

T SPORTS & GTV
Bangladesh vs Zimbabwe
One-off Test (Day 4)
Live from 1:30 pm
SONY SIX, TEN 1 & TEN 2
COPA AMERICA 2021 (FINAL)
Brazil vs Argentina
Live from 6:00 am (Sunday)

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1 & 2
WIMBLEDON (FINAL)
Ashleigh Barty vs Karolina Pliskova
Live from 6:00 pm
SONY SIX
England vs Pakistan (Second ODI)
Live from 4:00 pm

'Our group looks very tough'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh was placed with strong opponents in Group D of the AFC U-23 Championship as the draw of the 42-team tournament took place yesterday in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

The draw divided the participants into two Regions -- West and East -- featuring 11 groups for the qualifying stage.



Bangladesh will play against Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan and hosts Kuwait though the results of Uzbekistan, who already confirmed their place in the final round as hosts, will not be counted in group stage. As many as 11 champions from 11 groups and four best runners-up will qualify for the 16-team final round next year. The matches of group stages are scheduled to take place from October 23 to 31.

"Our group looks very tough," Bangladesh national head coach Jamie Day told The Daily Star from England while enjoying his vacation since last month, following the completion of the senior national team's World Cup Qualifiers engagement in Qatar.

Jamie reckons he would consider himself happy if his charges can repeat the performance of 2019, during the last edition of the tournament, where Bangladesh played comparatively well against Bahrain and Palestine yet suffered a 1-0 defeat to both. However, beating Sri Lanka 2-0 ensured that they finished third in four-team group.

"If we can perform like we did against Bahrain and Palestine, I will be pleased. We don't have an easier match this time but it will be a good experience for the younger players and the more senior ones need to help them and perform as well," said Jamie.

Before playing in Kuwait, Jamie wants to avail the FIFA window for the international friendlies to prepare better. "We have an international window in early October so we either use that for Under-23 games or we play nationally, as usual, and then go into the tournament."



MESSI, NEYMAR BATTLE in dream final

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Former Barcelona teammates Lionel Messi and Neymar will line up opposite each other in Saturday's Copa America final looking to end a hoodoo that has also affected some of their countries' greatest players. Like Brazil's Pele and Diego Maradona of Argentina before them, neither Messi nor Neymar has ever won the Copa.

That statistic will change for one of them in the dream final at Rio de Janeiro's iconic Maracana stadium.

For six-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi, this will be his fourth Copa final and perhaps his last chance to finish on the winning side. He's been his team's standout performer, as ever, scoring four goals and creating five more -- the tournament leader in both categories.

But at 34, this may well be his last Copa and next year's World Cup could be his last major international tournament altogether.

So far, finals have led only to disappointment for Messi having lost in 2007, 2015 and 2016 at the Copa, and seen his side beaten 1-0 by Germany at the 2014 World Cup.

Some people believe winning something with Argentina is Messi's only remaining professional goal.

"We'll try to stop him achieving this objective," said Brazil centre-back Marquinhos.

"As much as Messi, we also have players that deserve this title ... like our own 'Ney' who wasn't there for the last Copa," he added.

At 29, Neymar has a bit more time on his side but he was injured and absent two years ago when Brazil won their ninth title on home soil, beating Peru 3-1 in the final.

But as well as the two superstars lining up on opposite sides on Saturday, this is a classic match between two world heavyweights.

"We're going to play a final against our eternal rivals, the lifelong ones, the two most powerful national teams in South America and we hope ... it will be a great match," said Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni.

"Brazil versus Argentina is much more than a simple game of football ... these jerseys make the world stand still to watch their games. That represents the history of Brazil-Argentina," added Marquinhos.

Incredibly, these two sides are not even the two most successful ones in Copa history, with Uruguay having won 15 titles to Argentina's 14 and Brazil's nine.

