

WHAT TO WATCH

T SPORTS

Bangladesh Premier League  
Bangladesh Police vs Bashundhara Kings  
Live from 3:30 pm  
Brothers Union vs

Abahani Limited  
Live from 6:00 pm  
FACEBOOK  
La Liga  
Valladolid vs Elche  
Live from 12:00 am  
(Wednesday)

Cadiz vs Levante  
Live from 12:00 am  
(Wednesday)  
Alaves vs Sevilla  
Live from 2:30 am  
(Wednesday)  
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

English Premier League  
West Ham vs West Brom  
Live from 12:00 am  
(Wednesday)  
Leicester City vs Chelsea  
Live from 2:15 am  
(Wednesday)

I just feel that there's a good young player in [Nazmul Hossain] Shanto who is in really good touch at the moment. He played in the last series against Zimbabwe and we need to make sure that we develop some young batters. In the subcontinent, the top three is the best place to develop young batsmen. Shakib hasn't played international cricket in a while so batting at 4 would give him the breathing space coming back into the side. We know he is a world-class player. This batting line-up is not set in stone. There's a long way to go for the World Cup. We need to look at various options before we settle on a batting line-up.

RUSSELL DOMINGO  
BANGLADESH HEAD COACH



Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is all ears as Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo makes a point while ODI captain Tamim Iqbal looks on during a training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Otabek, Absar give Sheikh Jamal winning start

SPORTS REPORTER



Three-time champions Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club got off to a winning start in the Bangladesh Premier League with a 2-1 win over title-hopefuls Chattogram Abahani at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The Dhanmondi giants did not enjoy better ball possession or attack, but drove home the advantage after a slightly fortuitous goal towards the end of the first half.

Chattogram Abahani, on the other hand, looked disjointed without their inspirational midfielder Charles Didier, who was serving a suspension following a red card in the semifinal of the Federation Cup against Saif Sporting Club.

Nixon Brizolaria returned to the port city side after missing out the knockout stages of the Federation Cup through an injury, but his movements and efforts in front of goal was well short of what was expected of him judging by the performances in the group stage matches.

The Brazilian was heavily involved in the game as he was the target of most of the attacks from Chattogram Abahani, but his first major contribution to the game resulted in the opening goal for Sheikh Jamal.

The Brazilian, who scuffed a few attempts

at the opposition goal in the opening half-hour, was part of a two-man wall when Sheikh Jamal earned a free-kick from the left side of the box in the 40th minute. Uzbek midfielder Vali Jonov Otabek tried to pick the near corner of the post with a swinging effort, but the ball took a massive deflection off Nixon and ended up at the far corner of the net, leaving Chattogram Abahani goalkeeper Mohammad Nayeem completely wrongfooted.

The goal came as a shot in the arm for Sheikh Jamal, who doubled the lead five minutes after restart, with Nurul Absar picking the corner of the net with a powerful header on a cross from Monir Hossain.

Although Absar profited from the non-existent marking inside the box, his header and the precision of it was a rare sight for a local forward in Bangladesh's domestic football.

The two goalscorers of Sheikh Jamal were on the prowl once again 12 minutes later, but this time Nayeem was equal to the task.

Chattogram Abahani coach Maruful Haque made a couple of tactical substitutions and his team became more involved in the game, earning a spot-kick in the 84th minute which Nixon dispatched with confidence but that aggression came a little too late as Sheikh Jamal held on to their lead to leave the field with three points.



Sheikh Jamal forward Nurul Absar is the toast of his teammates as his second-half goal led the Dhanmondi giants to a 2-1 win over Chattogram Abahani in their Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Tools there, but will they be used well?

MAZHAR UDDIN



Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo has a wide variety of bowling options with six genuine seamers, two left-arm spinners, and two off-spinners in the 18-member ODI squad for the three-match series against the West Indies.

But as in the batting department where the likes of Liton Das, Nazmul Hossain Shanto, Soumya Sarkar, Afif Hossain and Mohammad Mithin are yet to take up a leading role, things are not yet settled in the bowling department.

The over-dependency on spin has been prevalent across formats and the presence of two of the most experienced left-arm spinners, Shakib Al Hasan and Taijul Islam, continues to provide the most assurance.

