

**T SPORTS**

Federation Cup Final  
Bashundhara Kings vs Saif Sporting  
Live from 4:00 pm  
**TEN 1 & SONY SIX**  
Australia vs India  
Third Test (Day 5)  
Live from 5:30 am (Monday)

**TEN 2 Serie A**

AS Roma vs Inter Milan  
Live from 5:30 pm  
FA Cup Third Round  
Manchester City vs Birmingham  
Live from 7:30 pm  
Marine vs Tottenham Hotspur  
Live from 11:00 pm  
Newport vs Brighton

Live from 1:45 am (Monday)

**TEN 1**

FA Cup Third Round  
Chelsea vs Morecambe  
Live from 7:30 pm  
Serie A  
Juventus vs Sassuolo  
Live from 1:45 am (Monday)

**FACEBOOK La Liga**

Levante vs Eiber  
Live from 7:00 pm  
Cadiz vs Alaves  
Live from 9:15 pm  
Elche vs Getafe  
Live from 11:30 pm  
Valladolid vs Valencia  
Live from 2:00 am (Monday)

## Can Toyota beat Ferrari?

Paul Put's Saif take on Bruzon's Kings in final today

ATIQUÉ ANAM



It should be a battle between the experience and riches of Bashundhara Kings against the youthful exuberance of Saif Sporting Club in the final of the Walton Federation Cup as the country's football begins to see shift of power.

Both finalists are fairly new in professional football – just over four years old and are regarded as the forerunners of football professionalism, yet the return



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

**Saif SC are a strong opponent. They have been playing together for 3-4 years and they have good strikers. But if we can capitalise on their weaknesses, we can do well.**

**TOPU BARMAN**  
BASHUNDHARA KINGS CAPTAIN

**Bashundhara Kings are a much bigger team than ours. So we will try to play the way we have so far. Everyone wants to be champions and so do we.**

**RIYADUL HASAN RAFI**  
SAIF SC CAPTAIN

to investments have been widely diverging for the two sides.

Bashundhara Kings have reaped rich rewards for investing heavily on star players, bagging a Championship League, a Premier League, a Federation Cup and an Independence Cup title in the last three years while Saif SC, who took a more development-based approach, are still trying to find their feet at the highest level after finishing runners-up in their debut season in the Championship League.

That Saif made it to the final of the Federation Cup this time took many people by surprise, including their Belgian coach Paul Put.

"Nobody was expecting what we have been showing. We have

already made history and if we win, we will be making more history," the journeyman coach told media at the team hotel yesterday afternoon.

The 64-year-old coach has an enviable CV and it will be further enriched if his side can upset the defending champions today in the battle of 'Toyota' versus 'Ferrari' according to him.

His side has already achieved more than his seven predecessors did by being in the final. They won all their group stage matches before getting the better off Mohammedan in a marathon tiebreak in quarterfinals. And then a 3-0 win over Chattogram Abahani sealed their final berth.

Saif may have a developing squad with a handful of national

team players, but they too have a decent assortment of Nigerian recruits including the tournament's top-scorer Kenneth Ikechukwu. And in spite of their predominantly counter-attacking based approach, Paul Put's charges have racked up the highest number of goals in the tournament so far.

Bashundhara Kings have had a similar journey to that of Saif into the final, with the extra-time win against record 11-time champions Abahani proving to be a real test of the champions' character.

Kings have been through a bit of a rebuilding of their own following the departures of Daniel Colindres and Hernan Barcos over the last year, but their new acquisitions -- Raul Becerra, Jonathan Fernandes, Robson Robinho and Khaled Shafiei -- have proved to be able replacements.

With a host of national team players retained from the previous season, Oscar Bruzon's Kings are not only the best team in the country, but also one of the best of the region. The Spaniard is relentless in his pursuit of titles with an aggressive brand

### Saif AWOL at press meet

SPORTS REPORTER

The pre-final press conference of the Walton Federation Cup at the Bangladesh Football Federation yesterday set an unprecedented stance of unprofessionalism as one of the finalists -- Saif Sporting Club -- were represented by their general secretary and an assistant manager instead of head coach and captain.

