

# SPORT

## Riyad hunts for rhythm

SPORTS REPORTER

The final round of the Bangladesh Cricket League's four-day competition, which begins Sunday, is going to be important for a number of national players.

Opener Imrul Kayes for instance will hope he can continue his good run following a brilliant Pakistan series; Soumya Sarkar will want to better learn the art of the longer version cricket. Simultaneously, an under pressure Anamul Haque will fight the two lefties in order to get back his opening position in the national team.

However, as far as personal battles go, few can eclipse the one that Mahmudullah Riyad is enduring at the moment.

The feats that Bangladesh's World Cup hero achieved in Australia and New Zealand earlier this year will no doubt be etched in the memories of many, however what seemed concerning was the way his form dropped barely a month later.

Riyad had scores of 5, 17 and 4 in the ODIs against Pakistan, and averaged 8.66 with the bat -- his second lowest in a three-match ODI series and only the fourth time that he averaged below 10 in his career.

The batsman, who whipped New Zealand's pacers in their own den without an ounce of fear, lost his timber on all three occasions.

Aware of the threatening scenario, Riyad is doing all he can to get his rhythm back. He was one of the few players to hit the nets at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in the last few days and considers the last round of the BCL as one of his biggest opportunities.

"There's no doubt that the last round of the BCL will be important for everyone. I play every match very seriously, but honestly, I hope to do something more in the upcoming four-day match. I hope that I can utilise this round and prepare myself in the best possible manner," Riyad told The Daily Star over phone.

"During the last series, I had plenty of hope. I was in such good form. But unfortunately it didn't work out for me. I want to play a big innings in the last round and get my rhythm back. I am confident I can do that," he added.

Riyad was described by many as Bangladesh's unexpected hero in the World Cup, since he wasn't in the best form going into the World Cup. Ever since his two consecutive centuries, expectations have increased tenfold. Will that affect the player's form against a full-strength Indian outfit next month?

"The 29-year-old certainly doesn't think so. This is a fresh series. What happened in the World Cup and against Pakistan is over. I am not thinking about those matches.

"The good news for us is that India have opted to send their full-strength team. This will only encourage us to player our best cricket. We will be very happy if we can put up our best display against a top team in this series," said Riyad.



PHOTO: STAR FILE

Mahmudullah Riyad reckons that the final round of the BCL could help him get his rhythm back for the India series which begins with a Test match in Fatullah on June 10.

## Volleyball takes centre stage

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh are aiming to reach the final of the DBBL Asian Senior Men's Central Zone Volleyball Championship, which begins at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Dhaka today.

The hosts will take on Maldives in the opening fixture of Pool B today, with Kyrgyzstan and Nepal being the other two teams of this pool. Pool A consists of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Top two teams from each pool will advance to the semifinals of this seven-nation championship.

Bangladesh, who have never played against any national team beyond the South Asian region, will have the unique opportunity to rub shoulders against the higher-ranked Central Asian nations in the first-ever international volleyball tournament to be held in Bangladesh.

"We have been out of international tournament for the last five years. So it is a good opportunity for the players to earn some experience and make this tournament a memorable one by playing in the final," hoped Bangladesh coach Emdadul Haque on eve of the championship.

Bangladesh squad consists of 12 play-

ers, out of whom only three have experience of playing international any tournament which they got from playing in the 2010 SA Games.

"We are trying to play modern volleyball which is practiced worldwide and we are hoping to implement that in this tournament," said Emdadul. "If we can play the way we have been practicing since February 12, we can hope to produce good results."

The coach informed that they have come out of the traditional W-formation and inserted new three-four men reception while sometimes keeping three to five attackers active during the game.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Volleyball Federation (BVF) has taken all necessary steps to make the championship a success. The Asian Volleyball Confederation's first vice president Essa Hamzah Alfailakawi, India's volleyball federation president Chaudhary Avadhesh Kumar and Iran's volleyball federation president Dr Davarzanil are expected to be present during the opening ceremony today.

BVF president Atiqul Islam informed that the federation are bearing all the expenditure of the Nepal team, who had initially decided to pull out of the championship following the devastating earthquake last month.

## Kane leads dominant Kiwis

AFP, London



Kane Williamson's unbeaten 92 rounded off a fine day's work for New Zealand in the first Test against England at Lord's on Friday.

