

<b>What to WATCH</b>	<b>GTV, CHANNEL 9 &amp; STAR SPORTS 1</b> <b>India v Bangladesh</b> <b>First Test, Day-1</b> <b>Live from 10:00am</b>	<b>BANGLA TV</b> <b>FIFA World Cup qualifier</b> <b>Oman v Bangladesh</b> <b>Live from 9:00pm</b>	<b>TEN 1</b> <b>International friendly</b> <b>Bulgaria v Paraguay</b> <b>Live from 11:00pm</b> <b>Euro 2020 qualifier</b> <b>France v Moldova</b> <b>Live from 1:45am (Friday)</b>	<b>TEN 2</b> <b>Euro 2020 qualifier</b> <b>Turkey v Iceland</b> <b>Live from 11:00pm</b> <b>England v Montenegro</b> <b>Live from 1:45am (Friday)</b>	<b>SONY SIX</b> <b>Euro 2020 qualifier</b> <b>Portugal v Lithuania</b> <b>Live from 1:45am (Friday)</b>	<b>SONY ESPN</b> <b>Euro 2020 qualifier</b> <b>Ukraine v Estonia</b> <b>Live from 11:00pm</b>
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# Bangladesh face Oman in ‘toughest match’

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh national football team will look to put up another spirited show when they square off against Oman in their fourth match of the World Cup qualifiers at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat today.

Satellite channel Bangla TV will telecast the match live from 9:00pm Bangladesh time.

Bangladesh, the lowest-ranked side in Group E and sitting at the bottom with two defeats and a draw, showed character in the last two matches against Asian champions Qatar and neighbours India despite only managing a single point from those two games.

They would like to carry the momentum against a team 100 places above them Oman in FIFA ranking and it will be the first FIFA/AFC-sanctioned official match between the two sides even though they met in the Quid-e-Azam International tournament in Pakistan in 1982, with Oman winning that encounter 3-1.

“I think in the previous two games, we have played really well and the performance of the players has been fantastic. This will be our toughest match so far as this is a very good side and we are away from home,” Bangladesh coach Jamie Day said on the eve of the match.

“It’s all extremely tough for our players to keep performing against teams that are technically better than us like they have done so far, but I want to try and reach the levels we have done recently,” Day added. The English coach might have some worries regarding fatigue to some of the players and he was not entirely happy despite a 3-1 win over Muscat Club in the practice match, which he termed ‘a sloppy performance’.

The 40-year-old coach is, however, determined to keep the same approach from the two previous games.

“As we have done in every game, [I want the] willingness to work hard, be organised and play



**Bangladesh coach Jamie Day (2nd from L) shakes hands with his Omani counterpart Erwin Koeman as Bangladesh skipper Jamal Bhuiyan (L) and Oman goalkeeper Al-Habsi look on at the pre-match press conference in Muscat yesterday.**

PHOTO: BFF

with a good tempo,” Day said. “All we can do is keep creating chances and work on finishing in training.”

Oman play pressing football with the wingers whipping in crosses relentlessly. They are also good in set-pieces and very quick on the break. When asked whether Bangladesh can stop Oman’s forwards, Day said: “It is going to be a tough task but we have prepared well and will try to get the plan right for the match.”

“It will be fantastic if we can get a good level of fans in the stadium; that will definitely encourage the players,” hoped the English coach, who is likely to start with the same eleven players who started

against India last month.

Oman coach Erwin Koeman was confident of closing the gap with leaders Qatar by notching up a victory against Bangladesh following their 2-1 defeat against the Asian champions.

“We will play against Bangladesh tomorrow but it is all about us. We will make the game because we will have a lot of box sessions and try to get the space [behind the backline] and avail the chances. It is an interesting game, but we know how to play,” said Koeman, who alongside his younger brother Ronald Koeman, won the 1988 European Championship for Netherlands.

# This team isn’t scared of anyone: Titu

SPORTS REPORTER



Football has not had much of a following even over the past year, but the scenario in Bangladesh has changed drastically in recent times. What was once the fans’ game of choice has again started capturing their attention, especially after the national team’s scintillating performances against Qatar and India in the joint qualifiers of World Cup and Asian Cup. Although Bangladesh are still bottom in the five-team table, with only one point from three outings, there have been a lot of changes, most significantly to their mentality, under coach Jamie Day. Expectations are also running high before the tough match against Oman and Saiful Bari Titu, one of the country’s top coaches, analysed the different aspects of both sides ahead of today’s tie.

