

SONY SIX
England v Pakistan
First Test, Day 4
Live from 4:00pm

TEN 1
UEFA Champions League

Bayern Munich v Chelsea
Live from 1:00am (Sunday)

TEN 2
UEFA Champions League
Barcelona v Napoli
Live from 1:00am (Sunday)

BCB risks falling behind in the new normal

MAZHAR UDDIN

The news that 11 footballers, a majority of whom were asymptomatic, tested positive for coronavirus ahead of the national team's camp could serve as a big lesson to the Bangladesh Cricket Board, who are thinking of the resumption of cricket in the coming days.

Interestingly, results from testing done by the footballers at various hospitals before joining the camp differed to what the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) found after testing the players again.

Despite showing no symptoms, 11 of 24 footballers tested positive for the virus and the results of the tests were inaccurate, which is very much a reflection of the scenario in the country.

From cricket's point of view, the BCB is still playing the waiting game when it comes to resuming group training, but perhaps the board should at least take the initiative to test cricketers who have begun individual training sessions.

National cricketers, including the likes of Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad, started training last month after the BCB provided access to their facilities across the country. With the Eid break ending yesterday, more cricketers were expected to join individual sessions.

A total of 28 cricketers will resume from today training across different venues, according to the BCB's training schedule. But questions remain about whether the board will take the initiative to test these cricketers with the situation of the footballers in mind.

According to BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury, the board is still discouraging cricketers



from individual training sessions. He said that not having any series in the near future led the board to decide not to take any initiatives to resume group training yet.

"The board has been discouraging cricketers from individual training from the beginning. What the footballers faced is obviously a big challenge for us as well, which is why we are yet to resume group training. This is alarming and, keeping the situation in mind, I don't see any reason to hurry," Nizamuddin told The Daily Star.

"However, as cricketers desired individual training, we provided them with facilities. But we also ensured social distancing and other safety measures and we instructed groundsmen and staff to have tests done. After the postponement of the Asia Cup and the ICC World T20, there are no scheduled series for us, which is why we didn't

resume group training. We will start testing players once we begin group training."

It is a matter of fact that what the BCB is yet to contend with the challenges that the BFF is currently facing but, with the resumption of cricket in mind, the BCB should take some initiatives if they want to prepare cricketers and, more importantly, face reality.

During their efforts to return to cricket, the Pakistan Cricket Board faced such a challenge as many cricketers returned positive tests ahead of their tour of England. That case was similar to what the BFF is facing, but the PCB managed to face the challenge and move forward.

Football leagues around the world also faced difficulties in adapting to the new normal. A total of 20 positive cases have emerged in England's Premier League since football restarted.

BCB officials expressed high hopes over the Tigers' upcoming tour of Sri Lanka from September but is the BCB preparing themselves and their players for that?

England created a bio-secure environment during their home series against the West Indies but despite that, visiting coach Phil Simmons made a mistake and attended a funeral ahead of the series which nearly cost him his job. He then had to isolate himself. England pacer Jofra Archer was fined and was even forced out of the second Test against the West Indies after the cricketer breached bio-security protocols.

It will be important for the BCB to prepare such an environment and help players and also the coaching staff to adapt to it, something the likes of Archer and Simmons struggled to do despite preparing heavily for the new normal.

Masood 'has proved himself in England'

AFP, Manchester



Pakistan coach Misbah-ul-Haq said Shan Masood had "proved himself in England" after the opener's superb hundred helped leave the tourists well-placed in the first Test at Old Trafford on Thursday.

Masood's Test-best 156 was the cornerstone of Pakistan's first-innings 326 all out, with England slumping to 12-3 in reply. The hosts ended the second day on 92-4 -- a deficit of 264 runs -- with star all-rounder Ben Stokes out for a duck and England captain Joe Root falling for 14.

Masood batted for nearly eight hours in difficult conditions and in the process joined Misbah and team batting coach Younis Khan as one of just six Pakistan batsmen to have scored a hundred in three consecutive Test innings.

This century following Masood's 135 against Sri Lanka in Karachi in December and 100 against Bangladesh in Rawalpindi in February.