Off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz, despite bursting onto the scene with a lot of promise in 2016, now needs to take his game to the next level and add variety in his bowling, especially in the limited-overs format. The inclusion of uncapped off-spinner, Mahedi Hasan will certainly keep Mehedi on his toes.

But according to Domingo, the

time has come to bank on seamers with an intention to develop a better bowling unit both at home and abroad keeping the long-term goal in mind.

"There's no doubt that we always wanted to play at least three seamers in our 50-over side. There are some exciting young prospects at the moment, guys like Shoriful [Islam] and Hasan Mahmud.

are going to New Zealand in six weeks' time. There, I can assure you we can play only one spinner so we have to make sure we have seamers who are ready to play international cricket. I can't see myself playing an ODI without three seamers," Domingo told reporters yesterday.

There was a changing of guard of sorts when the Bangladesh think tank moved on from Mashrafe

lack of consistency.

Although Rubel is among the six seamers in the 18-member squad, it is still not certain whether the pacer, who is in his thirties now, would be considered for the long run.

Now, it falls upon Mustafizur to take the leading role and it will be important for him to realise that and develop his mindset to fill the huge vacuum of Mashrafe.

Six years since making his International debut, another once highly rated pacer, Taskin Ahmed, has been battling injuries and has lacked consistency despite having all the attributes to become the spearhead of the Tigers' pace attack.

Mohammad Saifuddin is another good prospect as he has the ability to bowl both with the new ball and can also be a death-overs specialist. However, the team management needs to take proper care of an injury-prone Saifuddin to get the best out of him in the long term.

The inclusion of two young seamers in the form of left-arm pacer Shoriful and Mahmud is certainly refreshing but the question over whether the bowlers will receive enough support from the team management and be able to lift themselves remains.

TIGERS' TOP FIVE WICKET-TAKERS SINCE THE 2019 ICC WORLD CUP						
Player	Match	Overs	Wkts	BBI	Ave	Eco
Mohammad Saifuddin	2	13.3	7	4/41	9.00	4.66
Shafiqul Islam	4	33	7	3/62	33.57	7.12
Taijul Islam	5	48	7	3/52	26.57	3.87
Mustafizur Rahman	4	30	6	2/50	29.83	5.96
Mehedi Hasan	6	51	5	2/33	54.20	5.31

BANGLADESH BOWLING IN THE 1ST POWERPLAY (1-10 OVERS) SINCE 2019 ICC WORLD CUP	
Sri Lanka tour (2019): 1st ODI - 77 runs 1 wicket, 2nd ODI - 69 runs 0 wickets, 3rd ODI - 36 runs 1 wicket.	Zimbabwe series (2020): 1st ODI - 28 runs 3 wickets, 2nd ODI - 49 runs 2 wickets, 3rd ODI - 60 runs 2 wickets.

Rubel [Hossain] and Mustafizur [Rahman] have been bowling really well. Taskin [Ahmed] has shown improvement. There's a whole host of guys pushing for places. We need to make sure we provide them the opportunity to play one-day cricket.

"I think we can't just be a team that plays spinners all the time. We

Bin Mortaza, the country's most successful pacer - and so now is the time to groom a new set of seamers and give them enough exposure to hone their skills.

There is a long list of pacers -- Shafiqul Islam, Al-Amin Hossain, Abu Hider to name just a few -- who briefly impressed but then faded away either due to injury or



### 'I WISH MY FATHER WAS AROUND TO SEE IT'

Pacer Mohammed Siraj celebrates the wicket of Steve Smith during Day 4 of the fourth Test yesterday. Siraj best illustrated India's never-say-die attitude with his maiden five-wicket haul (5-73) in the Brisbane decider. It has been an emotionally testing tour for the 26-year-old who lost his father in November but stayed on to make his Test debut in Melbourne. "I'm grateful I got this opportunity to play for India and managed a five-for. I wish my father was around to see it. It was tough after he passed away. I spoke to my family and gained strength after talking to my mother. My focus was to fulfil my father's dream of me playing a Test match for India," an emotional Siraj told a video conference.

