

SPORT



PHOTO: AFP

PARALYMPICS BEGIN WITH HIGH HOPES

Performers take part in the opening ceremony of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo yesterday. Tokyo's Paralympic Games opened with athletes hoping to shatter stereotypes and world records despite a year-long pandemic delay and the spectre of a new wave of virus cases in Japan. As the Games began, Japan's efforts to improve accessibility and inclusion are in the spotlight, with many arguing there is still plenty of work to do. Some 4,400 athletes with impairments will compete in Tokyo at the world's biggest paraspports tournament. It's a place for sporting history, but also an event organisers say can change attitudes towards people with disabilities.

Ten-man Kings go down fighting

SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings bowed out from the group stages of the AFC Cup following a 1-1 draw in their last Group D fixture against ATK Mohun Bagan at the Maldives National Stadium yesterday.

The two-time Bangladesh Premier League champions, who needed a victory to advance to the Inter-zone semifinal playoffs, had taken a first-half lead through Jonathan Fernandes. However, a debatable red card to Shushanto Tripura on the stroke of half-time made their task doubly-difficult as they failed to find



with seven points.

The result denied Kings the opportunity to become the second club from Bangladesh after Abahani to move into knockout rounds of the competition.

With the Bangladesh champions needing a victory, coach Oscar Bruzon made two changes to his starting eleven, bringing in Tripura and Atiqur Rahman Fahad in place of Biplu Ahmed and Mahbubur Rahman Sufil in a 4-1-4-1 formation.

The Kings started the match at a brisk pace, winning a couple of corners and going close in the first quarter of an hour, with Mohun Bagan's Irish defender Gerard McHugh making crucial blocks to

keep the danger out. While Kings dictated possession, the Mariners looked more threatening with the incisive play, but Liston Colaco failed to hit the target following a brilliant dribble from Williams which had split the Kings defence in two and left goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico flatfooted.

Kings, though, grabbed the lead in the 28th minute when Fernandes struck the bottom-right corner of the net with a powerful shot following a few stepovers to create space inside the box.

Kings imposed their physicality on the game, conceding four yellow cards before Tripura was shown

a straight red card by the referee following an aerial duel with Mohun Bagan's Shubhashis Bose on the stroke of half-time.

The decision, a harsh one considering Tripura wasn't cautioned earlier, turned the game on its head as the Mariners came out all guns blazing in the second half. It was a matter of time before the Indian side scored, which came in the 62nd minute, with Williams tapping home a cutback from Colaco inside the box.

Bruzon made four changes in the second half and while the changes brought some intensity to their game, the Kings failed to prize out the Mohun Bagan defence. The closest they came to a winner was on the 85th minute when Robson Robinho's intended cross for Raul Becerra evaded everyone and came off the far post.

Bruzon, in his post-match reaction, declined to comment on the red card incident, saying: "If I speak about the referee, I'm going to be hit with a ban of 35 games minimum....About the refereeing, it's something our clubs needs to do because it's not only today's game but also in the game against Bengaluru."

"We were very confident at half-time about keeping the result but unfortunately in one transition they capitalised," the Spaniard opined.

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OSCAR BRUZON
Bashundhara Kings Coach

an answer to David Williams' 62nd-minute equaliser.

With five points from three matches, Kings finished second in the group behind Mohun Bagan, who sealed the lone knockout spot

India look to continue dominance

AGENCIES



A supremely confident India will look to tighten the noose around a struggling England and India skipper Virat Kohli will be expected to overcome his prolonged lean patch when the third Test of the five-match series begins in Leeds on August 25.

Despite a thumping 151-run win in the second Test, India skipper Kohli's lean patch with the willow continued. Kohli's last international hundred came in November 2019 and though he has scored a couple of 40s in the series so far, the expectations have always been sky high from the modern great.

Being 1-0 down in the series after a crushing defeat in the second Test at Lord's, Joe Root's men, meanwhile, have a

tougher task of drawing level as fast bowler Mark Wood was ruled out of the game.

