



With the board members by his side, BCB president Nazmul Hassan announces the postponement of Bangladesh's scheduled tour of Sri Lanka at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

Focus on domestic scene after Sri Lanka tour postponement

SPORTS REPORTER



Following a lot of suspense and speculation, Bangladesh's tour of Sri Lanka was finally postponed yesterday. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) President Nazmul Hassan said the Tigers will not be touring the island nation as the BCB does not agree with the quarantine protocols for the three-Test tour.

"We were informed of this yesterday [Sunday] and today we got back to them [Sri Lanka Cricket], saying it is not possible for us to send the team under such guideline and that the series should be rescheduled. We shall have this series if the [Covid-19] situation improves and when there are no such conditions. I don't think there is any chance for further discussion with SLC. If it was possible for them [to change the protocols], they would have done it by now," Hassan told the media at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

BCB was keen to send the team to Sri Lanka as it would have marked Tigers' first international cricket in seven months as cricket

has been halted in the country since March due to the coronavirus outbreak. And touring the island nation seemed the most practical as Sri Lanka is one of the countries least affected by Covid-19 in the region.

In contrast, Bangladesh -- eleventh on the list of countries with the most active cases, according to worldometer.info -- is still very much in the grip of the virus. However, the government lifted the nationwide lockdown on May 31 and the sports ministry has allowed resumption of sporting activity on a limited scale.

Since the Sri Lanka series is now indefinitely postponed, focus will now shift to how BCB can get cricket back on the field in Bangladesh. According to Hassan, they will be looking to return to cricket soon and added that the board has plans for the national team as the 27-member preliminary squad was undergoing a residential camp under head coach Russell Domingo.

"We will look to start cricket soon but the fact is the coronavirus situation is still not such in our country that it would allow us to start full-fledged. We are slowly trying to start playing matches. We have the national camp

The guidelines that they had given, it's not possible to play a Test Championship under those conditions. Their cricket board and sports ministry tried their best and agreed to all bar one of our requests. But the one they denied was the most important, the 14-day quarantine period. What we understand by quarantine and isolation are different. When one isolates with Covid-19, they can't get out of the room so what they saying as quarantine for 14 days is full isolation. So under those conditions, a player's mental and physical conditions will take a lot of time to recover.

NAZMUL HASSAN, BCB PRESIDENT

ongoing and they will play three practice matches, you will soon be informed of the details.

"Following this we are planning to start domestic cricket. Domestic cricket has two parts. Initially we are thinking to have a six-team tournament involving around 90 cricketers, this can be a corporate league or something else. We have also discussed that we can have a competition between the national team, HP team and A team, involving three or four teams sponsored by BCB. We are looking to have one of these two

tournaments," he said.

A total of five bilateral series has been postponed since the pandemic -- the remaining Test against Pakistan under the ICC Test Championship, home series against Australia and New Zealand, the tour of Ireland and now the Sri Lanka series. There are no international fixtures in the near future and the BCB's biggest challenge will be to get the Tigers playing international cricket again.

Although Hassan had previously stated that he is hopeful that Bangladesh will not miss out on most of their postponed international matches, the postponement has dealt a blow to those hopes.

When asked whether the board would consider hosting international series during this period, the BCB boss opted to play on the back foot.

"We first want to assess the situation [before hosting an international series], then there is also the fact that we have many domestic leagues pending. If we are able to have the domestic leagues done successfully and by then we will also observe the global situation, then we can think of hosting international teams but not at this point," said Hassan.

Difficult to be former self, says Murray

AFP, Paris



Andy Murray said Sunday it was going to be "difficult" for the former world number one to reach his level of old after a lopsided defeat by fellow three-time Grand Slam champion Stan Wawrinka in the French Open first round.

Murray suffered his joint-worst defeat at a major in terms of games won, succumbing to 2015 Roland Garros winner Wawrinka 6-1, 6-3, 6-2 in the opening day's marquee match.

"I need to have a long, hard think about it. It's not for me the sort of match I would just brush aside and not give any thought to," Murray told reporters.

