

# What to WATCH

## GTV & T SPORTS

Bangladesh vs Zimbabwe  
Third T20I  
Live from 4:30 pm

## T SPORTS, TEN 1 & SONY SIX

Sri Lanka vs India  
First T20I  
Live from 8:30 pm

## TEN 2 & SONY SIX

Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games  
Live from 8:30 pm & 3:30 am  
(Monday)

# Road race a rare chance for fans

AGENCIES

Richard Carapaz of Ecuador produced a powerful late burst after six-hour slog to win gold in a thrilling Olympic men's road race as favourite Tadej Pogacar was beaten into third place at the Fuji International Speedway on Saturday.

As expected, Slovenian Pogacar launched his assault for victory on the fearsome Mikuni Pass, a brutal climb around 35 km (22 miles) from the end of a 234km race ridden in hot and humid conditions.

But the Tour de France champion had not counted on the fire within a renowned mountain specialist who prepared himself for the season - and a race route described as one of the hardest in Olympic history with almost 5,000m of climbing - by training on the Cotopaxi Volcano in the



Andes.

The Tokyo Olympics will go down in history as a Games almost devoid of spectators, but cycling fans on Saturday got the rare chance to see the athletes in person on the first day of full-fledged competition.

With the Japanese capital in its fourth COVID-19 state of

emergency as infections surge, the organisers this month banned spectators from all but a handful of stadiums and asked the public to stay away from cycling, marathon and other outdoor events. But on the day after the opening ceremony, thousands gathered to watch the men's road race on a humid day with highs near 35 degrees Celsius.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance," said Kayoko Fujita, 38, watching with her two little boys at the finish at the Fuji International Speedway in Shizuoka prefecture. "I think it's OK if you take proper infection-control measures."

Along the 234km race - stretching from western Tokyo through three other prefectures to the base of Mt Fuji - Japanese television showed crowds packed together on the roadside cheering. A race official vainly held a sign reading, "Please refrain from spectating on the roadsides during the event."

By contrast, at the finish the masked fans remained orderly at their seats in designated zones.

Haruhiro Aoyagi, 16, applied for tickets to several events but only won the chance to see the cycling, he said as he watched with his mother.

"It's a rare opportunity so I want to enjoy it."

# Djokovic clinical but players struggle in Tokyo heat

REUTERS, TOKYO

Novak Djokovic launched his bid to stay on course for a Golden Slam with a clinical 6-2, 6-2 win over 139th-ranked Hugo Dellien of Bolivia on Saturday, as sweltering conditions in Tokyo took a toll on the players on the opening day of tennis at the Games.

Steffi Graf is the only player to have won all four Grand Slams and the Olympic gold in the same year but the 34-year-old Serbian is three fifths of the way there, needing a Tokyo gold and then the U.S. Open trophy to match the German's 1988 feat.

The world number one would not have wanted to spend too much time on court in the heat and humidity and wrapped up proceedings on Centre Court on day one in about an hour.

With temperatures hovering around 33 degrees Celsius (91.4°F) with high humidity, players struggled to cope and did not find much comfort from ice bags and a tube blowing cool air.

"Very tough," Djokovic, who will face German Jan-Lennard Struff in the second round, said about the conditions.

"I think today, from also speaking

to other players, was the hottest day so far. It's very hot but also humid. The hardcourts absorb the heat, it stays trapped in there. Not much wind, not much breeze. It was challenging definitely.

