

## T SPORTS

Sri Lanka vs South Africa  
Second T20I  
Live from 8:30 pm  
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1  
English Premier League  
Leeds vs Liverpool  
Live from 9:30 pm

## US Open

Women's Final  
Novak Djokovic vs Daniil Medvedev  
Live from 2:20 am (Monday)  
T SPORTS & MTV INDIA  
La Liga  
Espanyol vs Atletico Madrid  
Live from 6:00 pm

Real Madrid vs Celta Vigo  
Live from 1:00 am (Monday)  
MTV INDIA  
La Liga  
Osasuna vs Valencia  
Live from 8:15 pm  
Cadiz vs Real Sociedad  
Live from 10:30 pm



Nasum Ahmed is all ears as Bangladesh's spin bowling coach Rangana Herath makes a point during training at the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium. It will be interesting to see if the in-form left-arm spinner can continue his form in the upcoming T20 World Cup where the pitches are unlikely to be as favourable to the spinners as it was in Mirpur.

PHOTO: STAR

## A BLIP OR A PRECURSOR?

NABID YEASIN



Getting a winning tonic ahead of the T20 World Cup in Oman and the UAE was all that Bangladesh had apparently planned for and with three series wins on the trot -- away to Zimbabwe followed by wins at home over Australia and New Zealand -- the Tigers now head to the T20 extravaganza in their richest vein of form ever in the format.

The caveat is that most of Bangladesh's recent T20I triumphs came playing in favourable conditions at Mirpur, where surfaces were mostly tailor-made to enhance the hosts' abilities.

However, with media, fans and experts questioning the benefits that the Tigers could expect to reap from wins in such favourable

conditions, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) prepared a sporting wicket for the fifth and final T20I against New Zealand on Friday.

The behaviour of the pitch at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in the fifth T20I stood in stark contrast to the way the surface had played in the previous nine T20Is at the venue. It may also be enough to put an end to the claim that the Mirpur surface is a typical spinning track and that there are very little to no ways to improve the behavior of the pitch.

Right-arm quick Taskin Ahmed was getting ample carry and movement off the pitch from the very beginning while clocking speeds as high as 141kmph. And with the pitch offering uniform bounce instead of gripping and holding the ball back unexpectedly -- as it did in the previous nine

T20Is -- batsmen were able to play their shots while bowlers had to be shrewd even as they introduced variations and bowled slower deliveries.

The most unfortunate part was that the Tigers, who had dominated proceedings throughout the last two series, acted meekly and their discernable batting failure saw them succumb to a 27-run defeat.

Meanwhile, the one time in the entire series that they got the opportunity to show their ability on a true sporting wicket, an inexperienced New Zealand side showed their superiority over Bangladesh in the T20 format.

Bangladesh, who already had the five-match series in the bag, rested regular starters like Shakib Al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman along with all-rounders Mohammad Saifuddin and Mahedi Hasan. But that could

still not justify their slump to four for 46 in 8.5 overs in chase of a challenging 162.

New Zealand's 161 for five was the highest total in the last 11 T20Is at the venue. Is it that the Tigers, who have not had the need to score more than seven an over for most of their games on slow and gripping Mirpur pitches in the recent past, crumbled when asked to chase a total in a range that is considered par for the course in modern-day T20 cricket around the world?

If so, it probably is time for the harsh reality that the 'winning momentum' gained from the crushing 4-1 of the Aussies and a 3-2 series win over the Kiwis will not amount to much in the upcoming T20 World Cup, where the surfaces are expected to be sporting and competition to be much fiercer.

## Tigers set for extended rest

SPORTS REPORTER



After securing three T20I series wins on the trot against Zimbabwe, Australia and New Zealand, Bangladesh are about to dive into a long break ahead of the T20 World Cup, scheduled to be held in the UAE and Oman from October 17.

The Tigers will not have a training camp in the country, but will instead set up camp for the mega-event upon arrival in Oman on October 3.

All coaching staff and players in the 15-member squad, those on break or otherwise engaged -- such as Shakib Al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman, who will be at the IPL -- will be expected to join the camp in Oman.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is planning to organise a practice match against a local team in addition to the two official practice matches scheduled by the International Cricket Council.

BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury explained the reasons behind the long break ahead of the world cup.

"We decided to not camp in the country in order to combat the players' physical exhaustion and mental fatigue. They have played a lot of games recently, that too



in bio-bubbles and isolation. Besides, after the World Cup, a hectic schedule lies in wait as we will host Pakistan and then tour New Zealand and South Africa. Domestic cricket and the BPL season are likely to be hosted in between," Nizamuddin told The Daily Star.

Bangladesh, placed in Group B alongside Papua New Guinea, Scotland and Oman in Round 1 of the T20 World Cup, will kick-off their World Cup campaign against Scotland on October 17. The Tigers will have to secure the runners-up spot at the least to qualify for the Super12 stage, scheduled to begin on October 23.

## Women's team eye improvement against Nepal

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's football team will take on Nepal in the second FIFA friendly fixture at the Dashaath Stadium in Kathmandu at 5:15pm (Bangladesh time) today.

