caribbean and it's customary for us to say 'we will be friends at the end of the game'.

"That's exactly what he meant. It's not as though he is going to walk past me or be rude, it's just that when we are on the field we will play hard cricket."

Cricket made its long-awaited return at Old Trafford yesterday, with West Indies captain Jason Holder and vice-captain Kraigg Brathwaite leading separate teams in an intra-squad warm-up match. West Indies return to action after two weeks of intense preparations in England ahead of next month's three-match Test series against the home side. PHOTO: COLLECTED

HC order over DDFA election stayed

SPORTS REPORTER

A chamber judge of the Supreme Court yesterday stayed a High Court order that stayed Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF)'s election-postponement letter to Dhaka Divisional Football Association.

"The order we got from the High Court on June 10 has been stayed for 16 weeks by the chamber judge following an appeal from the BFF. The attorney general moved for the football federation," said lawyer Khurshed Alam Khan, who moved for petitioner Shaheenul Hossain Bhuiyan.

"We told the court that country's football has been held hostage by three persons.

"Now the letter of BFF issued on March 10 to Dhaka divisional football association will remain in force," Khan said. "We will seek to vacate the order but it is only possible in regular court, not in virtual court."

A high court bench, on June 10, stayed the operation of BFF's 'impugned letter' for 30 days while show-causing the BFF president and general secretary asking why the 'impugned letter' should not be declared illegal after Shaheenul, the newly-elected president of Dhaka DFA, filed a virtual writ petition the previous day.

BURNLEY 'ASHAMED, EMBARRASSED'

Burnley were left "ashamed and embarrassed" as a banner reading "White Lives Matter Burnley" was flown over the Etihad Stadium during their 5-0 loss to Manchester City on Monday. Burnley and City players and staff had taken a knee in support of the Black Lives Matter movement moments earlier. "Fans like that don't deserve to be around football," Clarets skipper Ben Mee said, adding: "We're ashamed, we're embarrassed. We are embarrassed that they tried to attach it to our club -- it doesn't belong anywhere near our club." PHOTO: COLLECTED

'Test cricket teaches you how to live life'

PTI

A limited-overs marauder he may be but West Indies' Chris Gayle says there is nothing more challenging than Test cricket, a format which can also help one understand the vagaries of life.

Speaking to Mayank Agarwal on an online show, Gayle said nothing beats the Test experience, a format he hasn't played in since 2014.

"Test cricket is the ultimate. Playing Test cricket also gives you a chance, how to live life because playing five days of cricket is very challenging. It tests you so many times, makes sure you are disciplined in everything you did," he said. "It also teaches you how to rebound from a tough situation."

Often accused of focussing entirely on the shorter formats, the 40-year-old encouraged youngsters to strive to play Tests. "Test cricket allows you to test your skills and mental toughness...Just be dedicated, enjoy what you do. Even if it's not within the sport, there's always something in open out there for you," Gayle said. "So, if one thing doesn't work, always remember there's another opportunity for you. So please don't be heartbroken if you are cricketer and don't make within the cricketing arena."

WHAT TO WATCH

LA LIGA
Facebook
Alaves v Osasuna
Live from 11:30pm
Real Sociedad v Celta Vigo
Live from 11:30pm
Real Madrid v Mallorca
Live from 2:00am (Thursday)

PREMIER LEAGUE
Star Sports Select 1
Man Utd v Sheffield Utd
Live from 11:00pm
Liverpool v Crystal Palace
Live from 1:15am (Thursday)
Star Sports Select 2
Wolves v Bournemouth
Live from 11:00pm

SERIE A
Ten 2
Inter Milan v Sassuolo
Live from 11.30pm
Atalanta v Lazio
Live from 1.45am (Thursday)