The Black Caps ended the second day well-placed at 303 for two, just 86 runs behind England's first innings 389.

Williamson and Ross Taylor had so far shared an unbroken stand of 155 after coming together when the tourists had lost two wickets with their score on 148.

But Williamson was given a reprieve late in the day when he went down the pitch to off-spinner Moeen Ali on 92 only for Jos Buttler to miss the stumping chance.

Earlier, Martin Gupthill made 70 in his

first Test in two years and was well-supported by Tom Latham (59) during what was just New Zealand's fifth century opening partnership in a Test in England.

The 24-year-old Williamson drove down the ground impressively and also used the cut shot to good effect in the first of this two-match series.

His fifty came in good time, off 78 balls with six fours.

England resumed on 354 for seven, having been 30 for four on Thursday before a 161-run fifth-wicket stand between Root and Stokes revived the innings.

But they lost their final three wickets for just 37 runs in 10.5 overs.

Left-arm paceman Trent Boult and debutant fast bowler Matt Henry leading the way.

England might have seen the back of both New Zealand openers when

they were each in the 20s.

Gupthill was on 24 when he edged debutant fast bowler Mark Wood to Cook at first slip, but an umpire review to check for a no-ball showed he'd overstepped the crease by a fraction.

After lunch, Latham was dropped on 21 by Ian Bell at second slip off Stokes.

But England took two wickets for no runs in three balls shortly before tea.

Ali succeeded where the quicks had failed by having left-hander Latham lbw.

Next over, 148 for one became 148 for two when Gupthill carelessly drove Stuart Broad low to Gary Ballance.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: 389 all out in 100.5 overs (Root 98, Stokes 92, Buttler 67; Boult 4-79; Henry 4-93)

NEW ZEALAND: 303 for two in 77 overs (Gupthill 70, Williamson 92\*, Taylor 47\*; Broad 1-42, Ali 1-52)



Pakistan opener Mukhtar Ahmed brought joy back to Pakistan, scoring 83 off 45 to get his side going against Zimbabwe at Lahore yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Pakistan win as cricket returns

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan celebrated international cricket's return after six years with a hard fought five-wicket win against Zimbabwe in the first Twenty20 international at a packed and security-tight Gaddafi Stadium on Friday.

The win doubled the joy for the hosts as the match brought international cricket home for the first time since attacks on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore in March 2009.

Strict security was in place with 4,000 policemen on duty, but that did not stop cricket-deprived fans from packing the 27,000 capacity stadium.

Pakistan opener Mukhtar Ahmed hit a maiden half century during his rapid 45-ball 83 to help Pakistan achieve their best Twenty chase in 19.3 overs and take a 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

Zimbabwe captain Elton Chigumbura hit eight boundaries and a six in his 35-ball knock during his career best 54 to lead Zimbabwe to an imposing 172-6 in their

20 overs after electing to bat.

Mukhtar, playing only his second international game, gave Pakistan a sound start with an opening stand of 142 with Ahmed Shehzad who made a 39-ball 55 with six boundaries and a six.

Mukhtar hit 12 fours and three sixes before he edged spinner Greame Cremer behind the wicket.

Shahid Afridi hit the winning runs, a boundary over the bowler, after a mini-collapse.

Sami, playing his first international match for three years, dismissed Raza to finish with 3-36.

The second Twenty20 will be played on Sunday in Lahore.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

ZIMBABWE: 172 for six in 20 overs (Masakadza 43, Chigumbura 54; Sami 3-36 Riaz 2-38)

PAKISTAN: 173 for five in 19.3 overs (Mukhtar 83, Shehzad 55; Vitori 1-24, Cremer 2-28)

Man of the match: Mukhtar Ahmed

Result: Pakistan won by five wickets

## Chennai reach sixth IPL final

SPORTS REPORTER



The Chennai Super Kings went into the final of the IPL with a nail-biting three wicket win over Royal Challengers Bangalore in Ranchi, with just one ball to spare to make a record sixth appearance in an IPL final, where they will meet the Mumbai Indians. Bangalore struggled throughout their innings, with Chris Gayle finishing with a team high 43 runs. Although his strike-rate of 95 was a testament to the nature of the Challengers' lacklustre innings, who eventually managed only 139 runs courtesy of a late flourish.

Chennai did not seem too keen on winning the game either. They understandably bided their time, but the slow run-rate was weighing on them.

