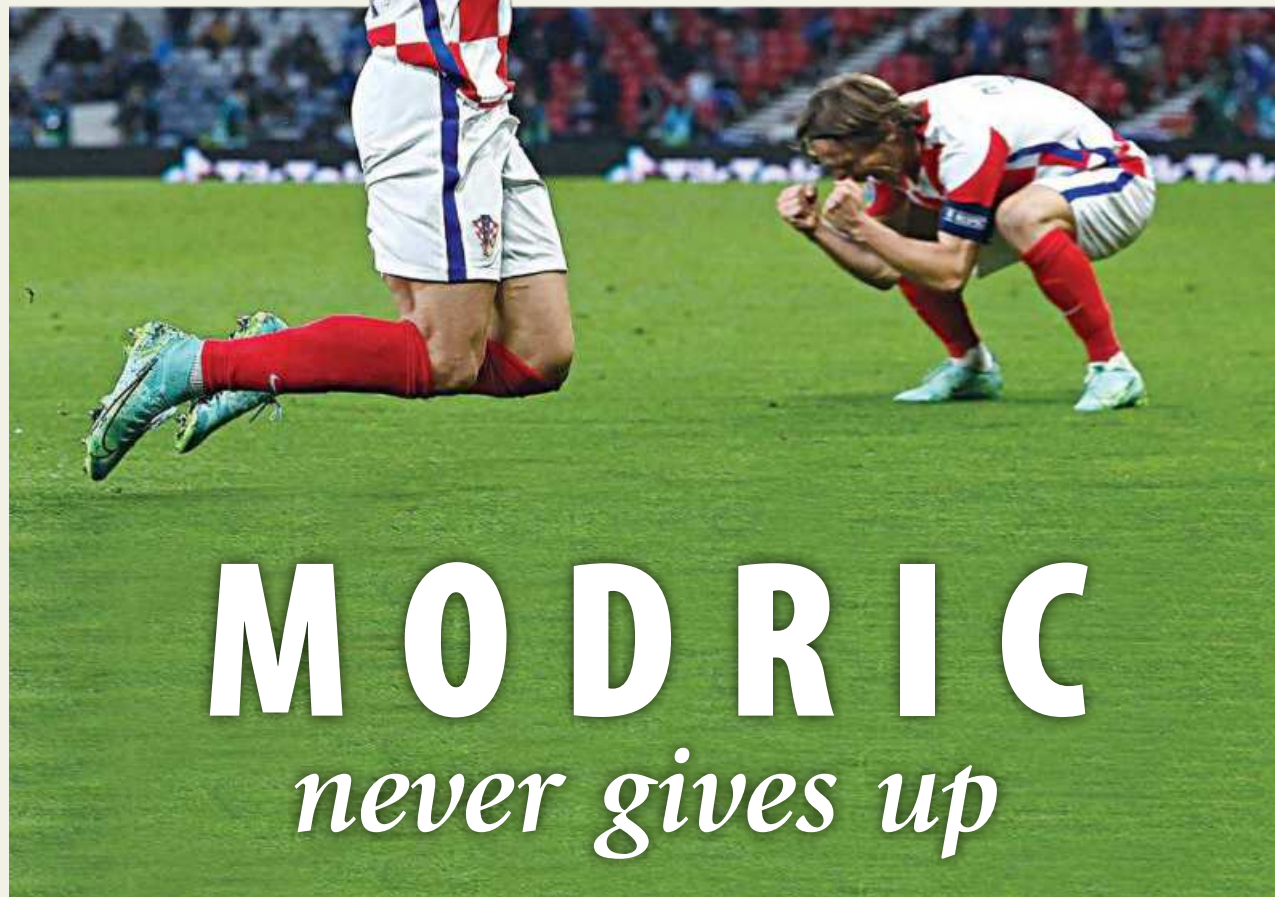


EURO 2020 HIGHLIGHTS



MODRIC

never gives up

AFP, Glasgow

After a 23-year wait to qualify for a major tournament, Scotland's Euro 2020 experience lasted just eight days after a 3-1 defeat to Croatia extinguished their hopes of reaching the last 16.

The Tartan Army will fondly remember frustrating England in a 0-0 draw at Wembley on Friday from their return to the international football limelight.

But a masterclass from Croatia's Luka Modric sent Steve Clarke's men packing from the tournament with a reminder of the class it takes to succeed at this level.

"They were unbelievable tonight, Modric especially," said Arsenal defender Kieran Tierney, who is accustomed to coming up against world-class opponents on a weekly basis in the English Premier League. "I think his performance was incredible."

Three years ago, most of Scotland cheered as Croatia beat England to

reach the World Cup final.

On Tuesday, fans of the Three Lions had their revenge as they celebrated Scotland's exit while watching their side beat the Czech Republic 1-0 at Wembley to secure top spot in Group D.

With both sides needing a win to secure their place in the knockout stages after taking just one point from their opening two games, Croatia's greater experience in controlling their nerves across 90 minutes was telling.

