

T SPORTS

**ROAD SAFETY WORLD SERIES**  
Final  
India Legends vs Sri Lanka Legends  
Live from 7:30 pm  
**STAR SPORTS SELECT 1**  
**ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE**  
West ham vs Arsenal

Live from 9:00 pm  
Aston Villa vs Tottenham  
Live from 1:30 am (Monday)  
**TEN 2 FA CUP**  
Chelsea vs Sheffield United  
Live from 7:30 pm  
Leicester vs Manchester United  
Live from 11:00 pm

Serie A  
AS Roma vs Napoli  
Live from 1:45 am (Monday)  
**FACEBOOK LA LIGA**  
Atletico Madrid vs Alaves  
Live from 11:30 pm  
Real Sociedad vs Barcelona  
Live from 2:00 am (Monday)



New Zealand pacer Trent Boult (4-27) celebrates the wicket of Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal during the first ODI at the University Oval on Saturday. Bangladesh's batting was so poor and so devoid of strategic nous that it was impossible for them to set any challenging target for the hosts. PHOTO: AFP

"It was difficult to bat early on as it was seaming and swinging. But I think if you look at our dismissals at least three to four were very soft dismissals which we don't expect. As I said I am proud of our batting and we are not the team to get all out for 130 odd runs no matter how difficult the situation we are in. So obviously we didn't play well and it was the wrong shot selection that forced us to bundle out for 130. I hope the soft dismissals in which we got out if we don't repeat those mistakes in the coming games and if we want to do well, we have to score at least 270-280 runs."

TAMIM IQBAL  
BANGLADESH ODI CAPTAIN

I don't think I duel with too many people but I have played against Tamim a little bit. I enjoy bowling against left-handers. I suppose it is not really too much of a secret. It was nice to see the ball swinging around a little bit. To get a couple of wickets at the top and keep the pressure on the middle-order was pretty satisfying."

TRENT BOULT  
NEW ZEALAND PACE BOWLER

## We are a level above Nepal, says Jamal



Sports Reporter



Jamal Bhuiyan has said they could do well in the upcoming tri-nation tournament in Nepal as he feels Bangladesh is a level above the Nepal team at the moment.

The Bangladesh captain returned to the country on Friday following a satisfactory campaign with Kolkata Mohammedan Sporting Club and wasted no time getting to training with the Saif Sporting Club players yesterday ahead of the Nepal tournament.

"I don't know what's going on with the Nepal team (regarding their training), but I think we are one level above them," Jamal said after a practice session at the Saif Sporting Club ground.

The team is strong and there are some new players. I believe we can get a good result. Jamie (Day) selected the team based on performances," said the Bangladesh captain, adding that he could not comment on first-game opponents, a Kyrgyzstan U-23 team, since he did not have much knowledge about them.

"Everyone is fit as the league was on. The team is strong and there are some new players. I believe we can get a good result. Jamie (Day) selected the team based on performances," said the Bangladesh captain, adding that he could not comment on first-game opponents, a Kyrgyzstan U-23 team, since he did not have much knowledge about them.

Bangladesh will play their first match against Kyrgyzstan U-23 team on Tuesday before their second match against the hosts on March 27. The top two teams of the round robin stage, where each team will play against the other once, will meet in the final on March 29.

The Bangladesh team, which flew to Nepal on Thursday, engaged in an indoor

session at the gym and swimming pool yesterday following a full-fledged training session on Friday. Jamal will join the team on Monday.

The Bangladesh captain said while being away from the team, he is working on fitness so that he can cope with the rest of the team right after reaching Kathmandu.

"The beginning in Kolkata was a bit tough because I had coronavirus. I was in isolation for almost 20 days in Qatar and then 10 days in India. So, I was out of practice and running for a month. Just got into the game after one practice session. But my fitness improved gradually," said the Bangladesh skipper, who played nine matches in the I-League for the popular Kolkata outfit.

While Jamal talked with affection about Kolkata football and how he was received wholeheartedly by the Black Panthers and their supporters, his parent club, Saif Sporting Club, were quick to extend his contract for the remainder of the season and the next season as well.

The club officials cut a cake to welcome their captain at the training ground and later completed formalities of the contract signing.

The club's managing director Nasiruddin Chowdhury said that the club would be Jamal's home for a long time.

"Jamal was always our player. He may have played for Kolkata Mohammedan on loan, but he will play the remainder of the season and the next season for us," Nasiruddin said.

Jamal said he is committed to contributing to Saif Sporting Club's success and that he would try to help the team finished at least second in the league.



(Top) Bangladesh captain Jamal Bhuiyan is welcomed ceremoniously by the Saif Sporting Club in Dhaka while (bottom) the national team members engage in a fitness session at the team hotel in Kathmandu yesterday. PHOTO: SAIF SC/BFF

## Disappointment abounds after 27th straight loss

MAZHAR UDDIN

Before the start of the New Zealand tour, Bangladesh ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal was hopeful of re-writing history and registering a first international win for the Tigers in the country after losing all 26 games across all formats in the nation. Make that 27. Bangladesh faced a crushing



The second ODI of the three-match series will be played on Tuesday (March 23) in Christchurch.

eight-wicket defeat to New Zealand after a helpless batting performance, which saw them bundled out for 130 runs -- their lowest total after coming in to bat first in the last three years.

The hope of registering a first win against the hosts at their den on Saturday is still one Bangladesh can fulfill on the upcoming matches on the tour, but for that the Tigers will have to show far more authority, especially with the bat.

Going back to the opening game of the three-match ODI series in Dunedin on Saturday, Tamim and his troops had a batting approach that reminded Bangladeshi fans of age-old batting displays from the Tigers.

