



Bangladesh batsman Mushfiqur Rahim, who played back-to-back match winning innings, is all smiles during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday ahead of today's third and final ODI against Sri Lanka.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Can Tigers play the perfect game?

SPORTS REPORTER



Despite registering a first-ever bilateral ODI series win over Sri Lanka with a game in hand, Bangladesh skipper Tamim Iqbal stated that they were

lucky in getting past the hurdles without playing to their best in the first two games of the three-match series.

Although the Tigers will eye the important 10 available ICC ODI Super League points in the final game today, head coach Russell Domingo will also focus on the overall performance and emphasise specific areas.

The batting department has been more like a one-man show in the first two ODIs, with Mushfiqur Rahim guided Bangladesh to winning totals with scores of 84 and 125 after coming with the

hosts in a desperate situation.

Seniors like skipper Tamim, Mushfiqur and Mahmudullah Riyad struck fifties in the first game to ensure Bangladesh could post a fighting total of 257 for six. In the second ODI, Mushfiqur struck his eighth ODI ton and ensured Bangladesh posted a formidable 246.

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However, Bangladesh were in a spot of bother early on during both occasions at 99 for four and 74 for four in the ODIs respectively before Mushfiqur and Mahmudullah steadied the ship, adding 109 and 84 for the fifth wicket.

Talk of a lack of consistency from relatively younger players will

persist, however, after those weak links in the batting department were exposed in the wins.

Liton Das continued a poor run with the bat, scoring 0 and 25. He is yet to score a 50 in his last eight innings, three of which have been ducks.

The team management is also struggling to find a suitor for the number five position. Mosaddek Hossain failed after replacing Mohammad Mithun -- another inconsistent batsman, who scored a duck in the first game.

Mahmudullah, who has been in good touch and scored 54 and 41 in the two ODIs, said that the Tigers were looking to put up a better showing in all departments in the third and final game today.

"Obviously winning the series 3-0 will be our target. But I think we were unable to play our best cricket whether it was in the batting or bowling department. We had a discussion and I hope we will

be able to play our best cricket," Mahmudullah said after training at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

"I personally feel that our top order collapsed and the middle and late order also couldn't perform and in the slog overs as well in the first game. I think we need to keep that in mind and perform accordingly. We are looking forward to it."

The 35-year-old added that he felt the fittest he had in his career and that he was trying to becoming more consistent as a batsman.

"As I bat at number six so at times, my innings of 30 or 40 remain uncountable. But as I said, I try to bat according to the situation and contribute for the team. At the same time, I also share my experience with the likes of Afif Hossain, who also bats in the lower middle order. I think they are very much capable and at times perform and sometimes fail," he added.

## 'Shakib's track record-- no joke!'

Mahmudullah Riyad said that he is 'certain' that premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who has been struggling with form of late, will turn up with a better performance in the final ODI against Sri Lanka today. Shakib scored 3, 9 and a steady 26 and scavenged a mere two wickets in the first two games. "There is not much to say about Shakib and his depth of understanding of the game. It is no joke that a guy has been the number one [ODI] all-rounder for over a decade. He knows when to bat and even how much to practice. Unfortunately, he could not capitalise on the good start in the first ODI. But I am certain he will be back to his usual self in tomorrow's game," said Mahmudullah.

--- Star Sport Desk



"There are no dead rubbers with the World ODI Championship and qualification for the 2023 World Cup. Every ODI is worth ten points. Shakib [Al Hasan], Tamim [Iqbal] and Mushfiqur [Rahim] have played over 200 games. Mahmudullah [Riyad] is close to 200 games [196 ODIs]. [Along with] Mustafizur [Rahman] and Mehedi [Hasan Miraz], they are a very good unit in their own conditions now. We were expecting really tough competition from Bangladesh. They have certainly given us that."

