

SPORTS



DREAM COME TRUE: Germany's Angelique Kerber poses with the US Open trophy and her newly-won status as world No. 1 after beating Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic in the final at Arthur Ashe Stadium in New York on Saturday. PHOTO: REUTERS

WHAT THEY SAID

A fantastic year: 2 Grand Slams, Olympic silver medalist, new World No. 1! Congrats, @AngeliqueKerber #USOpen
-Bastian Schweinsteiger
Wow wow wow. Congrats!!
-Nico Rosberg
Just woke up to see @angeliquekerber won the @usopen - congratulations on your 2nd Grand Slam and to @kapliskova for doing Czech proud!

The calm before the storm

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's national players might have complained about the lack of international cricket for the last seven months or so, but following the Eid break the scenario is set to change completely.

With so many matches scheduled in the coming months, the Tigers will want to make the most of their week-long holiday, because it does not seem like they will be able to enjoy too many over the next year.

After they return to Dhaka, the players will kick-start the new season with the National Cricket League (NCL) and the Afghanistan series, both of which are scheduled to begin on September 25.

While a number of the national Test players will be involved in the first two rounds of the NCL, the other national players will be busy playing against Mohammad Nabi and co. The three ODIs against Afghanistan will take place on September 25, 28 and October 1.

Meanwhile, England are scheduled to arrive in Dhaka on September 30. They will begin the tour with two ODIs in Dhaka on October 7 and 9 respectively. They will then travel to Chittagong to play the final ODI on October 12. By November 1, the two Tests against England will be over. In the meantime, the domestic players will get done with the NCL.

Three days on, and the cricketers, both national and domestic, will be busy with the Bangladesh Premier League, the most high-profile T20 competition of the country. With seven franchises taking part in the competition this time, the league is expected to run for at least five weeks.

By the time the BPL ends in December, the national players will need to gear up for their New Zealand series, where they will be playing three ODIs, three T20Is and two Tests from December 26 to January 24.

After the New Zealand series the national players will probably get a week-long break at the most. Because they will need to get ready for the Hyderabad Test against India which is set to take place from February 8 to February 12.

The first real breather for the national players, as per the current schedule, is expected to arrive after the India series. As of now, the Tigers do not have any series scheduled between February 12, 2017 and May 12, 2017.

However, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), according to reports, is trying to arrange a series against Sri Lanka during this three-month period. It is still not certain if it will be a home or away series. During this break, the BCB is likely to host a domestic tournament as well, which will further keep the cricketers busy.

From May 12, 2017 to June, 2017, Bangladesh will be involved in a tri-nation series involving Ireland and New Zealand and the much awaited Champions Trophy in England.

And as per the Future Tours Programme, the tours do not just end there. In July, Bangladesh is expected to host Pakistan. In August they might go to Australia and in October they are likely to go to South Africa.

'Always believed in my weapons'

AFP, New York



Angelique Kerber didn't quite know what to say.

Still glowing from a US Open semi-final win that propelled her to her third Grand Slam final of the year, on the same day her cherished dream of gaining the world number one ranking came true, the 28-year-old German was gently chided for being just a little too "predictable" in describing the emotional roller-coaster of her day.

"I don't know what you want to hear," Kerber said with a smile, graciously deflecting the question with the same ease she shows in blasting a forehand back at an opponent.

It's a skill she's honed over the course of a stellar 2016 campaign that saw her knock off Serena Williams in the Australian Open final in January, reach the Wimbledon final in July and, on Saturday, claim a second Grand Slam title at the US Open.

Long established in the top 10, with seven WTA titles before her Grand Slam breakthrough at the age of 28, she is now celebrated by her country's biggest sports stars as one of their ranks, plaudits pouring in from the likes of Manchester United star Bastian Schweinsteiger, NBA great Dirk Nowitzki, Formula One driver Nico Rosberg and even International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach.

Through it all Kerber has maintained her down to earth demeanor.

She said her first call after her Australian Open triumph would be to her grandparents in Puszczkwo, Poland, where they run the Centrum Tennisowe Angie tennis academy and where the Bremen-born Kerber is now based.

Coming from a tennis family, she first picked up a racquet at the age of three. During her rise she's been encouraged by childhood idol Steffi Graf, and after a worrying dip in form in early 2015 turned to the German great for help.

She credited training with Graf in Las

Vegas, where Graf lives with husband Andre Agassi, with helping her turn things around.

But she's at pains to point out she's never wanted to model herself on the German superstar.

