

## SPORT

Hardened sides  
look to hit  
their strides

SPORTS REPORTER

Soumya Sarkar, the Rangpur Riders icon player, has scored just 77 runs in six matches but will fortune turn in his favour when the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) returns to the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today after a stint in Chittagong?

The left-hander will desperately be looking to bounce back from his prolonged bad patch and try to regain confidence ahead of the demanding New Zealand tour in December-January.

His return to form will definitely help Rangpur Riders stay at the top position but his team will once again rely heavily on the spin trio of Shahid Afridi, Arafat Sunny and Shohag Gazi to continue their surge. On the other hand, their icon player Soumya is yet to click. Mohammad Shahzad and Mohammad Mithun have however lent some solidity at the top and Afridi looks confident of providing the finishing blows.

It will basically be a contest of two confident sides when Rangpur faces off against Rajshahi Kings. Rajshahi have played six matches for four points; two points ahead of the bottom-placed Comilla Victorians, but they lost two close matches in Chittagong and will definitely try to cash in on that confidence to get back into contention.

"We are now at the top spot but still we have enough matches, so you can't say anything. In T20 there is no big or small team but the main concern is that of minimising the mistakes in the middle," said Arafat Sunny yesterday.

In the second match of the day the second-placed Khulna will be looking to extend their lead when they meet Barisal Bulls, who lost all of their three Chittagong-leg matches.

All eyes will be on the two Barisal batsmen Mushfiqur Rahim and Shahriar Nafees and whether they can get back their rhythm to bring Barisal back to winning ways.

"We could not perform as per our expectations in Chittagong. Our main target would be to bring back the winning momentum. We discussed about our mistakes, so we are hopeful that we can correct those and start the Dhaka-leg with a win," hoped Nafees.

"Now the tournament has arrived at a tough juncture because every team played against each other and has enough ideas about their opponents. And T20 is a very cruel format where you don't get enough time or chances to correct your mistakes. So the important issue is to make sure you are not making too many mistakes in a match," he added.

In the end however, fans will be most interested to see if the Chittagong run spree continues in Dhaka. The first phase in Dhaka saw an average first-innings score of 144 runs in 13 matches, while the Chittagong leg has had more fireworks with an average first innings score of 161.

The organisers will also hope that the larger crowds in Chittagong is also seen in Mirpur from today.

BSF ignores  
Shila again

SPORTS REPORTER

South Asian (SA) Games double gold medallist Mahfuza Khatun Shila was once again ignored as the Bangladesh Swimming Federation (BSF) selected Mahfizur Rahman Sagor for a high performance training programme in Bangkok.

The year-long training programme, sanctioned by FINA, will begin in Thailand from January.

"Shila was not selected because her recent performances were not good. Besides, coach Park Tae Gun suggested that Sagor be sent," BSF general secretary Rafiq Uddin told reporters.

However, Park Tae Gun refused to take the responsibility, saying that he had no clues about the selection and that the federation took such decisions.

Despite being disregarded for international tournaments several times, Shila responded strongly as she won two gold medals in the SA Games earlier this year.

She also won a silver medal in the recently concluded SAARC Aquatic Championships in Sri Lanka while Sagor, who bagged seven bronze medals in the SA Games, won a bronze medal in the same competition.

Sagor was also selected for an 18-month long advanced training programme in Thailand as part of preparations for the Rio Olympics, but the swimmer could only improve his time by 0.45 seconds after training for one-and-a-half years.



RIVALRY-IN-LAW: When the Bangladesh Premier League returns to Dhaka today, the evening match will feature two brothers-in-law -- Khulna Titans captain Mahmudullah Riyad (L) and Barisal Bulls skipper Mushfiqur Rahim -- facing off at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

PHOTO: FIROAZ AHMED

## POINTS TABLE

Teams	M	W	L	Pts
Rangpur Riders	6	5	1	10
Khulna Titans	7	5	2	10
Dhaka Dynamites	7	4	3	8
Chittagong Vikings	8	4	4	8
Barisal Bulls	7	3	4	6
Rajshahi Kings	6	2	4	4
Comilla Victorians	7	1	6	2

## Fabulous Faf stuns booing Adelaide

REUTERS, Adelaide



South Africa skipper Faf du Plessis silenced the boos of the Adelaide crowd with a defiant century before declaring on 259 for nine and giving his bowlers a crack at Australia in the final hour of the opening day of the day-night third Test on Thursday.

Australia got through the final 12 overs without loss but the declaration prevented Dave Warner from opening the batting as he was off the field towards the end of the South African innings.

Matt Renshaw, one of three new caps in the Australia side, and Usman Khawaja faced the new pink ball instead but they were only able to put 14 runs on the board and will resume on eight and three respectively on Friday.

Du Plessis's timely declaration capped what must have

been an extremely satisfying first day for the South African, who came to the crease to catcalls with his side tottering at 44 for three but departed to an ovation after hitting 118 not out.

Two days after being fined for ball-tampering during the second Test victory that sealed the series with a match to spare, du Plessis showed just the sort of grit and determination that Australia have been looking for from their batsmen.

The hosts have far fewer concerns about their pace attack and Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc and the recalled Jackson Bird earlier showed why with a fine display of fast bowling that had the first seven batsmen caught behind the wickets.

Hazlewood took four for 68, while Starc and Bird pitched in with two wickets each as the Australian quicks bowled disciplined lines with the pink ball on the Adelaide track.

Du Plessis had won the toss and decided to bat first but

Australians.