In what is the 47th edition of the Copa, this is also just the fourth time these two have met in the final, with Argentina triumphing the first time in 1937 and Brazil coming out on top in 2004 and 2007.

And that is despite having faced each other more than 100 times in their history.

They have been by far the strongest two sides in the competition, even if Argentina rode their luck a touch in their semi-final penalty shoot-out win over Colombia.

The two squads are impressive for their strength in depth.

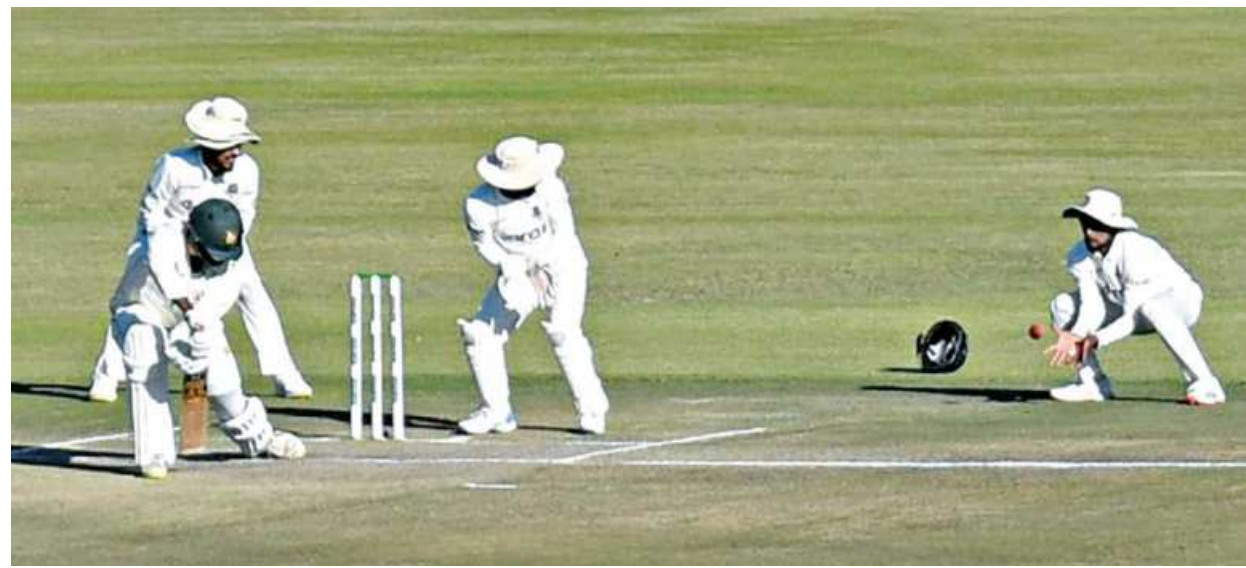
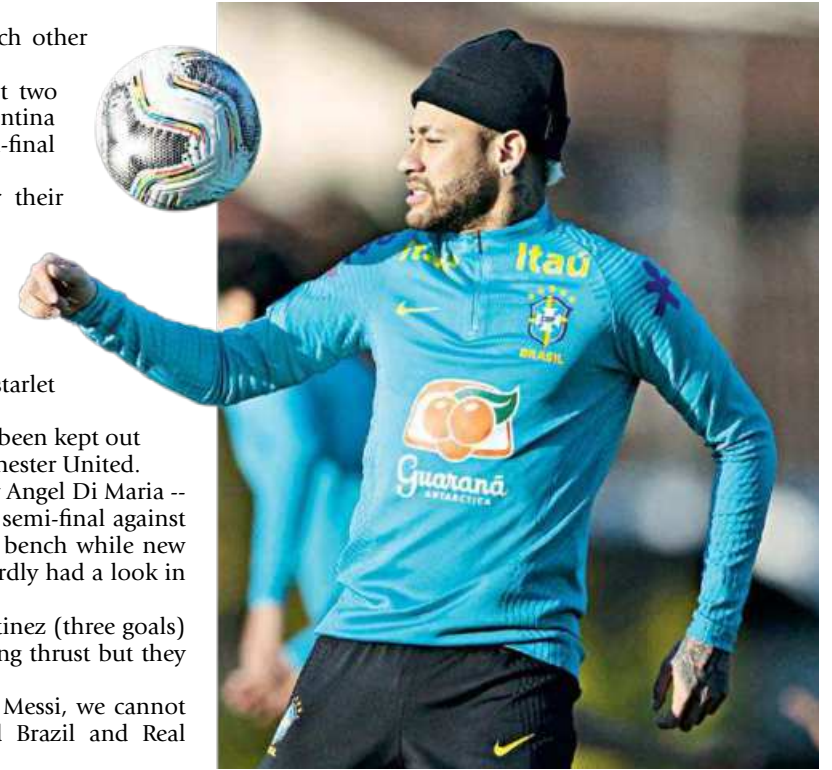
In their semi-final victory over Peru -- and despite Manchester City forward Gabriel Jesus being suspended -- Brazil left the likes of Liverpool's Roberto Firmino, Flamengo hot-shot Gabriel Barbosa and Real Madrid starlet Vinicius Junior on the bench.

