

T SPORTS

Sri Lanka vs South Africa
Third ODI
Live from 3:00 pm
TEN 1 & SONY SIX
World Cup Qualifiers
Norway vs Gibraltar

Live from 12:45 am
(Wednesday)
TEN 2
World Cup Qualifiers
France vs Finland
Live from 12:45 am
(Wednesday)

STAR SPORTS

SELECT 1 & 2
US Open
Quarterfinals
Live from 9:00 pm
& 4:30 am
(Wednesday)

PACERS UNDERCOOKED FOR WORLD T20 CHALLENGE?

NABID YEASIN



"We know what conditions are waiting in Oman and the UAE," Habibul Bashar, member of Bangladesh Cricket Board' (BCB) selection committee, had said earlier before indicating that the board might be contemplating including an extra seamer in their 15-member squad, to be announced, for the upcoming T20 World Cup in October-November.

However, the Tigers have played their previous eight T20s -- five against the Aussies and three played against the Kiwis -- on spin-friendly Mirpur surfaces, forcing them to employ a spin-heavy playing eleven with only two pacers featuring in the side in each of those games.

And as far as the trend in ICC events goes, Bangladesh would have to play in true cricketing wickets in Oman and the UAE. Even Bashar's words were indicative of the reality which would see the Tigers shift to picking the ideal blend of bowlers -- three pacers, two spinners including a few all-rounders -- in the World Cup.

Bangladesh do have a rich pace department to choose from with the likes of Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam, Mohammad Saifuddin and Rubel Hossain included in the 19-member squad for the ongoing New Zealand T20s.

But unfortunately, the amount of game-time has not been uniformly spread among the aforementioned lot as there was very little shuffling between the handful of pacers selected in the side in the past few games.

While Mustafizur played in all of the last eight T20s for Bangladesh, the left-arm pacer has only had Shoriful for the first four T20s against the Aussies and Saifuddin for the last Australia game and the first three T20s against New Zealand this month as his partners.

The reason behind that was probably the tendency to keep the winning eleven unchanged but it also cannot be denied that playing on spin-friendly Mirpur wickets have only limited the options of including a third seamer in the side.

And the lack of option for including the third seamer has seen someone like Shoriful, who is clearly considered as a frontline pacer

as he is the youngest cricketer to have been included in the current central contract for all three formats, out of the starting eleven for the past four T20s.

Taskin, another crucial cog in Tigers' pace department, hasn't played since the Zimbabwe tour in July. While it is true that the pacer has leaked runs in his past few appearances, game-time for him and bowling in a suitable condition could have lent him the opportunity to explore his mistakes before he is suddenly called into the squad in as big a platform as the World Cup next month.

Rubel has been out of the scene since his unproductive New Zealand tour back in April this year and could find himself out of ideas if called directly to perform in Oman and the UAE. And even regulars like Mustafizur could need shuffling considering the pacers being more injury-prone and that the Tigers are set to play at least eight games in a space of just 22 days in the World Cup.

Hence, it is certain that the BCB would have their work out readying a resourceful pace department ahead of the big event.



MESSI HITS OUT at match suspension

AFP, SAO PAULO



Brazil's World Cup qualifying clash against Argentina was sensationally abandoned shortly after kick-off on Sunday as controversy over Covid-19 protocols erupted.

Amid incredible scenes at Sao Paulo's Neo Quimica Arena, the match between the two giants of South American football was halted when Brazilian health officials ran onto the pitch, triggering a melee involving team officials and players from both sides.

The stunning intervention came just hours after health authorities in Brazil said four England-based players in Argentina's squad should be placed in "immediate quarantine" for breaching Covid-19 protocols.

The sides were just seven minutes into the match, which was played in front of only 1,500 spectators because of coronavirus restrictions.

According to Brazil's National Health Surveillance Agency (ANVISA), the Premier League players -- Giovanni Lo Celso and Cristian Romero of Tottenham, and Aston Villa's Emiliano Martinez and Emiliano Buendia -- provided "false information" upon their entry to Brazil.

Romero, Lo Celso and Martinez were all in Argentina's starting line-up for Sunday's game -- prompting the surreal intervention of ANVISA officials.

The four players were accused of failing to disclose that they had spent time in the United Kingdom in the 14 days before they arrived in Brazil, where Covid-19 has claimed more than 580,000 lives.

The controversy comes after nine Brazilians based in the Premier League failed to travel to South America following objections from their clubs.

Argentina captain Lionel Messi and his teammates trooped off the field as

confusion reigned over the fate of the game.

Soon, Brazil's squad began a practice game on the pitch.

Messi later hit out at the intervention by Brazilian officials.

"We've been here for three days, why are you doing this just now?" he said on Argentina's TyC network.

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni was similarly incensed, telling media that "at no time were we told that they could not play the game."

The Argentina team arrived back in Buenos Aires during Monday's early hours.



Argentina Football Association president Claudio Tapia said the federation had followed FIFA protocols for the game, pushing back at the claim that players had falsified entry records.

"It is not possible to speak of any lie," Tapia said.

Brazilian officials were unrepentant about the decision

to halt the game however.

"We got to this point because everything that ANVISA directed, from the first moment, was not fulfilled," ANVISA director Antonio Barra Torres said on Brazilian television.

The four players "were directed to remain isolated while awaiting deportation, but they did not comply. They went to the stadium and they entered the field, in a series of breaches," the official added.

A government order dating from June 23 prohibits the entry into Brazilian territory of any foreign person from the United Kingdom, India or South Africa, to prevent the spread of variants of the coronavirus.