After conceding early to Nikola Vlasic, Scotland struck back with their first goal of the tournament through Callum McGregor to go in level at half-time.

But their energy reserves ran dry in the second-half as Croatia kept the ball and finally ended the Scots' resistance in style.

Modric is the only man since 2007 to deny Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo the Ballon d'Or and showed why he belongs in such exalted company.

The 35-year-old, playing in his

62nd game of the season for club and country, received the ball on the edge of the box and fired into the top corner with the outside of his right foot.

"No one is sure how Luka manages that," Croatia boss Zlatko Dalic said of the Real Madrid midfielder.

"We expect that Luka will go down, lose his strength, but he is the force that pulls the whole team. He never gives up."

For Croatia, next up is a trip to Copenhagen on Monday to face one of Spain, Sweden, Slovakia or Poland.

After a lacklustre opening two games, Dalic complained his side had been unfairly written off back home.

But the surprise package of the 2018 World Cup are not done yet thanks in large part to their inspirational captain.

"We were not happy with performances in the first two matches and we knew we could be better," said Modric.

"When we play like this, we are dangerous to everyone."

STERLING

undaunted by heavyweight clash

AFP, London

Raheem Sterling said England were braced for a heavyweight last-16 clash at Euro 2020 after topping Group D with a 1-0 win against the Czech Republic on Tuesday.

The victory at Wembley means England are likely to face either world champions France, holders Portugal or Germany in the knockout phase.

England were heavily criticised for their toothless performance in the 0-0 draw against Scotland but found more of an attacking edge in their final group game.

"I think there are positives from the game," Sterling, who also scored England's only other goal of the group phase in the 1-0 opening win against Croatia, told ITV.

"We kept the ball better today. It gave us more attacking options. We got in the gaps really well, played some good football and got the goal we needed."

Sterling praised Jack Grealish and man-of-the-match Bukayo Saka. "It is brilliant to have these players around you who can create goals," he said. "Different players are needed for different games and those two that came in were massive and did what they needed to do. If you don't concede goals you win football matches. You just need to score at the other end. People were disappointed in the Scotland game a few days ago but we didn't concede."

"The most important thing was to win the group. It is tournament football and it will be difficult but we need to do what we are doing."

The Manchester City forward was undaunted about the likelihood of a stern test in the last 16 at Wembley next week. "At some point you have to face the best teams," he said. "It is about challenging yourselves."

UEFA adds rainbow to logo

AFP, Lausanne

UEFA on Wednesday added the rainbow to its logo as it defended its decision to refuse to allow Munich's Allianz Arena to be illuminated in the same colours in protest at anti-LGBTQ laws passed in Hungary.

In a statement European football's governing body said it "is proud to wear the colours of the rainbow", a symbol for the LGBTQ community, but stood by its decision by saying the city of Munich's request to illuminate the stadium was "political".

Germany will play Hungary at the Allianz Arena on Wednesday on the final day of Euro 2020 group matches.

"The request itself was political, linked to the Hungarian football team's presence in the stadium for this evening's match with Germany," UEFA said.

UEFA said that the rainbow was "a symbol that embodies our core values, promoting everything that we believe in - a more just and egalitarian society, tolerant of everyone, regardless of

their background, belief or gender."

And it insisted that its decision to turn down Munich's request was not political, saying that "the rainbow is not a political symbol, but a sign of our firm commitment to a more diverse and inclusive society".



Prime Bank win low-scoring thriller

SPORTS REPORTER

In an eventful low-scoring encounter, Prime Bank Cricket Club registered a narrow two-wicket victory over Gazi Group in the super league stage of the Bangabandhu Dhaka Premier Division T20 League in Mirpur yesterday.

Chasing 126, Prime Bank were struggling at 51 for five after 9.2 overs. Nahidul Islam then scored a crucial 25-ball 39 to take Prime Bank closer to the target, but his dismissal in the 17th over off a Mahmudullah Riyad delivery brought Gazi back in the game.

Once again there was some dissatisfaction over the umpire's decision yesterday in the final delivery of the 16th over as a caught-behind appeal against Alok Kapali on naught off the bowling of Nasum Ahmed heated things up.

Kapali smashed an unbeaten 21 off 15 deliveries and eventually guided Prime Bank over the line with a ball to spare.

Earlier, Mahedi Hasan's team-high 33 and Ariful Haque's 31 at the death helped Gazi post 125 for nine in 20 overs.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club registered a comfortable seven-wicket win over Mohammedan (133-9) in the day's first super league game. Mohammedan posted 133 for nine where Shamsur Rahman top scored with 49 runs. In reply, Sheikh Jamal reached the target with an over to spare.

At BKSP 3, Legends of Rupganj scored 200 for three -- the highest total of the tournament so far -- riding on Mehedi Maruf's 94 and Jaker Ali's 76 and clinched a 27-run win over Partex in the last relegation league match yesterday.

