**ENGLAND V AUSTRALIA** First T20I (D/N) Live from 11:00pm **US OPEN** Live from 9:00pm

**UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE** Lithuania v Kazakhstan Live from 10:00pm Italy v Bosnia & Herzegovina Live from 12:45am (Saturday)



### TAEKWONDO RETURNS FIRST AFTER LONG HIATUS

Following a five-month halt to the country's sports due to the coronavirus pandemic, Taekwondo became the first discipline to make an official comeback with its poomse competition, a kind of physical demonstration, at the National Sports Council auditorium yesterday. Some 200 participants from 20 clubs and districts are competing for 36 gold medals. The youth and sports ministry last month allowed sports federations to start their activities on a limited scale while maintaining health guidelines. Other disciplines like cricket, hockey, archery and football have gradually resumed activities through training programmes.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Djokovic disagrees with Federer and Nadal

REUTERS, New York

Novak Djokovic is finding it tough to deal with issues related to his breakaway players' body in the middle of the US Open but says he is moving forward with it as more professionals

join the cause daily. Djokovic resigned as head of the ATP player council last week, along with some members to form the Professional Tennis Players Association. Despite his off-court distractions, the top seed defeated Briton Kyle Edmund on Wednesday to improve his 2020 match record

The Serbian has described the PTPA as a platform for players to be better heard on decisions that affect their livelihoods, but the move has faced resistance from player council members Roger Federer and Rafa Nadal. Djokovic said he spoke to the duo before launching the PTPA on Saturday and disagrees that the timing was wrong.

"For a players association, it's always the right time, and it has been the right time for the last 20 years. Somehow it was never really accomplished, never really realized," he said. "Right now it is. We are moving forward."





### **MESSI AND BARCA DEADLOCKED**

A meeting between Barcelona Club president Josep Maria Bartomeu and Jorge Messi, Lionel's agent and father, ended in stalemate on Wednesday. According to reports, Jorge reiterated to Barcelona that his son would not stay at the Nou Camp. Negotiations are expected to continue so that the conflict can be resolved and Barcelona icon Lionel Messi can leave in a way that is agreeable to both parties. Another reports however suggested that Messi could now stay at Barcelona until 2021 and fulfill his current contract.

#### **REACTIONS FROM TWO PLAYERS OF BARCA'S BITTER RIVALS**

It does not concern us. He has earned the respect to decide his own future. I don't know if he is doing it in the best way. For Spanish football, for Barca and for those of us who like to beat the best... we would like him to remain. Leo makes La Liga and his team better, he makes Clasicos more beautiful because you like to win while being the best and he is one of the best in the world.

REAL MADRID CAPTAIN SERGIO RAMOS

It would be a huge loss. Like when Cristiano left. But you can't think about the past, It's football and that's it. If it happens it will be a huge loss for the prestige of the league. But we need to go forward. Other players will become stars. When Ronaldo left, the same thing happened, the life of Real Madrid went on without him and it will be the same for Barcelona and La Liga without Messi.

REAL MADRID MIDFIELDER LUKA MODRIC



Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam was ecstatic after dismissing Tamim Iqbal during practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday ahead of next month's Sri Lanka tour.

# 'Improvement only in money, not quality'

One of the country's most famous footballers has been at the helm of the Bangladesh Football Federation for the past for 12 years and BFF President Kazi Salahuddin is now set to contest another term in the elections on October 3. The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman spoke to stakeholders, asking their thoughts on the future and how the elections could take the sport forward. In the third part, we speak to the country's lone UEFA A license coach, AKM Maruful Haque, who guided the national team in two tournaments and coached top clubs to success.



same position it was in because organisers, players and coaches have been unable to improve

their position. I only see the improvement of money, not improvement of quality," said Maruful, before elaborating on his thoughts.

"Of course, there are reasons behind the lack of improvement. As organisers, we don't have any vision, such as where we want to see ourselves after four or eight years. We don't question if we are headed the right way and whether we will be able to keep pace with Asia's top nations or even whether we will be able to match South Asian nations.

"Footballers do not emerge suddenly; they are groomed systematically from an early age. How many footballers are playing football after coming through systematic methods? If you count coaches, we do nothing to improve ourselves. We don't study or enhance our knowledge by using existing resources. So, we all are in the same old position," said Maruful.

Generally, coaches have played key roles in the football's development over the globe after plans are chalked out by the technical director, but Maruful believes organisers are the main obstacles in carrying out plans, be they short or long-term.

"The technical director can't implement the development plan or roadmap, he only makes the design. It is the organisers' responsibility to implement it. I think our organisers are big obstacles to implementing a development plan, even a short-term plan. I think our organisers don't understand, or despite understanding, they look for development overnight. So most of the plans are not implemented in Bangladesh," said the 50-year-old coach.

"There is no shortcut to development. Organisers must change their view and take at least an eight-year plan instead of focusing on only two or three years. Money is a precondition to development and now there is a good flow of money in both the federation and clubs. But money must be utilised in a proper way to develop football for the long term instead of short term. You can first plan for eight years and start implementing it for the first four years and think of the second phase later. The implementation must be uninterrupted. It can be a pilot project that will feature only those districts which are active in football activities," opined the coach, whose presentation of a development project was praised by AFC in 2006.

