T SPORTS & SONY SIX Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka First Test (Day 3) Live from 10:15 am **STAR SPORTS 1 & STAR SPORTS SELECT 1** Punjab Kings vs Mumbai Indians Live from 8:00 pm T SPORTS & STAR SPORTS SELECT 1 **English Premier League** Arsenal vs Everton Live from 1:00 am (Friday)

Tenacious Tigers maintain the pressure

SPORTS REPORTER





The Bangladesh batsmen showed dedication and urgency in sticking to their plan on the second day of the first Test against Sri Lanka in what turned out to be another

good day out in the middle for the visitors, even as bad light at Kandy saw no play in the third session. Both left-handers, Najmul Hossain and Mominul

Haque, put a price on their wicket and that facet was not lost when the pair departed, which was an encouraging

If Tamim Iqbal had set the tone with his array of strokes on the first day, taking the attack to the Lankan bowlers, Najmul and Mominul -- who started the day on 126 and 64 respectively - found composure and levelheadedness on their side to make the Lankan attack toil on a wicket that was not offering anything extra. The Sri Lankan bowlers, for their part, had done more

homework before Day Two as was evident from the more controlled line and length but the curbing the run-rate was also affected by both Najumul and Mominul not looking to force the issue and letting their advantage slip.

The duo put on the highest partnership for Bangladesh for the third wicket in Tests of 242 runs, beating the previous best of 236 runs by Mushfiqur Rahim and Mominul in Chattogram in 2018 against the same opposition. It was also the fifth best partnership for Bangladesh for any

RECORDS TUMBLE IN PALLEKELE

wicket, but most importantly, it was the second-highest partnership for the Tigers in Tests in terms of deliveries faced by a pair.

The Najmul-Mominul duo batted together for 514 deliveries, falling short of the most deliveries played in a partnership by four deliveries. That record still belongs to Mohammad Ashraful and Mushfiqur for their 267-run partnership in Galle back against Sri Lanka in 2013, when the duo negotiated 518 deliveries.



The record should speak volumes of the patience that was shown by both Najmul and Mominul. Mominul reached his first-ever overseas ton while Najmul reached the 150run landmark before lunch. Najmul would perhaps rue the opportunity of missing out on a double ton as he played a Lahiru Kumara straight back to the bowler, playing the delivery too early. Before that, he had faced 378 deliveries during his resilient 168, laced with 17 fours and a six.

BANGLADESH: First innings-474 for 4 in 155 overs (Tamim 90, Najmul 163, Mominul 127, Mushfiqur 43 not out, Liton 25 not out, extras 26; Fernando 2-75, Lahiru 1-88, Dhananjaya 1-112)

Mominul, whose ability to perform in away conditions have been questioned over and over in no uncertain terms due to his lack of big scores outside the country, notched his 11th Test ton; his first outside Bangladesh in a career spanning eight years -- a baffling statistics by any measure given his experience and technique.

His previous best score on Lankan soil had been 64, averaging just above 33 in three Tests. It was a joyous occasion for the left-hander when he cut Dhananjaya de Silva to backwards point -- one of his favourite scoring zones during the knock -- for four to pick up his maiden away ton. Dhananjaya would bag Mominul's scalp in the second session when a flighted delivery teased the lefthander for a drive that Mominul edged to slip, but not before determined 127 off 304 deliveries, featuring 11

Even with two wickets lost before tea, Mushfigur and Liton Das would see out the short rain break and the eventual stoppage of play due to bad light with the former unbeaten on 43 and the latter on 25 as Bangladesh finished another good day.

'Lot of hard work ahead of us'

SPORTS REPORTER





Bangladesh coach Domingo heaped praise on captain Mominul Haque, who finally brought an end to his overseas drought by making his

first century outside the country in Kandy through a 127-run knock on the second day of the first Test against Sri Lanka.

"I think Mominul understands his game really well. He is a very calm person. I think his demeanour lends him to be a very organised Test batsman. He is meticulous in his preparation. He works really hard. He knows what his strength and weaknesses are. I think he is a fantastic Test batsman," Domingo told the reporters during a virtual post-match briefing after Bangladesh ended the day on 474 for four.

"He is trying his best to lead the side. He got a hundred against the West Indies, and followed up with a hundred here again. I think he has 11 Test hundreds now, which is a fantastic achievement," he added.

Domingo was also not short of praise for opener Najmul Hossain, who displayed a calm demeanour throughout his maiden century in which he contributed 242 runs along with Mominul for the third wicket before offering a return catch to Lahiru Kumara.

"I think there's been a lot of discussion about how he goes about his innings. Being a bit more patient, leaving a few more balls, cutting out certain scoring areas, he has played a fantastic innings. I am really pleased with him. He has worked really hard on his game in the last couple of months," said Domingo.

