

Ctg face Dhaka after opening-day thrillers

Rajshahi to take on Khulna in day's first match

SPORTS REPORTER



The thrillers that the first two matches of the Bangabandhu T20 Cup produced on the opening day on Tuesday provided much-needed succour for cricket fans as it marked the proper resumption of competitive cricket in the country since it was rocked by the Covid-19 outbreak in March.

There was drama, agony and, most importantly, some good cricket from all four teams, which

raised the bar for the coming days.

Gazi Group Chattogram will be play their first game against Beximco Dhaka in today's second game and will definitely need to hit the ground running and be prepared for some action-packed cricket.

Loaded with some of the country's most highly rated players in the likes of Mustafizur Rahman, Mominul Haque, Soumya Sarkar, Liton Das, Mosaddek Hossain and Tajjul Islam, Chattogram looks to be a good unit. Led by Mohammad Mithun, Chattogram also has

a fine blend of youth and experience from the domestic circuit.

But having the best team may not be enough, as was proved when young Najmul Hossain's Minister Rajshahi managed to thump a rather strong Dhaka, led by Mushfiqur Rahim, while defending 169.

Rajshahi's Mahedi Hasan put in a fine all-around performance where, first hitting a fifty and then bowling a magnificent last over, in which he bowled five dot balls to Muktar Ali, who had just scored 21 in the 19th over. It was his intelligent bowling and



PHOTO: STAR

Beximco Dhaka captain Mushfiqur Rahim will look for a victory after an opening-game defeat against Minister Group Rajshahi.

expert execution that condemned Dhaka a two-run defeat when they needed nine to win off the last over.

Young skipper Najmul will be oozing with confidence when they take on another big team on paper in the day's first game, the Mahmudullah-Riyad led Gemcon Khulna, who had narrowly escaped a defeat against Fortune Barisal on the opening day.

On the day that Shakib Al Hasan returned to competitive cricket, it was teammate Ariful Haque who stole the show as Khulna needed 22 off the last over while chasing 153. The hard-hitting right-hander smashed four sixes off Mehedi Hasan Miraz to clinch a scintillating victory.

Back to today's second game, Chattogram skipper Mithun said what matters most is the team that plays well on the given day.

"Before the opening day of the tournament, everyone was trying to figure out which one is the strongest team on paper. But after watching the game on the other day, it was clear that playing well on the given day actually matters. The wicket looks pretty good and if it remains the same there will be good cricket as the tournament progresses," Mithun told reporters yesterday.

From Dhaka's point of view, they will definitely look to come back strongly today and Muktar Ali will be one of the key players for them after picking up three wickets with his medium pace and almost winning the match against Rajshahi with his 16-ball 27.

Dhaka skipper Mushfiqur needs to lead the team from the front as it was his dismissal for 41 runs on the opening day that was probably the turning point.



(L-R) Soumya Sarkar and Liton Das, two of the most destructive openers in Bangladesh cricket, will pair up for Gazi Group Chattogram in their first match of the Bangabandhu T20 Cup against Beximco Dhaka today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

ICC must deliver world events

Says new chairman Greg Barclay

REUTERS, Wellington



New International Cricket Council (ICC) Chairman Greg Barclay told Reuters on Wednesday his organisation must deliver their pinnacle events over the next three years or there will be serious financial consequences for the sport.

The Covid-19 pandemic forced the ICC to reschedule three of their world tournaments, and Barclay, confirmed as chairman of the global governing body on Tuesday, said they were contracted to deliver them within the current broadcasting agreement.

"We have got to deliver the world events that are to come and those that are postponed," Barclay told Reuters by telephone on Wednesday of the agreements that expire in mid-2023. "Not just for the cricketing outcomes but there are commercial concerns as well."

The men's 2020 Twenty20 World Cup in Australia and 2021 women's World Cup in New Zealand have been moved to 2022, while the men's 2023 World Cup in India has been pushed back to later that year.

"If we fail to deliver all of those events then we will be penalised by the broadcasters and we won't receive the last of the ongoing payments," added Barclay. "That, in turn, is going to affect the ICC's ability to invest in its own programmes and enable it to make distributions to members. Unfortunately a lot of the ICC members are heavily reliant on those disbursements."

Barclay replaces interim chairman Imran Khwaja. Commercial lawyer Barclay has served as New Zealand Cricket's representative on the ICC board for the last six years.



Junior athletics without BKSP

SPORTS REPORTER

After football, handball, hockey, basketball and cricket, athletics have also joined the resumption-rally with Bangabandhu 36th National Junior Athletics Championships getting underway on an unfit track at Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS) from Friday.

It is the first competition arranged by the Bangladesh Athletics Federation (BAF) in 10 months since all sporting activities were suspended following the coronavirus outbreak in March.

Bangladesh Krira Shikkah Protisthan (BKSP), the champions of the last edition in January in Chattogram, will not be participating in the forthcoming championship due to the unavailability of players amid the shut-down of all educational institutes.

Some workers were yesterday seen doing repair works -- adjusting the edges of the damaged parts of the track by hammering pins onto it -- after the sporting body shifted the championship to BNS from Army Stadium citing financial constraints and their inability to pay bills worth Taka 20 lakhs otherwise required to stage the competition at the latter venue.

"We will be trying to save the athletes from getting injured as we are repairing the turf to bring it in good shape though the longevity of the athletic turf has already expired six years ago," BAF general secretary Abdur Rakib Montu told during a press conference yesterday.

"The athletes are really eager to take part in the championship. However, we will hold the championship in line with health guidelines," said Montu, hoping that around 500 athletes from 64 districts and eight educational boards will be taking part in 41 events.

