

WHAT TO WATCH

T SPORTS

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

TEN 1

UEFA Europa League  
Lille v AC Milan

Live from 11:55pm

Rangers v Benfica  
Live from 2:00am (Friday)

TEN 2

UEFA Europa League  
CSKA-Sofia v Young Boys  
Live from 11:55pm  
Napoli v Rijeka  
Live from 2:00am (Friday)

SONY SIX

Lanka Premier League  
Colombo Kings v Kandy Tuskers  
Live from 8:00pm  
UEFA Europa League  
Cluj v AS Roma  
Live from 2:00am (Friday)



## TOUCHED by the hand of God



PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS/TWITTER

SAMAMA RAHMAN

"I am black or white. I'll never be grey in my life."

Among the many observations that the world made about Diego Maradona, the one spoken by the man himself may hold truest.

He scored the winner with the most beautiful goal in World Cup history in the 1986 semifinal against England, but scored the equaliser minutes earlier with what he famously described as: "a little with the head of Maradona, and a little with the hand of God".

After reaching dizzying heights as a youngster in South America, he moved to Barcelona for a world record fee in 1982. But after suffering a broken ankle against Atletico Bilbao in his first season, Maradona, who would face xenophobic and racist insults against Bilbao in the second game, snapped. He initiated a brawl and was sold to Napoli, a club from one of the poorest

cities in Europe at the time and in the middle of a financial crisis. When asked what he expected, he replied: "Peace. The peace that I never had at Barcelona. And, above all, respect."

The locals, who were said to have loved Napoli more than their children, welcomed the most expensive player in the world with aplomb and a team that had never won Serie A would claim it twice, adding a Coppa Italia and a UEFA Super Cup by 1990.

When Maradona's love for the excess saw him become close to the boss of the Comorra crime family, Carmine Giuliano, Naples did not bat an eye. His cocaine addiction would also be overlooked and Maradona would be mobbed by bystanders wherever he went, all vying to declare their affection.

In 1990, Maradona would play through injury and captain Argentina to the World Cup final



in Italy, eliminating the hosts in the semifinals and fueling the hatred that those outside Naples harboured. The final ended in a 1-0 defeat to West Germany.

He would fail a drug test for cocaine shortly after and would leave Napoli in 1992 after a 15-month ban. He then fired

an air rifle outside his home in Buenos Aires at journalists and photographers, injuring four in February 1992. The 1994 World Cup would feature a further failed drug test and signalled the end of an illustrious career but headlines about the man, myth and legend would continue.

His managerial career was as colourful and eventful as his playing days, with trips to Mexico, UAE and even a change at managing the La Albiceleste at the 2010 World Cup. His friends included everyone from Freddie Mercury to Fidel Castro to Magic Johnson. A running war-of-words with Pele and his antics at the 2018 World Cup in Russia will also remain highlights.

Mauricio Pochettino, a youngster rooming with Maradona at the time of his attack on the journals, maintains: "I promise you, if he arrived here and opened the door we'd all be in love with him."

For all of the times that he has let the world down, his charm holds a unique timelessness. He will never be black or white, there is far too much of a consequence to painting him in either light. But now, finally, he will be at peace. And that is all he truly ever asked for.



"One day we'll kick a ball together in the sky above. I have lost a dear friend, and the world has lost a legend. One day, I hope, we will play soccer together in the sky."

PELE

"He leaves us but does not leave, because Diego is eternal. I keep all the beautiful moments with him and send my condolences to all his family and friends. RIP."

LIONEL MESSI

## 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 Taijul 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 Barishal 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.