During Bangladesh's early days in international cricket, surviving and struggling against quality seamers was a regular occurrence and Bangladesh's batting approach seemed exactly the same in the first ODI against the likes of Trent Boult and James Neesham.

New Zealand are probably among the very few countries where Bangladesh have travelled frequently in the recent past, but they are still lacking when it comes to adapting and adjusting to conditions.

Pacers usually get a lot of purchase from the bouncy New Zealand tracks and that proved the case in Dunedin with overcast conditions early on. The Tigers simply could not figure out the right approach.

The experienced Tamim started off confidently with a gorgeous six to Boult with an uppercut which was followed by a boundary on

the leg side, but the left hander was dismissed in a typical fast bowlers' trap.

After beating the southpaw with two out-swinging deliveries, Boult produced a straight delivery that undid Tamim, trapping him leg-before on 13 and signalling the start of the disaster for the visitors.

Soumya Sarkar was promoted to number three due to his ability to face quality pacers but the left-hander departed in soft fashion, handing a simple catch while going for a slash to a delivery relatively close to his body from Boult.

The inability to get used to the pace of the surface, which offered swing and bounce, proved too difficult for the Bangladeshi batters.

Liton Das, despite doing all the hard work to occupy the crease, eventually became another culprit of being dismissed in soft manner

off Neesham.

Things went from bad to worse since then and despite some sort of fight from two experienced batsmen Mahmudullah Riyad and Mushfiqur Rahim -- who were the only two batters to go past the twenties -- there was nothing positive for Tamim.

"If we want to overcome such a situation, we need to score at least 270-280 runs so that the bowlers can get something to defend. As I said, one of the top five batters needs to score big and carry the innings. But if we are unable to do that from the top five, then it's always difficult, especially in such conditions," said Tamim.

The Bangladesh fans back home, who woke up at 4:00am to watch the Tigers play, are perhaps still trying to overcome the hangover of the defeat, one that they will feel till the second game on Tuesday in Christchurch.

## 'It was a strange year'

REUTERS

Juventus forward Cristiano Ronaldo was named Serie A's Player of the Year for the 2019-20 season at the Gran Gala del Calcio on Friday.

Ronaldo won award, which is voted by the Italian Footballers' Association, after helping Juventus to a ninth successive Serie A title last season.

"It was a strange year, a year that no one would have wanted, but on a personal and team level, it was positive, because we won the championship," Ronaldo told Sky Sport Italia.

"At the beginning, it was difficult to play in empty stadiums, but our goal was to win the championship and we did it. We missed the Champions League but that's how football is."

The Portuguese striker's sensational strike against Sampdoria in December 2019 was also voted Goal of the Season.

"It was my best goal, I'm very sure of it," Ronaldo added. "I feel motivated and this must be the case, as otherwise it's not possible to play at this level when you are 35, 36, 37 or 40."



PHOTO: TWITTER



## BARCA LOOK TO CLOSE THE GAP

Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi trains ahead of his side's clash with Real Sociedad tonight. Sociedad host Barca as Ronald Koeman's men look to close the gap on Atletico Madrid, who take on Alaves tonight, at the top of La Liga. Barcelona are currently second in the league, only four points off the top of the table.

Koeman's men have been in excellent form since the turn of the year, and are unbeaten in the league in 2021. The Blaugrana are also on a seven-game unbeaten streak across all competitions and Koeman will hope that his side's form continues tonight.

PHOTO: TWITTER

## Buoyant West Indies out to deepen Sri Lanka's woes

AFP



Sri Lanka cricket's woes of the past 12 months could be extended for at least another fortnight unless the visitors can rise to the challenge of a buoyant West Indies team in the two-Test series starting on Sunday at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua.

Swept 3-0 in the One-Day International contest after being edged 2-1 in the tour-opening T20 International duel, Dimuth Karunaratne's team have offered little by way of confidence-building performances in the lead-up to the encounters with a Caribbean squad brimming with confidence after their unexpected successes in a similar two-match series in Bangladesh last month.

Having replaced Jason Holder as full-time Test captain on the strength of his handling of the underdog West Indies for the Tests in Chattogram and Dhaka, Kraigg Brathwaite leads a home team strengthened by the return of the former skipper and experienced batsman Darren Bravo.

Both were among a dozen first-choice players who opted out of the Bangladesh captain due to Covid-19 concerns. In their absence, debutants Kyle Mayers and Nkrumah Bonner took their opportunities with both hands and are predictably retained for this first series of an extended season of international cricket in the West Indies.

West Indies' main concern going into the first Test appears to be finding the ideal balance to the team as Holder's return to duty as one of the premier all-rounders in the international game gives the selectors the option of playing an additional spinner depending on the condition of the pitch.



D. Karunaratne K. Brathwaite

## Overseas fans barred from Tokyo Olympics

AFP, Tokyo

Overseas fans will be banned from this summer's virus-delayed Tokyo Olympics, organisers said Saturday, calling the decision disappointing but "unavoidable" as they try to hold the Games safely during the pandemic.

The unprecedented ban will make the Tokyo Games the first ever without overseas spectators, with organisers scaling back their ambitions for the pandemic event.

Once billed as a party to celebrate "proof of humanity's triumph over the virus", the Games are instead shaping up to be a largely television event, with little of the international party atmosphere that usually characterises an Olympics.

In a statement the Games officials said the virus situation in Japan and abroad remained "very challenging".

They said it was "highly unlikely" Japan could guarantee overseas visitors entry by the summer, and therefore the ban on spectators from abroad was necessary.