

What to WATCH

T SPORTS

Bangladesh vs West Indies
Second Test (Day 1)
Live from 9:30 am

TEN 2 & SONY SIX

Australian Open 2021
Third Round
LIVE FROM 6:00 AM (FRIDAY)

Plans afoot for franchise hockey league

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) has decided in principle to introduce a franchise-based hockey league in the country following a proposal from T-Sports, the first and only sports-exclusive satellite television channel.

"A few days back, an event management group of T-Sports proposed to us to hold a franchise-based hockey league with participation of six to eight teams. Today's executive committee meeting decided in principle to arrange it with the hope of getting back on the turf again," BHF general secretary Mohammad Yousuf said after a marathon meeting at the Falcon Hall in Tejgaon yesterday.

"After today's meeting, we will discuss with T-Sports every detail of the proposal, including how franchises and sponsors will be managed," Yousuf said. "We also gave our nod to the franchise-based league because a similar league is taking place in neighbouring India and the introduction of this tournament will add a new tournament in our calendar." However, the meeting could not take any concrete decision regarding the Premier Division League, which has not taken place in the last three years.

The BHF general secretary added that they have agreed to host India's junior squad for a six-match series.

Feast of home T20s for Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will host Australia, England and New Zealand – three of the top T20 sides in the world – this year ahead of the T20 World Cup, a high-placed official of Bangladesh Cricket Board confirmed yesterday.

Australia are likely to come here for three T20s against the hosts in September while England and New Zealand, too, will come here to play white-ball cricket ahead of the T20 World Cup, scheduled to take place in October-November in India, said the BCB official, adding that no tri-series involving any of these three teams has been

planned as yet.

"We are working on it [hosting Australia]. No decision has been made yet. As it stands, Australia, England and New Zealand will tour Bangladesh before the T20 World Cup. That's how we have planned and so far, no final decision has been made on hosting a tri-nation series," BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury told reporters yesterday.

If Australia's tour does take place, it will be their first in Bangladesh since 2017 even though the Aussies will not be playing deferred Test series against Bangladesh during this tour. The Test series, scheduled for June last year, was deferred

indefinitely in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

The BCB CEO informed that the window available for Australia can only be used for one format and it made sense to play T20s ahead of the T20 World Cup.

"We had three Tests and two T20s against Australia. Now that we can fit in T20s here, we are doing that. Instead of two, we are increasing the number to three T20s. It doesn't mean we are trying to replace one [format] with the other. If there was time available to fit the Tests, we would have done that. Time slot available is either for three ODIs, three Tests or three T20s. So, we are only aiming for

the T20s. It is a good preparation for us before the T20 World Cup and also a great opportunity to play against such a high-profile team ahead of the tournament."

Following the end of the ongoing home series against West Indies, Bangladesh will have a 33-day window before leaving for New Zealand, which is scheduled to end on April 1.

The BCB CEO said that a window is available in April to host Sri Lanka. "There is a time slot in April when Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are both available. So we are trying to fit in two or three Tests of the Test championship in that slot."



JUVENTUS QUALIFY FOR THE FINAL

Juventus players celebrate in the dressing room after reaching Coppa Italia final on Tuesday. Juventus beat Inter Milan 2-1 on aggregate to reach the final following a 0-0 draw in the second leg of the semi-final. Leading from the first leg in Milan, Juve survived a couple of scares before making it to the final for the second successive season. Inter threw everything at Juve late on but veteran keeper Gianluigi Buffon and his defence stood firm to secure a spot in the final.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Zidane praises adaptable Real

REUTERS



Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane credited his side for adapting to a brand new formation with hardly any practice after they beat Getafe 2-0 to move up to second in La Liga on Tuesday.

With nine first team players missing due to injury or suspension, Zidane deployed a 3-4-3 shape which the team had never used before and had barely worked on in training.

"We didn't prepare very much, but a little before the game we spoke about it and how to organise ourselves. The players interpreted it very well," Zidane told reporters after goals from Karim Benzema and Ferland Mendy gave his side victory.

The victory took Zinedine Zidane's side into second in the standings and left them five points below Atletico, who drew 2-2 with Celta Vigo on Monday to end an eight-game winning streak but have two games in hand.

"Considering we're playing a shape we weren't used to, we put in a good performance and did a good job."

Real were missing four defenders

and had no right backs available so Zidane doubled up on the left flank with Marcelo and Mendy, who combined to score their second goal shortly after Benzema had broken the deadlock.

"Our attitude was exemplary,



without preparing at all we interpreted the formation very well and that says a lot about our squad," Zidane added. "I don't know if we'll use it again because we have to adapt to whatever situation we find ourselves in, but we did well and I'm happy for the players because what they did today was not easy."

PHOTO: REUTERS



DJOKOVIC PASSES 'VERY TOUGH MATCH'

Novak Djokovic gives away his wristbands after winning his second round match of the Australian Open against Frances Tiafoe yesterday. Djokovic's aura of invincibility at Rod Laver Arena wavered under the pressure of Tiafoe but the Serbian rose to the challenge to claim a tough 6-3, 6-7(3), 7-6(2), 6-3 win. The double-defending champion has rarely been tested so early at his favourite Grand Slam but he had his hands full against American Tiafoe, whose sparkling tennis revived memories of his exhilarating run to the 2019 quarter-finals. "Very tough match," said a relieved Djokovic on court, his voice faint and hoarse from the battle. "Also difficult conditions. While we had sun on the court it was very, very warm. I want to give a hand to Frances again for a great fight. It was a fantastic match. If I have to choose obviously I would like to have these kinds of matches in the opening week."

PHOTO: REUTERS

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