

# Mushfiqur's favourite opposition

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A lot will depend on 'Mr Dependable' Mushfiqur

Rahim when Bangladesh take on Sri Lanka in the two-match Test series on their tour of the island nation this month.

Bangladesh's recent performances in all three formats were disappointing, with the performance graph in the longest format the most concerning for the team management.

The 2-0 whitewash against an inexperienced West Indies side at home soil earlier this year came as a huge reality check for Bangladesh in regards to their approach in Test format.

Although Mushfiqur has been the most consistent performer for the Tigers across all formats, the experienced cricketer has been in hot water for his wicket-keeping skills in the recent limited-overs tour of New Zealand.

The 33-year-old did hand over his wicket-keeping gloves to Liton Das in the longest format. Despite that lessened responsibility, Mushfiqur will have a huge role to play as a batsman in the middle order in Sri Lanka.

As a keeper, Mushfiqur has scored 3515 in Tests runs in 104 innings at an average of 37.00, including includes six centuries and 16 fifties. Playing only as a batsman for the Tigers in Tests, Mushfiqur has scored 1022 runs in 30 innings at an average of 35.24 which includes one hundred and six fifties.

Known as one of the most



Wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim plays one on the front foot during a net session in Katunayake, Sri Lanka yesterday. PHOTO: BCB

TEST STATS							
OVERALL							
	M	Inns	Runs	HS	Avg	100s	50s
Home	43	77	2582	219*	36.36	3	14
Away	29	57	1955	200	36.88	4	8
AGAINST SRI LANKA							
	M	Inns	Runs	HS	Avg	100s	50s
	13	24	895	200	42.61	1	6
IN SRI LANKA							
	M	Inns	Runs	HS	Avg	100s	50s
	6	11	541	200	60.11	1	3

dedicated cricketers in the Bangladesh camp, Mushfiqur's lively presence will also make a huge impact on the overall approach of the team. Mushfiqur can also take a lot of positives from the fact that he is the second-highest run-getter

after Mohammad Ashraful in Tests against Sri Lanka.

The highest run-getter for Bangladesh in Tests, Mushfiqur has developed himself as a world-class batsman over the past few years. He has three double hundreds under

his belt -- most by a Bangladeshi in the longest format, two of those since 2018 batting at number five.

Interestingly, Mushfiqur's maiden double ton came against Sri Lanka back in 2013 at Galle which was also the first-ever double hundred scored by a Bangladeshi in the longest format. It was also the only time when Bangladesh managed to draw a Test match against Sri Lanka courtesy of Mushfiqur's sublime knock.

Sri Lanka has always remained Mushfiqur's favourite opponents as he scored 895 runs in 24 innings at an average of 42.61 in the island nation, most runs he scored against any opposition in the longest format.

It will be crucial for the Tigers' team management to utilise the most of Mushfiqur, who scored 1092 runs in 23 innings at an average of 54.60, including two centuries and six fifties, batting at number five.

In absence of Shakib AL Hasan and Mahmudullah Riyad, it is Mushfiqur who will have to shoulder the responsibility and guide a relatively inexperienced Bangladesh batting line-up in the upcoming series.

It was under Mushfiqur's captaincy that Bangladesh managed to win a Test match against their Sri Lankan counterparts, back in 2017 on their historic 100th Test.

And perhaps skipper Mominul Haque can take some valuable inputs from the experienced Mushfiqur to re-write history this time around.

# Ismail urges BAF to adapt to new trends

SPORTS REPORTER



"We should adapt to new trends and appoint a coach for each athlete if we want to get international success."

That was the realisation made by Bangladesh's fastest man, Mohammad Ismail, after taking part in the inaugural International Athletic Imam Reza Cup Tournament in Iran last week.

Ismail has thrice been crowned the fastest man in Bangladesh and broke the 27-year-old national 100m sprint record in 2019 by clocking in 10.20 seconds (hand-timing). In the recently-concluded Bangladesh Games, he represented Bangladesh Navy and took 10.50 seconds (hand-timing) to clinch gold.

However, the 29-year-old sprinter has had varying experiences in international competitions. In Iran, he finished eighth out of eight sprinters, clocking in at 10.91 seconds (electronic-timing), 0.21 seconds more than the time he made when he finished fourth at the South Asian Games in Nepal in 2019.

"It has been a different experience in Iran because of the ongoing pandemic. It was really difficult for me to compete in Iran so soon after completing the Bangladesh Games. Because an athlete always has a peak when it comes to performing after labourious training. So, I had my peak during Bangladesh Games and virtually could not perform in Iran although I qualified for the eight-man final round among 36 sprinters," said Ismail, who is in quarantine after returning from Iran on April 13.