"I should be analysing that hard and trying to understand why the performance was like that."

Murray, who needed a wild card to play in Paris this year, was competing in a clay court tournament for the first time since his five-set loss to Wawrinka in their 2017

French Open semi-final.

The Scotsman, who cited that match as "the end of my hip", has been running a long battle ever since with an injury that at one stage threatened to destroy his career.

"It's going to be difficult for me to play the same level as I did before," said Murray.

"I'm 33 now and I was ranked No. 1 in the world, so it's difficult with all the issues that I have had.

"But I'll keep going. Let's see what the next few months holds, and I reckon I won't play a match like that between now and the end of the year."

Wawrinka fired 42 winners past a subdued Murray, who made barely a third of his first serves and was broken six times.

"From a physical perspective I wouldn't expect to physically be the same as what I was before I had the operation," Murray added.

"But in terms of like ball striking and in terms of my strokes and stuff...there is no reason that I shouldn't be able to do that from a technical perspective."



US Open champion Dominic Thiem plays a backhand shot against Marin Cilic in the first round of the French Open at the Philippe-Chatrier Court yesterday. The Austrian third-seed won the match 6-4, 6-3, 6-3.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'They're trying to stop me'

AGENCIES

The stewards at the Russian Grand Prix on Sunday evening cancelled the two penalty points imposed on Lewis Hamilton's super license and instead fined his Mercedes team.

The six-time champion had been handed the two penalties and given two five-second time penalties after making irregular pre-race practice starts in the pit-lane exit road.

Hamilton, who was bidding to equal Michael Schumacher's record 91 Grand Prix wins, finished third in a race won by his Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas with Red Bull's Max



Verstappen second.

Earlier, Hamilton accused the stewards of trying to stop him winning.

"I need to go back and see what the rules are and what exactly I did wrong," the Briton told Sky Sports television after being punished for practice starts outside of the designated area on his way to the grid.

"I'm pretty sure no-one's got two five-second penalties for something so ridiculous before," he added.

"I didn't put anyone in danger. I've done this at a million tracks over the years and never been questioned on it. So it is what it is."



Superman

AFP, Dubai



Nicholas Pooran stunned the cricket world and social media with a gravity-defying piece of fielding to prevent a six on a record-breaking night in the Indian Premier League.

Pooran dived cat-like to grab the ball at full stretch six feet (two metres) over the boundary before twisting in mid-air and backhanding it over the rope a split-second before he hit the ground.

The West Indian's acrobatics to deny Rajasthan Royals batsman Sanju Samson a six weren't enough, however, to stop his Kings XI Punjab side losing to the biggest run chase in IPL history in Sharjah on Sunday.

India cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar called it "the best save I have seen in my life. Simply incredible!!" -- prompting thanks to the "#godofcricket" from Punjab's fielding coach Jonty Rhodes. "(There) really is NO question about it being THE best save, EVER. Fantastic work by @nicholas. 47 who inspired the rest of the @lionsdenkxip fielders to put on 1 of the best defensive fielding displays I have ever seen," Rhodes tweeted.

Former England batsman Kevin Pietersen, commenting on television, was blown away by Trinidad-born Pooran's "unbelievable" exploit, which resulted in two runs being taken instead of six. "No way, no way, no way. That is unbelievable! The save of T20 cricket ever, that is the best I have seen," Pietersen said. The video of the spectacular effort lit up social media.

"Nicolas Pooran save for the boundary was inhuman extraordinary, he has redefined the human thinking capability, take a bow," said one Twitter user.

Another said: "Wowza, superman Nicolas Pooran". Pooran's effort came after his eight-ball 25 with the bat as King's XI piled up an unassailable-looking 223 for two from their 20 overs. But the Royals got home with four wickets and three balls to spare.

India's Rahul Tewatia smashed 53 off 31 balls -- including five sixes in one over -- after Steve Smith hit a quickfire 50 and Samson 85.

AGENCIES



Napoli hammered Genoa 6-0 in Serie A on Sunday.

