

T SPORTS & STAR SPORTS 1
India vs England
Fourth T20I
Live from 7:30 pm
SONY SIX
UEFA Europa League
Shakhtar Donetsk vs AS Roma
Live from 11:55 pm

Young Boys vs Ajax
Live from 2:00 am (Friday)
TEN 1
UEFA Europa League
Arsenal vs Olympiacos
Live from 11:55 pm
Rangers vs Slavia Prague
Live from 2:00 am (Friday)

TEN 2
UEFA Europa League
Dinamo Zagreb vs Tottenham
Live from 11:55 pm
AC Milan vs Manchester United
Live from 2:00 am (Friday)

Can Tigers work as a streak to defy the streak?

NABID YEASIN AND SABBIR HOSSAIN



Records need not be pointed out to show that Bangladesh are yet to make big strides in the longest format of the game compared to their achievements in limited-overs cricket. When compared to other Test-playing nations, that gap only becomes more prominent.

Hence, pundits, journalists, Bangladesh's fans and even the players almost instantly acknowledge the fact that the Tigers are a better limited-overs side in the international arena -- especially favouring ODIs. But despite being a better ODI side when compared within their own matrix, the Tigers' record away from home even in their strongest format is far off the standards set at home.

Bangladesh have had rare moments of success in both ODI and T20I World Cups and other major limited-overs ICC events over the years.

And while those remain some of the country's most iconic cricketing moments that glorify and enrich the country's cricketing history, the Tigers can boast of very few triumphs in overseas series.

After a number of heartbreaks in major tournament finals, Bangladesh were only able to win their maiden multi-team ODI tournament when they lifted a trophy in a tri-nation tournament including the West Indies and hosts Ireland in 2019.

The Tigers won a three-match ODI series 2-1 against a full-fledged West Indies side in July, 2018, but other than that victories in overseas series against top-ranked sides have been few and far between. The fact that they are yet to taste victories in bilateral series in four foreign nations -- South Africa, New Zealand, Pakistan and Australia -- only adds to



the Tigers' woes.

But it is their failure in New Zealand that comes to the fore vividly as the Tigers have toured the nation four times, more than the three aforementioned countries, playing and losing 26 matches against the Kiwis in their backyard -- 13 ODIs including one in the 2015 World Cup, four T20Is and nine Tests. They have had far more success against them while playing at home, with the famous 4-0 'Banglaway' in 2010 being the most noteworthy of all.

While talking about the Tigers' disreputable away record, one might be misled into thinking that they have not had their moments of exhilaration away from home,

especially in New Zealand.

However, with the Tigers currently on their fifth New Zealand sojourn for three ODIs and as many T20Is, we can find a number of inspiring individual performances across formats if we turn our focus to their previous outings against the Kiwis in their backyard.

But those knocks were just that, inspiring but never backed up by support from the team and that resulted in inevitable defeats.

Fifties from Henry Nicholls, Ross Taylor, skipper Tom Latham and cameos from James Neesham and Colin de Grandhomme helped New Zealand cruise to 330 for six in the third and final ODI against

Bangladesh in Dunedin in February, 2019. Despite Sabbir Rahman scoring a century in that game, a lack of support from his teammates -- only four others recorded double digits -- culminated in Bangladesh losing by a huge margin of 88 runs.

Similarly, Mahmudullah Riyad's unbeaten 128 in the 2015 World Cup game in Hamilton, Imrul Kayes' 101 in Christchurch in 2010 or Mushfiqur Rahim's 86 in Dunedin in 2010 were all trumped by a concerted team effort from the Kiwis, something the visitors missed on every occasion.

On every tour of New Zealand, it has been repeatedly proven that, aside from instances of individual brilliance, Bangladesh still have a

long way to go in growing as a team. Can Tamim Iqbal, who is on his first overseas tour as Bangladesh's ODI captain, bring his troops together to make amends in that particular aspect of the game in New Zealand this time around?

As evidenced by past tours, it is certainly not rare for Bangladeshi players to flourish in Kiwi conditions. But maybe what needs changing is a supply of ample support from other members of the team when any individual is having his day out in the middle. Maybe that could be the mantra for the Tigers to change the infamous record -- that of not winning in 26 international games in New Zealand till date -- on this tour.

PREMIER DIVISION TABLE TENNIS LEAGUE

Players to get back into swing after 3 years

SPORTS REPORTER



After a three-year hiatus, including a Covid-19-induced one-year break, the Premier Division Table Tennis League is set to get underway today at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium amid tales of joy and sorrow.

The players' happiness is unquestionable as they finally got an opportunity to earn some money from the top-flight league after three long years while the enrollment of Bangladesh Police Club in the league added to their delight. On the other hand, they were dismayed by Biman Bangladesh Airlines Table Tennis's decision to pull out of the league to which they returned after a five-year hiatus in 2017, participating that year and the next.

Biman, once an unparalleled team, taking the decision to withdraw apparently gave the teams that remain a bit of room to relax and not spend big behind their squads because now only one



of the 10 teams faces the threat of relegation.

Former junior champion Imran Hossain Ridoy, ranked Bangladesh's fifth-best player, was supposed to represent Biman in the postponed 2020 league, but is now playing for Ajax SC for approximately Tk 70,000 than what he would have gotten from Biman.

