

# SPORT



Bangladesh's fit-again coach Jamie Day (R) watches as goalkeepers put in a shift during their training session at the BGG Ground in Cox's Bazar yesterday ahead of today's semifinal of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup against Palestine. (Bottom) The top-seeded Palestinians also had a training session at the same venue. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED/BFF

## Day boost for booters

Take on favourites Palestine in the second semifinal today

ANISUR RAHMAN from Cox's Bazar

The return of Bangladesh head coach Jamie Day in the tactical area for today's Bangabandhu Gold Cup semifinal against Palestine will surely serve as a motivational boost to the men in red and green. Day even conducted a vital training session just after being discharged from the hospital yesterday morning.

The match will get underway at 2:30pm at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Ruhul Amin Stadium in Cox's Bazar. The venue, already muggy after yesterday's rain, is likely to be further affected as the low over the bay intensified into a cyclone yesterday.

The 38-year-old coach's sudden health concern jeopardized everything the home side have worked for so far as the semifinal clash with Palestine loomed overhead. However, Day's return to the dugout came as



a big relief for everyone. In particular, the players were surely the most relieved as they can now concentrate fully on the game at hand. Bangladesh have performed well at the international level for the last two months under the Englishman's stewardship.

"I'm fine. I had a little bit of chest pain, which is nothing major. The treatment has been very good here, ECG and other scans, everything is very good. Now I'm looking forward to the game," said a smiling Day at the team hotel after returning from the

hospital yesterday afternoon. The match against favourites Palestine is not going to be an uphill task for the hosts even though Bangladesh have never beaten the side in their three previous meetings. Bangladesh did however hold the superior side to a 1-1 draw in their first ever encounter in Dhaka but that was 12 years ago. Besides, Palestine, who are placed at 100th in FIFA Rankings, are ahead of Bangladesh in every aspect, such as their physique, skills, techniques, and pace. Hence, Day is

mulling over whether to switch up his 4-4-2 formation to create a compact backline and midfield by playing a lone striker.

Day believes that Bangladesh have everything needed to turn the match's tide in their favour at their disposal following the team's great performances against Laos and the Philippines. However, Day is also aware of Bangladesh's limitations upfront and knows that goal scoring will be the aspect that separates the sides.

"The boys are ready for the game. We need to score to win and hopefully we can do it tomorrow. We know it's going to be a tough game," Day said. "Palestine are a very good and strong side, so probably we will have to choose the strategy that will suit us best to get a result from the game."

Having termed the home side as underdogs, captain Jamal Bhuiyan vowed to give a tough time to the visitors.

"Of Course Palestine are favourites to win the match but it is our home ground and we have to do our best," said Jamal, who emphasized on how negotiating Palestine's set-pieces and using small tricks to avoid conceding will be crucial.

Meanwhile, coach Day faces another conundrum in selecting his starting eleven, especially after the team's performance against the Philippines in the group stages, and so, a couple of regular players may even be dropped in a bid to counter Palestine accordingly.

## 'We don't understand'

SPORTS REPORTER



There was a demand for someone professional to speak about the current medical condition of Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan's infected left hand for which he is currently undergoing treatment in Melbourne. Instead, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan held a lengthy press conference on the issue and by the end the picture seemed even murkier.

The one bit of actual news that seemed to emerge from the press conference at his residence yesterday was that Shakib evidently told Hassan on Monday that surgery was not needed on his left little finger. Shakib had however told reporters on Sunday that the pain would have to go down miraculously after the two-month medication for surgery to be avoided.

"He told me that the doctor prescribed three months of rest, and then he can play. I asked about the operation... that everyone is telling me that there is no use doing the surgery," Hassan said. "He also said the same, that there is no use doing the surgery. So the thing I heard at first still holds true."