Champions Juventus were trailing 2-1 and a man down after an hour at the Stadio Olimpico after a Jordan Veretout brace for the hosts and Adrien Rabiot's sending off.

But a towering Ronaldo header grabbed the equaliser in the 69th minute to avoid handing new Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo a first defeat.

"Going behind complicated things but we got an important point," said Ronaldo.

"We're at the start of the season, with a new coach. But the team are working well, I'm confident for the future. "Pirlo? It's still early days, but we're working with a smile, that's important."

Fati thanks to Messi

Barcelona wonderkid Ansu Fati said he is learning from Lionel Messi after firing his side to a 4-0 win over Villarreal in their first game of the



With a gravity defying act, Cristiano Ronaldo (C) helped 10-man Juventus to a 2-2 draw against AS Roma at the Stadio Olimpico on Sunday night. The Portuguese superstar converted from the spot before this towering header to bring up his 450th goal in Europe's top-five leagues. Luis Suarez also leapt high in the air to celebrate his two goals on his debut cameo for Atletico Madrid while Kylian Mbappe, despite not getting on the scoresheet, had a high-flying outing as he was pictured hanging by the crossbar during PSG's 2-0 against Reims.

PHOTO: TWITTER/REUTERS

ACES HIGH

La Liga season on Sunday.

With all the pre-match build-up centring on Messi's anger at the club's decision to force Luis Suarez out and join Atletico Madrid, Fati stole the show by giving Barca an early advantage with two expertly taken finishes in the opening 20 minutes.

Fati, 17, who was not even two years old when Messi made his Barca debut back in 2004, recalled a childhood looking up to the six-times world player of the year and said the Argentinean was helping him improve. "Playing with Messi is a dream I had since I was a child and now I am living it," the forward told reporters.

"He gives me a lot of advice, he helps me a lot on the pitch and in training, but away from it too, and that makes me very happy."

Icardi ends goal drought

Mauro Icardi broke a long scoring drought by netting both goals in Paris Saint-Germain's comfortable 2-0 Ligue 1 win at Reims on Sunday night.

PSG, who opened the league season with two losses, won 2-0 for a third straight league game and are now seventh, four points behind leaders Rennes.



"It's important for a striker to score goals," said Icardi after making the scoresheet for the first time since February.

"Today we lacked the efficiency to kill the match earlier, but we are happy with the result."

For the first time since the French Cup final on July 24, PSG started their all their 'Fantastic Four', of Kylian Mbappe, Neymar, Angel di Maria and Icardi.

Icardi stayed cool after nine minutes when Mbappe's pass was a little behind him, defying his long dry spell by controlling the ball neatly with his heel and then driving a low shot inside the far post.

Icardi struck the second goal to seal the points in the 62nd minute. After a neat move, Mbappe rolled a pass to the unmarked forward, who tapped the ball in.

Suarez enjoying new lease of life

Luis Suarez said on Sunday he needed a change when he left Barcelona after marking his Atletico Madrid debut with two goals and an assist.

Suarez's sensational 20-minute cameo came as Atletico started their La Liga season with a thumping 6-1 victory over Granada.

He set up a goal two minutes after coming on as a substitute, his sumptuous pass finished off by Marcos Llorente, before scoring himself with a powerful header at the back post.

The 33-year-old then added another in injury time, following up his own shot to make it six for a rampant Atletico at the Wanda Metropolitano. "Sometimes it is important to have a change as a player," said Suarez.

"I've come to a club that has given me a spectacular welcome, it shows in the atmosphere, you get a good impression from the beginning, and you can see that on the pitch."

Diego Costa said with a smile: "It's great. One of us bites, the other one hits."

Costa had earlier given Atletico the lead but it was the 31-year-old who made way for Suarez, and he raised doubts about his future after the match.

"I leave my future up to the club. I spoke with the club, with the coach, I made it very clear what was happening, that if I am here, I will fight," said Costa.

"If they see the possibility of me leaving, I'll accept it. I don't want to be a weight."