"Those who were supposed to play for Biman are now getting Tk 50,000 to Tk 70,000 less from other teams, who are not interested to spend big because only one team

will be relegated this time due to Biman's withdrawal," Ridoy told The Daily Star.

"We are not only facing financial damage, we also spent our own money to buy gear because Biman used to provide gear to the players," said Ridoy, hoping that Ajax SC would fight for a top-three position although Sheikh Russel and Bangladesh Police Club look to be ahead of the other eight on paper.

Parag, Antu Hossain Joy, Saleha Parvin, Moumita Rumi and two other players were also supposed

to play for Biman and are now struggling to land good positions.

Biman tried to be included at the eleventh hour, but the federation shut the door on them because it was too late to make arrangements for their inclusion.

Although Ridoy is playing for Ajax, he was pleased to see a new team -- Police Club -- join the league, saying it could provide good opportunities to players in future.

Inspired by their success in the Chess League, Police Club showed intent in the table tennis league as well by forming a strong squad that includes defending champion Muhatasin Ahmed Ridoy and promising players Sabbir and Ramhin.

"In our debut season, Bangladesh Police became champions in the Premier Division Chess League, which inspired us to step into other indoor games. We hope our team will deliver a good result in the table tennis league too," Superintendent of Police M Mahabubur Rahman, a focal member of the executive committee of Police Indoor Games, said.

REAL, CITY BREEZE THROUGH TO QUARTERFINALS

'Real played splendidly from start to finish'

REUTERS, Madrid



Real Madrid easily overcame Atalanta 3-1 at home in their Champions League last-16 second leg on Tuesday to stroll into the quarter-finals 4-1 on aggregate.

"You have to congratulate the players because we played splendidly from start to finish, against a team that demands a lot of you physically," said Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane.

"We did exactly what we needed to do, both in defence and when we had the ball. We could say it was a complete performance."

Karim Benzema scored a sixth goal in five games to put the 13-times European champions in charge after 34 minutes while captain Sergio Ramos converted a penalty on the hour mark.

The Italian side managed to get one

the opening goal.

"We all know the player Modric is, he may be 35 but he sure doesn't look it out on the pitch," Zidane told reporters.

'I am delighted to be in the next stage'

REUTERS, Budapest

Manchester City marched into the quarter-finals of the Champions League for the fourth straight season after a 2-0 win over Borussia Mönchengladbach on Tuesday to complete a 4-0 aggregate victory.

First-half goals from Kevin De Bruyne and Ilkay Gundogan secured a comfortable victory in another impressive display from Pep Guardiola's side in the home leg, played in the Hungarian capital due to Covid-19 travel restrictions.

"It was a good performance, in control for the 90 minutes. We moved the ball quick, played really well again. A lot of players with quality who don't lose the ball. I am delighted to be in the next stage," said Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola, who has seen his teams score 100+ goals in all his 12 seasons as a manager, since 2008-09.

City have won 24 of their past 25 matches in all competitions (lost one). Since a 1-1 draw with West Brom on December 15, City's 24 wins are at least seven more than any other side has managed in all competitions in the top-five European leagues.

They are only the third team in Champions League history to keep seven consecutive clean sheets, after AC Milan (seven ending in April 2005) and Arsenal (10 ending in April 2006).

Guardiola heaped praise on centre backs Ruben Dias and John Stones after Tuesday's Champions League win and said their solid partnership was a key factor in the club's stellar campaign.

"We just conceded one goal against Porto and that is quite impressive," Guardiola said. "You can't deny that Ruben and John made an incredible step forward for the team this season."



BOOTERS LEAVE FOR NEPAL TODAY

Bangladesh players seem in high spirits during their last practice session at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday, prior to their departure for Nepal today to take part in a tri-nation football tournament. The tri-nation tournament involving hosts Nepal, Bangladesh and Kyrgyzstan U-23 team is set to start on March 23 and will continue till March 29. The tournament will be played in round-robin format. There will be a total of four matches with the top two teams playing in the final. The Dashrath Stadium will host all the matches.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Stage set for Ibra's return

AFP, Paris

Zlatan Ibrahimovic looks set to face Manchester United in AC Milan's Europa League showdown with the English giants on Thursday as the resurgent 'Rossoneri' aim to announce their return to the big stage.

The Swede should be in good spirits after announcing his return to international football after nearly five years away on Tuesday, and appears to be winning the race to face his old club in the second leg of their last-16 clash at the San Siro.

The tie is locked at 1-1. Italian media reported on Tuesday that the veteran forward trained with the rest of the Milan squad and should be available for the first time since he left his side's 2-1 win at Roma with a high injury at the end of last month.

goal back thanks to a free kick from Luis Muriel in the 83rd but any hope they had of completing a comeback was quickly dashed a minute later by a low strike from Real substitute Marco Asensio.

Real coach Zinedine Zidane however praised an evergreen Luka Modric after the 35-year-old midfielder produced a majestic display in a comfortable win over Atalanta on Tuesday as the Spanish side reached the Champions League quarter-finals.

Modric played a crucial role in breaking the deadlock by contributing to his side's high-pressing game and intercepting a kick out from Atalanta keeper Marco Sportiello to set up Karim Benzema for



Manchester City marched into the quarter-finals of Europe's elite club competition for a fourth straight season. Meanwhile, City have reached the last four only once, in 2015-16 under Chilean Manuel Pellegrini.