**OMAN’S STRONG POINTS:** Oman will have the home advantage along with their height advantage. Another plus is that they are good tactically and technically. They also have a big advantage in taking chances because they are good at finishing. Their striking duo of Abdul Aziz Al Muqbali and Arshad Al Alawi have combined for five goals in their last three matches.

**BANGLADESH’S STRONG POINTS:** Bangladesh’s strongest aspect is the way they played in the past two matches. The performance against India definitely boosted their confidence but it is important to not be overconfident. Bangladesh have nothing to lose. Instead, the boys should have the strong mentality that they can secure points. The team has already developed a good mentality and are not afraid of anyone. It is now a changed national team, which is really different compared to previous national teams.

**OMAN’S WEAK POINTS:** Oman have only one weak point, which is their high line. Bangladesh will get spaces behind their

defence and have to exploit them when they get opportunities on the counter. India also showed that the proper planning from set pieces could earn a goal against Oman. That is another weak point.

**BANGLADESH’S WEAK POINTS:** The weakest point is conceding goals at the last moment. Oman are good from set pieces, so Bangladesh have to ensure good marking. The finishing of Bangladesh’s forwards is also poor. They should have taken a 2-0 lead against India but poor finishing deprived them of a victory. So, the boys must not squander the opportunities they get in counter.

**OMAN’S STYLE OF PLAY:** Oman generally play high-pressing football in a 4-2-3-1 formation. Sometime they switch to a 4-4-2. Oman build up attacks from the flanks and their wingers are good enough to whip in well-judged crosses. Four to five players, including the holding midfielder, join their attacks and puzzle opposing defences and they are even more devastating than Bangladesh on the counter attack.

**BANGLADESH’S STYLE OF PLAY:** Bangladesh also play the same formation, 4-2-3-1, and sometimes switch to a 4-1-4-1 with Nabib Newaj Jibon up front. Bangladesh defend the opponents in their own half and they now have cohesive team defending as the right back and right winger and left-back and left winger play in partnerships. Bangladesh’s 4-1-4-1 also gives them the numerical advantage over Oman’s three-man midfield. Bangladesh can easily stop their playmaker, Mobarak.

**PREDICTION:** Oman are clear favourites on their home ground and ahead of Bangladesh in terms of strength and FIFA ranking. If Bangladesh want to return home with points, they must avoid any unforced errors in the match and give maximum effort. Most of all, the boys must believe in themselves. However, they have to avoid conceding early goals.

## Bangabandhu Gold Cup deferred

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has deferred the Bangabandhu Gold Cup international football tournament by one month, confirmed BFF president Kazi Salahuddin yesterday.

“Bangabandhu Gold Cup will be held but not this year. It will be held in early January of 2020 as there is no difference between holding the tournament in November and January,” said Salahuddin, who had earlier given green signal for hosting the tournament from November 21 to 30 with the participation of four teams. It has, however, been learnt that the number of participating teams will increase.

ASIAN WOMEN’S VOLLEYBALL

# BD fight back to beat Kyrgyzstan

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh fought back to beat Kyrgyzstan in 3-2 sets in their fourth match of the Bangamata Asian Senior Women’s Central Zone Volleyball Championship yesterday, setting up a third-place deciding match against the same team today.

The women in red and green lost the first two sets by 25-9 and 25-15 points, but they bounced back strongly to take the next three sets by 25-21, 25-17, 15-11 points at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium.

“After the first two sets, I told the players not to break down, rather rectify the mistakes. I told them we would win in five sets,” Bangladesh coach Golam Rasul Mehdi told reporters after the match.

“I will identify the mistakes of today’s game and we will work on those. Hopefully we will win the place-deciding match to finish third,” the coach added.

Meanwhile, Nepal beat Maldives in straight sets in the other match of the day, which was a dress rehearsal of the final. The same two teams will meet in the final at 3:00pm today. The third-place deciding match will take place at 1:00pm.



**Bangladesh players try to block a smash from a Kyrgyzstan player during their match at the Shaheed Tajuddin Indoor Stadium yesterday. Bangladesh won the match in 3-2 sets.**

PHOTO: STAR

# Thiem in semis

## Djokovic, Federer face shootout

AFP, London



Dominic Thiem produced a scintillating display of attacking tennis to beat Novak Djokovic and qualify for the last four at the ATP Finals on Tuesday, leaving the Serbian facing a shootout against Roger Federer.