A bit of background: Shakib injured his left little finger in January this year, resumed playing a month later in the Nidahas Trophy (a decision the president said yesterday was influenced by him depositing his passport for the IPL -- "If he had decided to play, why not play earlier?" Hassan queried), returned from the tour of West Indies in August and said that he would prefer to have surgery before the Asia Cup the following month. Hassan had then said that he would prefer that he had the surgery later. Shakib eventually played, and four matches into the tournament returned home with a swollen and infected left hand, which had to have around 60 milligrams of pus removed at a city hospital.



NAZMUL HASSAN

With the apparent mismanagement of Shakib's injury, there has been radio silence from BCB's medical staff and physio Thihan Chandramohan, who allowed him to keep playing in the Asia Cup. Hassan has filled the vacuum and, although his stated preference for Shakib to have the surgery after the Asia Cup is recorded fact, seemed to remember events a little differently. He recounted a tale of how Shakib consulted him in Makkah and Medina when both were performing Hajj in late August. The upshot of the nine-minute long story was that even after Shakib said that the physio gave him the go-ahead to play with the injury, Hassan had suggested that Shakib consult a doctor and take a decision.

The rest of it was an exposition of how clueless the BCB was about the injury and at times defensive utterances that shifted culpability from the president to Shakib.

"We cannot understand how the infection had happened," Hassan said. "He received an injection on the West Indies tour, someone had suggested it -- we don't know who he asked about it and we don't know how it could have happened. No one is saying that it is because of that injection. If he had mild infection from before then the steroids may have aggravated it."

"We could have understood it if he had complained about pain after playing [during the Asia Cup] or if he got hurt while playing and aggravated it. Then you could have asked me why I asked him to play," Hassan said, ignoring the fact that Shakib had played numerous deliveries and stopped numerous balls with his hands while fielding.

"If for his satisfaction he wants to have surgery, he can do that."

Before joining the team for the Asia Cup, on September 5, Shakib had told The Daily Star that he was only 20-30 per cent fit and did not know of other big players who play with injuries like this.

## 6-star Bilal rocks Australia

AFP, Dubai



Test debutant Bilal Asif snatched six wickets to spark a spectacular Australian collapse from 142 for 0 to 202 all out and put Pakistan in firm command of the first Test in Dubai on Tuesday.

The 33-year-old off-spinner finished with 6 for 36 as his efforts, the third best figures for a Pakistani bowler on Test debut, derailed Australia on a pitch which started to assist spinners on the third day. He also became the oldest player in the last 50 years to take five wickets on debut.

Despite being jolted by spinner Jon Holland's two key wickets of Mohammad Hafeez (17) and Azhar Ali (four), Pakistan closed the day on 45 for 3, having an overall lead of 325 with seven second-innings wickets intact to force a win.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: First innings 482  
AUSTRALIA: First innings 202 all out (Khawaja 85, Finch 62, Abbas 4-29, Asif 6-36)  
PAKISTAN: Second innings 45 for 3 (Imamul 23 not out, Hafeez 17; Holland 2-9)



Debutant off-spinner Bilal Asif's six-wicket haul put Pakistan in the driving seat on the third day of the first Test in Dubai yesterday. PHOTO: ICC

### HIGHLIGHTS

Rajshahi's opening batsman Mizanur Rahman continued his brilliant form in the domestic circuit as the right hander struck his second consecutive century of the National Cricket League before being dismissed on 165 runs. The 27-year-old had struck three consecutive centuries in the previous edition of the tournament and his performances this time around will surely catch the selectors' attention in the coming days.

Young Nazmul Hossain Shanto, who had a horrible ODI debut in the recently concluded Asia Cup in the United Arab Emirates, has surely gained some confidence as the left hander struck his sixth first-class hundred. Nazmul, alongside Mizanur, added 311 runs for the opening wicket, providing Rajshahi the platform to take a huge lead against Rangpur before being dismissed on 173 runs.

Shadman Islam is considered as the next longer version specialist and in turn, the left hander continues to prove his ability to score big knocks. After his 157-run knock in the first round, the 23-year-old smashed his second consecutive hundred of the tournament, remaining unbeaten on his career best score of 186 runs. Shadman will surely look to register his maiden double hundred on the third day.

