

Do-it-yourself medal ceremony at Tokyo

Olympic champions at the Tokyo Games starting next week can forget about having their medals hung around their necks as they stand on the podium, shaking hands with dignitaries and soaking up their success. Instead, the three medals will be presented on a tray to the athletes on the podium and they then have to hang them around their own neck in front of the empty stands. There will also be no handshakes or hugs. "The medals will not be given around the neck," IOC President Thomas Bach told a virtual media roundtable on Wednesday. "They will be presented to the athlete on a tray and the athlete will take the medal him or herself. It will be made sure the person who will put the medal on the tray will do it with disinfected gloves. Presenters and athletes will wear a mask. There will be no handshakes and no hugs during the ceremony." — Reuters



Tamim and Tigers tune up well

Mushy flies back due to 'family reasons'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh had a good outing in the 50-over warm-up game yesterday, looking comfortable as they posted 296 for six against Zimbabwe Select XI ahead of the first ODI of the three-match series tomorrow.

More than the result, it was important for the Tigers to get into the limited-overs groove after winning a one-off Test by a comprehensive 220 runs to start the tour. Zimbabwe XI were on 185 for 7 with 10 overs left in the match.

Pacers Ebadot Hossain, Mosaddek Hossain and Mohammad Saifuddin bagged two wickets each while young left-arm seamer Shoriful Islam scalped one.

Another welcome sight for the visitors was ODI skipper Tamim

Iqbal spending a decent amount of time at the crease and scoring a 50 after Bangladesh won the toss and elected to bat. Tamim is still recovering from the knee pain that caused him to miss the lone Test and appeared to be in some discomfort later in the innings. He was dismissed for a 63-ball 66 that included eleven fours and a six, ending an 87-run opening stand with left-hander Mohammad Naim, who walked back soon after for a 52-ball 25.

Shakib Al Hasan, who has been struggling with the bat, faced 60 deliveries for his 37 before being caught at mid-on off the bowling of seamer Faraz Akram. Liton Das, who normally opens the innings in ODIs, came in at number four but could manage just two runs before becoming off-spinner Wesley Madhevere's second victim. However, Mohammad Mithun and Mosaddek Hossain utilised the opportunity and scored in the

thirties before retiring.

Young Afif Hossain also chipped in with 28 off 23 while wicketkeeper-batsman Nurul Hasan scored 18 off 12 and Mohammad Saifuddin remained not out on 12 to post a big total of 296 for six.

Although things went well in the game, Bangladesh faced a huge blow as news broke that the visitors would be without Mushfiqur Rahim for the rest of the series, the cricketer having returned home due to family reasons according to a BCB media release yesterday.

Mushfiqur was asked on Tuesday to stay back with the T20 squad after completion of the ODI series on July 20 due to the quarantine protocols for the Australia series at home. But it was learned that Mushfiqur's parents had both tested positive for Covid-19 on Tuesday and had travelled from Bogura to Dhaka yesterday.

Bangladesh will sorely miss the

service of their most consistent batsman, who has also been in terrific form in the 50-over format recently and had been named man of the series against Sri Lanka. The wicketkeeper-batsman hit two match-winning knocks of 84 and 125 in the first two games as the Tigers won the three match ODI series 2-1 in May.

In Mushfiqur's absence, the think-tank may opt for Liton at number four, leaving Mohammad Mithun and Mosaddek Hossain to fight for a place in the playing eleven. The three-match ODI series against Zimbabwe will be crucial for Tamim and the Tigers as it is part of the ICC Men's World Cup Super League. Bangladesh are currently in second place in the points table with five wins in nine games, but Tamim and his troops will be looking to grab as the maximum number of points from the series ahead of tougher assignments.

Ronaldo an 'imbecile', Mourinho 'abnormal'

AGENCIES



Real Madrid president Florentino Perez called Cristiano Ronaldo an "imbecile" and Jose Mourinho "abnormal" while he also said the two had "huge egos" in two audio recordings from 2012 that were leaked on Wednesday.

Both Portuguese stars were at Madrid during Perez's second tenure as club president. Audios of Perez attacking former players Iker Casillas and Raul Gonzalez as the "biggest frauds" in the club's history in an audio recording from 2006 had been leaked 24 hours earlier.

