



‘EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE NEW’

Bangladesh Test skipper Mominul Haque returned to practice yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur after a long break due to the coronavirus enforced break. After the successful completion of the first phase of individual practice sessions last month, the second phase began yesterday with an increased number of cricketers across different BCB-run facilities in the country. “Everything seems to be new after such a long time. I think it will take some time to adjust. Maybe it will take 2-3 or 4-5 days to adjust. Hope to adjust with everything soon. I have been away from cricket for 4-5 months and I missed the game a lot during this time. Teams like England, West Indies and others are returning to cricket and I miss this game more seeing them play. But we too are trying to get back to cricket. There is a possible Test series ahead of us and I hope that we can prepare well for that,” said Mominul after yesterday’s practice session.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Booters to be tested again

SPORTS REPORTER

BFF officials informed that all 36 persons -- 30 players and six officials -- will be retested for Covid-19 on Monday in two different facilities of Dhaka. The decision comes after a total of 18 players and an official among 29 tested over the previous few days were found to be positive even though most of them had submitted negative reports prior to being tested at the BSMU under BFF’s supervision. Officials also claimed that the confusion regarding the test results -- seven players and an official were eventually found Covid-19 positive on Friday after the federation had announced them negative on Wednesday -- happened due to ‘an error in communication stemming from a server related issue’.



England made quick work of Pakistan on the fourth day of the first Test at Old Trafford in Manchester yesterday, sending the visitors packing for 169. Set a target of 277, the hosts then fell into disarray and were reduced to 107 for four, with both Ben Stokes (7) and Joe Root (42) gone as the game’s fate hung in the balance.

PHOTO: REUTERS

A pipeline at risk of being clogged

ZAHANGIR SHAH from Manikganj

In October 2019, Bangladesh cricket was shaken to its core after national cricketers called for a strike and placed an 11-point demand -- which was later extended to 13 points. One of those demands stated the necessity to improve gyms, indoor facilities and ground facilities across the country. More than nine months since the incident, how much has changed in this regard? Looking at the state of Manikganj district, a place about an hour-and-a-half drive away from Dhaka, it seems as if the players’ demands fell on deaf ears. Manikganj is known for producing many prominent athletes like former cricketer Naimur Rahman, former national footballer Shafiqul Arefin Tutul, national team goalkeeper Ashraf Islam Rana, former national hockey player Jahid Hossain Raju and many others, but is now home to a very poor sporting facility. The only stadium in the district, built in 1963 on 3.98 acres of land and named Shaheed Miraj-Topon Stadium in remembrance of two heroic

to build a proper athlete-like physique. And to facilitate that a gymnasium needs to be built,” said Khokon. Meanwhile, former national hockey player turned current head coach of the BKSP hockey team, Jahid Hossain Raju, mentioned how a lack of facilities is hindering the growth of many prospects. “Several players from Manikganj are currently playing in the [hockey] national team. There are a lot of prospects here. But their growth is hindered severely as we still don’t have a gymnasium and other training facilities,” said Jahid. However, despite lacking basic training facilities, players from Manikganj are still shining at different levels and competitions. The under-17 boys from Manikganj emerged as champions in the Dhaka division in the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Gold Cup last year, the under-14 football team of Manikganj also became zonal champions in the JFA Cup while athletes from Manikganj won a total of seven gold medals at the National Youth Games.



freedom fighters -- AKM Miraj Uddin and Topon Chowdhury -- has not seen any infrastructural development for a long time. Although there is a two-storey building with 10 rooms and a gallery for 5000 fans, the dilapidated stadium does not even have basic facilities such as a gymnasium, swimming pool or indoor stadium. “Manikganj is a fertile land for producing talented athletes. Players from this district have always played valuable roles at the national level. But even after being a district so close to Dhaka, mentionable and proper sporting infrastructure has not yet been built,” said former national hockey team skipper Moshir Rahman Biplob. Sheikh Russell goalkeeper and former national team skipper Ashraf Islam Rana moaned about the reluctance of those concerned in building proper training facilities in his hometown. “It is disappointing to see that we still do not have an indoor stadium, gymnasium or swimming pool. All these should have been built long ago,” sighed the 32-year-old. Although Manikganj was capable of producing many sporting gems over the years without proper facilities, the district’s football coach Shahidul Haque Khokon sought at least a gymnasium to gift the country with more promising players. “A player needs to do physical activities