Wood suffered a shoulder injury diving into an advertising hoarding saving a boundary at Lord's and has now joined Stuart Broad, Chris Woakes and Oly Stone among England's sidelined quicks.

Ben Stokes will also not be returning to the scene with the star all-rounder still on a mental health break.

As for the batting, Root has been a lone shining light in a top-order that has otherwise repeatedly failed to score runs during England's current sequence of seven Tests without a win.

Root, however, remained positive before today's game. "I'm playing for England and I'm playing Test cricket," Root said Monday. "It's quite easy to stay positive in that respect, I'm living my boyhood dream.



Allen tests positive as teams check in

SPORTS REPORTER



The New Zealand cricket team arrived in Dhaka yesterday to participate against Bangladesh in a bilateral five-match T20I series starting from September 1 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The Black Caps landed at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport and quickly moved to the Hotel Intercontinental, where the team will undergo mandatory room quarantine for three days. The visitors will undergo multiple phases of Covid-19 testing before New Zealand and

Bangladesh start training in Mirpur from August 27.

This is New Zealand's first tour to Bangladesh since 2013 when the Tigers whitewashed the Black Caps in a three-match ODI series. However, Bangladesh are yet to register a win against the Kiwis in 10 T20I games and the Tigers will hope to rewrite history this time.

Members of the Bangladesh team also checked into the hotel yesterday, barring star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan -- who had traveled to Saudi Arabia from the United States after spending time with his family. He was expected to land in Dhaka yesterday night.

Meanwhile, Kiwi opener Finn Allen, who arrived in Bangladesh from England after playing The Hundred four days prior to the rest of the squad on August 20, tested positive for Covid-19 yesterday. Allen and Colin de Grandhomme reached Dhaka from England on the same day and had been quarantined in their rooms since.

The 22-year-old is currently receiving treatment from the Bangladesh Cricket Board's chief medical officer and has been in contact with NZC's chief medical officer. He will be monitored during his stay in quarantine by Blackcaps doctor Pat McHugh.

Two NRBs in 23-man squad for Kyrgyzstan tournament

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh national football team's head coach Jamie Day yesterday named a 23-member squad for next month's Three Nations Cup in Kyrgyzstan with two non-resident Bangladeshis in the squad.

The two surprising inclusions in the squad are Toronto-based 25-year-old forward Rahbar Wahed Khan, who plays for semi-professional side North Toronto Nitros and 18-year-old midfielder Tahmid Islam, who plays for French fifth division side USAA Vertou.

Goalkeeper Mitul Marma, defender Rezaul Karim, defender Atikuzzaman and midfielder Saad Uddin are the ones who were included either for the first time or made a comeback to the squad. The omissions from the squad from



Tahmid Islam

Rahbar Khan

the World Cup qualifiers earlier this year are: goalkeeper Rasel Mahmud Liton, defenders Rimon Hossain and Habibur Rahman Sohag, midfielders Mohammad Emon and Manik Molla along with forwards Mohammad Abdullah, Mehedi Hasan Royal, Sumon Reza and Mohammad Jewel.

Bangladesh will play against Palestine on September 5 and Kyrgyzstan on September 7 as part of the Three Nations Cup before squaring

off against Kyrgyzstan U-23 side on September 9. The men in red and green will play all these matches as part of their preparation for October's SAFF Championship in Maldives.

The players in Dhaka are expected to leave on August 28 for Bishkek where they will be joined by nine players from Bashundhara Kings, who are currently in Maldives for the AFC Cup.

SQUAD: Goalkeepers: Anisur Rahman, Shahidul Alam, Mitul Marma. Defenders: Bishwanath Ghosh, Topu Barman, Tariq Kazi, Rahmat Mia, Riyadul Hasan, Yeasin Arafat, Rezaul Karim, Mehedi Hasan, Atikuzzaman. Midfielders: Jamal Bhuiyan, Mashuk Mia Johnny, Sohel Rana, Saad Uddin, Rakib Hossain, Tahmid Islam. Forwards: Biplu Ahmed, Mahbubur Rahman, Matin Mia, Mohammad Ibrahim, Rahbar Wahed Khan.

