



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Mohammad Naim's 55 formed the bedrock of Rangpur Rangers' 182 for six in their Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League match against Rajshahi Royals at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Rajshahi could only muster 128 for nine in reply as Rangpur won by 64 runs.

BANGLADESH'S 2020 IN SPORT

FOLLOWING ARE THE SPORTING EVENTS TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN THE YEAR 2020:

CRICKET	Cricket World Cup
January – February: Tour of Pakistan (2 Tests and 3 T20Is)	February 21 – March 8: 2020 ICC Women's T20 World Cup
February: Home series against Australia (2 Tests)	MEN'S FOOTBALL TEAM
March: Home series against Zimbabwe (One Test and 5 T20Is)	January 15 to 25: Bangabandhu Gold Cup
May – June: Tour of Ireland (One Test, 3 ODIs and 3 T20Is)	Joint Qualifiers for Qatar 2022 and Asia Cup 2023
July – August: Tour of Sri Lanka (3 Tests)	March 26: Bangladesh vs Afghanistan
August – September: Home series against New Zealand (2 Tests)	March 31: Qatar vs Bangladesh
September: Asia Cup 2020	June 4: Bangladesh vs India
October: Tour of New Zealand (3 T20Is)	June 9: Bangladesh vs Oman
October – November: ICC World T20 2020	September: SAFF Championship in Dhaka
December: Home series against Sri Lanka (3 ODIs)	HOCKEY
	June: Junior Asia Cup in Dhaka
OTHER CRICKET	ATHLETICS
January 17 – February 9: 2020 ICC U-19	April 1 – 10: Bangladesh Games

Mujeeb seals a thriller for Cumilla

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) saw arguably its most exciting game yesterday, with Cumilla Warriors tailender Mujeeb ur Rahman striking a boundary off the last ball, when three runs were needed to win, to seal a two-wicket victory over table-toppers Chattogram Challengers at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Interestingly, Cumilla initially sent Sunzamul

SCORES IN BRIEF

CHATTOGRAM CHALLENGERS: 159 for 6 (Simmons 54, Junaid 45, Ziaur 34 not out; Soumya 2-20, Wiese 1-26)
CUMILLA WARRIORS: 161 for 8 (Malan 74, Van Zyl 22; Rubel 2-16, Rana 1-31, Ziaur 1-36)
Result: Cumilla won by two wickets
Player-of-the-match: Dawid Malan

With three wins in eight games, Cumilla kept their hopes alive for a play-off spot while Chattogram are still at the top of the points table with six wins from nine games.

For much of Cumilla's chase of Chattogram's 159 for six, it seemed that Cumilla would coast home. They needed 26 off the last four overs with seven wickets in hand with a well-set Malan at the crease on 66. But Cumilla dug a hole for themselves with some poor batting, losing four wickets and scoring just 10 runs in the next three overs, leaving 16 to win off the last over.

Abu Hider took a single off the first ball of the last over to give Malan back the strike. The left-hander also took a single as things started to look difficult for Cumilla, with 14 needed off the last four balls.

Hider then went for a big shot over wide long on, where Nasum Ahmed not only dropped the catch but also failed to save a boundary. Hider

then launched a huge six off Plunkett, and off the fourth ball scurried a bye after missing the ball.

There was still some more drama left as Malan was run out for 74 off 51 balls while trying to take a double. But Mujeeb then made sure that Cumilla's collapse would not cost them.

Cumilla's chase started off well with South African opener Stiaan van Zyl scoring four boundaries at the start of the innings, but it didn't last long as the left-hander fell after scoring 22 off 12 balls.

His partner Robiul Islam also departed for 17 as Malan then took charge, but Cumilla kept losing wickets at the other end. After scoring his second fifty of the BPL in the previous game, Soumya Sarkar failed to deliver and departed for six while Sabbir Rahman once again disappointed, scoring 18 runs.

Earlier, despite the 103-run opening stand between Junaid Siddique and Lendl Simmons after being asked to bat first, the rest of Chattogram's innings lacked impetus.

Simmons was the first to depart after scoring 54 off 34 balls with the help of five fours and two sixes while Junaid followed him soon after, scoring 45 off 37 balls.

Chattogram then lost a flurry of wickets, before Ziaur Rahman's unbeaten 21-ball 34 run – which featured four sixes – eventually helped the side post 159 for six.



Cumilla Warrior's number 10 batsman Mujeeb Ur Rahman is over the moon after hitting his first ball, the last of the match with three needed to win, for four and sealing a two-wicket win over Chattogram Challengers in their BBPL match in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Not afraid to make big decisions: Silverwood

ICC

Head coach Chris Silverwood has admitted that England will not think twice about making changes to their XI for the second Test against South Africa, if the pitch demands them.

