

SPORT

WHAT TO WATCH

FACEBOOK LIVE

PRESIDENT'S CUP

Najmul XI v Tamim XI

Live from 1:30pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1 IPL

Kolkata v Bangalore

Live from 8:00pm

TEN 2 Champions League

Real Madrid v Shakhtar

Live from 10:55pm

Ajax v Liverpool

Live from 1:00am (Thursday)

TEN 1 Champions League

Man City v FC Porto

Live from 1:00am (Thursday)

SONY SIX

Champions League

Salzburg v Lokomotiv

Live from 10:55pm

Bayern Munich v Atletico

Live from 1:00am (Thursday)

What has changed a year after the players' strike?

MAZHAR UDDIN

Exactly a year ago on this day, Bangladesh cricket was rocked when the country's top cricketers convened in Mirpur and announced that they would boycott all cricketing activities unless the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) met their 11-point demand.

Shakib Al Hasan played the leading role with Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad also among the leading figures behind presenting the demands.

After three days of intense drama -- during which BCB President Nazmul Hassan expressed his deep shock and anger -- the BCB finally agreed to most of the demands, saying that some others were unrealistic given the conditions in Bangladesh.

Shakib's subsequent one-year ban by the ICC for failing to report corrupt approaches by a bookmaker took some of the spotlight off the cricketers' demands. The coronavirus pandemic has also made it difficult for the board to fulfil some of the demands.

But even amid this pandemic, when organising any cricket is a challenge, the lack of players' voices is indicative of the need for reform.

The first demand was that players should get proper respect from the board and the current committee of Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) must immediately resign. The CWAB election is yet to take place this year, but according to its general



secretary Debabrata Paul they have asked players to take necessary steps immediately after the strike and the players are yet to decide.

The second demand was that the transfer system of the Dhaka Premier League must revert to the old system so that players can choose a team according to their liking. The BCB accepted the demand immediately.

The third demand said that the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) must be arranged based on the previous franchise model and the wages of local players be increased. The BCB staged the last BPL as a celebration of the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The board also agreed to return to the franchise model for subsequent editions.

Increasing match fees for first-class matches to Tk 1 lakh was the fourth demand, and the BCB announced the increments -- albeit

not the demanded amount -- after five days of the demand. Match fees rose from Tk 35,000 to Tk 60,000 in tier one and from Tk 25,000 to Tk 50,000 in tier two. According to the BCB they are planning on increasing match fees further in the coming days.

The fifth demand was an increase in daily allowance of Tk 1,500, which was later increased to Tk 2,500. Players also wanted plane fares to be provided to travel between venues, which was also approved and the hotel facilities were also upgraded along with gym and swimming pool facilities. The board said they are still working to improve practice facilities across the country.

The players also wanted the number of contracted cricketers and their salaries increased, which was the sixth demand. While salaries were increased, the board was reluctant to increase the number of

contracted players as they wanted competitiveness among cricketers to earn a contract.

The seventh demand was for the increase of salaries of local staff members -- coaches, ground staff, umpires and others, but the BCB said they were trying their best and that the practicalities and limitations of the board should be considered.

The eighth demand was that the number of one-day tournaments in the domestic arena must be increased, but the BCB said it will prioritise tournaments according to their value and timing.

The ninth point was to form a local calendar, which has never been made, and it seems difficult in the current situation. However, the BCB president did announce that the board is willing to start all domestic competitions gradually.

Timely payment of the dues of the DPL was the 10th demand and the board said it will take a strong stance to maintain it.

The 11th demand was the withdrawal of the restriction that players could play in only two foreign leagues per year. The BCB president said the board will see that on a case-by-case basis.

The cricketers added two more conditions two days after their original press conference -- they wanted a share of the revenues and that equal facilities be provided to women cricketers. BCB dismissed the revenue sharing, saying it was not possible in the Bangladeshi context, and on women cricketers the board said they have been working to improve women's cricket.



Afif Hossain (C) heads a football as others watch during a practice session of the BCB President's Cup at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Lots of equations ahead of last group game

SPORTS REPORTER



It is a must win game for Tamim XI to keep their hopes alive of reaching the final of the three-team BCB President's Cup 50-over-tournament when they take on Najmul XI in the last group stage game at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today.

With one win from three games, even a win might not be enough for Tamim and his troop as net run rate will come into equation in case they win today.

With two wins from three games, Najmul XI are on top of the points table

while Mahmudullah XI also have two wins in four games. If Tamim XI win today, all the three teams will be on four points.

However, Najmul XI, courtesy of a better net run rate due to two comfortable victories, will have a slight edge over the two other teams but still a crushing defeat today could change the equation dramatically.

