



(L) Bangladesh coach Russell Domingo and captain Mominul Haque have a lot to ponder ahead of the Dhaka Test against the West Indies (R), who are in high spirits after winning the first Test of the two-match series in Chattogram.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Players, officials put on their serious faces

SPORTS REPORTER



The day after a shocking defeat to the West Indies in the first Test inflicted by Kyle Mayers' record-breaking unbeaten double ton in chase of 395 in Chattogram, the Bangladesh Cricket Board higher-ups, including president Nazmul Hassan, sat at a meeting at his residence.

There was a sense of shock and disbelief from the BCB president after the hosts had dominated the visitors till the fourth day.

Hassan, chief selector Minhajul Abedin, selector Habibul Bashar, cricket operations committee chairman Akram Khan and a few directors were present at the meeting, where discussion about a possible replacement for Shakib Al Hasan for the second Test also took place.

There was also talk about

the pitch at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, where the three Bangladesh spinners — Taijul Islam, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, and Nayeem Hasan — failed to find any favours.

Some also raised questions about Mominul Haque's captaincy and spoke of the Tigers' poor body language.

But it was learned that the BCB was willing to give Mominul more time as his tenure of five games does not provide an adequate sample size.

Meanwhile, Shakib has asked for leave and given a letter to the board, asking to be allowed to stay beside his family during the birth of his third child, which will coincide with the upcoming tour of New Zealand.

That would effectively rule the age all-rounder out of the three-match ODI and three-match T20I series.

Ahead of the start of the series on March 20, the Tigers will also

Soumya Sarkar has been brought in as the replacement for injured all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan in the Bangladesh squad for the second Test and the left-hander, who has a hundred and four half centuries in 15 Tests, join the squad's training today.

hold a training camp.

"Shakib has given a letter to the board asking for leave during the upcoming New Zealand tour to stay beside his wife for the birth of his child. We will make a decision over the issue in the next few days," Akram said.

Shakib is also recovering from a thigh injury sustained on the second day of the first Test. He has been ruled out of the second Test and Soumya Sarkar has been

brought in as the replacement for injured all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan in the squad for the second Test, starting from February 11.

Cricketers returned to the field yesterday for the first time since the defeat in Chattogram and the atmosphere in the Tigers camp remained serious. Pacer Al Amin Hossain was seen in training yesterday after he was called into the camp to bowl in the nets.

Miraz, who struck his maiden Test ton in the first innings and scalped eight wickets in the first Test, informed that the Tigers were looking to play better cricket in the second Test and making a comeback.

"Obviously they played beyond expectation and played well on the fifth day. Despite dominating the first four days, we had a bad day on the final day which proved costly for us. I think if we can play better cricket, we will be able to come back strongly in the second Test," Miraz said yesterday.

Root hails England 'GOAT' Anderson

REUTERS



England captain Joe Root likened James Anderson to "fine wine" after the 38-year-old's reverse-swing masterclass helped secure a comprehensive victory in the opening Test against India on Tuesday.

Anderson had managed two wickets, both tailenders, in a subdued display during India's first innings on a flat track at Chennai's MA Chidambaram Stadium.

It turned out he had saved his best for the final morning when his spectacular three-wicket burst effectively snuffed out India's hopes of securing a draw in the series-opener.

"He is like a fine wine -- getting better and better," Root said after equalling Michael Vaughan as England's most successful Test captain following the 227-run victory. "When there's pressure, he will never let you down."

Root, who was man-of-the-match after his 218 in the first innings of his 100th test, marvelled at Anderson's skill and longevity.

"He's the GOAT of English cricket," Root said of the Lancashire bowler. "For someone at 38 to be still getting better, still being as fit as he has ever been, it's a huge credit to his desire to play for England. He's a great role model to the rest of the group."

Anderson said he was happy to get Shubman Gill and Ajinkya Rahane clean bowled on a track where the ball usually kept low. "It's always nice to see the stumps cartwheeling out of the ground, doesn't happen very often at my age, so yeah really happy with it," Anderson told a video conference.

England's rotation policy means Anderson is not certain to play the second Test, especially with the tendency to alternate him and Stuart Broad to get the best out of the veterans.

Anderson said he would put his hand up when England pick their playing XI for the next match, also in Chennai, from Saturday. "Yeah, of course. When a batsman gets in rhythm and in form, they want to just keep batting, keep that rhythm going, and it's the same for bowling, you want to keep that going as much as possible," he added.



Sheikh Jamal DC captain Solomon King sarcastically waves his shirt at the Abahani fans after getting a red card during their Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Jamal drop first points of league

SPORTS REPORTER



Title contenders Sheikh Jamal dropped points for the first time but ensured it would be just the one after coming back from a goal down twice and forcing a 2-2 draw against Abahani in a Bangladesh Premier League encounter at Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The draw means three-time champions Sheikh Jamal stick to second position with 16 points from six matches, five points behind leaders Bashundhara Kings. However, Sheikh Jamal have played a match less than Kings.

Six-time champions Abahani, on the other hand, slipped to the fourth with 15 points from seven matches.

This game was crucial for an insistent Abahani to close the gap with the leaders, especially after playing out two draws against Mohammedan and Chattogram Abahani.

The Sky Blues looked positive and took the lead in the 13th minute when Belfort Kervens changed the direction of a drive from Sohail Rana.

However, it was Sheikh Jamal, who showed their character to come back from behind, levelling the margin six minutes later when Gambian Sulayman Sillah availed a pass from

Jonov Otobek and beat goalkeeper Shaiful Alam Sohel with a powerful drive from inside the box.

The intense fight was then marred by a scuffle between Jewel Rana of Abahani and Solomon King of Sheikh Jamal in the 38th minute, which ended with both players getting their marching orders.

