

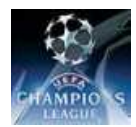


With Cristiano Ronaldo missing due to coronavirus, Rookie coach Andrea Pirlo makes a point to relative newcomers Dejan Kulusevski and Matthijs de Ligt in a training session yesterday ahead of tonight's Champions League clash against Barcelona. Miralem Pjanic, a former Juventus man, is expected to play a key role alongside the likes of Lionel Messi if the Catalans are to take away a positive result from the Allianz Stadium.

PHOTO: REUTERS/TWITTER

Juve's Ronaldo void against Barca

AGENCIES



Andrea Pirlo sees positives despite preparing for his biggest match since taking over as Juventus coach with Covid-19-stricken Cristiano Ronaldo in doubt against Lionel Messi's Barcelona in the Champions League on Wednesday.

Juventus signed Portuguese star Ronaldo in 2018 with the aim of lifting the coveted European trophy, and his absence against Messi's Barcelona could weigh heavy. The 35-year-old will need to test negative 24 hours before being allowed to feature in Turin. The return at the Camp Nou is on December 8. "We miss him right now, of course," said Colombian teammate Juan Cuadrado. "He's a champion. In these very difficult matches, his strength, his mentality and his desire shine through."

Ronaldo scored three goals for

Juventus in their first two league games, before contracting the virus while on international duty.

If Ronaldo misses his chance to line out on Wednesday he will have to wait until December to renew his rivalry with Argentine Messi. 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. They have not faced off since the Portuguese superstar left Real Madrid for Juventus, and both are running out of time to win the Champions League again.

Messi, now 33, has featured in four victorious campaigns, all with Barcelona, while Ronaldo has won it five times, four with Real Madrid and once with Manchester United.

IMMOBILE BUILDING ON FINE LAZIO START

You would never have known from their Matchday 1 performance that Lazio had been out of the UEFA Champions League for 13 years;

Ciro Immobile spearheaded a 3-1 victory over Borussia Dortmund, and the man who won the 2019-20 ESM Golden Shoe with 36 Serie A goals will hope more opportunities await against Club Brugge -- who halted an eight-game winless group stage run with a 2-1 success at Zenit last time out.

REBROV UP AGAINST HIS FIRST LOVE

Coach Serhij Rebrov will be the centre of attention as Ferencvaros play their first group stage home game since 1995. The 46-year-old sparked during two stints as a Dynamo striker, then led the club to two Ukrainian titles as coach from 2014-17. "I didn't want to have a Ukrainian team in our group, especially Dynamo," he conceded. "But I'm coach of Ferencvaros now and we'll treat them like any other opponents."

MBAPPE OUT TO END A BARREN SPELL

Paris' Kylian Mbappe was slated for

a toothless showing in Matchday 1's 2-1 loss to United; he featured on L'Equipe's cover under the headline: "Unrecognisable". The 21-year-old bagged four goals in his first four Ligue 1 games this season but is enduring the longest UEFA Champions League barren spell of his career: six matches without scoring -- so no goals in 2020. Will that sequence end in Basaksehir's first group stage home fixture?

CAN CHELSEA MAKE THEIR MARK IN RUSSIA?

Chelsea's 0-0 draw with Sevilla on Matchday 1 was overshadowed in England by United's triumph in Paris, but a clean sheet for Frank Lampard's high-profile but occasionally absent-minded team was probably worthy of more comment. Beaten soundly by Bayern in last season's round of 16, the Blues have not won a European game in 2020; will they upstage Krasnodar as the Russian newcomers play their first group stage home match?

End of a ban made tolerable by Covid-19

MAZHAR UDDIN



Shakib Al Hasan's one-year ban is set to end tomorrow, clearing the way for the star Bangladesh all-rounder to appear in all forms of cricket.

Shakib was handed a ban for two years, with the second of those suspended, by the International Cricket Council's Anti-Corruption Unit on October 29 last year for having failed to report corrupt approaches by an alleged bookie.

With the ban coming to an end, Shakib will once be allowed to appear in both international and domestic cricket and will be available for selection from tomorrow onwards. Shakib is set to return to cricket with the T20 tournament arranged by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), set to start from November 15.