"He is mad," Perez had said of Ronaldo in one of the audios released by El Confidencial. "This chap is an imbecile, he is ill."

"Do you think this chap is normal? He is not normal, otherwise he wouldn't do the things he does. The last foolish thing he did, everyone around the world saw it."

"Why do you think he does that foolish thing?" It is unclear what Perez was referring to regarding the "foolish thing."

Perez also attacked super agent Jorge Mendes, who represents Mourinho and Ronaldo. "Mendes does not order him, nor does he order Mourinho whatsoever," Perez said. "Zero. Not even for the interviews. These are guys with huge egos, both of them spoiled."

"He and the coach don't see the reality because the two could earn a lot more money if they were different. They are

both abnormal because we are talking about a lot of money in image rights.

"Furthermore, with that face they have, with that defiant manner that they are disliked by everyone. ... Advertising is the opposite, it is the complete opposite."

The quotes had already appeared in a book by the journalist Jose Antonio Abellan "Assault on Real Madrid" published in 2015.

Perez complained in a statement released by Real on Tuesday that Abellan recorded the remarks secretly. Perez said the timing was a result of his role as an organiser of the Super League. "The quotes are from conversations clandestinely recorded by Jose Antonio Abellan, who has been trying to sell them for years without success," Perez said.

"They are loose phrases from conversations taken out of the broad context in which they occur," Perez said. "That they are being reproduced now, after so many years have passed, I understand that it is due to my participation as one of the promoters of the Super League."

Ronaldo, Madrid's all-time top scorer with 450 goals, joined the Spanish giants in June 2009, 11 days after Perez returned as Real Madrid president. Mourinho, now in charge of AS Roma, guided Madrid to the La Liga title, the Copa del Rey and the Supercopa Espana from 2010 until 2013 before returning to coach Chelsea.

Ronaldo left Madrid for Juventus in 2018 after a nine-year spell at Los Blancos following a reported rift with Perez over a new contract.



Chiellini 'cursed' Saka before penalty?

AGENCIES



Italy star Giorgio Chiellini has claimed that he put a "curse" on Bukayo Saka before the England teenager's decisive penalty miss in Sunday's Euro 2020 final.

Saka saw his spot kick saved by Gianluigi Donnarumma, handing Italy the European title after the two teams drew 1-1 over 120 minutes.

Just before Saka took the kick, Chiellini screamed "Kiricocho!" -- a word that's been used by footballers for decades to impart bad luck on the opposition.

Responding to a question from ESPN, Chiellini responded in Italian: "Hello Christian, I confirm everything! Kiricocho!"

A video from UEFA also clearly shows the



veteran defender shouting the word just prior to Donnarumma's title-winning save on Saka.

Juan Carlos 'Kiricocho', or Quiricocho according to some versions of the story, was a hardcore supporter of Argentinian club Estudiantes de La Plata during the 1980s. The fan even attended some of the club's training sessions, but Estudiantes head coach Carlos Bilardo began to notice that his players mysteriously seemed to get injured whenever Kiricocho was present.

Bilardo, as the legend goes, told Kiricocho to attend training sessions of Estudiantes' rivals, hoping to utilise his powers to help, rather than hurt his side.

"Kiricocho was a kid from La Plata who was always with us, and since that year we were champions [in 1982], we adopted him as our mascot," Bilardo once remarked.

"He was a good kid but then I didn't see him again. The last time I was coaching Estudiantes [in 2003-04] I asked after him and nobody knew anything."

The legend of Kiricocho has since spread throughout the footballing world, with players now routinely using the word when they want to put a curse on their opponents.



Pakistan captain Babar Azam hammered a record-breaking 158 but failed to help his side from suffering a 3-0 ODI whitewash against England at Edgbaston on Tuesday. Azam's highest score at this level saw him become the quickest player to 14 hundreds in men's ODIs as the 26-year-old reached the landmark in 81 innings -- three fewer than South Africa's Hashim Amla.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'Olympics journey with a new dream'

SPORTS REPORTER



Participating in the Olympic Games has always been a token one for Bangladesh since its maiden appearance in the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 1984 but the Bangladesh officials this time, are thinking differently ahead of 2020 Tokyo Olympics by tagging a slogan -- Olympics journey with a new dream.