While the coach and captain of the other finalist team -- Bashundhara Kings -- were present right on time, even waiting half an hour for the arrival of BFF officials and sponsors, the coach and players of Saif SC were busy preparing for the final.

The Saif SC officials present there claimed that they could

not change their practice schedule, which was set prior to the notice of the press conference, as their rented ground had to split sessions for two teams of the club.

However, BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag claimed that they had informed the club about the press conference schedule in written and had commitment from the club that at least a key player will be made available for the event.

He also said that the matter will be investigated by the disciplinary committee for a decision regarding the breach of standard protocol.

Saif coach Paul Put, when contacted later, apologised to media for not being able to be present at the event.



of football, and anything but a victory today, even against an impressive Saif, would be a disappointment.

Bruzon, however, was cautious in his assessment of the opposition as he urged his team to show no complacency.

"We have strong belief in ourselves. But if we consider ourselves as favourites, we begin to lose. We have to be humble.

We are playing against a team who play positive football," Bruzon said at the pre-final press meet at the BFF House.

Whatever it is dubbed -- Toyota v Ferrari or young v experienced -- the final of the season's curtain-raising tournament -- scheduled to kick off at the Bangabandhu National Stadium at 4:00pm today -- promises to be a blockbuster affair.

## BPL at 4 venues from Jan 13

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has stuck to its decision of starting the Bangladesh Premier League from January 13, with only two days' gap following the completion of the Walton Federation Cup.

The decision was approved at an emergency meeting of the professional league management committee at the BFF House yesterday, where four venues were finalised for the league.

The venues are: Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka, Shaheed Dhirendranath Stadium in Cumilla, Shaheed Ahsanullah Master Stadium in Gazipur and Birshreshtha Flight Lt. Matur Rahman Stadium in Munshiganj.

The last two are new additions to the roster as BFF chose venues close to the capital, in light of the pandemic. Seven out of the 13 teams of the BPL chose BNS as their home venue.



### WINNING DEBUT FOR JAMAL

**Bangladesh captain Jamal Bhuiyan (R) celebrates with Faisal Ali (C) and Raphael Odoyin following Faisal's 58th-minute goal for Kolkata Mohammedan Sporting Club against Sudeva Delhi FC in the opening match of the Hero I-League at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata yesterday. Jamal was subbed off in the 87th minute following a decent performance in his debut appearance for the Kolkata Black and Whites.**

PHOTO: AIFF



**Women's International Master Rani Hamid makes a mock move against Shafiqul Islam, commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, during the opening ceremony of Mujib Birth Centenary Invitational FIDE Rating Chess Tournament at the National Sports Council auditorium yesterday. A total of 44 players including one Grand Master, three International Masters and one Women's International Master are taking part in the nine-round Swiss-League system competition.**

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

### Five Abahani players test positive

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani players Rubel Mia, Faisal Ahmed Shitol, Mohammad Ridoy, Dipok Roy and Al Amin Hassan Anaf tested positive for Covid-19 yesterday.

Abahani's assistant coach Zakaria Babu and one staff also tested positive for coronavirus, informed manager Satyajit Das Rupu.

"All of them are asymptomatic and have been isolated. Zakaria is currently staying at home," said Rupu. Abahani crashed out of the Federation Cup last Thursday following a 3-1 defeat at the hands of the defending champions Bashundhara Kings in a high-intensity semifinal at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Abahani began practice yesterday for the Bangladesh Premier League, scheduled to start from January 13.

## Injuries add to India's woes

AGENCIES



Australia took charge with lead of 197 in Sydney at the close of play on the third day of the third Test against India on Saturday. And India were left to count the cost of an injury to Ravindra Jadeja after the left-arm spinner was unable to take the field in Australia's second innings after suffering a blow to his bowling hand while batting.

