



Stand-in England captain Ben Stokes looks dejected as Jermaine Blackwood and Roston Chase put West Indies in a strong position to win the first Test at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton yesterday, sharing a 73-run stand for the fourth wicket to steady the visitors' ship after they were reduced to 27 for three on an exciting final day. England pacer Jofra Archer removed Chase to break the partnership but Blackwood remained not out on 65 and the visitors reached tea on 143 for 4, requiring 57 more runs in the final session to take a lead in the series. PHOTO: REUTERS

Jahanara raring to get back on the field

RAMIN TALUKDER



With sport completely halted and not even training camps spared following the coronavirus outbreak, Bangladesh national team cricketer Jahanara Alam has been trying to maintain her fitness at home like other athletes. But the pacer is eagerly awaiting a return to outdoor practice, especially after being inspired by Mushfiqur Rahim's recent outdoor activities.

"It's different to practice on the field. You can't compare it to working out on a treadmill. It works really well and refreshes you when you do drills on the field. I am a pace bowler and you know how important fitness is for a pace bowler," said Jahanara.

"Mushfiqur bhai's work ethic can serve as an inspiration to any cricketer and I was inspired to do the same when I saw him practising on the lush green, but I have no scope for that."

"The coronavirus suddenly changed everything. I was bored but now I try to be positive. Can you imagine, for the past four months I have been locked at home? Initially, I only did free-hand exercises as I had no gym equipment and as a result, I gained 2kgs," she continued.

Jahanara, however, said she was inspired by Mushfiqur's treadmill exercise and communicated with the wicketkeeper-

batsman to buy the same one. "I purchased some instruments, including a treadmill, and now I am fully focusing on my fitness because it would be unwise to work on fitness instead of skills when we return to cricket. Fitness is a big concern for any pacer, so I have to be fit and Mushfiqur bhai is a great inspiration in this regards," she said.

During the break, Jahanara dedicated as much time as possible to her favourite activities: cooking and eating ice cream.

"I love to cook and I love to eat different food. As an athlete, I need to sacrifice many of my favourite items due to my diet. However, the break afforded me the luxury to eat my favourite ice cream and the quantity was not insignificant," she said with a laugh. "I already started to follow my dieting chart again so there will be no more ice cream more in the near future."

She was confident that fitness would not be an issue for her when cricket returned to Bangladesh.

"Cricket returned to England and many other countries are also planning to resume. As far as I know, the board (Bangladesh Cricket Board) is planning to resume women's cricket through domestic competitions and it will definitely help us in regards to fitness. I am looking forward to starting outdoor practice after the Eid vacation. I always try to stay positive," Jahanara ended.



Barca cling on to fading title hopes

AGENCIES



Lionel Messi made it 20 assists for the season in Barcelona's stogy 1-0 win over Real Valladolid on Saturday, even as his team's La Liga challenge appears almost over.

Messi teed up Arturo Vidal's winner at Jose Zorilla to become the first player to provide 20 assists in Spain's top flight since Xavi Hernandez in 2009. Yet even as Barca's turbulent domestic campaign draws to a close, Messi continues to shine.

"It was a very difficult game against a team who know how to play well and did just that today. The hot conditions also complicated things for us but I'm pleased we won," said match-winner Vidal. "We knew that we'd have to work very hard and wouldn't be able to maintain our pace throughout, we know we want to improve but we've kept ourselves in the title race that's the important thing."

The win over Valladolid kept Barca in the title race, although leaders Real can extend



Arturo Vidal is congratulated by Lionel Messi after the Chilean scored the winner against Real Valladolid on Saturday. PHOTO: TWITTER

PICHICHI PLAYMAKER

Barcelona's Lionel Messi became only the second player to record 20 goals and 20 assists in a single season in Europe's top five leagues in the 21st century. In 2002-03 Arsenal's Thierry Henry scored 24 goals and provided 20 assists in the English Premier League.

Record six-time Ballon d'Or winning Argentine star assisted Arturo Vidal on his first-half strike against Real Valladolid, making him the first player in La Liga history to bag that extraordinary double. With 22 goals in 31 matches, Messi is also on the top of the league's goal-scoring chart.

The 33-year-old forward has now equalled the club record for most assists in a La Liga season set by Xavi Hernandez in 2008-09 and has two more matches to set a new record.

their lead at the top back to four points if they beat Granada on Sunday.

If they beat Granada, Madrid will win La Liga by prevailing at home to Villarreal on Thursday, regardless of Barcelona's results.

Overall, Madrid need only five points from their remaining three matches to secure their third La Liga title in eight years.

"We are doing things that deserve more than where we are," said Barca coach Quique Setien. "To win La Liga, I don't know, because our rival is winning everything."

Luis Suarez started on the bench but replaced Antoine Griezmann at half-time. Later it was revealed that Griezmann is set to miss his side's final two La Liga games after sustaining a thigh injury during the match.

As Barcelona's title challenge has wilted, Setien's position has come under scrutiny too, but he was bold against Valladolid, deploying a 3-5-2 formation, with Nelson Semedo and Jordi Alba as wing-backs and the versatile Sergi Roberto dropping into the back three.

