

**T SPORTS**

Bangabandhu T20 Cup  
Barishal vs Rajshahi  
Live from 1:30 pm  
Chattogram vs Khulna  
Live from 6:30 pm  
**TEN 1**  
Australia vs India

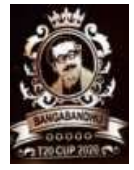
**Third T20**

Live from 2:10 pm  
UEFA Champions League  
RB Leipzig vs Manchester United  
Live from 2:00 am (Wednesday)  
**TEN 2**  
UEFA Champions League  
Zenit vs Borussia Dortmund

Live from 11:55 pm  
Barcelona vs Juventus  
Live from 2:00 am (Wednesday)  
**SONY SIX**  
UEFA Champions League  
Chelsea vs Krasnodar  
Live from 2:00 am (Wednesday)

## Tigers' pace race heating up

SPORTS REPORTER



The pace bowling department has always been one of Bangladesh's weaker suits of cricketing arsenal, with the fast men generally struggling to make a mark at home or abroad.

Pace bowlers are also more susceptible to injuries and that also makes it harder for them to sustain improvement over the long term, but things seem to be changing.

In October this year, Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo informed that he is looking to develop a good group of seven to eight fast bowlers who can play all formats and perform both home and abroad.

Over the past two months,



PHOTO: TWITTER

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Not without the usual fun and camaraderie

Eight of the top 10 wicket-takers in the BCB President's eight were fast bowlers, with Saifuddin leading with 12 wickets in four games.

The trend continued in the Bangabandhu T20 Cup. The pacers are dominating the wicket-takers' list and making a huge impact behind their teams' successes.

There have been quite a few young seamers emerging from various sources such as the age-level, high-performance and also from the domestic circuit, creating healthy competition in the fast-bowling department.

The likes of Khulna's Shohidul Islam and Rajshahi's Mukidul Islam are among the top performers in the ongoing tournament, bagging eleven wickets each. The list of up-and-coming pacers goes on with

Sumon Khan, Hasan Mahmud, Shoriful Islam, Mehedi Hasan Rana, and Shafiqul Islam are also in the reckoning for national places.

The emergence of such young talents however will keep the likes of Mustafizur, Taskin, and Abu Jayed on their toes to perform and lift their standards.

Mustafizur, to the relief of national selectors, has been doing just that as he returned to his groove after being sub-par in recent times. The left-arm seamer has looked in good shape and regained some of his accuracy, which makes his famed cutters all the more lethal. The Fizz has showed his class in the ongoing Bangabandhu T20 Cup and is the highest wicket-taker so far with 13 in five games.

Another highly-rated seamer, Taskin, also impressed as the pacer

has been generating good pace and more importantly, he is now more consistent with his line and length.

Meanwhile, among all the young and aspiring seamers, a big test awaits for a wily old fox in former Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who is all set to play for Gemcon Khulna after recovering from a hamstring injury.

The Tigers' highest ODI wicket-taker, Mashrafe has been gearing up for a comeback to competitive cricket since he quit the captaincy in March this year.

It will be a different battle for the 37-year-old this time around as Mashrafe will have to prove his worth as a pace bowler, without the added value of captaincy, to be an attractive option for national selection in the upcoming West Indies series in January.

## Two titans renew rivalry tonight

AGENCIES



Lionel Messi's rivalry with Cristiano Ronaldo has enthralled football for the better part of a decade, and the pair will duel for potentially the final time when Barcelona host Juventus in the Champions League tonight.

Ronaldo and Messi haven't exactly been on the friendliest of terms, ever since the pair emerged as the two best players on the planet around a decade ago, a status they have essentially kept locked down ever since.

Any mention of the two men in the same breath generally evokes a discussion of which one is greater, but that is an argument rather the fans always enjoy the rivalry that has given so much joy over the years.

some of the Champions League's biggest sides.

While Group G is cut and dried, Group H is anything but, with Manchester United, PSG and RB Leipzig are all tied on nine points. But with PSG playing bottom-of-the-table Istanbul Basaksehir, this RB vs United tie has the feel of a one-off cup final for a place in the knockout phase.

"We are very aware that the next game will be difficult," insisted Neymar after Matchday 5's 3-1 success at Old Trafford, but if a point at home against eliminated Basaksehir spells certain qualification for Paris, coach Thomas Tuchel remains wary: "Almost qualified isn't qualified." Leipzig and United are level with Paris on nine Group H points meaning any winner in their meeting would qualify; both sides have been unpredictable this season, and both could go through with a draw if Paris



**MESSI V RONALDO IN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE**

Messi's sides have had the better of their European games against Ronaldo's teams: W2 D2 L1.

Messi has scored three Champions League goals against Ronaldo's teams.

Messi has scored three times in six UEFA Champions League games against Juventus.

Ronaldo is yet to score against Barcelona in 450 minutes of UEFA Champions League football.

**CHAMPIONS LEAGUE (OVERALL)**

Name	Matches	Goals
Lionel Messi	146	118
Cristiano Ronaldo	173	132

**BARCELONA V JUVENTUS IN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE: HEAD TO HEAD**

Matches: 12, Barcelona won: 5, Juventus won: 3, Drawn: 4, Barcelona scored: 15, Juventus scored: 10

lose. In short: it's tight.