Asked whether he talked with athletes and coaches from other nations to learn about their training methods amidst the pandemic, Ismail said: "I had a brief discussion with an Iranian coach and he informed me that Iranian athletes have been

practicing in a Covid-19-free environment at a sports complex but their domestic competitions are not taking place."

Ismail also believes that time should not be wasted awaiting the end of the pandemic and that the Bangladesh Athletic Federation should instead start training with a small number of athletes who are capable of delivering international medals.

"Because everything has been going on amid the pandemic, training can be arranged by the federation. There is no way to have training with 100 athletes, but it is a new trend to bring an athlete under a coach. I saw two Iranian sprinters in the Imam Cup under two different coaches. The sprinters from Maldives, Sri Lanka and Pakistan are training under individual coaches. Bangladesh should adopt this trend to get international success," opined Ismail.

Athletes from services teams have been dominating competitions in Bangladesh, but Ismail still believes there is talent at the district level.

"Athletes from services teams are doing better on the back of uninterrupted training, but some athletes from the district level also did well to win bronze medals in the Bangladesh Games despite a lack of training and quality coaching. That shows they are also talented athletes and I think they should be given long-term training and groomed for future," said Ismail, who also wanted long-term training for himself as well as modern machines to hone skills.

"Athletes must be given proper training as well as good nutrition. We also need modern equipment like electronic boards and step counters which will measure the athletes' physical ability and stride and judge performance. Athletes also need a fully-equipped gymnasium to produce good results," Bangladesh's fastest man concluded.



# Djokovic rues worst performance in years

REUTERS



World number one Novak Djokovic said he felt "awful" on court during the straight sets defeat against Britain's Dan Evans at the Monte Carlo Masters on Thursday and the performance was one of his worst in many years.

Djokovic went into his first meeting against the 33rd-ranked Evans with a 10-0 record in 2021 but exited the ATP Masters 1000 event after an error-prone show in chilly and blustery conditions.

The Serbian congratulated Evans, who came to Monte Carlo having won just four matches on clay, for a "deserved" 6-4, 7-5 victory.

"To be honest, this has been probably one of the worst matches and performances from my side I can recall in the last years," Djokovic told reporters.

"I don't want to take anything away from his win, but from my side, I just felt awful on the court overall. Just nothing worked. It's one of those days.

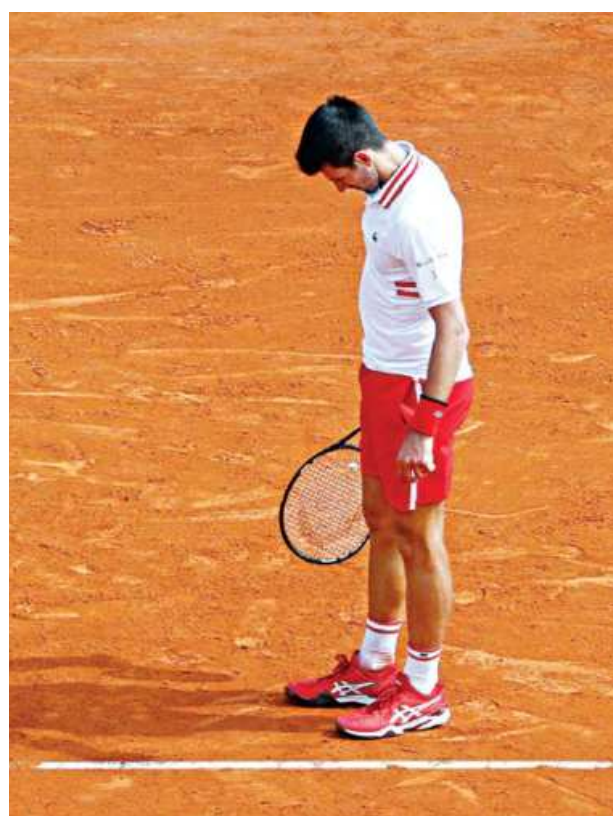
"From my side, I definitely should have done better. As I said, definitely that's been one of the worst performances I can remember in many years."

Djokovic said he was exiting with a "bitter" feeling but hoped he can turn things around as he heads home to play the Serbia Open next week.

"Just was obviously very, very windy, tough to play in these kind of conditions against a guy like Evans who makes you move," he added. "He's very unpredictable with his shots. He dismantled my game. I was just not feeling it, and playing pretty bad.

"Obviously right now, as I walk off the court, I'm disappointed with the way I played, the way I felt on the court. But it's a long clay season. Still plenty of tournaments, plenty of room to improve.

"Obviously I have to work, hopefully get a better performance next week in Belgrade."