In yet another major injury blow to India on their tour of Australia, all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja later has been diagnosed with a dislocated thumb and possible fracture after he took a blow to his thumb.

The 32-year-old was hit on his left thumb as he looked to defend a rising delivery from Australia quick Mitchell Starc.

Rishabh Pant, who did not take the field during Australia's second innings, after he was hit on his elbow by a well-directed bouncer from Pat Cummins, has avoided any major concern and was fine.

Jadeja was India's best bowler in the first innings and his four wickets for 62 helped the side restrict Australia to 338

At one point during the afternoon session, India had four substitute fielders on the ground as Pant, Jadeja, Jasprit Bumrah and Ravichandran

Ashwin were all off the field.

Between 1980 and 2017, substitute fielders were not permitted to keep wickets in the case of an injury, but the rule was changed and came into effect a little over three years ago.

Like all substitute fielders, Saha cannot bat in Pant's place and only substitutes for a concussed player, a

control the situation to prevent abuse," the Marylebone Cricket Club, the game's law-makers, said at the time of the rule change.

"A substitute still cannot bowl, bat or act as captain."

Coincidentally, India were the first Test team to benefit from the new rule in 2018 when Dinesh Karthik donned



rule that was introduced in 2019, are able to bat, bowl or act as captain in place of the replaced player.

"It was felt that, if the original wicketkeeper was genuinely injured, then a substitute should be allowed to take over, but that the umpires should

the gloves in place of an injured Parthiv Patel during a Test against South Africa in Johannesburg.

More recently, West Indian Joshua Da Silva took the gloves from Shane Dowrich in a Test against England after Dowrich was injured.



**West Indies batsman Kraigg Brathwaite gives the thumbs up before the team's journey from Barbados for three ODIs and two Tests in Bangladesh.** PHOTO: TWITTER

## Windies set to land today

SPORTS REPORTER



International cricket is set to finally resume in Bangladesh after the outbreak of Covid-19, with a 38-member West Indies team scheduled to reach Dhaka on

Sunday morning for a month-long tour. However, the visitors are coming with an inexperienced squad after top cricketers such as Jason Holder, Kieron Pollard and Darren Bravo pulled out citing COVID-19-related concerns or personal fears.

The West Indies side will arrive in Dhaka with Covid-19 negative reports and will undergo their first of many coronavirus tests on the first day of their three-day isolation in the hotel.

After completing the three-day isolation and before being allowed in the nets at the Academy Ground of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on the fourth day, the visitors will have to clear another Covid-19 test. The samples will be collected on the third day of quarantine. During those four days, the West Indies side can practise only among themselves.

After undergoing three tests in seven days since their arrival, the Bangladesh Cricket Board will provide net bowlers and the visitors will be able to interact with others. The West Indies team is also scheduled to play a one-day warm-up game at BKSP Ground 3 on January 18.

The Caribbean side will reach Bangladesh on the back of a Covid-19 scare after fast bowling all-rounder Romario Shepherd had tested positive. He was replaced by Keon Harding in the one-day squad.

The first phase of Covid-19 testing among Bangladesh players, and officials returned negative results.

Meanwhile a 24-member Bangladesh ODI squad will have their first practice session today and later check into the hotel and remain in the bio-secure bubble throughout the series.

Bangladesh cricketers will take part in two intra-squad warm-up matches on January 14 and January 16 at BKSP following which the final ODI squad is likely to be announced on January 17.

Bangladesh have not played international cricket since March last year. However, the board did arrange competitive domestic events. In October last year, the board arranged the BCB President's Cup -- a three-team fifty over competition -- which was followed by a five-team Bangabandhu T20 Cup in November-December.

The first two matches of the ODI series will be played on January 20 and 22 in Dhaka while the third ODI will be played at Chattogram's Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium on January 25.

The first Test will begin on February 3 at the ZACS while the second and final Test of the series will be played in Dhaka from February 11.