After resumption, Abahani restored their lead through Brazil's Francisco Rodrigues, who headed home a Raihan Hasan long throw-in in the 46th minute.

They surrendered the lead again in the 72nd minute when Omar Jobe struck his seventh goal of the campaign, beating the offside trap and netting after squandering an earlier change in the 50th minute.

Abahani could have left the field with a fifth win had a strike from Nasir Chowdhury not been ruled out due to offside in the last minute of injury time. Ultimately, Abahani had to be content with a third draw in seven matches.

MOHAMMEDAN NOTCH SECOND WIN

Mohammedan secured their second win after five matches when they handed a 1-0 defeat to Bangladesh Police FC at the Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium yesterday.

Mohammedan had a flying start with a 3-0 win over Arambagh in their opening match but the Black and Whites failed to carry that momentum into the following matches, losing twice and drawing thrice before yesterday's win.

After a barren first half, Japanese midfielder Uryu Nagata struck the decisive goal in the 47th minute by nodding home a Habibur Rahman Sohag free-kick.

Mohammedan's return to winning ways helped the Motijheel-based outfit climb up to sixth in the 13-team table with nine points from seven matches. Bangladesh Police remain glued to ninth with seven points from six matches.

MONEKE POWERS RUSSEL

Nigerian forward Obi Moneke struck the season's second hat-trick to power Sheikh Russel to an emphatic 4-0 win over Arambagh under floodlights at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Moneke scored in the 36th, 39th and 46th minutes respectively to become the second player to hit a treble in the ongoing league after Sheikh Jamal's Omar Jobe, who also hit a hat-trick against winless Arambagh, who are winless in six matches.

Mohammad Abdullah wrapped victory in the 73rd minute.

Barty bagels, Rafa magic at Melbourne Park

AFP, Melbourne



Rafael Nadal's injured back didn't slow down his bid for a record 21st Grand Slam title on Tuesday, as women's world number one Ashleigh Barty romped to a 6-0, 6-0 'double bagel' at the Australian Open.

On a day when women's champion Sofia Kenin also reached round two, but two-time winner Victoria Azarenka lost after breathing problems, Nadal and Barty were the headline acts at the coronavirus-delayed Slam.

Spanish great Nadal, who pulled out of last year's ATP Cup with back problems, beat Serbia's Laslo Djere 6-3, 6-4, 6-1 in one hour and 52 minutes on a sun-kissed Rod Laver Arena.

"It's been a tough 15 days for me," said the 2009 champion, whose back stiffness first flared during an exhibition match last month. "I needed to survive today and that's what I did. I'm happy to be through and I think I did a good job today. Straight sets is what I needed."

Nadal, 34, is attempting to outstrip his old rival Roger Federer, who is out with injury, and take sole ownership of the all-time record for Grand Slam titles.

After world number one Novak Djokovic eased through late on Monday, Russia's Daniil Medvedev extended his winning streak to 15 matches with an emphatic 6-2, 6-2, 6-4 victory over Canada's Vasek Pospisil.

The 2019 US Open finalist is raising hopes of a maiden Grand Slam title with his unbeaten run, which includes

winning the Paris Masters, ATP Finals and last week's ATP Cup with Russia.

Russian seventh seed Andrey Rublev also continued his winning start to the year with a straight-sets victory over German Yannick Hanfmann 6-3, 6-3, 6-4.

Barty later outclassed Montenegro's Danka Kovinic, losing only 10 points as she raced into round two in just 44 minutes. With the win Barty, last year's semi-finalist who sat out most of the 2020 season, ramped up hopes of a first Australian women's winner in 43 years.

"It felt great to be here," she said. "I tried to stick to my process and routine but I just wanted to have fun."

Women's champion Kenin was less convincing and she audibly vented her frustrations during her 7-5, 6-4 against Australian Maddison Inglis, who is ranked outside the top 100.

Two-time major-winner Garbine Muguruza, who was stunned by Kenin in last year's final, had little trouble beating Russia's Margarita Gasparyan 6-4, 6-0. But there were distressing scenes as an ailing Azarenka, the 2012 and 2013 champion, went out to Jessica Pegula.

Azarenka, who was one of the players locked down in hard quarantine pre-tournament, began to suffer in the second set. The 2020 US Open runner-up, who only played one warm-up match last week, was seen gasping and using an inhaler, and then looked close to collapse on court. After a medical timeout she played on but lost 7-5, 6-4.

Inspirational Jones easy on big stage

AFP, Melbourne

Francesca Jones' heart-warming Grand Slam debut ended in defeat Tuesday, but the Australian Open qualifier believes she has arrived on the big stage.

Jones, a 20-year-old from Britain who has a rare congenital condition that means she has only three fingers on each hand and seven toes, fell short against American Shelby Rogers 6-4, 6-1 in 67 minutes.

But merely stepping onto a Grand Slam court was a satisfying feat having been told as a child that she would never be able



to become a professional athlete.

Jones made her 57-ranked opponent work in a competitive first set before falling away. "I have proved that I can compete at this level," Jones, ranked 245, said.

"I think now it's about accumulating as many matches as possible over the next 12 months against players such as Shelby or even of a higher level."

"I think for me the main thing is that one error can really change momentum at this level. That's something I need to get used to and definitely will be aware of next time I find myself at this sort of tournament."

Jones has found herself in the public spotlight since qualifying for the Australian Open, as she spreads awareness of her condition - Ectrodactyly Ectodermal Dysplasia.

"I have had loads of messages and a lot of support the last few weeks."



Spanish great Rafael Nadal shrugged off a back injury to beat Serbia's Laslo Djere in straight sets at the Rod Laver Arena yesterday.

PHOTO: TWITTER