



Despite a bit of rain in the air, Mahmudullah Riyad and Al Amin Hossain enjoyed their outing while Anamul Haque, too, seemed to be in jolly mood yesterday as cricketers continued their individual practice sessions in Mirpur and other BCB-facilities across the country.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Ronaldo's rallying call

AGENCIES

Cristiano Ronaldo spoke of the importance of "critical thinking" in the wake of Juventus' Champions League exit and the sacking of Maurizio Sarri.

Ronaldo scored twice on Friday to give Juve a 2-1 win over Lyon in Turin, but it was not enough to prevent them going out at the last-16 stage on away goals after a 2-2 aggregate draw.

"The 2019-20 season is over for us, much later than usual but yet sooner than we expected," Ronaldo wrote on Instagram.

"It's time for reflection, time to analyse the ups and downs because critical thinking is the only way to improve. A huge club like Juventus must always think like the best in the world, work like the best in the world, so that we can call ourselves one of the best and biggest in the world. "Winning Serie A once again in such a difficult year is something that we are very proud of. Personally, scoring 37 goals for Juventus and 11 for the Portuguese national team is something that makes me face the future with renewed ambition and desire to keep doing better and better each year.

"But the fans demand more from us. They expect more from us. And we have to deliver, we must live up to the highest expectations. May this short vacation allow us all to make the best decisions for the future and come back stronger and more committed than ever. See you soon!"

Messi carries Barca but Bayern lie in wait

AFP, Barcelona



Lionel Messi scored a brilliant solo goal as Barcelona saw off Napoli on Saturday but they are likely to need something even more special from their captain to beat Bayern Munich in the quarter-finals.

Messi's weaving run and finish came between an early Clement Lenglet header and a Luis Suarez penalty, also won by Messi, as Barca stormed into a 3-0 lead in the first half at Camp Nou.

But Lorenzo Insigne gave Napoli hope just before the interval and an unconvincing second period from Barcelona left them hanging on for a 3-1 win on the night, 4-2 on aggregate.

"A second goal would have given them a feeling of euphoria

that can hurt you," said Barca coach Quique Setien.

"It's normal to get a little nervous."

In winning the penalty, Messi took a heavy kick from Napoli's Kalidou Koulibaly and needed treatment.

"It was a heavy knock," said Setien. "It will have to be treated but I don't think there is a problem."

After finishing five points behind Real Madrid in La Liga, Barca resumed in the Champions League with doubts hanging over the form of the team and the future of their coach.

Setien said on Friday he had not considered resigning but failure in Europe, after a turbulent domestic campaign, would likely take the decision out of his hands.

Victory against Napoli eases the pressure but the performance will not inspire confidence, even with Messi seemingly rejuvenated after three weeks rest.

Napoli, whose own league season only finished last weekend, should have had the advantage of rhythm but a disastrous opening half an hour left them with too much to do.

MISSION LISBON

QUARTERFINALS

Aug 12: Atalanta v PSG

Aug 13: Leipzig v Atletico

Aug 14: Barcelona v Bayern

Aug 15: Man City v Lyon

SEMIFINALS

Aug 18: Leipzig/Atletico v Atalanta/PSG

Aug 19: Man City/Lyon v Barca/Bayern

FINAL: August 23



Although there will be no Ballon d'Or this year, the frontrunners -- Barcelona's Lionel Messi (L) and Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski -- continued to underline their credentials on the biggest stage. Messi ended with one goal but tortured Napoli throughout in a 3-1 win while Lewandowski scored two and assisted two in Bayern's 4-1 thumping of Chelsea on Saturday.

PHOTO: BARCELONA FC/BAYERN MUNICH FC



Series not over yet, says Azhar

AFP, Manchester



Pakistan captain Azhar Ali insisted there was all to play for following a dramatic three-wicket loss to England in the first Test at Old Trafford, where his side were "one punch away" from victory.

England, chasing a target of 277 -- only one higher total has been achieved to win in the fourth innings of a Test at the Manchester ground -- were in trouble at 117-5. But a sixth-wicket stand of 139 between player of the match Chris Woakes, who finished on 84 not out, and Jos Buttler (75) changed the course of the game during Saturday's fourth day.

It was a particularly bitter defeat for Pakistan as they had been the better side for much of this Test.

But the loss of several wickets late on Friday during an eventual second innings of 169 cost them dear in a match where Shan Masood made a Test-best 156 in the first innings and leg-spinner Yasir Shah took eight wickets in all.

Pakistan, who have not lost a series against England for 10 years, must regroup quickly before the second Test in a three-match campaign starts at Southampton on Thursday.

"It's disappointing but not over yet, there are still two Tests to go," Azhar told reporters. "There a lot of positives from this game, we outplayed England on most parts of this Test match. I wouldn't say we lost the match in (our) second innings, but we missed a chance to knock England out of the game there."