MICKY ARTHUR  
SRI LANKA HEAD COACH

## 'We still need to work on the system'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh football team are set to fly out for Qatar today to take part in next month's World Cup and Asia Cup Qualifiers following a fighting display against Sheikh Jamal DC in the sole practice match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Having lost the home advantage earlier, the failure to avail overseas training facilities added insult to injury. Thus, the boys in red and green arrive at Qatar with a significantly lower preparation compared to opponents India and Afghanistan, who have been training in Qatar and United Arab Emirates respectively after ensuring every possible facilities including practice matches against different sides.

Hours before the practice match, Bangladesh coach Jamie Day told the Daily Star about the lack of preparation which kept his charges in a gloomy, disadvantageous state so far.

"It was a match we desperately needed and I want to thank Manik (Shafiqul Islam Manik) and Sheikh Jamal players for agreeing to play. It was not about the scoreline but rather to see the system in

which we approached, and still need to work on it in the following days," Day said in a video message after the closed-door practice match.

During the only training match, the troupes of Day faced an uphill battle against Sheikh Jamal in which the national side had to come from two goals behind to play out a 2-2 draw, which became somewhat of a mini morale booster for the booters.

Gambian forward Sulayman Sillah gave Sheikh Jamal a lead before the national team conceded an own goal in the second half to go 2-0 down. However, a couple of strikes from right-back Yeasin Arafat and Mehedi Hasan Royal ensured that the blues left the field with some confidence.

It was learnt that Jamie played almost two different squads in two halves to test all players, with key players like Bishwanath Gosh and Saad Uddin already being ruled out while Mohammad Ibrahim and Mahbubur Rahman Sufil still suffers from covid-19.

The blues will begin their training in Qatar soon after they get the Covid-19 test results as Bangladesh are scheduled to get their campaign off to a start by taking on Afghanistan on June 3 before facing India on June 7, followed by Oman on June 15.



PHOTO: BFF

## 'Our little bet was a winner'

AFP, PARIS

The decision to delay Roland Garros for a second successive year has saved "tens of millions of euros", the head of the French Tennis Federation told AFP.

The 2021 edition of the clay court Grand Slam gets underway in Paris on Sunday, just seven months after the end of the 2020 tournament, which was pushed back from May/June to September/October.

This year's event is also starting a week later than normal in an effort to capitalise on the French government's phased easing of Covid-19 restrictions.

"Our little bet was a winner," French Tennis Federation (FFT) director general Amelie Oudaa-Castera said. "Having to postpone for a week is really a winning choice, a beautiful tens of millions of euros saved."

In total, just over 5,000 spectators will be admitted at the Roland Garros site until June 8. That figure will go up to more than 13,000 a day later thanks to the government's decision to raise fan numbers to a 65 percent limit of actual capacity.

"Had the tournament ended on June 6 (the original finishing date) and the following Wednesday the limits were raised, that would have been awful," said Oudaa-Castera.

The main setback for organisers this year is that nine of their scheduled 10 evening sessions -- an innovation for 2021 -- will be played behind closed doors. A government curfew of 9pm will not be lifted until June 9. Oudaa-Castera admitted that the ideal scenario would have seen the 2021 event pushed back two weeks.



## Reshuffling begins at Europe's elites

STAR SPORT DESK



Zinedine Zidane's decision to leave Real Madrid yesterday night signaled the start of European giants beginning to regroup after dismal showings in a season that was already tainted for them by the European Super League debacle.

Around the time that Zidane's departure was confirmed by Real Madrid -- who lost the La Liga title to city rivals Atletico Madrid this season -- news of upheaval in Italy caught the eye.

Antonio Conte, who engineered Inter Milan's path to their first Serie A title of the decade this season, left the Nerazzurri by mutual consent, upset at planned cutbacks. Italian giants Juventus were also hoping for a return to normalcy after conceding the Serie A title to Conte following nine straight triumphs, with reports that they were set to sack Andrea Pirlo and re-appoint Massimiliano Allegri.

There was similar dissatisfaction in France, where Mauricio Pochettino was reportedly flirting with a chance to fill the managerial vacancy at his old club, Tottenham Hotspur. His stint in France has been marred by Paris Saint-Germain's surrender of the Ligue 1 title to Lille, the first time they have lost the title since 2016-17, to the Monaco side that boasted Kylian Mbappe.

