



Although the Sri Lanka tour has been postponed again, Bangladesh cricketers are continuing training with the hope that domestic cricket will restart. Here, Soumya Sarkar (L) and Mohammad Saifuddin (C) are challenged to a sprint by fitness trainer Nick Lee on a day of optional training at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

Sonic boom had Elina worried

AFP, Paris

Ukraine tennis star Elina Svitolina said she thought “something bad had happened” when a French fighter jet flew over Roland Garros on Wednesday, breaking the sound barrier. The thunderous noise that panicked residents of Paris was caused by the sonic boom, police in the French capital said. The military said the jet had been scrambled to go to the aid of another aircraft that had lost radio contact, and was authorised to travel at supersonic speed. “Yeah, I heard it. I was a bit worried because I thought something bad happened,” said Svitolina after defeating Mexico’s Renata Zarazua 6-3, 0-6, 6-2 on the tournament’s showpiece Court Philippe Chatrier.

“I looked at the chair umpire. He was little bit shocked as well because you never know these days what can happen, what’s going on. “Yeah, it was the airplane, so it was very strange, very loud, like something big dropped.”

‘I was struggling to walk’

REUTERS, Paris

Serena Williams’ search for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title will extend into another year after an Achilles tendon injury forced her to withdraw from the French Open on Wednesday. The American, who turned 39 this week, had been due to play Bulgarian Tsvetana Pironkova in the second round later but after a warm-up decided the injury was too severe. Williams, a three-time former champion at Roland Garros, said she may not play again this year. “I warmed up and it was a very short warmup and then I spoke to my coach and said ‘what do you think?’ she said. “I was struggling to walk so that’s a tell tale sign that I should try



It was a bad day for the favourites. Serena Williams, chasing a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title, was forced to withdraw due to an Achilles tendon injury while US Open finalist Victoria Azarenka suffered a tame defeat against Anna Karolina Schmiedlova.

to recover.” Williams had suffered the problem during her semi-final loss to Victoria Azarenka in the U.S. Open and said ahead of her Roland Garros campaign that she was not at 100% physically but had recovered sufficiently to play. She spoke again of the injury after her first-round win over fellow American Kristie Ahn and aggravated it while practising for her second-round match. “An Achilles injury is a real injury you don’t want to play with as it can get worse and I don’t want to get to that. This is not a nagging injury, it’s an acute injury. If it was my knee it would be more devastating. It’s just bad timing and bad luck.” Williams said she was yet to decide whether she would play again this season, saying she needed two weeks

of complete rest. Williams also pulled out of the French Open in 2018 with an abdominal injury before a last-16 clash with Maria Sharapova. Since Williams resumed her career in 2018 after a maternity break she has remained tantalisingly one behind the record 24 Grand Slam titles claimed by Australian Margaret Court. While her window of opportunity is narrowing to reach that milestone, Williams sounded a defiant note. “I love playing tennis. I love competing,” she said. “It’s my job and I’m pretty good at it still... I’m so close to some things and I feel like I’m almost there... that’s what keeps me going. “My body is actually doing really well.”



PHOTO: FRENCH OPEN

Messi mending fences

AGENCIES

Lionel Messi called for “an end” to arguments at Barcelona as he urged unity at the club he tried to leave before the season. The Barcelona captain spoke to Catalan newspaper Sport in an interview published online late on Tuesday. “After so many disagreements, I would like to put an end to it,” said Messi. “We must unite all Barcelona’s people and assume that the best is yet to come.” The departure of his friend Luis Suarez to Atletico Madrid did not go down well with Messi, at least not the way it happened, with the club backing down on a promise he could go for free when they realised he was joining a direct rival. “I just said what I felt in what was a difficult moment for me,” Messi told Sport. Messi’s reaction, posted on Instagram, drew criticism. Some thought it was excessive for him to go in on the board and president Josep Maria Bartomeu once again. Bartomeu has never responded to Messi’s accusations in a bid to calm the crisis. Now, Messi has taken a step back: “I understand people may have



