

T SPORTS

Bangabandhu T20 Cup
Dhaka v Rajshahi
Live from 1:30pm
Barishal v Khulna
Live from 6:30pm

TEN 1

UEFA Champions League

Kyiv v Barcelona
Live from 2:00am (Wednesday)

TEN 2

UEFA Champions League
Rennes v Chelsea
Live from 11:55pm
Juventus v Ferencvaros
Live from 2:00am (Wednesday)

SONY SIX

UEFA Champions League
Krasnodar v Sevilla
Live from 11:55pm
Man United v Istanbul
Basaksehir
Live from 2:00am (Wednesday)



The major attraction of the opening day of the Bangabandhu T20 Cup will be Shakib Al Hasan as the premier all-rounder is all set to make a return to competitive cricket for the first time since his ban. Meanwhile, the opposing captains for the day -- Tamim Iqbal of Fortune Barishal and Mahmudullah Riyad of Gemcon Khulna; Mushfiqur Rahim of Beximco Dhaka and Nazmul Hossain Shanto of Minister Group Rajshahi -- were all smiles as they posed for pictures during practice yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



An unyielding spirit

ATIQUÉ ANAM

An iconic footballer and sports organiser, Badal Roy lost his battle with cancer and breathed his last in Dhaka on Sunday.

Although Roy's battle with cancer was a brief one -- he was diagnosed with Stage-4 liver cancer in early November -- the national award-winning sportsperson was fighting on several fronts over the last few years.

He had successfully battled against a stroke which had left him partially paralysed in 2017, yet at the Bangladesh Football Federation, he was battling against a different sort of malaise. He raised his voice against all that was rotten in our football -- the corruption and the lack of vision, which had stunted the growth of the game since the time Roy had hung up his shooting boots some three decades earlier.

Following a prolific career of more than a decade with the Black and Whites of Mohammedan and for the Red and Green of Bangladesh, Roy turned his attention to the organisational front. He had served as manager of his beloved club on several occasions and became a joint-secretary at the BFF before serving as its elected vice-president for three terms.

Both places, though, had become corridors of power where financial considerations had long replaced those of preserving the purity of the beautiful game.

Roy had left Mohammedan -- a club which was his home as a footballer and an organiser -- more than a decade ago as the control of the traditional powerhouse went to people who had hardly any credentials as sports organisers. The revelation of the casino scandal last year



saddened him, like many of the Mohammedan players and fans of that era. He returned to the club and led the cleansing act. He believed he was winning that battle and that Mohammedan would once again emerge from the shadows of failure and squalor.

Like his beloved club, the BFF had, too, become a place more inclined to wielding power than executing footballing plans and vision. Sitting at his office at the BFF House in the last few years, he would often vent his frustration to journalists at not being able to contribute to the development of the game the way he wanted. He argued with the hierarchy all the while keeping the cordiality of the relationships which were forged on football pitches decades ago.

The last days of his life were tragic. Despite his physical limitations, he actively wanted to change the system in football, but his desire did not meet the agenda of many. He lost in the election, which seemed inevitable, yet it was probably too hard to take for a man who had won many a battle before.

The "pressure from quarters" during the election and agony of that defeat broke him down mentally while physically he was giving in to one disease after another before being consumed by cancer.

It is a sad end to a courageous and eventful life, but it should not be the end of the dreams he had fought for.

The wait is over

MAZHAR UDDIN



The wait proved to be longer than anticipated in resuming competitive cricket in the country since the coronavirus pandemic shook the entire world earlier this year.

But it is finally over. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is all set to begin the five-team Bangabandhu T20 Cup today with the participation of domestic cricketers, creating hype among the players as well as the followers.

Mushfiqur Rahim's Beximco Dhaka will take on Najmul Hossain's Minister Rajshahi in the opening game of the tournament while Mahmudullah Riyad's Gemcon Khulna will face off against Tamim Iqbal's Fortune Barishal in the days' second fixture.

Although the board arranged the BCB President's Cup last month, it was only a test-case basis before resumption of proper competitive cricket in Bangladesh.

The T20 competition will certainly bear huge importance

There's opportunity in every tournament. The last two tournaments that I played in the BPL and President's Cup, we couldn't pass the hurdle. At the same time, it is also a consistency that the last two tournaments that I played we reached the final. Our initial goal is to reach the top four and then obviously we would want to play the final.

MUSHFIQUR RAHIM

We may not have a lot of well-known players in the team but cricket is a game of uncertainties. If the strong team on pen and paper always wins the tournament then it's a different thing, but it's not like that. I am confident in the players we have; they all are capable and I hope we could start the tournament well.

TAMIM IQBAL

Everyone is saying we are a strong team on pen and paper. But I always believe that it's the performance on the field that counts, no matter how many big names you have in the team. It feels good to have Shakib back with us and we all know how important his presence is whether in an international or domestic tournament.

MAHMUDULLAH RIYAD

Whether as a captain or as a normal player, it's always important to perform. Captaincy is a different part and I will try to fulfil my duty, but I will also try to perform and score runs. I am working on scoring big. Saifuddin was a huge asset for us but unfortunately we are going to miss him for the next six-seven days.

NAJMUL HOSSAIN SHANTO

for everyone, from the organisers to the players and the cricket-lovers of the country. In this article, The Daily Star looks at some salient aspects of this tournament.