Aside from that duo, Domingo was hoping a disciplined performance from his bowling department would put pressure on the hosts after taking the total past the 500-mark on the first session of the third day.

"We will make up some time over the next three days. I don't think any more overs will be lost in the game. We will discuss it overnight but we need to get some quick runs tomorrow morning. If we can get around 520, it gives us a good opportunity to put them under some pressure," Domingo said. "Winning the Test is a long way away. It is not something we are thinking about at the moment. Our main focus is to play well in the first session tomorrow. There's a lot of hard work ahead of us to even consider thinking of winning this Test.'

The 46-year-old added: "I don't think reverse swing is a big thing at this venue. There's a lot of moisture around. I really think that building pressure for periods of time is going to be important for our seamers. It is not a pitch where you can just run through guys in 40-

'We have to be patient and build pressure. We have to bowl in the right areas consistently and take our chances. It is the bottom line. Getting 20 wickets is not easy in Tests, so the guys have to make sure that they are really disciplined over the next couple of days," hoped Domingo.

Bangladesh's Test skipper Mominul Haque achieved his first hundred outside home soil, his eleventh overall, and his fourth against Sri Lanka. His previous best overseas score was 77 against South Africa in Potchefstroom in 2017.

- Najmul Hossain Shanto became only the second batsman from the team to cross 150 in his maiden Test century. He struck 17 fours and a six in his 163 runs innings. Mominul is at the top of the list as he scored 181 runs against New Zealand in Chattogram in 2013.
- Najmul and Mominul added 242 runs to record Bangladesh's fifth-highest partnership in any wicket and highest third-wicket partnership in Test overall. The previous record for the third-wicket partnership 236 in Chattogram in 2018 against Sri Lanka) was set up by Mominul and Mushfigur Rahim. Shanto and Mominul's record-breaking partnership lasted 85.4 overs.
- For the first time in his Test career left-handed Mominul played more than 300 deliveries in an innings. He made 127 off 304 balls, having struck 11 fours.
- Bangladesh lost only two wickets in the first 100 overs of their innings, and the only instance of such feat for them was seen back in 2003 against Pakistan.



Bangladesh Test skipper Mominul Haque raises bat after scoring his first away hundred during the second day's play of the first Test against Sri Lanka at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium in Kandy yesterday. PHOTO: SLC

BPL to resume on April 30

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federaton (BFF) yesterday decided to resume the Bangladesh Premier League from April 30, one day after the end of the countrywide lockdown

imposed by the government to contain Covid-19. The second phase of BPL was supposed to begin on April 9 after the completion of the first phase of the league matches on March 7.

The league was suspended for one month due to the mid-term transfers and the national football team's international engagements in Nepal before the BFF was forced to halt their resumption plans due to the lockdown starting April 7. Although a few clubs wanted to resume after Bashundhara Kings and Abahani completed their AFC cup engagements in May and the national team's World Cup Qualifying commitments in June, most clubs wanted to play some matches before Eid-ul-Fitr in May.

Taking all of that into consideration, it was decided at a meeting of the professional football league committee, chaired by BFF senior vice president Abdus Salam Murshedy, to start the leage on April 30 as well as play three to four rounds of matches before Bashundhara Kings and Abahani fly for Maldives to play in the AFC Cup.

The BFF also submitted a letter to the youth and sports ministry seeking approval to hold the BPL from April 30 by without crowds and by maintaining health guidelines at all four venues.

EUROPEAN FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Real move top, Milan teams frustrated



Real Madrid enjoyed temporary respite from their European Super League humiliaton by thrashing Cadiz 3-0 on Wednesday to keep the pressure on Atletico Madrid at

Three goals in 10 minutes towards the end of the first half helped Madrid go top of the table on head-to-head, above Atletico Madrid, who play at home to Huesca on Thursday. Manchester City closed in on the Premier

League title as the leaders fought back to win 2-1 at Aston Villa on Wednesday in their first match since withdrawing from the European Super League. Serie A leaders Inter Milan were held at

Spezia on Wednesday but extended their advantage to 10 points, as nearest rivals AC Milan fell to a 2-1 home defeat by Sassuolo after a chaotic few days amid the European Super League furore.

Champions Juventus moved third, just one point behind AC Milan, after beating Parma 3-1, hours after the top three were forced to backtrack on plans to join the new 12-team closed tournament.

Meanwhile, striker Mauro Icardi scored a hat-trick as Paris St Germain eased into the



Real Madrid striker Karim Benzema's fierce header goes past goalkeeper Jeremias Ledesma during his side's 3-0 victory over Cadiz in La Liga on Wednesday. Benzema's two goals put him level with club legend Raul Gonzalez as having scored against 35 different La Liga opponents throughout his career in

French Cup semi-finals with an emphatic 5-0 victory over Angers and AS Monaco joined them with a 2-0 win over 10-man Olympique Lyonnais on Wednesday.