Yet the 30-year-old left-hander averaged a meagre 17.75 during Pakistan's 2016 tour of England.

Masood stood firm in Manchester even though he was twice reprieved by Jos

Buttler on 45, the wicketkeeper dropping a catch and missing a stumping off spinner Dom Bess.

"It was an excellent performance by him, especially against a seam attack of (Stuart) Broad, (James) Anderson, (Chris) Woakes and (Jofra) Archer, and against an off-spinner (Bess) that was bowling well on a pitch where there was turn," said Misbah of the English-educated Masood's fourth hundred in 21 Tests.

"It was good application and his hard work has paid off."

"Now he has proved himself here in England, so I'm really pleased, especially as it's not (just) a hundred, (but) a big hundred."

"Still, we would have been in trouble if he only scored a hundred. But hundred-and-fifty plus, and through the innings, that was really special."

A good day for Pakistan got even better with Stokes clean bowled for nought by Mohammad Abbas during a slump that had the hosts three down inside six overs.

Abbas also removed opener Dom Sibley on his way to close figures of 2-24, with towering left-arm quick Shaheen Afridi making the initial breakthrough with just the fourth ball of the innings when Rory Burns was plumb lbw.



Pacer Mohammad Abbas took two early wickets on Thursday evening as Pakistan consolidated the stronghold provided by Shan Masood's century in the first Test against England at Old Trafford.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Sevilla, Leverkusen cruise into quarters

REUTERS



Five-times winners Sevilla made light work of AS Roma when first half goals from Sergio Reguilon and Youssef En-Nesyri gave them a 2-0 win over AS Roma and sent them into the Europa League quarter-finals on Thursday.

Sevilla's win, in a tie reduced to a single match played in Duisberg, Germany, after the first leg was called off at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, earned them a meeting with Wolverhampton Wanderers on Tuesday.

Former Spain coach Julen Lopetegui's side went ahead when Reguilon flew past Bruno Perez and scored with an angled shot which squeezed between goalkeeper Pau Lopez's legs. Roma appeared to be coming back into the match when Sevilla struck again. The La Liga side broke up a Roma attack, Lucas Ocampos was set free down the right and pulled the ball back for En-Nesyri to turn into an empty net shortly before halftime.

The last eight will be played in four German cities as part of the mini-tournament, with the final on Aug. 21 in Cologne.

QUARTERFINAL LINE-UP

(all games 1900 GMT)

MONDAY, AUGUST 10

At Dusseldorf

Inter Milan (ITA) v Bayer Leverkusen (GER)

At Cologne

Manchester United (ENG) v Copenhagen (DEN)

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11

At Duisburg

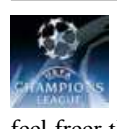
Wolverhampton (ENG) v Sevilla (ESP)

At Gelsenkirchen

Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR) v Basel (SUI)

Barca's chance to save troubled season

AFP, Madrid



If Barcelona have been weighed down by the burden of expectation in recent years in the Champions League, they should feel freer than ever ahead of Saturday's last 16, second leg against Napoli.

Few expect an easy passage into the quarterfinals and if they get there, even fewer expect them to survive against Bayern Munich, the tournament's most convincing team so far, who will surely finish the job against Chelsea in their last-16 tie.

With the advantage of an away goal from the 1-1 draw in Italy in February, Barca would usually feel confident against a side that just finished seventh in Serie A, and at the Camp Nou, where they have suffered only one defeat in 58 Champions League games.

But after a miserable end to La Liga, that flipped a two-point lead over Real Madrid into a five-point deficit, Barcelona resume their European tilt as outsiders, behind Bayern, Juventus, perhaps Atletico Madrid given their favourable draw, and certainly the winner of Real Madrid and Manchester City.

"The fans are running out of patience because we're not giving them anything," said Lionel Messi as Barca's title chase unravelled. "If we want to fight for the Champions League, a lot has to change because like this, we will lose to Napoli as well."