BREAKING BARRIERS

It was not going to be easy for the BCB to come up with the plan to arrange a proper domestic competition considering the coronavirus situation in the country right from the very beginning. The board opted for the slow and steady method to resume cricket and could be called successful in arranging the BCB President's Cup last month, albeit on a much lower scale. The BCB has given paramount

importance to players' safety and in ensuring bio-secure bubble, which itself is a complex process in Bangladesh's context. The board did not back down from its plans after the tour of Sri Lanka got postponed in October and the T20 tournament starting from today will be a dress rehearsal for the hosting international series against the West Indies in January next year.

RETURN OF SHAKIB AL HASAN

The Bangabandhu T20 Cup will also be the comeback tournament for ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who is back after serving a one-year ban from all sorts of

cricket, ending on October 29. The star cricketer was handed the ban by the International Cricket Council after he failed to report a corrupt approach which he had received from a bookie. There were, however, lot of talks regarding Shakib -- mostly controversies for his off-field activities upon his arrival in the country. Even Shakib would want to be in the news for the right reasons and through performances as all eyes will be on him during this tournament.

EXPECTATIONS FROM THE PLAYERS

The cricketers were desperate at one point to make a return to the

field after being 'locked down' in their homes since the pandemic began. It was an exceptional situation where the players were barred from getting on to the field -- obviously for their health safety -- but this has created a lot of hunger in every single player in Bangladesh. But it will also be important for players like Soumya Sarkar, Sabbir Rahman, Liton Das, Naim Sheikh and others who could not live up to the expectations on may previous occasions including the BCB President's Cup. Time has come for the new generation to take more responsibility and be match-winners, not just for a game but for the entire tournament.



END OF MILAN'S WAIT AND LIVERPOOL'S NEW RECORD

Headers from Roberto Firmino and Diogo Jota, who continued his streak of scoring in his first four league games at Anfield, were enough to give Liverpool a club record-setting 3-0 victory over Leicester City in the Premier League. The All Reds are now unbeaten in 64 league games at Anfield and the win took them level on 20 points with leaders Tottenham Hotspur. Meanwhile, Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored twice before picking up an injury as Serie A leaders AC Milan beat 10-man Napoli 3-1 on Sunday to record their first league win in Naples for more than 10 years.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Russian Daniil Medvedev completed a remarkable week with a 4-6, 7-6(2), 6-4 victory to land the biggest title of his career to date. The 24-year old said he wants to be part of a new series of long-running rivalries in men's tennis after beating Dominic Thiem to win the ATP Finals title on Sunday and added "exciting times" are ahead for the men's game.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Will Barcelona freeze in Kiev without Messi?

AGENCIES



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi has been ruled out of Barcelona's Champions League match against Dynamo Kiev. The Blaugrana have left the Argentine out of the 19-man squad to face the Ukrainian outfit on Tuesday.

Messi played the full 90 minutes in the 1-0 defeat to Atletico Madrid, but the 33-year-old will now miss the Group G match. Manager Ronald Koeman insists the time is right to prioritise La Liga, with the Catalan giants languishing in 12th position in the table. Midfielder Frenkie de Jong is another notable absentee despite being tipped to fill in for injured Gerard Pique at centre-back.

The Champions League returns for the second instalment of three back-to-back matchdays, with eight fixtures from Europe's elite competition on Tuesday night.

The Champions League has been a welcome distraction to the chaos continuing to unfold behind the scenes at Barcelona.

Ronald Koeman's men sit top of their group with a perfect record after the opening three games and will all but guarantee their qualification to the knockout stages with a repeat victory



PSG forward Neymar will make his return to the Parisiens attack against Leipzig after being given a 30-minute run-out against Monaco as coach Thomas Tuchel has already confirmed one name on the PSG teamsheet for the Champions League showdown. PHOTO: TWITTER

over Kyiv.

History will be on Barca's side on Tuesday night with the Spaniards unbeaten in their last three away trips to Ukraine, while Kyiv have won just one of their last 11 games in the Champions League. No team has won their group more than Barcelona -- 21 times and counting -- but if Koeman's side are well-placed in Group G, Dynamo Kyiv gave them quite a test despite losing 2-1 on Matchday 3.

Chelsea and Sevilla start the day six points clear of the bottom two-- Rennes and Krasnodar -- in the section. If the Blues prevail in France

and the UEFA Europa League holders win in Russia, both sides will be guaranteed a top-two finish.

It still feels a little strange to think of Juventus under Andrea Pirlo's leadership. The Italian playmaker was a generational talent in his pomp but not a player you might automatically assume to be a natural fit as a top-level manager.

His Juve side are still discovering their identity and four goals against Ferencvaros on Matchday 3 showed the potential of Pirlo's offensively-minded coaching style but they must rediscover their

consistency in order to mount any serious challenge for the Champions League.

The Ole Gunnar Solskjaer project was dealt a major blow on Matchday 3 as Man Utd sank to a shocking 2-1 defeat against Group H bottom dwellers Istanbul Basaksehir.

Exact revenge over their opponents on Tuesday night would see them excise the demons of Istanbul a fortnight ago -- but more importantly, could pave the way for United to secure qualification from one of the most competitive groups in this year's tournament.