Montu also informed that BKSP athletes are going to compete in the district-level championship as the BKSP remained closed due to the pandemic.

Barca, Juve, Chelsea, Sevilla in last 16

AFP, Paris



Juventus, Chelsea and Sevilla all claimed last-gasp wins as they qualified for the Champions League last 16 on Tuesday, while Martin Braithwaite grabbed a double in Barcelona's 4-0 victory at Dynamo Kiev as they also secured a place in the knockout rounds.

They are the first teams to make it out of the group stage, doing so with two games to spare, on a night which saw Erling Haaland, Neymar, Cristiano Ronaldo and Bruno Fernandes all get among the goals.

There was no Lionel Messi for Barcelona, with the Argentine rested for the trip to Ukraine, but Ronald Koeman's side got the job

done to make it four wins from four in Group G.

All the goals came in the



PHOTO: TWITTER/AFP

Erling Braut Haaland continued his purple patch, scoring twice in Borussia Dortmund's 3-0 win over Club Brugge while Neymar (bottom) netted the all-important goal to keep PSG in business in the Champions League with a 1-0 win over Leipzig on Tuesday night.

second half. "We've achieved our objective," said Koeman. "We looked hungry and scored four goals. Important players were able to rest and the youngsters deserved their minutes."

MORATA, GIROUD STRIKE LATE
Juventus joined Barcelona in qualifying from Group G but the Italian champions needed a stoppage-time header by substitute Alvaro Morata to beat Ferencváros 2-1 in Turin and seal their progress. Ronaldo drilled in the equaliser before half-time, meaning he has scored in 15 consecutive

Champions League seasons. Chelsea are through from Group E after edging Rennes 2-1 in France, with Olivier Giroud coming off the bench to head in an injury-time winner. Serhou Guirassy had cancelled out Callum Hudson-Odoi's breakthrough opener. Last season's Europa League winners Sevilla will not get to defend their trophy as they advanced to the last 16 of Europe's elite club competition and did so with a 2-1 win over Krasnodar in Russia, in a rare game played before a sizeable crowd.

Sevilla and Chelsea are level on 10 points but Frank Lampard's side go to Spain next week, when the winner will secure top spot.

Manchester United are in pole position in Group H after a first-half Fernandes brace set them on their way to a 4-1 victory over Istanbul Basaksehir that made up for a 2-1 defeat in Turkey last time out.

"It's a Champions League night at Old Trafford, you'd expect them to enjoy themselves. I'm pleased," United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said. Solskjaer's side are three points clear of both Paris Saint-Germain and RB Leipzig, after an early Neymar penalty gave the French side a 1-0 win over their German visitors.

HAALAND'S FRIGHTENING RECORD

Borussia Dortmund need just one more point to qualify from Group F following a 3-0 win over Club Brugge as the prolific Haaland netted twice either side of a Jadon Sancho free-kick in Germany.

Haaland has 16 goals for the season, and has now scored 16 Champions League goals in just 12 appearances -- Messi had two goals and Ronaldo none after the same number of appearances. In the group's other game, Lazio beat Zenit Saint-Petersburg 3-1, a result which eliminated the Russians.



'Damage control aim against Qatar'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin hopes the national team will do their best to control the damage when they take on Qatar in a World Cup qualifier in Doha on December 4.

The men in red and green are in Doha for the away match against the Asian Champions, whom they managed to keep to a 2-0 win in the first leg last year on a rain-soaked pitch at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

"Qatar is the number one team in Asia. There is actually no comparison to be made between the two sides. I will hope the boys will play good football as I have less expectation from them because they have just started playing football three weeks ago after eight months' gap," Salahuddin said yesterday.

"If I say very gently or softly, damage limitation is now our purpose. Not as the president but as a former player, I think damage control is our main job against Qatar," Salahuddin added.

The BFF president also believes the absence of head coach Jamie Day, who is still in Bangladesh due to being Covid-positive, will have a big impact on the team.

"Jamie's absence against Qatar will have a big impact on the team. Bangladesh can't apply the same style against Qatar which they did against Nepal. It will be a different technical and tactical game against Qatar and I am doubtful about how the assistant coach will change tactics in the match," said Salahuddin.



(L) India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah shares his wisdom with youngster Kartik Tyagi ahead of Friday's first ODI against Australia while veteran New Zealand batsman Ross Taylor hones his batting skills during training ahead of Friday's first T20I against West Indies.

PHOTO: TWITTER/AFP



Lewa heads FIFA Best shortlist

REUTERS, Unltd



For the Game. For the World.

Bayern Munich's treble-winning Robert Lewandowski joined regulars Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi on the shortlist for The Best FIFA Men's Player award, world soccer's governing

body announced on Wednesday.

Lewandowski was top scorer for Bayern in the Champions League (15 goals), as well as the Bundesliga (34), and was a firm favourite for the Ballon d'Or award before it was scrapped this year for the first time in its 64-year history because of the novel coronavirus.

However, the Polish striker can still lay claim to being the best player if he picks up the FIFA award, which will be presented at a ceremony on Dec. 17.

His former team mate and current Liverpool midfielder Thiago Alcantara was also nominated.

Joining them on the shortlist are Champions League runners-up Paris St Germain's forwards Neymar and Kylian Mbappe while Liverpool's Premier League winning trio of Mohamed Salah, Virgil van Dijk and Sadio Mane also made the cut.

Manchester City midfielder Kevin De Bruyne, the Premier League's player of the year last season, also made the shortlist as did Real Madrid captain Sergio Ramos.