Bangalore's top-order, barring Chris Gayle, failed spectacularly. Virat Kohli, AB de Villiers and Mandeep Singh put on just 17 runs -- with one boundary -- as Ashish Nehra ran amuck. Gayle however, managed two 4s and three 6s.

Michael Hussey, opening for Chennai, spent the entirety of his knock looking for a steady partner, but other than a 40-run stand with Faf du Plessis, no help arrived. Hussey hit two 4s and three 6s during his knock, before departing for 56.

With Chennai needing just four runs to win, they lost both Pawan Negi and Dwayne Bravo in Starc's over, although Negi was run out. MS Dhoni was hoping to steer his side home, but he was gone with one run still needed. However, Ravichandran Ashwin came in and took a single off his first ball to secure victory.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

CHENNAI: 140 for seven (Hussey 56, Chahal 2-28)

BANGALORE: 139 for eight (Gayle 41, Nehra 3-28)

Man of the match: Ashish Nehra

Result: Chennai won by three wickets

## Dizzy almost a done deal

AFP, London

Jason Gillespie will accept the England coach's job if offered the position after positive talks with Andrew Strauss brought the Australian a step closer to replacing Peter Moores.

Gillespie is understood to have been persuaded by Strauss to take the job, although a formal offer has been made yet.

The Adelaide Advertiser, Gillespie's home-town newspaper, reported that England would make an announcement on Tuesday.

Gillespie also revealed that he has held talks with Andrew Strauss about succeeding Peter Moores as England coach.

"I've spoken to Andrew and the ECB about the vacant position," he told Sky Sports News. They made it very clear they're chatting to a number of people of interest, so they'll let us know what the process is in due course. At this stage there's nothing more to say. It was face-to-face with Strauss and we had a good chat," said Gillespie.



BCB directors and officials from Robi Axiata Limited, the new sponsors of Bangladesh national cricket team, address reporters in Mirpur on Thursday. The telecom company will sponsor the Tigers for the next two years. PHOTO: COURTESY

## IN A NUTSHELL

### Kohli ahead of Ronaldo, Messi

AGENCIES, London

British Sports business magazine 'SportsPro' has named Indian cricketer Virat Kohli as the six most marketable athlete of this year ahead of the likes of sprint king Usain Bolt and football superstars Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo.

The monthly magazine has placed Kohli just a rung below British Formula One reigning world champion Lewis Hamilton while Brazilian football superstar Neymar was named second while, Canadian tennis player Eugenie Bouchard topped the list.

Below Kohli was United States basketball star Stephen Curry, followed by Japanese tennis player Kei Nishikori. Bolt was number 10.

Tennis player Novak Djokovic was placed at 14 while Ronaldo and Messi were at 16th and 22nd respectively.

The rankings do not reflect the current state of affairs, rather they project marketability over the next three years.

### Fab 4 gets windfall

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Indian cricket's former legends Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Sourav Ganguly and VVS Laxman will get a one-time benefit of Rs 1.5 crore, according to reports. The decision was taken in BCCI's finance committee's meeting on Thursday in Chennai.



The 'fab four' will be given the sum by the BCCI for their immense contribution to Indian cricket.

The BCCI is also planning to introduce a graduation system for women cricketers and the salary of junior cricketers is expected to be increased.

However, all the members didn't agree with the proposal and they have been asked to come forward with something concrete in the next meeting to address the issue.

The BCCI's profit has come down in the last two years and subsequently the players' income, too, has come down. There was a proposal to fix the players' income so that they don't suffer even if the board doesn't make enough profits.

According to reports, the BCCI's financial committee slammed IPL franchise Chennai Super Kings' valuation of Rs.5 lakh and said that the team has cheated the board.

In a board meeting on Thursday, CSK's valuation was discussed and the panel has promised of action by early next week. On Thursday it was also learnt that the BCCI expenditure on legal matters in the last two years went up to Rs.56 crore.

### Wembley bombed!

AGENCIES, London

This weekend's English promotion playoff finals will go ahead at Wembley stadium as planned despite an unexploded World War II bomb being discovered nearby, officials said.

The device was discovered by builders working at a site near the stadium and posed "a genuine risk to life", according to the Army. Homes and businesses nearby were evacuated.

Middlesbrough face Norwich City in the Championship playoff on Monday with a place in the Premier League at stake.