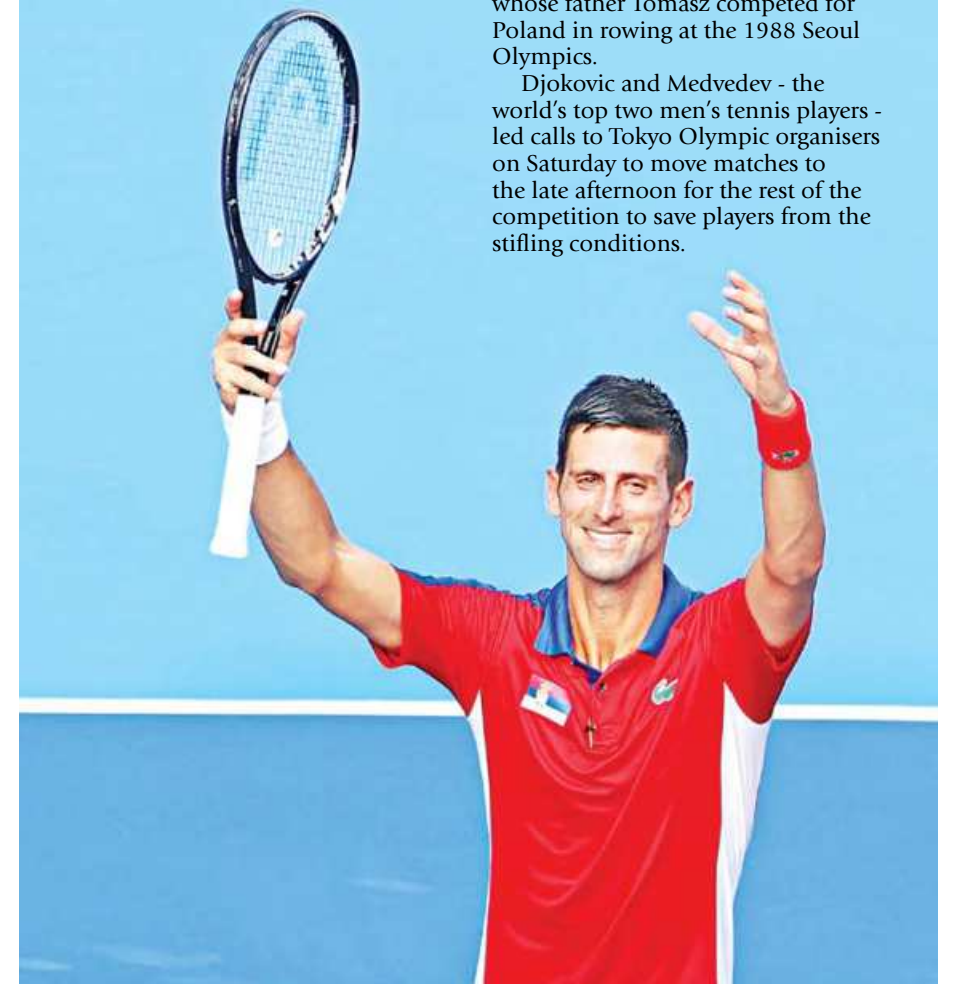
Daniil Medvedev said it was some of the worst heat he had played in after beating Kazakh Alexander Bublik 6-4, 7-6(8) in the second match on Centre Court.

Poland's Iga Swiatek, the 2020 French Open champion, had the chance to kick off proceedings on the main show court after Naomi Osaka's match was moved back a day due to her involvement in Friday's opening ceremony.

With media, volunteers and the players' entourage the only ones present at the 20,000-seater stadium to witness her Olympic debut, Swiatek stayed calm and composed to secure a 6-2, 6-2 win over German Mona Barthel, formerly ranked in the world's top 25.

"I'm pretty happy that I'm into the second round and not only the humidity and temperature was hard but also the sun, because on one side it was pretty hard to serve," said Swiatek, whose father Tomasz competed for Poland in rowing at the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

Djokovic and Medvedev - the world's top two men's tennis players - led calls to Tokyo Olympic organisers on Saturday to move matches to the late afternoon for the rest of the competition to save players from the stifling conditions.



## GLITTERING GOLD DISTRACTS FROM TOKYO WOES

Sport stretched out over Tokyo on Saturday and gold medals rained down as the Olympic Games burst into life, finally casting aside some of the shadow of COVID-19 and controversy that has plagued the global showpiece. Syria's 12-year-old Hend Zaza, the youngest athlete competing at the Tokyo Olympics, is comforted by Austria's Liu Jia after being defeated 4-0 during their women's singles preliminary round table tennis match. Chinese shooter Yang Qian celebrates on the podium after grabbing first gold of the Tokyo Games. Hou Zhihui of China, Mirabai Chanu Saikhom of India and Windy Cantika Aisah of Indonesia pose with their medals after women's 49-kg weightlifting event. Zhihui Hou won the gold medal with a comfortable win over Indian and Indonesian medalists. Mirabai Chanu, India's only athlete in weightlifting, took home the silver medal and still holds the world record in clean and jerk of 119 kg.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# No SAFF C'ship, Asian qualifiers in Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER



The deteriorating Covid situation in the country has prompted Bangladesh of hosting two major regional football events in the coming months.

The SAFF Championship, which was deferred to August-September this year from 2020 due to the pandemic, will not be staged in Bangladesh after the game's local governing body informed of its unwillingness to host the event due to the rising Covid cases.