In the standout match so far at London’s O2 Arena, the Austrian fifth seed took the fight to the world number two, recovering from losing the first set to triumph 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 7-6 (7/5)

Earlier, Federer put himself back in the mix at the end-of-season event with a 7-6 (7/2), 6-3 win against Italian debutant Matteo Berrettini in their round-robin clash.

Federer and Djokovic will face off on Thursday in a repeat of this year’s Wimbledon final to determine who else will progress from Group Bjorn Borg.

Thiem was forced to play high-stakes tennis against the 16-time Grand Slam winner, taking the breath away with some of his inside-out forehands and single-handed backhands

Forced to play at his limit, he hit 50 winners compared with Djokovic’s tally of 27 but also racked up 44 unforced errors.

“This was really one of these special matches, what I’ve practised all my life for, all my childhood for,” Thiem said.



**Dominic Thiem celebrates his victory against Novak Djokovic in the men's singles round-robin match of the ATP World Tour Finals in London on Tuesday.**

PHOTO: AFP

# Villa to hang up his boots

AFP, Tokyo



Star striker David Villa, Spain’s top goalscorer, Wednesday announced he will retire next month, ending a glittering career in which he won the World Cup, European Championships and Champions League.

The 37-year-old Vissel Kobe striker said he will call it a day at the end of the 2019 J-League season after a 19-year career that took in Barcelona, Atletico Madrid and Valencia while accumulating 98 caps for his country.

“I have decided to end my professional career and that I have decided to retire,” Villa told reporters in Kobe, his voice occasionally breaking with emotion.

“I’ve been thinking about this for a long time. This is the result of discussions I had with my family and people around me... I wanted to retire from football, not be forced to retire from football,” he said.

Villa will become an investor in Queensboro FC, a new franchise based in the New York district of Queens that will play in the second tier of US football.

“Even though I will no longer be on the pitch, I will continue to be involved in football in other ways and will continue to contribute to the football world,” he said.

Villa played in three World Cups and was a member of the Spanish side that lifted the trophy in 2010 and won the European Championships in 2008, though he missed



out on the 2012 triumph through injury. He scored 59 times for Spain, a national record.

His club honours include the 2010-11 Champions League, the 2011 UEFA Super Cup, 2011 Club World Cup and two La Liga wins in 2010-11 and 2012-13 with Barcelona.

Villa scored the third goal for Barcelona at Wembley in the 3-1 win over Manchester United in the 2010-11 Champions League Final.

He won a third La Liga with Atletico Madrid in his one season there in 2013-14 after leaving Barcelona.

After leaving Atletico, Villa embarked on a successful spell in Major League Soccer for New York City, where he scored 80 goals in 124 appearances.

Villa was New York City’s first-ever signing and his haul included the first goal scored at Yankee Stadium in an opening home victory over the New England Revolution.

At Vissel Kobe, he played alongside fellow Spanish legend Andres Iniesta and German striker Lukas Podolski but the presence of the ageing foreign stars has done little to bring success to the ambitious Japanese club.

Vissel Kobe are currently languishing 10th in the J-League after 31 games -- the same position they finished last year.

Villa has scored 12 goals in 26 appearances for Vissel. He is expected to play three more J-League matches as well as semifinals and finals of the Emperor’s Cup.

## PM focuses on sports to create worthy citizens

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said that apart from education, the government is paying special attention to sports and cultural activities as part of its efforts to make children worthy citizens.

“The prime task of the government is to make the children worthy citizens. We’ve undertaken various programmes for that purpose,” she said while inaugurating the Sheikh Russel International Club Cup Tennis Tournament 2019 in Khulna from her official residence through video conference.

“We’ve given special attention so that the practice of various sports could take place in the country and we are working on that,” she added.

Sheikh Hasina said mini stadiums are being constructed in every upazila so that the youth could be involved in sports which will make them mentally strong and self-confident.

## Russia snub new Adidas shirts

AFP, Moscow

Russia’s football authorities said Wednesday the national team will not be wearing new Adidas-designed shirts in upcoming Euro-2020 qualifiers after some pointed out they reverse the colours of the Russian flag.

“In the upcoming games, the Russian national team will continue using the kit in which it began the qualifying round,” the Russian Football Union told AFP.

Last week Adidas unveiled the new shirts with blue and white stripes trimming the red sleeves, creating the effect of a tricolour flag, similar to uniforms the brand designed for Germany.

But while the colours are in the right order on the German shirt, the Russian shirts put the colours in the reverse order to the national white, blue and red tricolour when players have their arms at their sides.