A 107-run defeat in the series-opening Boxing Day Test in Centurion has once again spelled out England's red-ball troubles. An outbreak of illness within the squad that laid low 10 people at various times has only compounded matters, with Dominic Sibley joining the long list of players to have been afflicted.

With Jack Leach now having regained fitness, England will have to reassess their bowling combination for the next Test. If they do decide to play a spinner after going for an all-seam attack in the first, then one of the veterans – Stuart Broad or James Anderson – is likely to be dropped.

The Broad-Anderson pair has been one of England's most prolific bowling partnerships, but nostalgia has no place in Silverwood's England, who want to concentrate on building a team for the future.

"In Jimmy [Anderson] and Stu [Broad], we have a wealth of experience and we'd be really stupid not to take that into consideration every game," Silverwood said. "But, equally, you want your youngsters to



come through, and if we're going to make room for a spinner, we've got to have a look at which seamers are right for this pitch. If there's a big decision, we're not afraid to make it." The Newlands pitch is one of the few in the country that assists spin bowling, and Silverwood was well aware of that fact. "We've got to look at playing a spinner at Newlands," he said. "We'll go down there and do what we always do – look through the records, what features where, and who is going to have most impact on that game. We'll do our homework and go from there."

England Test captain Joe Root also echoed these sentiments ahead of the second Test. "It's a fine balance. You've got to look at the surface and at an

attack you feel is best going to counter that and best counter the opposition," he said.

"I think the ideal scenario is to have people pushing them [Anderson and Broad] all the time, so that they're constantly trying to improve themselves. "You don't want to wish those guys away or look back and think, 'we've forced Jimmy Anderson out.'"

Despite the sombre mood in the English camp, Silverwood said that illness and adversity have made his team stronger and let the players come closer. "I think there's some aspects from this Test that have galvanised us," he said.

The second Test of the four-match series begins on Friday, 3 January.

Process delivers results for Labuschagne

ICC

Having strung together a bounty year in Test cricket after making an appearance midway through the 2019 Ashes series in England, Australia batsman Marnus Labuschagne offered a peek into his mindset and thinking that has catapulted him to much success as his team's No.3 batsman. Since replacing Steve Smith as Test cricket's first ever concussion substitute, Labuschagne has accumulated 1104 runs in 17 innings, the highest run tally for any batsman in Tests this year.

These performances have taken him up

from a ranking of 82 on the MRF Tyres ICC Test Rankings for Batting from when he first arrived as a sub to No.4 on the list, only behind the big three of Virat Kohli, his team-mate Smith, and Kane Williamson.

After tallying 353 runs in seven innings, including four fifties, to finish as Australia's second-highest run-getter in the Ashes, Labuschagne maintained a remarkably consistent level of performance in the home summer, notching up three centuries and two half-centuries across six innings against Pakistan and New Zealand, operating at an average of 103.66 at home.

"I just keeping it process-driven and not on results," Labuschagne told cricket.com.au, after Australia's series-clinching victory in the second Test in Perth. "Making sure that every innings I come in with a clear mind and making sure I'm playing what's in front of me and not what's happened in the past and not what I want to achieve – it's right in the moment." Apart from that, I'm just loving it. It's a great team to be a part of, and the way we're playing at the moment is really enjoyable."

The strategy has reaped rich rewards for Labuschagne so far, as he caps the year as Australia's find of the season.

His red-hot Test form has earned him a call-up to Australia's ODI squad for the tour of India next year, when they play three ODIs between January 14 and 19. With a home ICC Men's T20 World Cup approaching, the time is ripe for Labuschagne to translate his red-ball success and become a force to reckon with across formats.



ECB to support scrapping 5-day Tests

AFP, London

Five-day Test matches could become a thing of the past from 2023 after England supported calls to cut them by a day, according to Tuesday's Daily Telegraph.

"We believe it could provide a sustainable solution to the complex scheduling needs and player workloads we face as a global sport," an ECB spokesman said.

"We're definite proponents of the four-day Test concept, but cautiously so, as we understand it's an emotive topic for players, fans and others who have concerns about challenging the heritage of Test cricket."

Kevin Roberts, the chief executive of Cricket Australia, had said mandatory four-day Tests were "something that we have got to seriously consider".

Four-day Tests have been sanctioned since 2017 by the sport's global governing body the International Cricket Council (ICC), but only outside of their inaugural World Test Championship.