BCB President Nazmul Hassan said Shakib, who is currently in the US with his family, will return to Dhaka by November 10.

Since his ban in October last year, Bangladesh have played only 14 international matches -- four Tests, three ODIs and seven T20Is -- and the coronavirus pandemic has to some extent come as a

ban, the team did not feel the absence of its talismanic cricketer as much as they would have if they had to contend with tough international assignments over the last seven months.

After his exceptional all-round performance in the 2019 ICC World Cup, followed by his leading role during the players' strike a year ago, Shakib tried to stay away from the headlines, but the cricketer remained in the news for several reasons during this period.

The star cricketer grabbed headlines by forming his Shakib Al Hasan Foundation to help people in need during the floods and also the coronavirus pandemic, auctioning off the bat that he used during the World Cup. There were controversies too as 200 workers from the Shakib Al Hasan Agro



THE INTERNATIONAL MATCHES SHAKIB MISSED

- 2 Tests against India -- November 2019
- 3 T20I against India -- November 2019
- 2 T20Is against Pakistan -- January 2020
- 1 Test against Pakistan -- February 2020
- 1 Test against Zimbabwe -- February 2020
- 3 ODIs against Zimbabwe -- March 2020
- 2 T20Is against Zimbabwe -- March 2020

Farm Limited, owned by the star all-rounder, gathered outside the farm in April and closed the Munshiganj-Nildumur road, claiming they were owed four months' wages. Shakib instructed the farm authorities to clear all unpaid dues and the matter was eventually resolved.

There was also talk about the state of his relationship with ODI captain Tamim Iqbal when Shakib declined to appear in Tamim's live Facebook chat shows citing personal reasons despite the cricketer giving interviews to various media outlets.

As Shakib's ban was nearing its end, there was much anticipation that he would make his return in an international series. The all-rounder was expected to play from the second Test of the planned Sri Lanka tour and aiming for a strong comeback, Shakib even returned from the US and started individual practice at his alma mater, BKSP.

However, the BCB's decision to not send the team to Sri Lanka due to the strict coronavirus protocols saw Shakib return to the US, and now fans are anticipating the return of the country's most celebrated cricketer in the domestic T20 competition from mid-November.

blessing in disguise for the 33-year-old cricketer and the national team.

Since March this year cricket in Bangladesh has been halted due to the pandemic and it's been more than seven months since the Tigers last played an international game. Shakib's availability from tomorrow will certainly boost the morale of the side for their upcoming international schedule.

As far as the domestic competition in the country is concerned, the dashing southpaw missed out on the special edition of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League T20 and the first round of the Dhaka Premier League, which remains suspended.

The blessing in disguise for Bangladesh is that because of the pandemic, which has eaten up seven of the 12 months of Shakib's



NADAL THE GOLFER

Two weeks after his 13th French Open title, Rafael Nadal proved his prowess in another sporting arena when he finished tied sixth in the Balearic Golf Pro-Am Championships on Monday. The 34-year-old, who boasts a handicap of 0.3, came in 10 shots behind the winner after the three day tournament in Llucmajor on his native Mallorca.

PHOTO: TWITTER

'Individually we are better than Nepal'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh national football team were once a much better side compared to their Nepalese counterparts and their six consecutive wins against Nepal from 1995 to 2005 spoke volume of Bangladesh's supremacy on the field. But the scenario has changed a lot since a single goal-defeat to Nepal in 2011.

And while previously it was a known fact that Bangladesh are a superior side, the men in red and green now have to rather claim they are a better side than Nepal, who are ahead of Bangladesh in both FIFA ranking and in terms of performance.

In their previous two meetings in SAFF Championship in 2013 and 2018, Bangladesh suffered 2-0 defeats to Nepal, who are now 17 places ahead of 187th-ranked Bangladesh. After a seven-month gap due to coronavirus pandemic, the booters have started preparation ahead of the two international friendlies against

Nepal on November 13 and 17 in Dhaka. And midfielder Sohel Rana yesterday claimed that Bangladesh are a better side than Nepal and that the last few defeats were only because of a few silly mistakes.