## Batsmen return to the fore

SPORTS REPORTER



On the second day in the second round of the 20th National Cricket League (NCL), the batsmen once again returned to the fore with a total of three centuries being scored yesterday.

Among the three hundreds, two came from Rajshahi openers Mizanur Rahman and Nazmul Hossain Shanto in their Tier-1 match against Rangpur at the Sheikh Kamruzzaman stadium in Rajshahi.

Resuming the day on 99 without loss, both Mizanur and Nazmul went on to strike their respective centuries, helping Rajshahi take control of the game. Rajshahi ended the day on 419 for two and now lead the four-day match by 268 runs after Rangpur were all-out on just 151 runs in their first innings.

The pair added 311 runs for the opening wicket before Nazmul was dismissed on 173 runs off 313 balls, laced with 23 fours, while Mizanur was eventually out on 165 runs off 216 balls, his second consecutive hundred of the league, featuring 22 fours.

In the Tier-2 encounter at the Khan



Centurions Mizanur Rahman (L) and Nazmul Hossain Shanto shared a 311-run opening partnership as Rajshahi took a huge lead against Rangpur during their NCL match in Rajshahi yesterday. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah, Shadman Islam also struck his second consecutive hundred of the league for Dhaka Metropolis, who are heading towards a big lead against Dhaka Division.

Shadman, who scored his highest first-class tally of 186 runs off 313 balls

including 21 fours and a six, will resume the third day with his sights set on his maiden double ton. Dhaka Metropolis ended the day on 312 for 4.

At the Sheikh Abu Naser stadium in Khulna, the hosts are in a spot of bother in their encounter with Barishal as they ended on 199 for 6 and trailing by 100 runs.

Khulna kept losing wickets at regular intervals in the Tier-1 match, where Mohammad Mithun's 72 was the highest score for the batting side. After resuming the day on 266 for 8, Barishal were all-out on 299.

Meanwhile, in the other Tier-2 fixture between Chattogram and Sylhet at the Sheikh Kamal International cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar, rain forced an end to the entire day's play without a single ball being bowled.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**KHULNA v BARISHAL**  
BARISHAL: First innings 266 for 8 in 90 overs

**KHULNA:** First innings 199 for 6 in 75 overs (Mithun 72, Ziaur 46 not out; Kamrul 2-26, Gazi 2-58)

**RANGPUR v RAJSHAHI**  
RANGPUR: First innings 151 all out in 59.4 overs (Naeem 60;

Mohor 3-37, Farhad 3-39)  
**RAJSHAHI:** First innings 419 for 2 in 116 overs ( Nazmul 173, Mizanur 165; Ariful 1-56)

**DHAKA DIVISION v DHAKA METRO**  
DHAKA DIVISION: First innings 206 all out in 75 overs

**DHAKA METROPOLIS:** First

innings 312 for 4 in 102 overs (Shadman 186 not out, Ashraf 49; Shahadat 2-54)

**CHATTOGRAM v SYLHET**  
CHATTOGRAM: First innings 282 for 9 in 87 overs (Sadik 106, Nasir 84; Shahanur 3-58 Jayed 2-53)

Day 2 cancelled due to rain.

## Shakib's infection in control

SPORTS REPORTER

There was finally some good news in the saga surrounding the injury to the left little finger of Shakib Al Hasan as test results yesterday indicated that the Tigers' Test and T20I skipper's infection was under control.

Shakib, who is currently undergoing treatment in Melbourne, was relieved but the 31-year-old will have to continue antibiotics and injections for the next few days.

After finishing the course, doctors will decide what the next step in his treatment will be.

The cricketer is expected to be released from hospital on Sunday and it is also expected that he will return to Bangladesh the same day.

However, doctors have strictly told Shakib that he will be unable to hold the bat for the next three months. The good news is that if the pain subsides completely during this three-month period then the left-hander may not require any surgery.

However, even if there is the slightest pain then there will be no alternative to surgery. The all-rounder will begin his rehabilitation after returning to Bangladesh.

Shakib flew to Australia on October 5.