Yet to win any medal from the Olympics so far, Bangladesh had previously participated in all nine editions of Olympics till Rio Olympics with all wild cards entry except one for golfer Siddikur Rahman, who was the first athlete to represent Bangladesh in Olympics with his own capability. And this time around, archer Ruman Sana became the second Bangladeshi athlete to achieve the same feat.

The Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) yesterday had a media briefing as three out of six athletes will leave here for Japan tomorrow and BOA is dreaming on the back of those three athletes -- shooter Abdullah Hel Baki, archers Ruman and Diya Siddique while swimmers Ariful Islam, Junayna Ahmed and sprinter Jahir Rayhan are scheduled to leave from their

respective places on July 19 and 25.

"We are dreamers. Yes, Ruman made all of us dream after qualifying directly for the Olympics. That's what we wrote about the new dream. It is a big dream alright, but we believe in it, even though dreams often doesn't come true," said chef de mission of Bangladesh's 18-member contingent and BOA vice president Sheikh Bashar Ahmed at a city hotel yesterday where ITO Naoki, ambassador of Japan in Bangladesh, was present along with other BOA officials.

"This time the Olympic Games will be different due to the Covid-19 situation and there will be a lot of restrictions for both athletes and the officials but I guarantee you that we will hold a safe and secured Games with the athletes and officials travelling to Japan without any worries," said Naoki.

Referring to the discussion with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, BOA secretary general Syed Shahed Reza said, "Honourable Prime Minister ensured us in providing all types of support for the betterment of the country's sports. She also instructed us to focus on direct participation in the Olympics in future and arrange better training for the athletes."

'Van Dijk looking really good'

AFP, London



Jürgen Klopp says Virgil Van Dijk is looking "really good" as the Liverpool defender returns from the knee injury that forced him to miss most of last season.

Liverpool surrendered the Premier League title to Manchester City after major injuries to Van Dijk and several other defenders.

Van Dijk's fellow centre-backs Joe Gomez and Joel Matip were sidelined for long spells, while Trent Alexander-Arnold was injured in the lead-up to Euro 2020.

Dutch star Van Dijk did not return after suffering a knee injury in a challenge with Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford at Goodison Park in October last year. Gomez was ruled out for the season with a knee problem a few weeks later.

The four players are currently working on their fitness at Liverpool's pre-season training camp in Austria. "Virg and Joe will not have double sessions now for the first few days with the team. They have a second session of the day but it's with the rehab department, physiotherapy -- these kinds of things," Klopp told Liverpool's website.

"That's for these two. They look really good. I don't know exactly when we can make the next steps but it will happen in the next four weeks. For sure, we will get a big step forward."

Matip did not feature again suffering ankle ligament damage in February.

Right-back Alexander-Arnold hit form late in the season to earn a place in England's Euro squad, but had to pull out after sustaining a thigh injury in a friendly against Austria. "Joel looks good, absolutely, he is the closest probably to normal training and then we will see when we get him started for playing," Klopp said.

"Trent was a serious enough injury but now not a major one, I would say. "He is close but for the moment, probably the next five or six days he has a special programme -- from time to time with the team, from time to time by himself."



BPL returns with a stalemate

SPORTS REPORTER

A major lack of team chemistry from both outfits, especially on the attacking front, left the Bangladesh Premier League encounter between Muktijoddha Sangsad and Sheikh Russel KC to a goalless draw at Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. The match was being played after a 12-day break due to the lockdown.

The stalemate on a fine pitch saw Sheikh Russel raise their points tally to 28 from 17 matches while Muktijoddha Sangsad, battling hard to avoid relegation, earned a valuable point to have 11 from 16 matches and more importantly, have six points more than Brothers Union.

Sheikh Russel KC could have moved up to the fourth position of the 13-team table with an outright win over Muktijoddha Sangsad, whom they handed 1-0 defeat in the first-leg meeting earlier,

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but the former champions never seemed to possess the necessary hunger during the game as the foreign recruits appeared reluctant to help each other upfront.

Like Sheikh Russel, Muktijoddha Sangsad also played without purpose though a triumph over Sheikh Russel was not impossible with the way they attacked but there was seemingly no clear understanding among the forwards, who either had hit the shot wide or straight at goalkeeper Ashraf Islam Rana despite getting him on one-on-one situations.