thought I should have shut up or let it go, as I did on many other occasions, but a lot of things hurt me in the last few weeks and it was my way of expressing that.” Messi referred to his attempt to force Barcelona to release him from the final year of his contract after the disastrous end to last season left the club without a trophy. “I take responsibility for my mistakes, that, if they existed, were only to make a better and stronger FC Barcelona,” said the Argentine. “I wanted to send a message to all the club members and to all the fans. If any of them is bothered for a second by something I said or did, they should never doubt that I am always thinking about what is best for the club.” “Adding passion and desire will be the only way to achieve our objectives, always united and pulling in the same direction,” said Messi. “Whoever knows me knows that I am not capable of playing any way other than always to win, and giving everything on the pitch. It was like that throughout my career and that is not going to change. Today my commitment to this shirt and this badge is total, it is still intact.”

An emotional tribute

AFP, Dubai

An emotional Rashid Khan dedicated his man-of-the-match performance to his mother, who died earlier this year, after he bowled Sunrisers Hyderabad to their first win of the 2020 IPL. The Afghan leg-spinner took 3-14 from his four overs to restrict Delhi Capitals to 147 for seven in their chase of 163, handing Hyderabad a win by 15 runs in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday. Khan, who tops the world T20 bowling rankings, said his mother was his “biggest fan”.



“Tough one-and-a-half years for me, first my dad expired and then my mom three-four months ago,” said the 22-year-old. “And it took a bit of time for me to come back. My mom was my biggest fan, especially in the IPL and when I was the man of the match, she would always talk to me through the night.” Hyderabad skipper David Warner was all praise for the “outstanding” spinner. “Rash is Rash, he knows what he has to do and the way he came out and delivered tonight was exceptionally great.”

Confusion persists as BFF polls loom

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) elections in 2016 was full of excitement, speculation, allegations and anticipation of results as two strong panels competed for primacy. Four years later, most of those elements are absent, apart from some enthusiasm from football fans who launched social media campaigns to bring about a change in leadership and revive the country’s football. The previous three elections were fought fiercely between two panels, each backed by influential organisers, but this time around talk of a big spark was seemingly extinguished even before it was lit when District and Divisional Football Association Secretary General Tarafder Mohammad Ruhul Amin pulled out of the election.

Incumbent president Kazi Salahuddin has formed a full panel, keeping most of his executive committee members while the opposition panel could not even choose a presidential candidate. There are two independent presidential candidates -- former footballers Shafiqul Islam Manik and Badal Roy, who has announced his withdrawal from the elections after the deadline, and is so legally still a candidate. This has created confusion among the councillors as to the exact line-up of presidential candidates even as the October 3 polls are fast approaching. Are fans’ demands for change on social media having any impact on the 139 delegates who are key to electing a BFF committee? What are the delegates thinking about the upcoming elections and how will they explain allegations that most delegates are sold to the candidates at a handsome price and thus lower division and district football have been overlooked years after year?

“To tell you the truth, the current committee did not communicate with us and there was no football in the district in the last 12 years. We believe there is a need to change but I don’t see much possibility because there are no strong [opposing] candidates. We are still in the dark about the candidates and anything can happen as there are still some days left to hold polls,” said Rajshahi Divisional FA President and BFF delegate Mahfuzul Alam Loton. “You know a nasty play is being made and it involves money, and it is true that the sale of votes happened before but I am not involved in such things,” said former footballer Loton, who has been a BFF delegate for the last 12 years. Barishal Divisional FA president and BFF delegate Asaduzzaman Khasru said, “The candidates are calling me for votes but I want to choose those who will keep continuing district football and lower divisions as well as revive old tournaments. “The change of leadership has been

discussed for a long time and it happens when there are right candidates competing; the picture of the BFF election is still not clear to us,” said Khasru. “The money game should be stopped [in BFF polls]; there have been transactions before. I think it will continue. The fact is that the councillors are not going to candidates; instead the candidates are coming to the councillors.” “I want to cast my votes for those who are involved with sports. I believe the country’s football would have gone forward if district football got the attention,” said Agrani Bank SC general secretary AM Abid Hossain. “I can’t make any comment on the movement for change but I want to be positive. “I have no idea about money changing hands for BFF votes because I am a first-time voter. One thing I can say is that many things happen when you are allowed to contest freely.” “We are observing the movement of change across the country and we are not beyond the general people. Everyone in this current committee is not incompetent but some members need to be changed,” said Basabo Tarun Sangha Football Committee chairman Munjer Rahman, also a first-time