Technically all the three teams still have a chance to qualify for the final and it will be an interesting battle where only a win will not secure a place in the final, instead both the sides will be looking for a clinical victory.

BHF compromises with discipline again

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) once again compromised discipline by lifting suspensions on four club officials conditionally citing the old-fashioned statement of 'greater interest of hockey'.

The decision was made by the BHF executive committee yesterday. It decided to lift bans on Mohammedan SC manager Ariful Haque Prince and assistant manager Asaduzzaman Chandan and Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club general secretary Ahsan Ullah Khan and manager Nazrul Islam Mridha.

All four officials and one judge had been handed suspensions ranging from three to five years in late November, six months after Mohammedan and Mariner Youngs were involved in a scuffle centering the June 7 match in 2018. However, the officials have not really missed out as the domestic league has not been held since.

"On the condition of participating in the Premier Hockey League, the suspension on four officials of Mohammedan and



Mariner Youngs have been lifted. They applied to withdraw their suspension," said BHF acting general secretary Mohammad Yousuf at a post-meeting briefing at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium.

It is not the first time that the BHF failed to stick to its decision as Prince and Chandan, along with four players, had before been suspended for five years

for physically assaulting Pakistani coach Naveed Alam in July 2013. That suspension was lifted in November 2015 ahead of the Premier Hockey League.

The BHF also imposed five-year bans on four national players -- Russel Mahmud Jimmy, Zahid Hossain, Imran Hasan Pintoo and Kamruzzaman Rana -- for displaying 'deliberately poor performance' in the Asian Cup, but lifted the bans citing

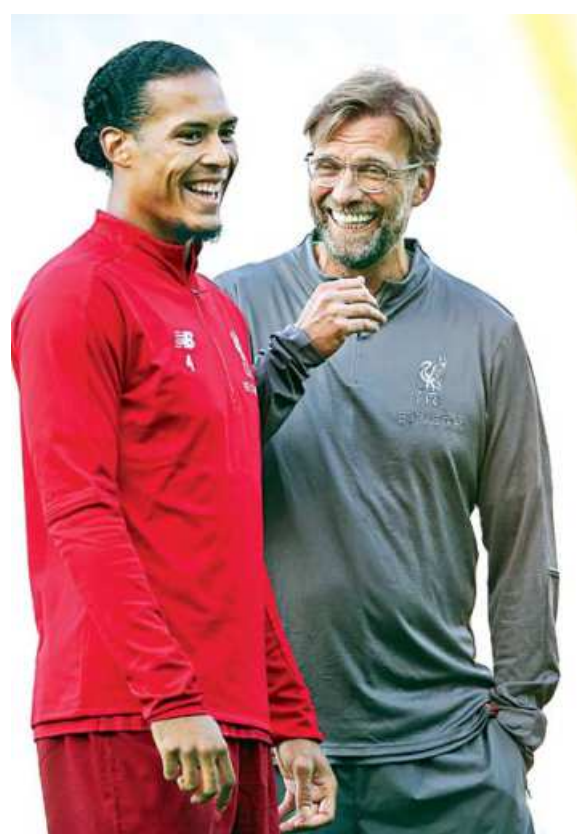
the common phrase 'greater interest of hockey'.

There are many such instances when the BHF has lifted bans ahead of schedule.

"A suspension is imposed for a certain period, not for a lifetime. We have made this deviation this time because of the greater interest of hockey as well as to hold everything tight. You won't see it in future because we have been following discipline strictly in all the tournaments we have arranged in the past two years," said BHF president and Air Chief Marshal Masihuzzaman Serniabat.

With the lifting of the suspensions of four officials, the BHF is now seeing the way to hold the Premier Hockey League in December, some two-and-half-years after the last edition concluded in June, 2018.

However, the issue of Usha KC has still hanged in balance as the BHF president wants to see details of legal and constitutional aspects for promoting Usha to the Premier Hockey League after the Old Dhaka outfit were relegated to the First Division after failing to take part in the Premier League in 2018.



Will wait for Van Dijk like a good wife, says Klopp

AFP, London



Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said supporting Virgil van Dijk is his priority after the talismanic Dutch defender suffered cruciate knee ligament damage that will likely end his season.

Van Dijk was on the end of a shocking challenge from Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford in Saturday's 2-2 draw in the Merseyside derby that will bring to an end his run of starting the last 94 Premier League games.

The 29-year-old's arrival from Southampton for a then world record £75 million fee for a defender in January 2018 has transformed Liverpool's fortunes. The Reds won the Champions League in 2019 and the Premier League for the first time in 30 years last season.