"If you compare Bangladesh and Nepal, we are the better side. We

lost to them due to silly mistakes during the games. We want to win both friendlies against Nepal, rectifying those mistakes," said Sohel after training yesterday.

However, the Abahani midfielder later admitted that Nepal might be better as a team but Bangladesh

boast more individual talents.

"As a team, Nepal are a good side but we, as individuals, are ahead of them. If you look back at the AFC Cup campaign, we produced good results. In that perspective, we are good at the club level competition. Besides, we can also realise that we are better than them when we play against them."

National striker Nabib Newaj Jibon had earlier claimed that the Bangladeshi players were technically better than the Maldivian footballers ahead of an AFC Cup play-off match for Abahani earlier this year. That match against Maziya SRC, however, ended in a draw.

Meanwhile, all 12 Bashundhara Kings players including Finland-born Tareq Kazi joined the camp last night. Abahani goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel was on his way to Dhaka from Chattogram while Tutul Hossain Badsha did not turn on account of tending to his sick wife.

Captain Jamal Bhuiyan, Tareq, coach Jamie Day and the other foreign coaching staff are scheduled to arrive in Dhaka tomorrow.



(From L to R) Rahmat Mia, Pappu Hossain, Yeasin Arafat and Sumon Reza -- youngsters of the Bangladesh football team -- share a light moment after a gruelling training session yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

FIFA referee Aziz no more

SPORTS REPORTER

Former FIFA referee Abdul Aziz died of cardiac arrest at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) yesterday. He was 68.

Aziz was initially admitted at BSSMU after a cardiac arrest on October 12 and had later tested Covid-19 positive.

Aziz, who started refereeing in 1974, conducted 28 international matches from 1981 to 1991 as a FIFA referee. He also conducted more than 500 domestic matches. Aziz joined Agrani Bank in 1990 before retiring in 2011.

Rohit's omission raises questions

REUTERS, undated



The extent of Rohit Sharma's hamstring injury has intrigued batting great Sunil Gavaskar after the opener was seen practising on Monday, hours after his omission from India's tour of Australia on fitness grounds.

Mumbai Indians captain Rohit missed his team's last two IPL matches currently underway in the United Arab Emirates with the injury. The selectors omitted him from both the Test and limited-overs squads and the cricket board (BCCI) said its medical team would "continue to monitor the progress" without elaborating on the injury.

Hours later, the Mumbai Indians posted a video of their captain practising "in full flow" in Abu Dhabi, which baffled many.



"We are talking about the Test matches, which are a month and a half way," Gavaskar told IPL broadcaster Star Sports after Monday's match. "If he is practising in the nets for Mumbai Indians, then honestly I don't know what kind of injury it is."

"I think a little bit of transparency, a little bit of openness about what actually is the problem with him

will help everybody." Indian team players usually don't comment on team selection matters. India and Australia will lock horns in a four-test series for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in December-January, which will be preceded by six short-form internationals.

India have named Prithvi Shaw, KL Rahul and Shubman Gill in the Test squad and one of them could partner Mayank Agarwal at the top of the batting order. Agarwal's own fitness is not beyond doubt but the BCCI was characteristically taciturn about it when naming the opener in all three squads. The 29-year-old has missed Kings XI Punjab's last two IPL matches and Gavaskar criticised the lack of clarity around Agarwal's suspected leg injury.

"For an Indian cricket fan, they ought to know what happens to two of their key players," the former India captain said.

QUIZ CONTEST

The Daily Star | STAR CINEPLEX

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Winners are requested to follow the instructions given in email

QUIZ - 06
What is the Facebook Page link of STAR Cineplex?

WINNERS LIST OF QUIZ - 05

1. Tanjia Sayed, Banasree
2. Mohammed Saddam Hossain, Jatrabari
3. Ashraful Moeen, Gulshan
4. Sabit Raihan, Rajshahi
5. Niles Saha, Noakhali Zilla School
6. Mazharul Islam Sayem, Chandpur
7. Imrozha Chowdhury, Eskaton
8. Mehedi Hasan Tusar, Nazimuddin Road
9. Farhan Sajal, Sabujbagh
10. Rubaiyat Leo, Mirpur-13