Edinson Cavani scored in the sixth minute as Manchester United won 2-0 on the night against Granada for a 4-0 aggregate win in their Europa League quarterfinal second leg on Thursday. The Red Devils will meet AS Roma while Unai Emery's Villarreal will play the other semifinal against Arsenal, who cruised into the last four with a 4-0 win against Slavia Prague. PHOTO: MAN UTD/ARSENAL



# Lille, wounded Bayern and cup do-over

AFP, Paris



Lille can dial up the pressure on the Ligue 1 chasing pack, Bayern Munich face a thorny test following their Champions League exit and Athletic Bilbao will again try to win the Copa del Rey. Here is a look at some of the standout action in Europe this weekend.

Lille in game of cat and mouse Hunting a first French title since winning a league and cup double in 2011, Lille can provisionally go six points clear with victory against Montpellier as they have the advantage of kicking off this weekend's Ligue 1 fixtures.

Another boost is the return of Jonathan David, who has made a quick recovery from an ankle injury that sidelined him against Metz, having scored the winner away to Paris Saint-Germain at the start of April.

However, Montpellier are unbeaten in 13 games in all competitions and making a late push for Europe. Next week they also face Canet-en-Roussillon in the French Cup quarter-finals, the fourth-tier amateurs who embarrassed Marseille last month.

No time to mourn for Bayern After seeing their Champions League defence ended in Paris, Bayern Munich return to domestic action with RB Leipzig ready to pounce on any slip-up in a title race that appeared over earlier this

month. The absence of Robert Lewandowski has left Bayern with a huge hole in attack, compounded by the unavailability of Serge Gnabry, who is isolating after contracting Covid-19.

Wolfsburg are undefeated at home this campaign and have won nine of their past 12 games despite losing a seven-goal thriller

repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic is the chance of immediate redemption for Athletic Bilbao in the Copa del Rey, in the second final in as many weeks in Seville.

With last season's all-Basque final delayed almost a year in the hope of allowing fans to attend, Athletic have had to wait just two weeks for a shot at avenging their

Champions League musical chairs in Italy

While a 10th successive Serie A crown looks beyond reach for Juventus, the prospect of missing out on the Champions League is not beyond the realm of possibility either for Andrea Pirlo's team.

Juventus occupy third place in Italy but defeat at Atalanta, winners of eight of their past nine, could allow Napoli to replace the Turin club in the top four.

The match in Bergamo is a dress rehearsal of sorts for next month's Italian Cup final, although Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini risks missing the May 19 showpiece following a row over an out-of-competition doping test.

Ajax target first leg of double As Ajax streak clear in the Eredivisie, on course for a record-extending 35th title, the Amsterdam giants can secure the first part of a domestic double in the Dutch cup final against Vitesse Arnhem.

Roma snapped Ajax's 24-game unbeaten run in the first leg of the Europa League quarter-finals but only PSV Eindhoven have taken points off Erik ten Hag's side in the Eredivisie in 2021.

Vitesse won the cup in 2017 for the first time and could yet achieve the club's best top-flight finish, having come third in 1997-98.

The 2020 final between Utrecht and Feyenoord was cancelled after the Dutch season was terminated early as a result of the pandemic.



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi arrives in Bilbao on Friday ahead of Saturday's Copa del Rey final against Athletic Bilbao. PHOTO: FCB

at Eintracht Frankfurt last week, presenting a tough proposition for a Bayern side who could say goodbye to coach Hansi Flick at season's end.

Take two as Athletic eye Copa redemption One of the more bizarre

1-0 loss to Real Sociedad. They play Barcelona at an empty La Cartuja in a meeting of the competition's two most successful clubs. Barca have won the trophy 30 times and Athletic 23, finishing runners-up five times since the last of those in 1984.

# Coleman's suspension reduced

REUTERS

World 100 metres champion Christian Coleman has his two-year ban for breaching anti-doping whereabouts rules reduced to 18 months by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) on Friday but will still be ineligible for the Tokyo Olympics.

Coleman's ban, which was due to run until May 13 2022, will now end on Nov. 14, meaning he will miss the July 23-Aug. 8 Tokyo Games but can return to competition in time to defend his world indoor and outdoor titles next year.

The sprinter had been given a two-year suspension



by an independent tribunal of track and field's Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) in October last year.

He appealed against his ban in November.

"Christian Coleman's appeal was partially upheld and he will serve a reduced period of ineligibility of 18 months as from May 14 2020," CAS said in a statement on Friday.

CAS said its Panel had determined Coleman had committed an anti-doping violation but found his "degree of negligence to be lower than that established in the challenged decision". Three failures in a 12-month period to be at a location provided to anti-doping officials is considered a doping violation.

Coleman, who won the 100m world title at the 2019 Doha world championships in 9.76 seconds and had been the hot favourite for Olympic gold in Tokyo, said he was disappointed that he would miss the Summer Games.