PHOTO: BCCI

## 'We couldn't have done worse than this'

REUTERS



Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo criticised his players' attitude and said they could not have performed worse after their 2-0 defeat at Serie A title rivals Inter Milan on Sunday.

Arturo Vidal and Nicolò Barella struck in each half to give a dominant Inter their first league win against the Turin club since September 2016 to leave Juve seven points off the top.

"Our attitude was wrong from the start," Pirlo told Sky Italia. "If you don't have the anger to win the duels in these matches, it becomes difficult. We never stepped foot on the pitch."

"It was an ugly match because we weren't expecting it. We couldn't have done worse than this."

The gap between Juve in fifth and leaders AC Milan will be extended to 10 points if the Rossoneri beat Cagliari on Monday. Inter are second, level on 40 points with Milan.

Pirlo thus has a big task in the second half of the season as he looks



PHOTO: TWITTER

Inter Milan's Nicolò Barella celebrates his goal with Romelu Lukaku during the 2-0 'Derby of Italy' victory over champions Juventus on Sunday.

to guide Juve to a 10th straight league title.

"Our ambitions remain the same," he said. "It's a slip-up against a strong

opponent. These things can happen over a long season, but you can't have this attitude at a team like Juventus.

"We had to come here with a certain ambition of playing our own game and instead we were too fearful."

Inter coach Antonio Conte, who Pirlo played under at Juventus as they won three league titles together between 2011 and 2014, was pleased to get his first top flight managerial win against his former employers at the fourth attempt.

"To win against a team like Juventus, who are an important reference point in Italy, you need to play a perfect match," Conte said.

"The players did well to put what we prepared out on the pitch and I'm very happy for them as these games raise your self-confidence and let you know you're on the right track."

"They knew that Juventus have dominated for nine years. The gap between them and the others still exists, but we're working to reduce it from every point of view."

## Biplob made Gk coach of national team

SPORTS REPORTER

Former goalkeeper Biplob Bhattacharjee has been appointed as the goalkeeping of the Bangladesh national team.

The 40-year-old keeper, who worked with Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club as goalkeeping coach in the last two seasons after bringing an end to a long professional career, has been given a one-year contract by the Bangladesh



Football Federation.

"I couldn't be more excited to be joining the federation. It's a dream to be able to work at this level as a goalkeeping coach," said Biplob in his reaction.

The former national custodian will not only work with the current crop of national team keepers, but will also work with the under-23 team while hunting and coaching goalkeepers at the grassroots level.

Having been part of eight SAFF championships during a 16-year stint with the national team, Biplob is expected to bring in a wealth of experience to the job of the national team's goalkeeping coach, a position which used to be occupied by foreign coaches on contract basis in recent years.

## England spin duo can do even better, says Root

REUTERS



Captain Joe Root expects spin twins Dom Bess and Jack Leach to be even better in the second Test

after both claimed five-wicket hauls in England's victory over Sri Lanka in the first match at Galle International Stadium.

Bess took 5-30 as England skittled their hosts out cheaply in the first innings, while Leach was 5-122 in the second before the tourists wrapped up a seven-wicket win on Monday.

The teams meet again in Galle from Friday and Root said the spin duo will have learned a lot from the first Test. "I think they will be better. They got a huge

amount from this, not only in terms of confidence from taking wickets but the amount of time they had out there," he told a news conference.

"You cannot replicate the amount of time spent out in the field in a match situation against international players. Not just the actual art of spin bowling, the skill and technical elements of it, but the mental aspect of it, getting used to the heat. We didn't have the usual lead-in to a tour that is played in such extreme conditions."

Root was named Man of the Match after scoring 228 in England's first innings but said the victory was a team effort. "Any Test win you've got to take a lot of confidence from, and a lot of heart from," he added.



Lionel Messi walks off the pitch after being sent off for the first time in his Barcelona career in the closing stages of extra time as Barcelona lost 3-2 to Athletic Bilbao in the Spanish Super Cup final on Sunday. The Barca superstar was dismissed after striking Asier Villalibre. [Inset] The players of Athletic Bilbao, who knocked out holders Real Madrid in their semifinal clash, celebrate with the trophy.

PHOTO: REUTERS

