

Justice for George

Schalke's American midfielder Weston McKennie on Saturday wore a 'Justice for George' arm-band as part of the growing protests over the death of an unarmed black man during a police arrest in Minneapolis in the United States. "To be able to use my platform to bring attention to a problem that has been going on too long feels good!!!," tweeted 21-year-old McKennie after the 1-0 loss to Werder Bremen. "We have to stand up for what we believe in and I believe that it is time that we are heard! #justiceforgeorgefloyd #saynotoracism." George Floyd died in Minneapolis in an arrest by a police officer who pinned him to the ground for several minutes by kneeling on his neck. --- AFP



Activity for most feds tied to Bangladesh Games

ANISUR RAHMAN

As the countrywide shutdown that lasted for more than two months to contain the spread of coronavirus came to a halt yesterday, different sectors in the country have reopened and sports are no exception.

Major sports federation that were partially or fully closed also opened their offices partly as per their previous announcement to follow the government guidelines on reopening. On restarting actual sporting activities -- which have been suspended for nearly two and a half months -- the federations have stuck to their stance of observing the situation first and then taking a decision.

Before the coronavirus outbreak in the country, 31 federations and its athletes were engaged in preparing for the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Games, which was slotted for April 1-10 before the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) postponed the ninth edition on March 11, just six days after unveiling the logo and mascot of the Games.

Most of those federations have virtually no engagements until the return of the Bangladesh Games, which is also considered the national championships for different disciplines. Although sports like cricket, football, hockey and a few others may return to the field of play in a small scale -- subject to the improvement of the coronavirus situation -- most sports federations will see little activity other than running national camps until the Bangladesh Games are staged.

"Since the suspension of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Games in early March, we did not get an opportunity to sit together to discuss the matter, especially after the countrywide shutdown was enforced. Now, we will get the opportunity to rethink about the Games as the country is opening gradually and we also want to hold the Games when the situation surrounding the coronavirus pandemic improves," BOA Secretary General Syed Shahed Reza told The Daily Star.

"We have to do something because we



can't sit idle, but we have to observe the situation and stay safety. Although it is too early to make any comment on the Games, I hope we can arrange the Games in October-November if everything goes well. I hope the situation improves by then," said the former diplomat. "The Games have remained as it is with 31 disciplines and I am hopeful

that it can take place with 31 disciplines when the situation improves. However, the process may be different."

"Personally, I am thinking of whether it is possible to hold the Games in segments with seven to eight disciplines at a time. For instance, we can hold the Indoor sports in one or two days before holding another group of sports at another time. But I have to discuss it at the executive meeting of the Bangladesh Olympic Association as well as with sports organisers," said Reza.

BOA has already spent approximately Tk 7 crore to arrange Bangabandhu Bangladesh Games, although the government had not released any funds against BOA's estimated budget of Tk 30 crore.

If the government can't provide money in time for the start of the Games, I do not think it will stop the Games from taking place because we also held the Bangladesh Youth Games with our own funds. If the situation returns to normal, money can't be a barrier. I have confidence that I can manage the fund," vowed Reza.



Winning Dhoni's trust key to getting captaincy: Kohli

REUTERS, New Delhi



India captain Virat Kohli believes he landed the job largely because his predecessor Mahendra Singh Dhoni was impressed with his reading of situations in matches.

Kohli, 31, replaced Dhoni as test captain in 2014-15 and took over the limited-overs reins in early 2017, becoming India's all-format leader as well the team's batting mainstay.

Fielding in the slips, Kohli had easy access to wicketkeeper Dhoni and he felt their chats in between deliveries earned him the trust of the former skipper.

"You start talking to the captain regularly," Kohli told teammate Ravichandran Ashwin in a chat on YouTube.

"I was always in MS's ear, standing next to him and saying 'We can do this, we can do that, what do you think?'

"He would deny a lot of things but he would discuss a lot of things as well. I think he got a lot of confidence that I can do this after him.

"A large portion of me becoming captain was to do with him observing me for a long period of time. It just can't happen that he goes and the selectors say, 'Okay you become captain'."

Leading the national team of a cricket-mad country is one of the toughest jobs in the game but Kohli is enjoying the responsibility.

"I looked at it this way -- if I'm getting this opportunity, I need to work as hard as I can, because not many people get this chance," said Kohli, who led India to Under-19 World Cup title in 2008.

Kohli led India to the top of the world test rankings in October 2016 where they remained until Australia replaced them this month. India lost in the semi-finals of last year's one-day World Cup in England.

"I was always inclined to taking responsibility (but) becoming captain of India was not even in my wildest dreams to be honest," Kohli said.

'Playing under new rules really weird'

PTI

Sri Lankan batting great Kumar Sangakkara says it will look "really weird" and "off-putting" to play cricket under the strict guidelines laid down by the ICC but he understands that there is no better option. The International Cricket Council (ICC) recently come out with comprehensive guidelines to get the sport up and running around the world while at the same time maintaining the highest safety protocols.



"I understand the guidelines are going to restrict players, playing of the game, it's going to look really weird, and off-putting even for me when I think about it," Sangakkara said on Star Sports' show 'Cricket Connected'. "But the priority is health and safety. Health is absolutely paramount at this time, especially for players to have the confidence to get back to cricket, to get back to playing, to have grounds may be at some point open to spectators."