"We are there for him, he knows that and we will wait for him like a good wife is waiting when the husband is in jail and will do, meanwhile, all what we can do to make it as easy for him as possible," Klopp told Liverpoolfc.com.

The club have refused to put a timeframe on Van Dijk's return, but Klopp acknowledged he was facing up to a prolonged period without one of his most important players.

"He now will be out for a while, that's clear. We don't want to set any timeframe, to be honest, because each player is different and each individual is different," he added.

"So we feel now in this moment extremely, extremely for him because most of us were in a similar situation and we know that these situations are absolutely rubbish.

"You don't need it. You don't need it but you have to get over it and Virgil will get over it, 100 per cent, and today is already the first day, if you want, of the recovery."

Zimbabwe reach Pakistan sans Rajput

AFP, Karachi

Zimbabwe's cricket squad arrived in Pakistan on Tuesday -- minus their Indian coach, who had been advised to stay away from the rival South Asian nation.

Zimbabwe are scheduled to play three ODIs in Rawalpindi on October 30, November 1 and 3, and three T20Is in Lahore on November 7, 8 and 10. For now, The players will complete a mandatory quarantine period.

Pakistan had granted Zimbabwe coach Lalchand Rajput a visa, but he did not travel as per his government's advice.

"Zimbabwe head coach Rajput will miss the Pakistan tour after Indian embassy in Harare wrote to us asking that Rajput, who is an Indian national, be exempted from visiting Pakistan," a Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) statement read.

In Rajput's absence, bowling coach Douglas Hondo will supervise Zimbabwe for the tour, with allrounder Chamu Chibhabha at the helm.

Champions League storylines to watch

AFP, Paris

The Champions League group stage kicked off on Tuesday with Bayern Munich beginning their defence of the trophy won in Lisbon in August. Here are some of the storylines to watch over the next few weeks.

MESSI V RONALDO

They are the two greatest players of their generation with 11 Ballons d'Or between them, and the two highest scorers in Champions League history. Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo are now set to renew their individual rivalry when Barcelona

Kiev and Ferencvaros, but both Messi and Ronaldo are running out of time to win the Champions League again. Messi, now 33, has featured in four victorious campaigns, while 35-year-old Ronaldo has won it five times.

WILL MAN UTD GET OUT OF THEIR GROUP?

Manchester United began their campaign at Paris Saint-Germain in a repeat of their dramatic last-16 meeting in 2018-19, when the Red Devils progressed thanks to a controversial late penalty.

That was arguably the high point of Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's reign as



and Juventus clash in Group G.

They have not faced off since the Portuguese superstar left Real Madrid for Juventus in 2018.

Ronaldo is currently self-isolating after testing positive for Covid-19 and will need to pass a negative test before being allowed to feature against Barca in Turin on October 28. The return at the Camp Nou is on December 8.

Both sides should advance from a group also containing Dynamo

Old Trafford manager. It was his 14th win in 17 games as caretaker, and soon after he got the job permanently. But United went out to Barcelona in the quarterfinals and did not qualify for last season's Champions League.

Solskjaer's first full campaign in charge saw United finish third to return to Europe's top table, but serious doubts remain about his managerial ability and they are in



a tough group, with last season's semi-finalists RB Leipzig and the Turkish champions, Istanbul Basaksehir, as well as PSG.

CAN HAALAND STAR AGAIN?

Erling Braut Haaland was the star of last season's Champions League before the competition was interrupted by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Norwegian was a sensation for Red Bull Salzburg in the group stage, scoring eight times. After moving to Borussia Dortmund in the winter he scored two more in the defeat of PSG in the last 16, first leg, although Dortmund ended up losing on aggregate.

In total Haaland scored 44 club goals last season, all before turning 20 in July. He already has 11 this season for club and country and Dortmund will hope he can help them out of a group also containing Zenit Saint Petersburg, Lazio and

Club Brugge. ATALANTA: DARK HORSES NO MORE

Atalanta's run to the quarterfinals, where they suffered an agonising defeat to PSG, would have been heartwarming even had it not coincided with their home city of Bergamo being devastated during the first wave of the pandemic.

Gian Piero Gasperini's side qualified for the last 16 despite losing their first three group games and then beat Valencia 8-4 on aggregate in their debut Champions League campaign. They also finished third in Serie A to return to Europe's elite club competition.

But Atalanta are no longer a surprise package and are favourites to advance from their group along with Liverpool, ahead of Ajax and the Midtjylland. Will they continue to thrive despite no longer being the dark horses?