ONLINE OLYMPIAD A necessary new experience for chess players

SPORTS REPORTER



Following the deferment of the 44th Chess Olympiad by a year, the world governing body of chess, FIDE, has come forward to introduce FIDE Online Olympiad, a team competition where all members will get the opportunity to compete amidst the coronavirus pandemic.

Bangladesh has already sent names of a six-player pool and a reserve team of six players on Saturday, five days before the closing date of entry. The tournament will take place from July 22 and August 30.

Usually each FIDE member sends two teams to Chess Olympiad -- men's and women's, who compete separately while four players compete in each round. But the Online Olympiad will see each country represented by one team of six players -- two senior male players, two senior female players, one U-20 player male player and one U-20 female player. All six players will compete in 15-minute games in each round.

Defending national champion GM Niaz Murshed, third-place finisher GM Reefat Bin Sattar [runner-up GM Abdullah Al Rakib withdrew], national women's champion WIM Rani Hamid, runner-up WIM Sharmin Sultana Shirin, IM Fahad Rahman (U-20) and Ahmed Walijah (U-20) will represent Bangladesh in the tournament.

FM Taibur Rahman, GM Ziaur Rahman, Samiha Shimmi, Nazrana Khan Eva, Tajwar Tahsin Zia and Nowshin Anjum are in the reserve team and they can replace players from the main team.

The Online Olympiad will be played in five stages as the participating teams, split into five divisions from Base to Top, will play in each stage even though some top teams will get byes depending on their ranking. Each division is expected to feature 50 teams from where the top 15 teams will qualify for the next division.

"We still don't know whether we will have to play in base division or play directly in fourth or third division. It will be clear once the entry is completed on July 16," Bangladesh Chess Federation's general secretary Syed Shahabuddin Shamim said yesterday.

Shamim informed that the players will have to play three rounds on three successive days with the qualifying stage starting from July 22.

"We have discussed at the executive committee meeting whether the players can share online chess experience among themselves as some players play online regularly while others have less experience. Besides, some members proposed whether it is possible to bring all six players under a roof to provide better environment with uninterrupted internet facility," Shamim said, adding that they were supposed to sit again yesterday to discuss the issues and select a captain and vice-captain for the team.

We left the door open, says Klopp

AFP, Liverpool

Jurgen Klopp was frustrated by Liverpool's lack of killer instinct as Burnley became the first visiting side to avoid defeat at Anfield in the Premier League for 18 months in a 1-1 draw on Saturday.

Andy Robertson's first-half header had the champions on course to maintain a perfect home record this season and tally in on a record points tally for the English top flight.

But the Reds were made to pay for a host of missed chances when Jay Rodriguez earned a point to further Burnley's late push for a place in Europe. "We left the door open, we didn't close it. We should have scored two, three, four goals at least," said Klopp, who was also irked by referee David Coote's lenient attitude to Burnley's physical approach. "The ref let all these challenges today happen. When the ball comes in the box, Burnley are always dangerous."

"They stayed completely in the game, they did what they wanted to do. It is frustrating because we should have scored earlier."

Liverpool can still break Manchester City's record points haul of 100 two seasons ago, but will now need to win all three of their remaining matches against Arsenal, Chelsea and Newcastle.

Cut off their arms, says angry Gasperini

REUTERS, Turin



The only way for players to avoid giving away penalties for handball under current rules is to cut off their arms, angry Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini said after his team drew 2-2 at Juventus.

Gasperini saw his side give away two penalties, both for handball, which allowed Serie A leaders Juventus twice to fight back from behind.

Both handballs were accidental, as first Marten de Roon and then Luis Muriel were struck at point-blank range, but because of the position of their arms, the referee had little

SERIE A TOP FIVE

Team	M	W	D	L	G/D	Pts
Juventus	32	24	4	4	36	76
Lazio	32	21	5	6	33	68
Atalanta	32	20	7	5	46	67
Inter Milan	31	19	8	4	33	65
Roma	32	16	6	10	16	54

option but to award a spot kick each time.

"Those are the rules, well, at least, in Italy," said Gasperini. "What do we do, cut off the player's arms?"

"That's not the first penalty given like that, there have been so many. Is

the rule interpreted like that in any other league in the world? We need to change the way we interpret the rules."

The draw kept Atalanta third in the table, nine points behind Juventus, with six games each left to play.

"We did really well against the league leaders," he said. "I'm very happy with the performance and very disappointed not to have won." Gasperini said that, even if Atalanta had closed the gap on Juventus to six points, they could not have won the title.

"The Juve title can't get away," he said. "I believe that the Scudetto no longer had history but for us it was a prestigious race and a way to test ourselves for the Champions League quarterfinals where we want to make a good impression."

Atalanta face Paris St Germain in the Champions League quarters, which will take place over one leg in Lisbon in August.



(Clockwise from L) Cristiano Ronaldo got his 27th and 28th goals of the Serie A season with two perfect spot-kicks as Juventus salvaged a point at home against a rampaging Atalanta team, but both decisions by the referee, including the handball from Paulo Dybala's cross, came under heavy scrutiny, especially from Atalanta coach Gianpiero Gasperini.



PHOTO: REUTERS/JUVENTUS