Using India, Bhutan and Nepal as examples, Maruful said they had first led from the front and invested at the grassroots

"Bangladesh football is in the level and before private corporate houses came forward to carry out initiatives.

"Neighbouring nations like Nepal and Bhutan have been working at the grassroots level and towards youth development, which is being implemented directly by the federations. Other corporate houses have come forward with initiatives as those federations made investors understand what the development and culture of football is. Bangladesh does not have a real football culture. It has a traditional football culture which is not supportive. It is the federation's responsibility to ensure a culture of grassroots football with youth development that must last 12 to 16 years."

Maruful sees only two pieces of evidence



of development over the past 12 years: a couple of corporate houses enlisting into the league and ensuring payments, and an increase in the number of coaches. But he is not optimistic about changes in football after the September 3 polls.

"I am not hopeful that the upcoming election can bring change to the country's football because I am not hearing anything regarding development plans from any party with the intention to contest the elections. They are the same ones who are at the helm or were once at the helm," said Maruful, who is also a BFF delegate.

Maruful believes four of six components need to be introduced to take Bangladesh football to new heights.

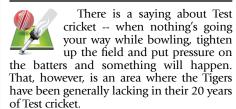
"If you see developed football nations, there are four to six components available there. These are proper short-term planning long-term plans with action, a flow of money, strong grassroots and youth programmes, rich education of coaches, competitive, wellorganised and synchronised league and fixtures and top local players playing abroad. To become a top football nation, Bangladesh must have at least four of the components mentioned above. Otherwise, it can't be top football nation," said Maruful, who rated the BFF executive committee four out of 10 due to the involvement of corporate houses in the BPL and a good flow of money in football.

#### TIGERS' TEST TRIALS

# The intangible importance of fielding

The Bangladesh national team is gearing up to return to international cricket with their three-Test tour of Sri Lanka in October, which will end around six months of down time in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Before the Tigers return to cricket in their weakest format, followed by the batting and bowling, The Daily Star attempts to analyse the third and arguably the most important aspect of their Test cricket -- fielding.

Mazhar Uddin



With the inevitable rust that sets in because of the long gap from the game, the challenge of correcting previous mistakes on the upcoming Sri Lanka tour will be steeper

The Tigers fielding department will play a vital role that is often overlooked, but it has been an almost silent cause for worry in many occasions. Considering fitness, almost all Bangladesh cricketers can be termed fit and agile, but there have been many instances when dropped catches exacted a heavy price, changing the course of games that could have been won.

In Tests, the slip cordon arguably plays the most important role, but Bangladesh are yet to find a true specialist in those positions. Whether it's with the new ball or with an old cherry, bowlers have to peg away at batsman for long stretches and it is imperative that slip fielders gobble up any chances that suddenly come their way due

to batsman error or a great ball. After those periods when nothing seems to happen for hours, the thick edge against the run of play is gleefully accepted by top teams like Australia, England, India or South Africa. That shifts the momentum and more importantly, lifts the morale of the bowlers.



The picture is quite the opposite for Bangladesh, who have endured more than their fair share of wicket-less periods in Test cricket. Invariably, the edge that promises to end the hardship is dropped at slip, further deflating bowlers. The likes of Soumya Sarkar, Mohammad Mithun, Nazmul Hossain Shanto and Imrul Kayes were seen in the slip cordon in recent times, but unfortunately none have gained the reputation of a solid slip fielder yet.

In New Zealand last year, dropped chances in both the ODI and Test series cost the visitors heavily on a tour where an inexperienced fast bowling department were made to look more helpless.

Apart from the lack of specialist slip

fielders, the poor approach and attitude from the fast bowlers towards fielding -both catching and ground fielding -- has also been a big concern.

Although the Bangladesh team do have a couple of specialist close-in fielders in short leg and silly mid-off with Test skipper Mominul Haque and, more recently, rookie opener Shadman Islam doing a decent job.

Following a rather disappointing end to the 2019 ICC World Cup, Bangladesh fielding coach Ryan Cook gave a report where he focused on the areas of strength for each individual.

"One of the things we focused a lot on was the positions of the players in the areas

of strength. We did that quite well in Sri Lanka. So those were the things in those

reports," Cook told reporters last year. However, he did mention that the Tigers catching has remained inconsistent and required a lot of work. "I think it [catching] has been inconsistent. We had some really good catches in the World Cup and during the Sri Lanka series. But catching has to be consistent. And that's where we will be focusing on in the next couple of days. From the slip fielding perspective, we want to transform players in the squad, then we decide who needs to go. The guys who are best suited to the position, will go to that position," he added.

Fielding and wicketkeeping -- another indispensable aspect in Tests -- at times have disappointed in crunch moments.

The experienced Mushfigur Rahim, in his last Test against Zimbabwe where he scored his second double-ton, played mainly as a batsman as the team management decided to hand over the gloves to Liton Das.

Many had opined that Mushfigur should focus on his batting more in the longest format and sacrifice his wicketkeeping for the betterment of the team, and that to some extent worked well for the Tigers

Liton has already showed some promise behind the stumps with his swift technique and his presence in the Test side. However, keeping the long Sri Lanka tour in mind, the selectors are likely to pick three wicketkeepers. Anamul Haque, Mithun and Nurul Hasan are among the frontrunners for the third spot.