The agency also said Argentina's delegation had been warned in a meeting on Saturday that the players at the centre of the controversy must be quarantined and should not play any part in Sunday's game.

'A tougher game awaits us'

SPORTS REPORTER



Following a 2-0 defeat against Palestine on Sunday, Bangladesh national team will face a greater uphill task against hosts Kyrgyzstan in their second and final match of Three Nations Cup at the Dolen Omurzakov Stadium in Bishkek today.

Head coach Jamie Day admitted that the upcoming test against the 101-ranked Kyrgyzstan, who defeated 188-ranked Bangladesh in all four previous meetings, is going to be more challenging than the previous one against the 102-ranked Palestine.

"I think Kyrgyzstan are a better team than Palestine, so a tougher game awaits us, which is not ideal as it is the second game in three days," said Day, who is considering to tinker his playing eleven but will decide after seeing



players' fitness levels before the match.

Even in the defeat against Palestine, the men in red and green showed signs of progress in terms of passing and holding the ball and the charges of Day will be keen to keep the wheel of improvement rotating.

The British coach might be pleased that his charges didn't look nervous from the outset, and at times appeared more determined, especially in the latter stages of the game. Although the lack of goal-scoring opportunities remains a headache for Day, he believes that this particular issue can't be fixed overnight.

"I think in patches we did better and at times passed it better but we need to improve in the attacking areas.

"We won't produce goal-scorers or creative players overnight with the current system [of Bangladesh football]," Day told The Daily Star.

Another silver lining was the debut of Canada-based Rahbar Wahed Khan, who came on at the 84th minute and showed glimpses of his talent. "Yes [he] did well. We are slowly introducing him to the team and players and he showed some nice touches when on," Day said, adding that France-based Tahmid Islam is yet to be ready but will get some game time in the last match against Kyrgyzstan U-23 side.

Rahbar was thrilled to have made his debut on the international stage. "It was my first international match and obviously there was some pressure. I think we were very confident in the last 10 minutes and weren't nervous, which is good though the result wasn't in our favour."

Clarity behind decisions lacking

MAZHAR UDDIN



In recent times there have been a few sensational decisions taken by Bangladesh cricketers that hit the headlines but as time goes by those decisions may emerge as vague.

Keeping the questions alive as to whether Mahmudullah Riyad who reportedly announced his retirement from Test format in the middle of the series in Zimbabwe in July this year but up until now, no official statement has been presented neither by the player himself, nor by the team management or the board.

Then it was Tamim Iqbal who opted himself out of the upcoming ICC World T20 selection through a social media video recently as the question raised on whether it was the team management who were actually supposed to make the call after consulting with the player.

The last and the biggest sensational news was revealed by head coach Russell Domingo after the defeat in the third T20I against New Zealand on Sunday where the South African informed Mushfiqur's probable unwillingness to keep behind the stumps in the shortest format anymore.

Interestingly, no one seems to be completely sure of whether Mahmudullah would undo his decision of retiring from Test cricket or whether Tamim would come back in the Tigers' World Cup squad despite his announcement.



Mushfiqur's issue was the latest where Domingo, before the start of the New Zealand series, came up with an unorthodox strategy of splitting the wicket-keeping duties between Mushfiqur and Nurul Hasan for the

first four games in order to assess the wicket-keeping role for the Tigers.

All eyes were on the experienced Mushfiqur in the third T20I but it was Nurul who ended up keeping wickets for the Tigers and that raised many eyebrows.

For someone like Mushfiqur who had already served Bangladesh for more than a decade and now, the pressure of proving himself again as a wicket-keeper and that too after an announcement by the head coach himself, surely does not transmit the right message to the players.

With less than a month to go for the mega event, it seems that Bangladesh is yet to be clear on one of the most important aspects of who is going to be the first-choice wicket-keeper in the squad. There may be quite a few options when it comes to wicket-keeping but if it is Nurul whom the team management prefers as the leading choice, then it is important to show proper faith in him.

The way Domingo is tackling the transition period of the senior players could actually reflect the restlessness within the dressing room and the Tigers head coach really needs to show some clarity behind his decisions in order to provide assurance to the players heading into the World Cup.



Dulal Hossain putts one on the opening day of the Mujib Borsho Trust Bank Open Golf Tournament at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday as golf returned to the country following a six-month break due to the third wave of Covid-19. While Dulal could only manage a first-round 80, his peers Liton Miah, Mohammad Nazim, Mohammad Sayum and Khandaker Rahat Tahsin Parash led the chart with matching 73s.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



India clinch thrilling victory

REUTERS



Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja combined to wreck England's batting order as India beat England by 157 runs in the fourth Test at The Oval on Monday to go 2-1 up in the five-match series.

Chasing a record victory target of 368, England were 100 for no loss early on the final day but the wheels came off for the hosts in the second session when they lost six wickets to stumble to 193-8 at tea. England eventually were bowled out for 210 runs.

Chris Woakes fell for 18 on the stroke of the interval, leaving Craig Overton on five and England still 175 runs behind.

Earlier, England began an intriguing final day on 77 for no loss, needing 291 runs to accomplish a record chase and go 2-1 up in the five-test series.

They made a strong start too with openers Rory Burns and Haseeb Hameed sharing a century stand before Shardul Thakur drew first blood.

Burns took two runs off Thakur to bring up his 50 but the seamer angled the next ball in and the opener could only edge it behind.

Hameed got a reprieve on 56 when Mohammed Siraj dropped an easy catch at mid-on off Jadeja.

Root held one end up for some time but dragged an innocuous Thakur delivery onto his stumps to depart for 36 and end England's faint hopes of an unlikely win.