"She's a great champion," Kerber said. "For me, it's really important to go on my own way."

She's done that with the help of coach Torben Beltz, who guided her through one of her best seasons in 2012 and was re-hired in 2015 after she split with Benjamin Ebrahimzadeh.

She said Beltz and the rest of her team helped her focus on how to make the leap this season.

"We spoke about 2016, playing better in the majors and in the bigger tournaments and playing consistent," Kerber said.

"This is what I changed this year. I was always believing my weapons and about my tennis."

Supremely level-headed on the court, Kerber is light-hearted off it, and her legion

of social media fans delight in the selfies of Kerber dancing in the streets of New York or scuba diving in the Maldives.

Her ability to stay on an even keel is hard-won, something she's learned to do only after years of letting her frustrations run away with her cost her matches.

"I lost a lot of matches with this stuff, because I was frustrated," Kerber said.

"When I missed one shot I was like thinking about the shot the next few minutes and few shots."

Her ability to shake off those negative feelings was on full display in Flushing Meadows, where she fell a break down in the third set before defeating Karolina Pliskova 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 to lift the title on Saturday.

"You have to believe in your dreams," she said.

"You have to go with a lot of patience, working hard, have a great team around you and love what you are doing."

"This is when everything comes together one day."

'Touring the right thing to do'

STAR SPORT DESK



England's third-highest Test wicket-taker Stuart Broad on Sunday publicly announced, through his column in the

Daily Mail, that he will go on the tour of Bangladesh which has been marred by security fears after a gruesome terror attack on a Gulshan cafe on July 1 claimed the lives of 20 civilians.

"It has been a really difficult decision about whether to tour Bangladesh but on balance I believe it's the right thing to do and I have told the ECB [England and Wales Cricket Board] that I am ready to go," wrote Broad.

A three-man ECB security delegation led by head of security Reg

Dickason conducted a security tour of Bangladesh in August reported back to the ECB, who green-lit the tour based on their assurances.

"The ECB have assured us it is



STUART BROAD

safe to go and people's jobs will depend on keeping us safe. That is a big commitment, they've put their

necks on the line to an extent and Reg Dickason, the head of security, is a man I trust and who has unrivalled knowledge of this area.

"I've known Reg for a very long time and he's never let any of us down before. We all trust he's giving us the right advice and will ensure we're properly looked after. He's a big player in this," Broad said in his column.

"It's going to be a tough tour, no doubt about it. But, after a long summer of deliberating, once it was decided an England team would definitely be going following the security recce a couple of weeks back then I was always going to go."

He also talked about winter 2008 when the England team went back to India within a week of the Mumbai terror attacks.

"A few of us have been in this position before when we went back to India in 2008 following the Mumbai attacks. I thought it was right to go back to India in 2008 and I think it meant a lot to India," he wrote, adding: "Bangladesh are hugely passionate about cricket and their fans have always been very welcoming. I'm satisfied it's the right thing for the tour to go ahead."

Broad, who is set to play his 100th Test match in the two-Test series in Bangladesh in October, also revealed that he is recovering from a stress reaction in his left ankle but said that he expects to be fit for the tour.

"I'll start bowling again in a couple of weeks. I'm looking forward to being fully fit by the time we leave for the Bangladesh Tests."

BD women end series on high

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's national women's cricket team ended their tour of Ireland on a positive note as a hatrick from leg-spinner Rumana Ahmed led the visitors to a tense 10-run win over the hosts at Belfast on Saturday.

By winning the third ODI, Bangladesh won the series against Ireland. The third ODI was not initially in the schedule. However, since the first two ODIs were washed out, the authorities mutually decided to add one more game. While Bangladesh won the ODI series 1-0, they lost the T20I series 1-0.

Rumana became the first Bangladeshi woman to scalp a hatrick and end up with excellent figures of three for 20 in 7.5 overs to help the visitors defend a below-par 106. Batting first, Bangladesh crumbled to 25 for 5 initially. Ireland's medium pacer Amy Kenealy ran through the top order with figures of four for 32. From there on, Sanjida Islam scored 33 and with a string of partnerships took Bangladesh past the 100-run mark.

After the exchange, Ireland began quite well and looked destined for victory. Meg Kendal and Cecelia Joyce scored 52 runs for the opening wicket. However, once that partnership broke, Ireland crumbled. At 84 for four, Rumana came in and proceeded to send back Kim Garth, Clare Shillington and Mary Waldron -- all trapped leg-before -- in successive deliveries. Eventually Ireland were dismissed for 96 when Ciara Metcalfe was run out in the 38th over.