Conte's sudden departure has seen him become one of the contenders to

take over at the Santiago Bernabeu as he has had plenty of talks with the club before, but there is also a preference that club legend Raul take charge, with the alluring narrative of another Galactico coming back and perhaps thriving.

Zidane's exit was less preposterous as there have been reports for weeks that Zidane was considering his future and a story in AS, a Madrid-based newspaper, that he had told his players after the 2-2 draw with Sevilla on May 9 that he would be leaving.

Allegri, meanwhile, has been out of work since leaving Juventus in 2019. During his time at the club he won five consecutive Serie A titles, as well as leading the team to two Champions League finals.

Pirlo's time at Juventus has not been an unmitigated disaster, with Juventus scooping the Italian Super Cup earlier in the campaign and this month picking up the Coppa Italia. But Juventus struggled in Serie A, finishing fourth and only securing Champions League football on the final day of the season.

Juventus were also underwhelming in European competition. They managed to beat Barcelona 3-0 in Spain to top Champions League Group G, only to lose on away goals to Porto in the Round of 16.

Following an unprecedented year with shocking results, Europe's elite -- seemingly having momentarily abandoned plans for the Super League -- will turn back focus to reclaiming their dominance.

## English fans flock to Porto

REUTERS, PORTO



As thousands of English football fans flock to Portugal's city of Porto for Saturday's Champions League final, hotels and bars are hoping the tourism boost will be a prelude to their emergence from a collapse brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic.

People were seen taking pictures next to an inflatable model of the Champions League cup in Porto's central Aliados square.

Standing in the lobby of the NH Collection hotel in the heart of Porto, general manager Francisco Brito could not hide his happiness. His hotel

is fully booked for the first time in months thanks to the clash between Manchester City and Chelsea, he said. "It is definitely a boost for most hotels," Brito told Reuters as a couple checked in behind him. "No one ever thought we could experience such a



brutal hit ... it is a huge satisfaction to be back in business."

Although most of the 16,500 fans who will be allowed into the stadium will have to complete the trip within 24 hours of the final. The fans coming to Porto for Saturday's Champions League final will not have to stay in bubbles and will not face restrictions on movement during their limited stay, Portuguese police said on Thursday.

"The borders are open. The city and the country are opening up little by little. Within what is possible, freedom (of movement) will not be conditioned," Porto police Superintendent Cardoso da Silva told a news briefing.

## Emery lauds 'impeccable' Villarreal

REUTERS



Villarreal coach Unai Emery praised his "impeccable" players for their dedication after claiming the club's first major trophy by beating Manchester United in the Europa League final on Wednesday.

The Spanish side won a thrilling penalty shoot-out 11-10, after a 1-1 draw, with goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli scoring his side's 11th before stepping

back in goal to make the decisive save, stopping United counterpart David de Gea's spot-kick.

It was a record fourth Europa League triumph for Emery as a manager, after winning the competition three times with Sevilla, but marked Villarreal's first piece of major silverware.

"In the Europa League we have been absolutely impeccable. Since the very first moment. Some days we were coming at 6am to the stadium to prepare a game for the Sunday. All of this makes the journey

(worthwhile)," Emery told a news conference.

"We were talking about enjoying these moments. In the end you are proud to reach the title (decider) but if you don't win, you are sad. Winning is another step, an important step ahead. We do this profession for these moments. We have been able to give joy to many people."

Emery joined Villarreal in July 2020, nine months after he was sacked by English side Arsenal following a poor run of results.



"Sometimes one kick defines a season as a good one and sometimes a kick defines it's not. Nobody expected us to finish second in the league but the boys came up just short tonight unfortunately. Trophies matter and that's what matters at this club so no it's not a successful season. It's the short answer."

OLE GUNNAR SOLSKJAER  
MANCHESTER UNITED COACH