Chasing the huge target, Isharul Islam (38 not out) and Jaynul Islam (37 not out) added a record 73-run ninth-wicket stand, the highest partnership for that wicket in T20.

However, even the blistering partnership was not enough for Partex as they could only manage 173 for eight.



Although Prime Doleswar batsman Shamim Hossain Patwary could not make too many runs against Abahani yesterday, his aggressive batting and good form earned him a maiden call-up to the national team, with a T20 berth for Zimbabwe series.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



New Zealand pacer Kyle Jamieson celebrates dismissing India skipper Virat Kohli on the final day of the World Test Championship final at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton yesterday. The Kiwis bowled India out for 170 and were chasing a target of 139 runs in 53 overs. New Zealand scored 44-2, needing 95 more runs in 35 overs.

PHOTO: TWITTER

Premier League resumes at BNS on Saturday

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite yet another lockdown and the restriction of movement in districts adjacent to Dhaka, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) decided to resume the Bangladesh Premier League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium while exploring the feasibility of holding future matches at the Dhaka Residential Model School, United International University and the Army Stadium.

The BFF also decided to defer the league's resumption by one day. It will now begin on Saturday through a match between holders Bashundhara Kings and Rahmatganj instead of the Abahani-Mohammedan clash, which was shifted to Sunday. After a day's

break, the 18th round of the league matches will begin at the same venue.

"Every club is ready to take part in the league and we are going to resume on June 26, one day after the previously scheduled date of resumption, through a match between Bashundhara Kings and Rahmatganj," BFF senior vice president Abdus Salam Murshedy told the reporters after the emergency meeting of the professional league management committee was adjourned yesterday.

"As we can't hold matches in Munshiganj, Gazipur or Cumilla because of the lockdown, we are exploring the feasibility of the Dhaka Residential Model School ground, United International University ground and the Army Stadium for holding league matches until the lockdown is lifted. Although we

have a couple of astroturf grounds, the clubs don't want play on it," Murshedy said.

Asked about the logic of holding professional football league matches at school and university grounds, Murshedy said: "We see football played in snow-logged pitches across Europe. The fact is that we have to leave the BNS for renovation works by the first week of August. We also have to think about the next season and club engagements in AFC Cup and Asian Cup."

Murshedy also informed that Mohammedan had no objection about playing their next match against Abahani on June 26 as eight players and their Australian coach tested Covid-19 negative on Tuesday. Sean Lane informed that he had conducted training yesterday in the presence of players who tested negative.

Shakib returns for all formats

Shamim the only new face

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan was included across all three formats as selectors yesterday announced the squads for the upcoming tour of Zimbabwe.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Nurul Hasan was also named in all three formats while young Shamim Hossain proved to be only new face, breaking into the T20I side.

The Tigers are scheduled to board a flight on Monday to take part in one Test, three ODIs and three T20Is against Zimbabwe.

Shamim caught the eye with his hard-hitting ability in the lower-middle order. The left-hander was part of the Bangladesh U-19 World Cup-winning side and has scored 181 runs in ten innings for Prime Doleswar in the Dhaka Premier League so far at a strike rate close to 150.

"Obviously I am happy, but I think getting a chance in the team is not the end. It's important to utilise this opportunity. Mainly I bat at number six and my aim will be to play the role of a finisher and contribute to the team," an elated Shamim told media yesterday.

Soumya Sarkar was dropped from the ODI side but found a place in the T20I team while Mustafizur Rahman

TEST SQUAD:

Mominul (Captain), Tamim, Shadman, Saif, Najmul, Mushfiqur, Shakib, Liton, Yasir, Nurul, Miraz, Taijul, Nayeem, Jayed, Taskin, Ebadot, Shoriful.

ODI SQUAD:

Tamim (captain), Naim, Liton, Shakib, Mushfiqur, Mahmudullah, Mosaddek, Mithun, Afif, Nurul, Miraz, Taijul, Saifuddin, Mustafizur, Taskin, Rubel, Shoriful.

T20 SQUAD:

Mahmudullah (Captain), Tamim, Naim, Liton, Shakib, Soumya, Afif, Shamim, Nurul, Nasum, Mahedi, Aminul, Saifuddin, Mustafizur, Taskin, Shoriful.

was named exclusively in the white-ball formats while left-handed Najmul Hossain was picked only for the Test side.

Off-spinner Nayeem Hasan was also included in the Test side alongside Nurul, who played his last Test back in 2018 against the West Indies. Shakib returned to the Test team for the first time since taking leave from the last series in Sri Lanka to take part in the Indian Premier League.

Off-spinning all-rounder Mahedi Hasan was dropped from the ODI side while Nurul, Taijul Islam and Rubel Hossain made comebacks. Nurul played his last ODI in December 2016 in New Zealand.

Tamim Iqbal, who took a break from the last T20I series in New Zealand, expectedly returned. However, experienced wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim will not feature in the T20I series in Zimbabwe after asking for leave.