Given the backdrop, District Commissioner SM Ferdous’s words will surely lend some hope to athletes and the sports lover of Manikganj. “An application has been made to the district sports organisation for the allotment of the abandoned town hall and construction of a sports complex there. I will sincerely try to do it with the government’s approval,” informed Ferdous. BCB director and MP from the Manikganj-1 constituency, Naimur Rahman, who is also a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Youth and Sports, said the construction work would only become easier with cooperation from the district commissioner. “The government has announced plans to build infrastructure for indoor facilities in every district. The work will be easier when the district commissioner will allocate the place in the name of the sports organisation,” hoped Naimur. Even in such a poor condition, Manikganj’s only stadium still hosts many tournaments throughout the year. But arranging these tournaments is getting more difficult day by day due to the stadium’s decrepit condition. And if this continues, the next Naimur Rahman or the next Ashraf Islam Rana from this region may not even be encouraged to play any kind of sport.

Zidane’s first loss coincides with Sarri’s last

AGENCIES

Manchester City marched into the Champions League quarterfinals by beating visitors Real Madrid 2-1 for a 4-2 aggregate triumph on Friday, with Raheem Sterling and Gabriel Jesus taking advantage of two dreadful errors by Raphael Varane. Having beaten the 13-times champions home and away, City will now head to Lisbon for the ‘final eight’ where they will face Olympique Lyonnais, who progressed on away goals

against Juventus in Friday’s other game despite a 2-1 loss on the night. On Saturday, Juventus announced that Sarri had been sacked. Sarri was hired to give Juventus a more flamboyant edge but struggled to impose his so-called “Sarri-ball” high-tempo passing game on the Turin side. He had been under pressure since his side lost to Napoli on penalties in the final of the Coppa Italia in June. Real, trailing 2-1 from the first-leg, were without suspended skipper Sergio Ramos at The Etihad and it showed. French international Varane, having

If I wasn’t devastated by not qualifying, I’d be happy with the performance. I actually expected less from us, I think we played a great game. We fell behind to a penalty kick that could have made us lose our heads and we had three chances when we were 2-1 ahead.

MAURIZIO SARRI
JUVENTUS COACH

received a pass inside his own area from goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois in the ninth minute, was robbed by Jesus and the striker slipped the ball to Sterling who slotted home his 100th goal for the club. Karim Benzema equalised from a header after some brilliant work down the flank by Rodrygo and it took another piece of calamitous defending by Varane to decide the tie in the 68th minute, when his backpass to Courtois was lobbed home by Jesus. Zinedine Zidane had never lost a knockout tie in the Champions League as Real manager, having won his

previous 12 encounters while winning the trophy three times. “It is important. We beat them twice. Zinedine Zidane never lost a knockout game. The calm and personality they play with, they are good,” he said. Zidane said his side’s loss had to be put in the context of their domestic title-winning campaign. “We are proud of what we achieved this season, this is football. We lost to a good team and have to accept it,” said the Frenchman. “95% of what we have done this season has been excellent. Today we played a good team and we have to accept it.”

“I wanted to show my face because this defeat is mine. I have to take all the responsibility for this match. We played well in the game, we’d prepared well for it, but at this level if you make mistakes you end up paying a lot for them. I can’t explain the errors but I have to accept them. This is a complicated moment for me. This hasn’t happened to me many times in my career but something like this can always happen, errors are made all over the pitch but in my position they have a higher price. My team mates know I’m sad but I have to show character and get over this quickly. It’ll be a sad night for me. I’m a competitor and today I messed up. I’m not happy but I have to accept it.”

RAPHAEL VARANE
REAL MADRID DEFENDER



Cristiano Ronaldo (L) fell to his knees and looked up at the heavens after Juventus were eliminated from the Champions League by Lyon (C) on away goals on Friday night. The Portuguese has scored all seven Juventus goals in the Champions League knockouts over the past two seasons. Meanwhile Real Madrid defender Raphael Varane gifted Manchester City two goals to end Zinedine Zidane’s stranglehold on the Champions League.

PHOTO: TWITTER/REUTERS