"With the rising Covid cases in the country, we felt it was unrealistic to stage such a big event in Sylhet as the Bangabandhu National Stadium is about to undergo renovation. We relayed the decision to the SAFF secretariat," Bangladesh Football Federation's general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag told The Daily Star.

Earlier on Friday, SAFF general secretary Anwarul Haque Helal, following a virtual meeting with six member associations of SAFF, told local media that the event might be held in October in an appropriate venue.

"We have discussed the issue of BFF's unwillingness to host the event with the member associations. All the countries want the tournament to be held this year. We want to hold the tournament in early October when we have a gap in the slot," Helal said.

It has been learnt that Nepal, India and the Maldives have expressed interest in organising the tournament, which is likely to be a five-team affair instead of seven due to Pakistan's FIFA suspension and Bhutan's unwillingness to travel abroad during the pandemic.

Meanwhile, Asian football's governing body, AFC, has corresponded with the BFF regarding hosting Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers at a neutral venue instead of Sylhet.

"The AFC conveyed to us that the qualifiers will not be staged in Bangladesh mainly due to the Covid situation. The Qualifiers will be held at a neutral venue, which will be decided within a few days," Shohag told The Daily Star.

Bangladesh were drawn alongside Iran and Jordan in Group G of the Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers, scheduled for September this year.

# 'Today, women can take up football as a profession'

27-year-old Sabina Khatun, captain of the Bangladesh women's national football team, crossed the 100-goal landmark last June, taking just three-and-a-half seasons to claim a milestone no other had before. The Bashundhara Kings skipper opened up about her journey, how she sees women's football in Bangladesh and her dreams and ambitions in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star's Ashfaq Ul Mushfiq. The excerpts are below:



**The Daily Star (DS):** Did you start the season with the target of reaching the 100-goal landmark?

**Sabina Khatun (SK):** I was well ahead in terms of goals last year and I had the chance to reach the milestone this season, so I made the best use of the opportunity.

**DS:** How did you feel after reaching the milestone?

**SK:** Of course, a new record by itself is inspiring but I have to thank the president of Bashundhara Kings for how the achievement was celebrated on the field. It was celebrated beautifully and that made it feel even better.

**DS:** What do you think of the condition of women's football in Bangladesh?

**SK:** If you see the current situation, it definitely rose to a certain standard over the past 4-5 years. 7-8 years ago, women used to play football for the sake of it. But now, women play very organised football, which is I think is a positive for women's football.

**DS:** What's your next goal for the national team?

**SK:** Our Asian qualifying round was supposed to be in Bangladesh

in September but it's now going to be staged at a neutral venue. We will get to know where in a few days. That's what I'm focusing on right now.

**DS:** Do you have any special routine to keep yourself free of injuries?

**SK:** I haven't experienced any major injuries yet, but we do regular exercises, yoga and rehab to keep ourselves free of injuries.

**DS:** Have you achieved all your dreams as a footballer? Or are you chasing more?

**SK:** I have a dream of playing in the European leagues. That is my biggest dream.

**DS:** What's your message for young girls who dream of playing football?

**SK:** Today, women can take up football as a profession in Bangladesh. Women's football is far better than it was in the past and girls are getting financial support from playing in leagues. Right now, there are a lot of female players because after seeing success stories over the course of the past 4-5 years, many parents want their daughters to be footballers. I have a similar wish, that girls may come to the field, play and create a future through football.

# Oldest Olympian ready for 2024

REUTERS, TOKYO

Tokyo 2020's oldest competitor, 66-year-old Australian horse rider Mary Hanna, said on Saturday she also aimed to take part in the 2024 Olympics unless her body gave way.

Hanna represents her country in dressage, one of the three equestrian disciplines that are the only Olympic events that do not differentiate on the basis of gender and often feature athletes aged over 50 competing at the highest level.

"I don't know what else to do with myself. I've been doing this for so long now. Look, riding's one of those amazing sports where you can do it no matter what your age is, or your gender," Hanna said after she competed in the qualifiers on Saturday.

Asked if she hoped to make it to Paris in 2024 for what would be her seventh Games, she said: "Yes, absolutely. It's only three years away. Unless my body really breaks down, I'm certainly aiming for Paris."

Hanna - who has four grandchildren and is 54 years older than Tokyo youngest competitor, 12 years old Syrian table tennis player Hend Zaza - has also not given up hopes of winning an Olympic medal.