In midfield, Liverpool's Fabinho has been kept out of the side by a resurgent Fred, of Manchester United.

Likewise, Paris Saint-Germain winger Angel Di Maria -- a bright spark when he came on in the semi-final against Colombia -- has mostly started on the bench while new Barcelona signing Sergio Aguero has hardly had a look in for Argentina.

Messi and Inter Milan's Lautaro Martinez (three goals) have provided Argentina's main attacking thrust but they have quality and creativity throughout.

"Argentina are not just Lautaro and Messi, we cannot only concentrate on those two," said Brazil and Real Madrid midfielder Casemiro.



Bangladesh's Nazmul Hossain Shanto takes a catch at first slip off the bowling of Shakib Al Hasan to dismantle Zimbabwe for 276 runs in their first innings of the one-off Test at the Harare Sports Club yesterday. (Bottom) Mehedi Hasan Miraz displays the cherry after taking a five-for in the innings. PHOTO: BCB



Tigers in driving seat

SPORTS REPORTER

Mehedi Hasan Miraz bagged his second five-wicket haul abroad and Shakib Al Hasan picked up four as Bangladesh took a big first-innings lead against Zimbabwe, who lost their last five wickets in just 15 runs on the third day of the lone Test at the Harare Sports Club Ground yesterday.

Despite being comfortably placed on 225 for 2, Zimbabwe were eventually bundled out for 276 in what was a dramatic batting collapse by the host after the post-lunch session.

Miraz, who picked up his eighth five-for in Tests, ended up picking five for 82 from 31 overs while Shakib picked up four for 82 in 34.5 overs, as the visitors brilliantly took the edge over the host.

Shadman Islam (22 not out) and Saif Hasan (20 not out) made a confident start in the second innings and negotiated the final hour of the day without any trouble as Bangladesh possess the upper hand with a lead of 237 runs and will resume the fourth day on 45 without loss.

Takudzwanashe Kaitano showed great temperament on his debut, top-scored with

87 which came off 311 deliveries, and kept Zimbabwe on the hunt. Kaitano's patient innings made him face the third-most deliveries on debut for a Zimbabwean in Test cricket.

He added 61 for the first wicket with Milton Shumba and 115 with skipper Brendon Taylor for the second wicket, but since then Zimbabwe lost their way at the middle. Taylor was dismissed on 81 off 91 balls while going for a slog against



Miraz which was the only success for Bangladesh in the first session of the day.

Bangladesh made the comeback in the second session where Shakib dismissed debutant Myers after scoring 27. The visitors picked another couple

of wickets after taking the new ball where Maruma was dismissed going for a sweep -- the shot that has been the biggest downfall for the majority of the Zimbabwean batsman yesterday. He was dismissed on a duck after facing 17 deliveries.