He put on 32 with Quinton de Kock for the sixth wicket before Hazlewood served up another peach of a delivery to send the wicketkeeper back for 24, with Vernon Philander (4) following soon afterwards.

It was just after the end of his 54-run partnership with Kyle Abbott (17) that he secured his sixth Test hundred with two runs to fine leg off the 147th ball he faced.

As South Africa entered unfamiliar territory in their first night session in Test cricket, du Plessis put on another 39 runs with debutant left-arm finger spinner Tabraiz Shamsi before bringing an end to the innings.

SCORES IN BRIEF

**SOUTH AFRICA:** First innings 259 for 9 decl (Cook 40, du Plessis 118 not out, de Kock 24, Abbott lbw b Bird 17, Shamsi 18 not out; Starc 2-78, Hazlewood 4-68, Bird 2-57)

**AUSTRALIA:** First innings 14 no loss (Khawaja 3 not out,

A declaration  
of intent

STAR SPORT DESK

The third Test may have started with the bad aftertaste of a ball-tampering row but it only steeled the man at the centre of it all, South Africa skipper Faf du Plessis, to do all that was in his power to set Australia on the back foot and possibly condemn them to their first ever series whitewash at home.

He did that on the first day through a fabulous century that rescued his team from 44 for three, but he also utilized his role as captain to twist the knife in further.

Australia opener David Warner had just returned to the field after seeking treatment off the field on an injured shoulder.

Under cricket's rules, a player must be on the field for the same time they spent off it before being able to bowl or bat again -- in Warner's case, he was caught short.

"I listened to the conversation he had with the umpires -- one ear talking to the batter, one ear listening to him," du Plessis told AFP.

"And then I heard he had six minutes left before he could bat again so I thought 'let's have a crack'."

Du Plessis showed his captaincy smarts by upsetting the Australian team's plans as they had to reshuffle their opening pair with Usman Khawaja having to join Test debutant Matt Renshaw at a testing period to stumps.

"It was just for me to take them a little bit out of their comfort zone and put someone else to open



PHOTO: REUTERS

South Africa skipper Faf du Plessis rose to the challenge and scored what he considers his best Test century on the first day of the third Test against Australia in Adelaide yesterday.

the first session went decisively to the hosts.

Dean Elgar, Hashim Amla and JP Duminy were dispatched for five runs apiece after opener Stephen Cook had earned a reprieve when Starc trapped him lbw only for the TV replay to show the left-armed had overstepped the mark.

Cook was unable to add to his series-best tally of 40 after the tea break before edging Starc to Steve Smith in the cordon and when Temba Bavuma (8) got an outside edge to a Bird delivery, the tourists were 117 for five.

As on his Test debut at the same ground in 2013, when he hit 110 not out to help South Africa bat out four and a half sessions for a draw, it was left to du Plessis to frustrate the

Du Plessis passes  
test of character

AFP, Adelaide

It had been a tumultuous few days for South Africa skipper Faf du Plessis, who was found guilty of ball-tampering by the International Cricket Council after he was caught on camera sucking a mint and rubbing saliva into the ball during last week's second Test against Australia in Hobart.

Given all the drama from his much-publicised appearance at the hearing it was a remarkable effort of concentration and will for du Plessis to conquer the Australian bowlers and post his sixth Test century, one he rates as his best.

"My best. Everything. What was required to get to this point now. Surprisingly, technically, I was the best this whole series. I felt really good, but in the context of everything else, (it was) the best," he told reporters.

"I was really motivated. I felt it needed a character test, and the only way I could do it was by scoring runs."

But du Plessis, who was booed by the home crowd as he came out to bat with his team wobbling at 44 for three, was dismayed by yet more booing when he reached his courageous century off 147 balls.

"I was expecting a little bit of hostility, but not to that extent," he admitted.

"When I came out to bat I was obviously quite aware of it and as the innings went on it disappeared a bit.

"But to be really honest when I got to 100 I wasn't expecting to still get booed, so that was pretty disappointing."



Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (L) and opener Tamim Iqbal (R) receive crests in recognition of their contribution to tax revenues at the NBR's new headquarters in Agargaon yesterday.



PHOTOS: STAR

## NZ eye end to 30-yr dry run

Kiwis dealt Boult blow on eve of 2nd Pakistan Test

AFP, Hamilton



Misbahul Haq.

New Zealand have a chance to seal a first series win against Pakistan in more than 30 years in the second Test in Hamilton with the tourists without talisman

The home side also suffered a blow on the eve of the second Test when bowling spearhead Trent Boult was ruled out on Thursday with a knee injury.

The seventh-ranked Black Caps go into the match which begins Friday 1-0 up in the two-Test series following a comprehensive eight-wicket victory over second-ranked Pakistan in the opening Test in Christchurch.

A win or draw in Hamilton will be enough for New Zealand to notch their first series win over Pakistan since 1985 and only

their third ever in 22 series. The last time they met six years ago in Hamilton, New Zealand lost their last eight wickets for 50 runs to be beaten by 10 wickets.

Wahab Riaz took three wickets in that onslaught and comes into contention for this Test.

Apart from the likely inclusion of Wahab, Pakistan were revealing little about the make-up of their side for a pitch that generally offers pace and reverse swing, with some turn as the match progresses.

New Zealand have spinner Mitchell Santner back in their squad after recovering from a wrist fracture while Dean Brownlie was recalled as cover for Ross Taylor after a growth was detected in his left eye.

However, late Wednesday the 77-Test veteran was cleared to play in Hamilton, although he will undergo surgery afterwards.