The hope might be Barcelona can turn pessimism to their advantage, if the result is a team free of tension, able to view the

Champions League as a fresh start after a failed campaign in Spain.

When they capitulated against Roma and Liverpool, Barca's players talked about crumbling under pressure, a weakness that has been exposed all too many times since.

"They were strong and from a psychological point of view they fed off our fragility," said then-coach Ernesto Valverde after the Liverpool loss. "They came at us and we failed to react," said Sergio Busquets of Roma.



Lionel Messi and his Barcelona teammates will be desperate to dribble past Napoli in tonight's fixture of the Champions League, which remains their only chance of a silverware this season.

PHOTO: FC BARCELONA

get humiliated by Bayern.

There are caveats to the chaos too. Despite only seven wins from 11 games after the restart, Barca were impressive in spells and most effective against bolder opponents, the like of which they are more likely to meet in Europe.

"You can't tell me it's all been a disaster, it hasn't," said a defiant Setien last month.

They also have Messi, who comes in on the back of three weeks rest, and alongside him, Luis Suarez and Antoine Griezmann, an attacking trio that should be the envy of every team left in the competition.

Marc-Andre ter Stegen is one of the world's outstanding goalkeepers. Ansu Fati and Riqui Puig are hugely exciting young talents. Without fans, Barcelona's mental fragility could be less exposed, their technical quality more decisive.

And yet still the sense is of a team relying on the intangibles: Moments of individual genius, momentum in a knock-out tournament, liberation from the burdens of expectation.

"We have to be more consistent, more reliable," said Setien last month. "If we manage to have a game like the one we played against Villarreal, where everything went well, it will undoubtedly give us a chance to win the Champions League."

In this format, with only four one-off matches to win, there is perhaps no better year to be clinging to the hope of the unpredictable. But for a club like Barcelona, it feels a little desperate, a final shot in the dark at the end of a long and turbulent year. There should be something more.

England's September tour of India postponed

AFP, Manchester



England's upcoming white-ball tour to India has been postponed due to disruption caused by coronavirus, cricket chiefs announced on Friday.

A programme of three ODI and three T20I games, originally due to start in late September, would have been ideal preparation for the T20 World Cup in Australia later in the year.

But that tournament has now been put on hold and India is struggling to contain the outbreak of COVID-19.

Officials from England and India are in talks over dates for an all-formats England tour to India from late January to late March and India's Test tour to England due later in 2021.

England are currently scheduled to play five Tests in India from January to March next year.

"International cricket between India and England is a highlight of the cricketing calendar and we look forward to working with the BCCI to firm up the schedules for these eagerly anticipated tours as soon as possible," said England and Wales Cricket Board chief executive Tom Harrison.

BCCI secretary Jay Shah said: "I

am pleased with the way BCCI and ECB have managed the situation. The rescheduled tour is also being redesigned in a way to accommodate both red and white-ball formats."

If health conditions do not improve, the fixtures could be staged in the United Arab Emirates, which will stage the lucrative Twenty20 Indian Premier League from September.

The only major international cricket being staged anywhere in the world at present is in England, who are hosting Pakistan in a three-Test series.

It follows a Test series against West Indies and a one-day series against Ireland.

'Bale did not want to play'

AFP, Madrid

Zinedine Zidane has said Gareth Bale told him he did not want to play for Real Madrid against Manchester City in the Champions League last 16 on Friday.

Bale was left out of the squad and has not travelled to Manchester, where Madrid were aiming to overturn a 2-1 deficit from the first leg in February. Sources close to Bale claim he told Zidane he did not want to travel, after finding out he was not included in the squad, but was ready to play.

"There is a relationship of respect between player and coach," Zidane said in a press conference on Thursday. "He preferred not to play, nothing more, and the rest is between me and him."

Zidane said it was a personal decision but would not be drawn on details, insisting "there are things that have to stay in the changing room". Asked about his future, Zidane said: "Bale is a Real Madrid player, nothing has changed and I respect him like everyone else."



Sevilla's Youssef En-Nesyri (L) celebrates his opener against AS Roma during their Europa League fixture at the MSV Arena in Duisburg on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP