

Domestic cricketers excited as DPL resumption nears

SPORTS REPORTER



While the national cricketers are gearing up for the upcoming home series against Sri Lanka, the excitement among domestic cricketers is also high as the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM) is all set to start the Dhaka Premier League from May 31.

The 2019-20 season's league was postponed on March 19 last year after just one round due to the outbreak of coronavirus in the country. CCDM chairman Kazi Inam Ahmed earlier revealed that the league will have a fresh start and will be played in T20 format instead of the usual fifty-over format.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board did start the National Cricket League -- the first-class competition -- in March this year but that too was suspended after two rounds owing to a fresh upsurge in Covid cases.

It was learnt that the board will monitor the entire procedure and logistics of the league which was previously done by the clubs.

The CCDM will conduct the first Covid tests of all the players and officials on May 26 while the



While the young left-arm pacer Shoriful Islam is gearing up for Bangladesh's upcoming three-match ODI series against Sri Lanka, the players outside the national camp will be thrilled for a return to the field with the previously-halted Dhaka Premier League set to resume from May 31.

PHOTO: BCB

second test will be carried out May 29 before the teams check in at the hotels.

It was also learnt that the players of the 12 clubs will be kept in three separate five-star standard hotels in the capital and the games will take place in three venues -- BKSP 3, 4, and the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. The organisers have also kept the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah as a

reserve venue. The board will create a bio-secure bubble to ensure the health and safety of the players and support staff.

"It's a big challenge, to be honest, for all of us. But I must mention the support from the clubs and the senior players to restart the league. We are hopeful of providing all the necessary health protocol and ensure safety of all the individuals

related to the league," CCDM's member secretary Ali Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday.

The clubs have already chalked out their plans for the upcoming league. Mohammedan Sporting Club, who have roped in Shakib Al Hasan, are set to start their residential training camp from May 19.

"Obviously it's a different challenge in the pandemic but we are looking forward to it. I am not sure whether I will be allowed to watch the games from the field as a club official, but I have to accept that for the safety of everyone and complete the league successfully," Mohammedan official Tarikul Islam Tito said.

It has been a long wait for the domestic cricketers, especially the ones outside the national set-up, to see the resumption of the league, which is the biggest source of income for the majority of the players.

"We are excited to be able to return to the field again. It's been a tough time for those of us outside the national set-up and we were desperate to play the league," said former national cricketer Marshall Ayub, who will play for Prime Doleshwar Sporting Club.



Bangladesh football players had their first practice session at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday after all the footballers, barring the injured Bishwanath Ghosh, on Sunday joined the national team's preparation camp for the June World Cup Qualifiers.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Booters start training without test results

SPORTS REPORTER



Having spent a four-day Eid vacation, footballers and coaching staff wasted no more time to start preparation for June's World Cup Qualifiers at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday even as they did not receive Covid-19 test results till afternoon after undergoing tests on Sunday.

In a quest to coping up with the hot weather in Doha, the booters sweated out under the sun for more than an hour on the first day of training after coach Jamie Day conducted a yoyo fitness test of all 32 players, with majority of them achieving the target.

"The players look very good in training because they spent some time with their family and friends. They did very well in the first session today and I hope they will look sharper in the next three to four days," said the 41-year-old coach, who believes Bangladesh will have to give their best to get some points in the remaining three matches against Afghanistan, India and Oman.

"Obviously we will try to win all three games and we need to play extremely well to do that because we are going to play against teams who are ranked higher than us. We know if we don't play our best, we can't win. We discussed it yesterday

[Sunday] and will discuss it in the next couple of weeks, so that we can play our best to get some points," said Day.

"If everyone doesn't play 10 in 10, we can't win. If they can play six or seven, we might draw and if they play less than six or seven, then we stay where we have been. It is very hard to win matches in Qatar but we will try to get points as much as we can though we know that we have lost our home advantage and the situation is extremely hard but we are looking forward to the three matches."

Midfielder Manik Mollah is confident of doing something well in Qatar.

"The fitness of the players is at a good level. So we have an opportunity to do something good if we can capitalise on the training properly because we have some time in hand before the start of the Qualifiers," the Chattogram Abahani midfielder said. "Doing training in hot weather here will help us cope up with the weather in Qatar."

The initial plan was to keep all the players at hotel during the Eid break, but the Bangladesh Football Federation allowed the players to spend time with family members before resuming the camp on Sunday.

However, starting training without getting test results has apparently triggered health risk to all the players, a situation similar to August last year when 18 players had tested positive.

BARCA WIN FIRST WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE TITLE

Barcelona players celebrate winning the Women's Champions League final in Gothenburg on Sunday. Barcelona put on a brilliant display to beat Chelsea 4-0 to win the title for the first time in the club's history and they are the first club to have won both the men's and women's Champions League.

PHOTO: REUTERS



'Who better than Suarez?'

REUTERS



Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone said he was grateful the ball dropped to Luis Suarez after the Uruguayan struck an 88th-minute goal in Sunday's 2-1 win over Osasuna which kept his side on course to win the La Liga title.

Atletico Madrid took a giant step towards the La Liga title with 83 points after 37 games. Real Madrid however ensured the title race will go down to the final weekend as they beat Athletic Bilbao 1-0 at San Mames on Sunday thanks to a second-half goal from defender Nacho

gave Osasuna a shock late lead, just as nearest challengers Real Madrid went ahead against Athletic Bilbao.

But Brazilian left back Renan Lodi equalised before Suarez finally kept his cool in front of goal to turn in a Yannick Carrasco pass and was then buried beneath a sea of his team mates' bodies.

"Suarez has so much experience and who better than him to resolve a game like that when it looked to be slipping away from us," Simeone told reporters. "Suarez showed incredible spirit, he has not been scoring recently but he kept on coming close."

Simeone had talked up the Uruguayan's big-game experience ahead of the match,



Atletico Madrid's Luis Suarez is ecstatic after scoring his side's second goal during Sunday's 2-1 win against Osasuna. The Uruguayan striker's 88th-minute strike kept his side on course for the La Liga title.

PHOTO: TWITTER

Fernandez. The result sees second-placed Real move onto 81 points while Barcelona saw their hopes of winning La Liga extinguished as they were beaten 2-1 at home by Celta Vigo on Sunday.

Suarez, Atletico's top scorer this season, had not found the net in his previous five outings and had wasted a series of clear chances in a nerve-shredding penultimate game of the season.

Atletico looked to have blown the chance to win the title when Ante Budimir

saying Atletico were "entering the Suarez zone".

Suarez said he had not expected the game to be so difficult.

"Everyone tells you that suffering is part of Atletico's identity but I didn't think we'd suffer that much," the Uruguayan said. "But that is what this team is about, effort and sacrifice, many people working really hard to ensure the club achieves its objectives. Now we have to rest and prepare for the next game."

Goalkeeper to goalscorer

AGENCIES



Just as Liverpool's Champions League chances looked virtually over, goalkeeper Alisson Becker went up in the 95th minute and powered home Trent Alexander-Arnold's corner to clinch a 2-1 win against West Brom on Sunday.

The Brazil international dedicated his dramatic last-minute headed winner to his late father. He said, "I'm too emotional, this last month for everything that has happened with me and my family,



but football is my life, I played for since I can remember with my father. I hope he was here to see it, I'm sure he is celebrating with God at his side."

After Alisson Becker's stunning goal, his manager Jurgen Klopp declared: "It's the best goal I've ever seen scored by a goalkeeper!"

The Liverpool number 1 joined an exclusive list of six goalkeepers to have scored in the Premier League. But Alisson became the first keeper to score a header and

the winner in 29-year history of the competition.

Peter Schmeichel (Shot in the box, 2001), Brad Friedel (Shot in the box, 2004), Paul Robinson (Own half, 2007), Tim Howard (Own half, 2012), and Asmir Begovic (Own half, 2013) are the five goalkeepers who scored before Liverpool's Alisson in the Premier League.

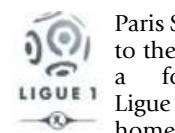
The 28-year-old also became the first-ever goalkeeper to score in Liverpool's 129-year history.

TOP 10 GOALSCORING GOALKEEPERS IN FOOTBALL HISTORY

Rogério Ceni (131 goals), Jose Luis Chilavert (67 goals), Dimitar Ivankov (42 goals), Rene Higuita (41 goals), Johnny Vegas Fernandez (39 goals), Marcio (34 goals), Hans-Jorg Butt (32 goals), Misael Alfaro (31 goals), Dragan Pantelic (26 goals), Fernando Patterson (26 goals).

PSG cling on to title hopes

REUTERS, Paris



Paris St Germain clung on to their hopes of winning a fourth consecutive Ligue 1 title with a 4-0 home win against 10-man Stade de Reims as Lille's lead was cut to a single point with one game remaining on Sunday.

As PSG cruised to a routine victory, Lille, who have 80 points, were held to a goalless draw by mid-table St Etienne and now need a win at Angers in the final round to guarantee them a first title since 2011.

Neymar converted a penalty



in the 13th minute after Yunis Abdelhamid handled the ball in the area and picked up a straight red card in the process. Kylian Mbappe doubled the advantage in the 24th, firing home from a terrible clearance by Thomas Foket.

Marquinhos added a third with a downward header on 68 minutes and Moise Kean netted a fourth from just inside the box.

"We saw that today, Liverpool's keeper (Alisson Becker) scored a last-minute goal, so anything is still possible," said PSG midfielder Ander Herrera. "We're now going to focus on next Sunday to win that final," said Lille captain Jose Fonte.

Nadal heads to Roland Garros with confidence

REUTERS

After warming up for the French Open in style by beating world number one Novak Djokovic in the Rome Masters final on Sunday, Rafa Nadal said he is heading to Roland Garros with confidence and a clear mind in search of a 21st Grand Slam title.

Nadal, 34, beat the Serb 7-5 1-6 6-3 to claim a record-extending 10th ATP Masters 1000 title in Rome and felt his game improved through the week.

"The Next Gen young people? Me, Rafa (Nadal) and Roger (Federer) are reinventing the Next Gen. We are the Next Gen."

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

Nadal, who suffered quarter-final exits at Masters 1000 events in Monte-Carlo and Madrid, said he would rest for a couple of days back home before heading to Paris for his title defence.

"I think I can work in a couple of things that I can do a little bit better or I can keep confirming that I am on the way," he told reporters on Sunday.

"I think I have been improving this week, but I need to keep going with that improvement, because when you improve and you're able to do it every day for longer time, then you feel more confident and more safe."

"I went through a lot of things during the week. Some positive, some great moments, some lucky moments, suffering moments. At the end I think I played a very solid week of tennis, it's the right moment to win an important title."