Back to Madrid match, Karim Benzema scored twice and set up another for Alvaro Odriozola to head in at the Ramon de Carranza stadium, where any suggestion Madrid's players might be destabilised after a hugely controversial few days was dismissed.

Madrid president Florentino Perez was the only owner from the European Super League's 12 founding clubs to speak publicly about the competition following its remarkable launch on Sunday night.

And despite 10 of the 12 pulling out in the face of anger and opposition from all sides of the game, Real Madrid was still officially part of the breakaway tournament when the players kicked off on Wednesday night. La Liga sought to capitalise on the momentum towards reform, with the slogan 'Earn it! On the pitch' projected for television viewers across the stand where the virtual fans would usually be. Cadiz players wore t-shirts in the warm-up that read 'Super League? Football is

Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane hailed forward Karim Benzema. "I'm really pleased with what he's doing."

UK PM and 'fan revolution

Ceferin praises

AGENCIES

The spectacular collapse of the proposed European Super League may feel like a victory for supporters who protested against the plans across the continent and outside English Premier League grounds but the top clubs are already plotting

their next move. "The project is on standby. The project exists, but half of them have left, tired of what they have heard over 24 hours, saying they don't want to continue," Real Madrid president Perez told Spanish radio station



When asked was wrong to think the breakaway competition was now dead, he added: "Absolutely".

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin has praised UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his government for helping to force six English clubs to pull out of the breakaway Super League venture, saying they had taken the side of a fan revolt.

Ceferin said Johnson had recognised the anger of football supporters. had protested outside grounds including involving matches Liverpool and Chelsea.

"I find it very responsible from the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to take a sharp stand on the side of the fans, not only because of the culture and love of football, but also because it ensures order in the country."

'Bring on Messi!'





Upbeat Australia coach Graham Arnold has urged Argentina to bring Lionel Messi to the Olympics and described their tough pool as Tokyo's "group of

Drawn with twice champions Argentina, 1992 winners Spain and Egypt, the 'Olyroos' face an uphill battle to reach the knockout rounds of the 16-team tournament, their first Games since Beijing in 2008.

"Let's not write the 'group of death' any more. It's a group of dreams," Arnold told reporters on Thursday. "This is what you dream about in world football in these types of tournaments.

"The players, this is what they want. "I couldn't be happier with the draw. It's a great opportunity for the younger players to really put themselves on the stage and really show what they've got. "I hope Argentina bring Lionel Messi as well."

The men's tournament in Japan is for the Olyroos in 2018," he said.

under-24 players but nations are allowed to bring three over-age players.

Arnold, who also coaches Australia's senior team, said all of his squad wanted an Olympic iersev but he would rather not bring any overage footballers as it would deny younger talents their chance on the world stage.

"If we have a very good player in a certain position of an Olyroo age, then that Olyrooaged player will go and there will be no overage player for that position," he said.

"Kids are getting a lot of game-time in the A-League, players overseas are impressing, so we've got to give those kids the opportunity first. "I'm not going to pick a team around three over-age players."

Australia's best result in Olympic soccer was fourth at Barcelona in 1992, the first Games dedicated to under-23 sides. Arnold said his squad was determined to win Australia's first football medal and the tough draw had done nothing to change their ambitions.

"Otherwise why are we going? I've driven that mentality into these boys since I took over

Ferguson 'cried tears of joy' at Scott's Euro qualification



Alex Ferguson admits he cried tears of joy when Scotland beat Serbia to qualify for this year's delayed Euro 2020 championships. The former Manchester United manager said he burst into

tears when Ryan Christie, who had given the Scots a 1-0 lead before the Serbians levelled, started crying in a post-match interview. The Scots sealed their place in their first major finals since the 1998 World Cup winning 5-4 on penalties when David Marshall saved

Aleksandar Mitrovic's spot-kick. Ferguson, who was parachuted in to coach Scotland at the 1986 World Cup finals following the death of Jock Stein, said he feared the worst when Serbia levelled in the last minute of normal time.

"When Serbia scored in the last minute I thought 'oh Christ Almighty, extra-time, no chance'," he told Glasgow's Euro 2020 team to mark 50 days to the start of the tournament. "But they saw it through and dug their heels in." And then the Ryan

Christie interview. "Christ, I was crying when I saw him crying. It was fantastic. You talk about a boost to the country -- it was fantastic.

Ferguson said Christie's tears reflected that of a nation proud of its football heritage. "Ryan Christie was crying for Scotland, for every Scottish fan," he said.