In the second session, Bangladesh picked up three wickets conceding 35 runs from 35 overs however Kaitano then paired with Regis Chakabva and looked to build another partnership.

Kaitano's patience finally broke when he was caught down the leg side off Shakib. With that innings he is now Zimbabwe's highest scorer on debut as an opener in Tests, leaving behind Grant Flower's 82 run knock.

Miraz then spun the Zimbabwe lower-middle order starting with a brilliant leg-before trapping Donald Tiripano and the off-spinner then bowled Victor Nyauchi on naught as Zimbabwe still needed six runs to avoid the follow-on with two wickets in hand.

Although the hosts managed to avoid the follow-on somehow they were unable to go further. Miraz picked up his fifth wicket to dismiss Blessing Muzarabani and Shakib wrapped things up removing Richard Ngarava as Bangladesh took the grip on the Test match.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH:
468 all out in 126 overs and 45 for no loss in 17 overs (Shadman 22 not out, Saif 20 not out)

ZIMBABWE:
276 all out (Kaitano 87, Shumba 41, Taylor 81, Chakabva 31 not out; Mehedi 5-82, Shakib 4-82, Taskin 1-46)

Wimbledon set for a new queen

AFP, London



Ashleigh Barty is one victory away from realising her dream of winning the Wimbledon title on the 50th anniversary of fellow indigenous Australian Evonne Goolagong Cawley's first triumph.

The 25-year-old world number one produced her best performance of The Championships so far to beat 2018 champion Angelique Kerber 6-3, 7-6 (7/3).

Barty will play former world number one Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic in Saturday's final.

Pliskova came from a set down to beat powerful Belarusian second seed Aryna Sabalenka 5-7, 6-4, 6-4.

Barty had never progressed further than the fourth round at Wimbledon despite having form on grass as she was junior champion in 2011.

However, she took the first set with just the one break of serve and then showed real determination to turn around a 1-4 deficit and force the tie-break where she had six match points.

Kerber saved three but it was only delaying the inevitable and soon it was Barty who raised her arms in celebration.

"It's incredible, it was as close to as good a tennis match that I have ever played," said Barty who fired eight aces and 38 winners.

"It was a hell of a match from the first ball." "I am really proud of myself and my team. It's been an incredible journey, full of ups and downs."

Barty said she had not spoken to Cawley since the tournament began.

However, as she has done since the outset she wore the specially-designed dress in tribute to her mentor's iconic

scallop one she wore in 1971.

"To give myself a chance to create some history almost in a way that's a tribute to her is really exciting," said Barty.

"I couldn't be more rapt to have that opportunity on Saturday."

Kerber can, though, be pleased with her run despite Barty ending a 10-match winning streak for the 33-year-old German.

The grass had revived a career that appeared to be spiralling downwards -- she had failed to reach a Grand Slam quarter-final since her 2018 Wimbledon title.

"For me it was just the fight that I put up in the last few weeks in my tennis, that's actually what counts for me right now," said Kerber.

Pliskova has never doubted herself despite dropping out of the top 10 -- she is ranked 13 -- after being a regular since 2016.

A first appearance in a Wimbledon final has justified that self-belief -- and dropping her first set of The Championships will be a minor irritant.

Pliskova had never been beyond the fourth round at Wimbledon but showed great resilience in coming from behind to beat Sabalenka.

She managed to get over the disappointment of both failing to take any of the eight break points that she secured in the first set and losing it to battle it out toe-to-toe with Sabalenka.

Sabalenka might have been second seed but she had gone into previously undiscovered Wimbledon waters -- a second round turn in 2017 her previous best on three visits.

However, Pliskova's perhaps greater experience -- Wimbledon completed the full house of Grand Slam singles semi-finals -- told in the end.