Club Brugge honoured coach Philippe Clement's promise that they would "go all-in" against Zenit on Matchday 5, a 3-0 win setting them up for an improbable mission: beat Lazio in Rome and the Belgian champions will qualify at their hosts' expense (and set a new club record of ten points in a Champions League group stage).



PHOTO: BFF

## UNBRIDLED JOY FOR MAGURA

Players of the Magura team are ecstatic after beating Rangpur 3-1 in the final of the JFA U-14 National Women's Football Championship at the Liberation War Memorial Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday. Nabiran Khatun scored twice while Arpita Biswas scored the third goal for Magura after Khadiza had given Rangpur the lead. Nabiran was adjudged player of the final while Arpita scooped the top-scorer's award. Subarna Khatun of the same team bagged the player of the tournament award.

## Eng-S Africa ODI series postponed

REUTERS, CAPE TOWN

England's One-Day International series against South Africa has been postponed amid concerns over the mental and physical health of the players, Cricket South Africa (CSA) and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said in a joint statement on Monday.

The announcement comes after the players were subjected to a number of Covid-19 scares with potentially five cases inside the teams' bio-secure environment in Cape Town, with one South Africa player and two hotel staff confirmed as positive.

Two members of the England tour party also have "unconfirmed positive results" that require further investigation, the ECB said on Sunday.

## 'Never knew it could feel that good'

REUTERS



An emotional Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp said the return of the club's fans to Anfield after a nine-month absence gave him goosebumps as they witnessed a 4-0 thumping of Wolverhampton Wanderers on Sunday.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the club's faithful had not been able to see their team play in their famous old stadium since March 11, when Liverpool were dumped out of the Champions League by Atletico Madrid, but on Sunday 2000 Reds fans roared them on to victory.

"Wasn't it the perfect night? Imagine 10 months ago people would have told us we would have a game and 2,000 people would turn up," he told broadcasters Amazon Prime.

"When we came out, we all had goosebumps. I had no idea how it would feel. It was perfect. The noise, what the people did, they were on their toes, you could see and feel and smell. They had waited so long for it," he said.

The 53-year-old enjoys a great relationship with the club's fans, and despite the team's success on the field during the pandemic, he has clearly missed playing in front of them.

"The game, the atmosphere, it was so nice. I had goosebumps. They started 'You'll Never Walk Alone' - really nice. I never knew it could feel that good," Klopp said, his voice welling up with emotion.

"This (the pandemic) started in February, and we were waiting to get normality back. Normality is good - I don't think we appreciated it as much. It was very very touching," he added.



Tottenham Hotspur's strike duo of Harry Kane and Son Heung-min both scored in Sunday's 2-0 derby victory over Arsenal while Liverpool were clinical in their 4-0 thrashing of Wolverhampton Wanderers, celebrating in front of their fans at Anfield for the first time since they won last season's title.

PHOTO: REUTERS/TWITTER

## Muktijoddha battling for survival

SPORTS REPORTER



Falling football power Muktijoddha Sangsad were once in acute financial crisis to form a squad during the second edition of the professional football league in 2008 after the then caretaker government froze their bank account. But devoted footballers like Firoz Mahmud Titu, Rokonuzzaman Kanchan, Saifur Rahman Moni decided to sign for the freedom fighters' side without taking any signing money, bailing out the club that time.

In that journey, Muktijoddha Sangsad, who won the Dhaka Premier League in 1998 and 2000 before winning the national league once, just about avoided relegation, thanks to the sacrifice of those players who also motivated junior players by arranging money from sponsors.

More than a decade later, the club is still mired in financial crisis and yet again struggling to form a squad for the upcoming professional league, with the transfer window set to close on December 15 and season set to start on December 22 through the Federation Cup.

During this long period of struggle for survival, no system has developed inside the club and there



is virtually no management to look after the football team, which once drew a lot of attention as the third force in country's football behind Abahani and Mohammedan. Each season the club struggles to collect fund to form squad and the crisis deepened after its club tent in Gulistan was shut down by law enforcement agencies last year on allegation of running illegal casinos.

Hearing the poor condition of the club, its former striker Kanchan regretfully said, "We once played for Muktijoddha without payment to save the club and paved the way for the next generation of footballers. The club still owes me Tk 30 lakh. It is really painful that Muktijoddha Sangsad can't stand properly because of some people who are not honest."

According to Ariful, Muktijoddha Sangsad need nearly Tk 1.80 crore for the payment of players including four foreign recruits as well as for running the camp for the duration of the season. He also added that the players will get 50 percent of last season's contract money which is worth Tk 1.20 crore.

However, Bangladesh Football Federation and its senior vice-president Abdus Salam Mursheedy are trying to convince top management of the club after a group of footballers appealed to save the club.

"We have already talked to the management of the club, who informed us that they have financial problems" Mursheedy said. "However, we are hopeful that Muktijoddha Sangsad will play in the Federation Cup in the month of victory because the name of Muktijoddha is involved with our emotion, liberation and many other things."

Mursheedy said that they are also trying to convince high-ups of the government to allocate some fund for Muktijoddha Sangsad.