Having lost the first match 2-1, the women in red and green are looking to improve their performance against their South Asian counterparts, whom they have never been able to beat, with an eye on the upcoming AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers.

The performance in the first match, where Bangladesh conceded two early goals before substitute Tohura Khatun pulled one back, wasn't all that bad considering the Bangladesh team were playing their first match in two-and-a-half years.

"We were playing after two-and-a-half years and could identify what mistakes we made and where we stand right now. We are looking forward to perform better in the second match and get some boost ahead of the Asian Cup Qualifiers in Uzbekistan later this month," midfielder Mishrat Jahan Mousumi said in a video message from Kathmandu.

## Rabbi swims 46km in quick time

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Md Rabbi, a tenth grader from Bogura, became champion of the 'Sheikh Kamal Teesta Swimming 2021' competition held in Rangpur's Gangachara Upazila on Saturday.

He took 5 hours 38 minutes and 26 seconds to swim the 46km route, starting at the Teesta Barrage in Nilphamari and ending at the Sheikh Hasina Teesta Bridge in Mohipur in the Gangachara upazila of Rangpur.

Saiful Islam Russell of Borguna finished second, taking 5 hours and 50 minutes, while female swimmer Mitu Akter of Bogura secured third place at 6 hours and one minute.

Sixteen boys and girls in total participated in the competition, organised jointly by the Deputy Commissioner of Rangpur and the District Sports Association.

Moshiur Rahman Ranga, the member of parliament from the Rangpur-1 constituency, was present at the prize-giving ceremony held in the upazila on Saturday. Asib Ahsan, the Deputy Commissioner of Rangpur, chaired the event.



## DOUBLE DELIGHT ON CR7'S SECOND MAN UNITED DEBUT

12 years and 118 days had passed since Cristiano Ronaldo last played in a Manchester United shirt, but the 36-year-old did not miss a beat as he found the back of the net twice on his first start since returning to Old Trafford against Newcastle in a Premier League encounter yesterday. Bruno Fernandes and Jesse Lingard put the gloss on the finish with two further strikes, giving the hosts a 4-1 win.

PHOTO: REUTERS



## Djokovic's last hurdle en route to summit

AGENCIES



One match from finishing the first calendar-year men's singles Grand Slam in 52 years, Novak Djokovic isn't getting ahead of himself by talking about it.

Djokovic defeated Tokyo Olympic champion Alexander Zverev 4-6, 6-2, 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 on Friday to reach the US Open final, where he will face Russian second seed Daniil Medvedev with tennis history at stake.

"I know everybody wants to talk about history," Djokovic said. "I'm just trying to lock into what I know works for me."

World number one Djokovic will try to complete the first calendar Slam since Rod Laver in 1969 and only the fourth

ever after Laver in 1962 and Don Budge in 1938. Australian legend Laver, 83, was in the stands to watch Djokovic continue his quest for history.

But the task remains unfinished, so talking seems premature to Djokovic.

Rosewall at 35 in 1970, also takes pride in honing his game to perfection. "I know what my strengths are. I stick to them," Djokovic said.

When Daniil Medvedev reached his first U.S. Open final in 2019, he lost a

Russian said of the 2019 tournament. "I was not feeling like it's a must to win."

The world number two has carved a comfortable path through the draw to reach his third major final, dropping only a single set in six matches and wrapping



## DANIIL MEDVEDEV

➤ ATP Ranked 4, 2019 US Open finalist, 2021 Australian Open finalist.

➤ Last win against Djokovic: 2020 Tour Finals

➤ Last tournament won: 2021 Toronto Masters

➤ Grand Slam results on Hardcourts: 32-9 (78%)



## NOVAK DJOKOVIC

➤ ATP Ranked 1, 20 Grand Slams, 3 US Open titles.

➤ Grand Slam results on Hardcourts: 163-20 (89%)

➤ Last tournament won: 2021 Wimbledon

## HEAD-TO-HEAD

Djokovic 5-3 Medvedev

## GRAND SLAM:

Djokovic 2-0 Medvedev

## RECENT ENCOUNTER:

2021 Australian Open final (Djokovic won)

"Why should I be happy? The job is not done," he said. "That's kind of the attitude I have."

The 34-year-old Serbian star seeks his fourth US Open title and a 21st career Grand Slam trophy, which would give him the men's all-time lead by one over Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, both absent with injuries. Djokovic, who would be the oldest US Open champion since Ken

gruelling five-set match against Rafael Nadal after what he called a "crazy" tournament, including a feud with the New York crowd.

But this time, he said on Friday after his straight-set demolition of Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime in the semifinals, everything is different - starting with his desire to win. "Let's be honest, I was already happy being in the final," the

up his win over Auger-Aliassime in a brisk two hours and four minutes.

The 25-year-old is still searching for his first major title after losing to Novak Djokovic in the Australian Open final earlier this year. "The more you lose something, the more you want to win it, the more you want to gain it and take it," he said. "I lost two finals. I want to win the third one."