WHAT TO WATCH

TEN 1
UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
Play-offs
Brondby IF vs FC RB Salzburg
Live from 1:00 am

TEN 2
UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
Play-offs

Shaktar Donetsk vs Monaco
Live from 1:00 am (Thursday)
Sony Six
ENGLAND VS INDIA
Third Test (Day 1)
Live from 4:00 pm

What role will Tamim return to?

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI



Bangladesh gear up for another T20I series without star batsman Tamim Iqbal but there is the air of him being there regardless, largely due to the fact that the left-hander is battling injury issues ahead of the upcoming T20 World Cup in two months' time.

The upcoming series against the Kiwis is set to be the fourth T20I series in a row that Tamim will be

into a side which is yet to find the answer to its top-order troubles in the shortest format.

Tamim has been able to establish himself as one of Bangladesh's top run-getters, but his T20 career does not do justice to his ability. The strike-rate for a T20 opener is a crucial facet in the shortest format, but Tamim's strike rate of 116.96 suggests his approach is mired in confusion. Despite almost all prominent batsmen in the side having struggled in the T20I format, Tamim who has a reputation for dominating with the bat, has rarely looked flustered.

Often times it appeared that he was trying to transmit his role in the ODIs to formulate a T20 approach. That factor only seemed to have accumulated further problems as the role he plays does not always see Bangladesh reaching the kind of scores that is regular in T20s. Bangladesh's current top-order issue in a nutshell is the problem that the think-tank faced in getting their T20 planning and approach right.

When Tamim has tried to hang around, playing an anchor role, it resulted in eating up deliveries in the Powerplay. Even when he has been able to carry on with his innings, other batters could not provide momentum or the batting lineup would face pressure due to a lack of runs in the Powerplay.

While his role in the Test and ODI format has always been crucial, not having Tamim in his natural flow has cost both him and his side in the shortest format. The pertinent question is what role the team management sees him fulfilling now.

If the Tigers want to take any advantage of the depth in the lower middle-order, the need of the hour is to go aggressive very early on and take advantage of the Powerplay. Whichever candidates are picked from amongst the likes of Tamim, Liton Das, Soumya Sarkar or Mohammad Naim to play as the opening pair, they will have to be the most effective at playing the role of the aggressors.

It has not always been clear what the think-tank wants and as they have not back Soumya by dropping him from an opening slot in the fifth T20I against the Aussies, questions remain whether the team management themselves have clarity.

In the end, it is not about names, but the roles they will be picked for. Until there is clarity about the role the top order must fulfil as the Tigers head to the World Cup, any attempt at a solution will be ineffective.



NEWS IN BRIEF

SK JAMAL CLOSE IN ON SECOND SPOT
Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club moved closer to confirming the second spot in the Bangladesh Premier League with a 1-0 win over Rahmatganj MFS at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Jamal moved to 49 points from 23 matches. Already-champions Bashundhara Kings have 58 points from 21 matches while third-placed Abahani are on 43 points from 22 matches. Only a defeat for Sheikh Jamal in their last match and consecutive wins for Abahani could see the Sky Blues overtake Sheikh Jamal in second spot.

In the other matches, Saif SC beat Bangladesh Police 2-0, Mohammedan beat Muktiyoddha 2-0 and Arambagh beat Brothers Union 1-0.

AFRIDI SIZZLES AT SABINA PARK

Fast bowler Shaheen Afridi took a career-best 6-51 as Pakistan established control of the second cricket Test against the West Indies on the fourth day Monday, placing itself in a position to level the two-match series. "For me it was about keeping a good line throughout because with the support of the other bowlers we always felt we had a chance," said Shaheen.