Mezbah Uddin Ahmed, CEC of BFF polls

delegate who says he has no idea about the sale of votes. East End Club’s life-time member and BFF delegate TM Mamun Kaiser said, “We also want the change but you don’t get what you want. But we believe some changes will occur like the previous time and some changes won’t come. You need some quality people and I think every councillor will choose the right person because this election is not similar the previous one. It had been seen before that the votes were sold but this time it will not happen and the councillors feel the need for change.” “Every member of the committee has to take responsibility of failure because Salahuddin bhai made different subcommittees to improve football. Salahuddin bhai is the best in communicating at international and domestic level and there is no one [else] suitable for this position,” said Kawran Bazar Pragati Sangha joint secretary and BFF delegate Mosharrar Hossain, predicting that the Salahuddin panel may lose two to three posts in the elections.

SHORT CORNER

Everton knock Miley Cyrus off the perch

Everton may have been knocked off the top of the Premier League table by Leicester on Sunday evening, but they’re still No 1 after fans took a 35-year-old club anthem to first place in the iTunes chart. The Liverpool club are one of the surprise frontrunners of the English Premier League with three wins from their opening three matches. They currently sit second behind Leicester City on goal difference after victories over Tottenham, West Bromwich Albion and Crystal Palace to begin the season. Following Saturday’s 2-1 victory away at Crystal Palace for Carlo Ancelotti’s men, thrilled fans began buying Spirit of the Blues in their droves. Available for 79p on iTunes, the club’s official record from 1985 soon began shooting up the charts, rising more than 1,000 places in a matter of hours. Spurred on by a social media



movement which saw fans put the catchy tune over the top of famous clips from TV shows and movies, the song officially displaced American popstar Miley Cyrus’ Midnight Sky as the UK’s No 1 tune on Sunday night. Spirit of the Blues was released shortly after the Toffees completed a First Division title and European Cup Winners’ Cup double during the 1984-85 season. -- AGENCIES

Lewy expected to be honoured ahead of CL draw

Bayern Munich striker Robert Lewandowski is expected to be named UEFA Player of the Year for the 2019/20 season in Geneva ahead of a closed-doors draw for this year’s Champions League group stages. The Polish striker is one of three finalists alongside Manchester City’s Kevin de Bruyne and Bayern teammate Manuel Neuer. Lewandowski guided Bayern

Munich to their sixth Champions League title, finishing as the competition’s top scorer with 15 goals. Overall, he netted 55 goals in 47 games in all competitions as Bayern won the treble. Bayern’s Hansi Flick, Liverpool’s Jurgen Klopp and RB Leipzig’s Julian Nagelsmann are finalists for the Men’s Coach of the Year award. Teams have been drafted in Pots and they will be drawn at random until each group has a team from each Pot. Two teams from the same league will not be allowed in the same group. Pot 1 has Bayern, Sevilla, Real Madrid, Liverpool, Juventus, Paris Saint-Germain, Zenit Saint Petersburg, Porto while Pot 2 features Barcelona, Atletico Madrid, Manchester City, Manchester United, Shakhtar Donetsk, Borussia Dortmund, Chelsea, Ajax. This means Liverpool could potentially be in a group with Barcelona, Atletico or Dortmund. Inter Milan, who are in Pot 3, may well be the third horse in any group of death scenarios. -- STAR SPORT DESK

Jose Mourinho was pacified eventually after chasing Eric Dier down the tunnel as the Tottenham defender responded to nature’s call during a Carabao Cup match against Chelsea on Tuesday. Dier, who received the man-of-the-match award, later posted a picture with the award resting on a toilet.



PHOTO: TWITTER