Robert Lewandowski (L) scored twice while Alphonso Davies hit the target once as Bayern Munich thrashed Fortuna Duesseldorf 5-0 in Munich on Saturday to open up a 10-point lead at the top of the Bundesliga.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Davies, Lewa star as Flick betters Pep's record

AFP, Berlin



BUNDESLIGA

Hansi Flick bettered Pep Guardiola's record start as head coach of Bayern Munich, who opened a 10-point lead in the Bundesliga.

Having defeated second-placed Borussia Dortmund 1-0 away win in midweek, Bayern enjoyed a 5-0 romp over Fortuna Dusseldorf.

The visitors' defender Mathias Joergensen scored an early own-goal before Benjamin Pavard, Robert Lewandowski (2) and Davies hit the target for Bayern.

With five games left, the defending champions, who have won their last eight league games,

are comfortably on course for an eighth straight league title.

Davies scored the best goal of the game when the fleet-footed defender pressed Duesseldorf into making a mistake, barged past several defenders and fired home.

"It was very special, I did my job as a defender," said Davies.

The 19-year-old, who was born in a Ghanaian refugee camp before his parents emigrated to Canada, was nicknamed Bayern's 'Road Runner' by teammate Thomas Mueller after the win in Dortmund.

Mueller joked that Davies is Bayern's version of the fast-running Looney Tunes character after the left-back sprinted to dispossess Dortmund striker Erling Braut Haaland, himself no slouch.

"When the opponent thinks 'Oh, I have time', meep, meep, meep' the Roadrunner comes and steals the

ball," quipped Mueller after Davies clocked 35.3km/h to catch Haaland.

Davies said he likes his new nickname after running even faster against Duesseldorf.

"Yeah, I know the cartoon, I watched it when I was growing up," said the Canadian teenager, who clocked 35.4 km/h in a sprint at the Allianz Arena. He was just short of the Bundesliga record of 36.49 km/h, which Borussia Dortmund's Achraf Hakimi set earlier this season.

"Yeah, I am quick, but him (Mueller) calling me the 'Road Runner' is a compliment which I take to heart and it was a good nickname," added Davies.

He has made the left-back berth at Bayern his own with a series of outstanding displays this season and recently signed a contract extension until 2025.

Icardi signs 4yr PSG deal

AFP, Milan

Paris Saint-Germain have signed Argentina international Mauro Icardi from Inter Milan on a four-year deal after taking up the option to buy the on-loan forward, the two clubs announced on Sunday.

Icardi joined PSG this season and impressed with 20 goals in 31 games, before the Ligue 1 campaign was stopped and his club crowned champions because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Paris Saint-Germain are delighted to announce the signing of Mauro Icardi on a permanent deal, following the striker's loan from Inter Milan during the 2019-2020 season," the French club said .

Icardi, who has eight caps for Argentina, but also holds an Italian passport, has signed a four-year deal until June 30, 2024.



Real Madrid's Sergio Ramos and Marcelo were seen battling for the ball during training in groups at the club's training ground on Saturday. Clubs in Spain's top two divisions can hold full training sessions from today for the first time since returning to activity.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



While other leagues in Europe have resumed behind closed doors, fans returned to Hungarian football stadia as supporters watched the national championship's match between DVTK and Mezokovesd in the DVTK Stadium in Miskolc, Hungary on Saturday after the Hungarian Football Association decided to allow clubs let fans in for the first time since March.

PHOTO: AFP

Bolsonaro wants football back in Brazil

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

The right-wing populist president of Brazil wants the football season to resume even though the five-time World Cup winning country is a hotspot of the coronavirus pandemic.

Brazil is for many synonymous with football and many of the all-time greats, from Pele to Neymar, hail from the nation.

But Brazil is also the epicentre of Latin America's coronavirus outbreak.

The death toll from coronavirus in Brazil has hit 27,878, official figures showed on Friday, surpassing the toll of hard-hit Spain and making it the country with the fifth-highest number of fatalities.

Football has been suspended in Brazil since mid-March but President Jair Bolsonaro recently told Radio Guaiaba that footballers would likely not fall very ill with COVID-19.

"As footballers are young athletes the risk of death if they catch coronavirus would be dramatically reduced," Bolsonaro said.

Back in March Bolsonaro also claimed

that thanks to his own sporting past he would only suffer a slight cold if he caught the virus.

The president says his chief motivation for wanting football to curb unemployment and the misery that accompanies it.

"The players have to survive somehow," he said, explaining that while some top footballers earn a fortune, those from smaller regional leagues need to play "to feed their families".

The way Brazilian politics works, it is not in Bolsonaro's remit to restart football. This must be done by the regional states and municipalities.

When football was suspended, seasons at the regional level were underway, but the national championship had been due to start in May.

Bolsonaro and his son held meetings on May 19 with the presidents of two Rio superclubs, Vasco da Gama and Flamengo.

Photos of Bolsonaro and his son wearing the shirts of the two clubs stunned social media, with official supporter groups claiming their image had been sold out to politics.

SL cricketers begin training today

REUTERS, Colombo

A select group of Sri Lanka cricketers, mainly bowlers, will return to training today, amid efforts to restart the game after the coronavirus shutdown, the cricket board said on Sunday.

Professional cricket has been suspended since March because of the pandemic, with Sri Lanka's home series against England and South Africa among its casualties.

Thirteen players will check into a hotel for a 12-day residential camp at the Colombo Cricket Club, Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) said in a statement.

A coaching and support staff of four will oversee the training.