Pakistan, however, were still in command during an England top-order collapse on Saturday that saw four



Chris Woakes remained unbeaten on 84 to guide England to a thrilling three-wicket victory against Pakistan in the first Test at Old Trafford on Saturday.

PHOTO: ECB

wickets lost for 31 runs.

"We were sure we'd wrap it up if one more wicket fell," said Azhar. "But they (Buttler and Woakes) attacked from the off and snatched the game away from us. Sometimes you just have to give credit to the opposition. We were in control of the game; we were one punch away from finishing it off, but they came and dominated us."

Azhar, a specialist batsman, managed just 18 runs in a match where he was out for a duck in the first innings. But although he has now scored a mere 139 runs in his past 12 away Test innings, Azhar denied captaincy was affecting his batting.

"When I bat, I'm not thinking about the captaincy, whether or not I'm out of form," he said. "And when I'm captain, I don't think about my batting at all."

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: First innings 326 and second innings 169 all out (Yasir 33; Broad 3-37, Woakes 2-11, Stokes 2-11)

ENGLAND: First innings 219 and second innings 277 for 7 (Buttler 75, Woakes 84 not out; Yasir 4-99)

Result: England won by 3 wickets and lead the 30match series 1-0.

Player-of-the-match: Chris Woakes.

'Pirlo's screwed now'

AGENCIES



Gennaro Gattuso warned Juventus head coach Andrea Pirlo that his illustrious playing career will count for little in his new job.

Pirlo, who has not had a coaching job and only took over as Juve's Under-23s boss last week, was handed the reins in Turin on Saturday in the wake of Maurizio Sarri's dismissal.

The midfielder -- who won four Serie A titles, one Coppa Italia and two Supercoppa Italiana during a four-year spell with Juve -- has signed a two-year deal.

And Gattuso, who played alongside Pirlo at Milan and for Italy, provided an honest assessment of the job's difficulties for his former team-mate.

"Well he's screwed now... That's the job," Gattuso told Sky Italia.

"He's lucky to be starting at Juventus, but this profession is one where a great playing career is not enough. You have to study, to work hard, and you don't get much sleep."

Gattuso's first job in coaching came at FC Sion, with the 42-year-old then having spells at Palermo, OFI Crete and Pisa before he took charge of Milan's youth team in 2017.

"Being a player and being a coach is really not the same thing at all," Gattuso added. "It's a totally different profession and we can't learn it just from books, we need to get in there and work hard. It's a different world."



U-21s to start fitness training under Air Force

Two test positive for Covid-19

SPORTS REPORTER



With the Bangladesh national football team's training camp under threat after so many footballers tested positive for Covid-19, a group of the U-21 hockey team are all set to start fitness training today after a gap of six months.

Sixteen hockey players took the Covid-19 test on Saturday. Two have tested positive for the virus and will be kept at the Air Force isolation centre in Cantonment. The rest are scheduled to start training at BAF Bangabandhu Base in Dhaka Cantonment.

The fitness training will be the first BHF activity since the outbreak of coronavirus in March as the local game's governing body last organised the Shaheed Smriti Hockey tournament in February. Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) president and Air Chief Marshal Masihuzzaman

Serniabat inaugurated the training programme at the BAF Falcon Hall in Tejgaon yesterday.

The infection of footballers has delivered a strong message to other sports federations about the need to allocate substantial time before resuming activities ahead of any official engagements.

With the Asian Junior (U-21) Cup, which was scheduled to be held in June in Dhaka, postponed indefinitely due to the pandemic, there are no engagements for the U-21s on the horizon.

"Of the 36-member preliminary squad, 18 players from different services teams have been in training [amid the pandemic, as they were inside the Cantonment] and their physical condition is also good but the players who are not in services teams have not been in good shape physically, so our president wanted to provide fitness training for those players," said BHF acting general secretary Mohammad Yousuf. "It



is actually an isolated physical fitness training which will be held under the supervision of Bangladesh Air Force. Air Force fitness trainers will only focus on fitness and then, if needed, our coaches will join the camp."

After being overlooked, U-21

head coach Mamunur Rashid raised questions about the value of conducting fitness training when players have virtually no target without a tournament on the horizon. Mamun trained the U-21 team since June last year and his charges beat Oman 3-1

in a five-match series in Dhaka early this year.

"I know nothing about the fitness training as the head coach. I think this fitness programme has no value as there is no target for the players. I think such training will rather push players back," said Mamun, who also wondered why coaches cannot join when players from outside can attend the camp in Cantonment.

"We could have sat idle if we wanted amidst the pandemic but did not. I can't see any problems with the fitness training under Air Forces trainers. Sports activities are gradually starting in the country and it is likely to start in full swing within a few months. We are conducting this so that we can resume the preparation of the U-21 team early, soon after we get government permission. Besides, we also want to host the Asian Junior (U-21) Championship, which is also the Junior World Cup Qualifiers, in early 2021," said Yousuf.