Leg-spinner Rumana Ahmed's hatrick -- the first in international cricket by a Bangladesh women's cricketer -- helped her side beat Ireland by 10 runs in the third ODI to claim the series 1-0. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Karolina vows to keep attacking

AFP, New York

Karolina Pliskova vowed not to turn her back on her all-or-nothing game despite it falling short in her three-set defeat to Angelique Kerber in Saturday's US Open final.

The 24-year-old Czech lost 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 to the new world number one but she came tantalisingly close to a maiden Grand Slam win when she led 3-1 with a break in the decider.

In the end, her 47 unforced errors -- a consequence of her big-hitting approach -- proved her undoing.

"You have the pressure that she's going to ace you four times in a game, but you still have to be aggressive and hit winners, otherwise I cannot be the one who is running with her," said Pliskova.

"I cannot play 30 times across the net. It's gonna just kill me. I just have to go for my shots."

Pliskova had defeated both Serena and Venus Williams to reach the final.

But Kerber proved too steady an obstacle -- in the first set, the 28-year-old committed just three unforced errors.

Pliskova said that the fact Kerber is left-handed was also a key factor in the way the final played out.

It's a style that she found hard to counter even though her twin sister Kristyna, a fellow player on the tour, is also left-handed.

"I didn't play a lefty girl in this tournament. She's always serving to the backhand. You cannot do much from it. Then she has the whole court open," said Pliskova. "There aren't many left-handed girls in the top 100, so there is no time where you can practice against a lefty. It's always tough to play them."

'Xavi is irrelevant'

AGENCIES, Madrid

Cristiano Ronaldo used his post-match interview following his goalscoring return against Osasuna on Saturday to hit back at former Barcelona midfielder Xavi's comments that he would never compare to Leo Messi.

Xavi said earlier this week: "Ronaldo is extraordinary but compared to Messi, there can be no comparisons. Messi will be number one until he wants to stop. He's superior to everyone."

Given, the chance, Cristiano didn't hold back in responding: "Everyone knows that if they want to get on the front page they have to speak about me. He [Xavi] doesn't have any Ballon d'Ors and I have three."

He went on: "Why is Xavi relevant? He plays in Qatar or I don't know where. I'm the most searched-for sportsman on social media."

Concert to kickstart Sylhet leg

SPORTS REPORTER



Preparations are being taken to make the eighth and ninth rounds of the JB Bangladesh Premier League in Sylhet a success, organisers informed at a press conference in the capital yesterday.

The first five rounds of the ninth edition of top-tier professional football league were held in Chittagong and Mymensingh, with decent crowds in attendance. However, a shift to Dhaka, where the sixth round was held last month, witnessed the usual empty stands.

With the eighth and ninth rounds coming up in Sylhet, the marketing rights holders of the league, Saif Global Sports, are hoping that the turn-out in Sylhet will be big.

"The league has been very competitive this time and we haven't seen any clear favourites as yet," Tarafder Ruhul Amin, the chairman of Saif Global Sports told reporters at the press conference.

we are taking different initiatives. The first match-day on September 25 will be preceded by a concert on September 23 at the venue which will be attended by the league's brand ambassador Mumtaz Begum, popular singer Ayub Bachhu and other artists. The ticket price has been fixed at Tk 200."

The organisers have also promised to make the telecast more audience friendly, with new technologies introduced. They are also hoping to wrap up the league within December and start the next edition within February next year.

At the end of the first six rounds, four teams share the top position with 12 points each: Muktiyoddha Sangsad, Rahmatganj MFS, defending champions Sheikh Jamal DC and four-time champions Abahani are followed by Chittagong Abahani on 11 points while last year's runners-up Sheikh Russel KC are bottom of the table with a single point.

The seventh round will be held from September 19 to 21 in Dhaka while the eighth and ninth rounds will be held in Sylhet from September 25 to October 1.

42ND CHESS OLYMPIAD Women lose, men win

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh men's team bounced back from a poor string of results with a 4-0 point win against South Korea in the eighth round of the 42nd Chess Olympiad in Baku on Saturday. GM Niaz Murshed, GM Ziaur Rahman, GM Abdullah Al Rakib and IM Minhazuddin Ahmed won their respective boards to move up to the 53rd position in rankings.

Bangladesh were scheduled to play 16th seed Croatia in the ninth round.

Meanwhile, the women's team lost by 1.5-2.5 points against Austria in the eighth round. They were scheduled to take on lightweights Hong Kong on Sunday night.