

What to WATCH

T SPORTS & TEN 1
World Cup Qualifiers
Italy vs Switzerland
Live from 01:45 am
(Saturday)
TEN 2
World Cup Qualifiers
Moldova vs Scotland
Live from 11:00 pm
England vs Albania
Live from 01:45 am
(Saturday)

Khaled Mahmud, Bangladesh's team director for the upcoming Pakistan series, is seen having a chat with BCB's chief curator Gamini de Silva. The pertinent question now is whether the BCB will instruct Gamini to prepare wickets that will actually benefit the Tigers in the long run?

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

‘WINNING MOMENTUM’ A BCB Original

NABID YEASIN

 Bangladesh's T20 World Cup campaign offer only agony and pain to fans if they simply look at the outcome. But in reality the Tigers' T20 quest offered much more than just wins and losses; it was an exciting drama-packed thriller doled out by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and its stakeholders.

An eye for detail can help one ascertain the elements in Bangladesh's T20 World Cup journey that could make it more exciting and entertaining than many Netflix originals!

It had almost everything to be a 9/10 content. There was drama, suspense, excitement, the thrill of shots fired and shots returned and a fitting if somewhat anticlimactic end with Bangladesh returning empty-handed and falling from six to eight in the T20I rankings.

The hook of the mega-series came in September, when ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal announced he would not be available for the T20 World Cup. However, it was not the news itself but the way it came out

to the public that caught everyone's eye. Instead of the board issuing a formal press release on the matter, Tamim opted for a Facebook live session to let everyone know of his unavailability.

With Tamim successfully hooking the media and fans' attention at the very beginning, all eyes were now on the New Zealand series which was played right after Bangladesh had thumped Australia 4-1.

While it was clear to the experts and even fans, at least knowledgeable ones, that the slow and low Mirpur surfaces were being exploited to register maiden series wins against the Kiwis and the Aussies and that the wins would not amount to much in the long run, members of the BCB and team management remained adamant that the 'winning momentum' was all the tonic that they needed before the World Cup.

This part, meanwhile, could be considered the suspense of the Tigers' whole T20 World Cup storyline, similar to the moment in a horror movie when a jolly family is too ignorant to see obvious red flags and proceed on their merry way into a new house while viewers can clearly see the impending doom that awaits.

'Winning momentum'. That is all that was uttered and the term could be heard

time and again before and even during the Tigers' World Cup journey. Even after losses in both official practice games, a loss to associates Scotland in the first round and the eventual debacle that saw them lose five of five matches in the Super 12 stage, the team management's rigid stance on the matter would not change.

Without any acknowledgment of the clear faults in their preferred method of preparation for the mega-event, the bereaved Tigers were left to fend for themselves as, alongside fans and media, even members of the board began taking wild swings at them, leaving the players to resort to snarky replies at press conferences as they kept the drama alive.

While skipper Mahmudullah Riyad became emotional and pointed out the extent to which the players go to show their commitment and dedication towards the team and how their feelings for the country are 'much greater than the outsiders', an agitated Shakib Al Hasan tried to justify batting failures by pointing out the shortcomings of Oman, an associate nation. The pinnacle of dramatic events, however, was doled out by Mushfiquur Rahim when he insisted the naysayers 'take a look in the mirror'.

If history is anything to go by, the blame game, especially inside the BCB, will go on, promising the spectators a much more exciting and thrilling sequel in the coming days. Maybe a few spur-of-the-moment decisions with no thoughts on long-term benefits will be taken by the cricket board in the coming days. Who knows!


Bangladesh are now attempting to revamp their process to rebuild their tarnished image. How will they do it? Will it be the same old method of welcoming Pakistan later this month to slow and low Mirpur surfaces that can only give the Tigers a false sense of achievement with a few wins under the belt?

Or will the team management be wise enough to realise that this Pakistan series of three T20Is and two Tests could be a first step towards avoiding such horrendous mishaps in the coming years?

The latter will only be possible if the BCB casts aside their 'winning momentum' philosophy, subdue their ego and prepare sporting wickets that may cost them in the form of a few defeats but benefit the country's cricket by creating a proper cricketing process that could see Bangladesh fare better in the next T20 extravaganza in the coming year in Australia.

Racism scandal has fractured cricket, says Root

REUTERS, London

 England captain Joe Root said the racism scandal engulfing his club Yorkshire has fractured the sport and has called for change and action to make cricket better. In a statement published on Twitter, Root spoke for the first time about the crisis at Yorkshire which was sparked by allegations of racism by former player Azeem Rafiq.

Yorkshire have been suspended from hosting international cricket and several sponsors have walked away. "It's my club and I care passionately about it," Root said. "I've spent a lot of time reflecting. There is no debate about racism, no one side or the other. It is simply intolerable. "These events have fractured our game and torn lives apart. I want to see change and actions that will see Yorkshire County Cricket Club rise from this with a



culture that harnesses a diverse environment with trust across all communities that support cricket in the county."

Rafiq said he was subjected to racism at Yorkshire while he was playing there between 2008 and 2018 but an inquiry found the conduct did not warrant any "disciplinary action". He said he was made to feel like an outsider at Yorkshire and that he had even contemplated suicide.

New Yorkshire Cricket Club chairman Kamlesh Patel, who replaced former chairman Roger Hutton following his resignation last week, praised 30-year-old Rafiq for speaking and has promised "seismic change" at the club.

Speaking to reporters in a conference call later Root said the most important thing was for cricket to move forward as a sport, but added racism was deeper than just cricket.

"I think we need to address what's happened and find ways of educating more," he said.

Sheffield-born Root was also asked whether he was considering his position with Yorkshire.

"In terms of my position. If you're not at the club how can you make any change? How can you help move things forward," he 30-year-old, who along with Ben Stokes reached in Brisbane on last Saturday ahead of England's Ashes series against Australia next month.

Gerrard appointed Aston Villa manager

REUTERS, London

Former Liverpool and England captain Steven Gerrard was confirmed as Aston Villa's new manager on Thursday as the 41-year-old ended his three-and-a-half-year stint with Rangers.

Gerrard emerged as the favourite for the Villa job after the Midlands club sacked manager Dean



Smith after a run of five successive Premier League defeats. In a statement, the club's CEO Christian Purslow said Gerrard's "ambitions, philosophy and values" matched the club's.

Gerrard was in charge of Rangers for three-and-a-half years and last season broke arch-rivals Celtic's nine-year domination to lead the Ibrox club to a 55th Scottish title on the back of an unbeaten league campaign.

Villa will be Gerrard's first senior coaching role south of the border and the former midfielder, who played more than 700 games for Liverpool between 1998 and 2015 said he was proud to be appointed. "Aston Villa is a club with a rich history and tradition in English football and I am immensely proud to become its new Head Coach," Gerrard said.



‘Especially motivated against Maldives’

Since his debut against Laos in 2018, Mohammad Ibrahim has found it hard to replicate his club performances for Bangladesh national team. The 24-year-old winger, however, played comparatively well in last month's SAFF Championship. And in the ongoing Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa Trophy in Colombo, Ibrahim carried his form by scoring in a 1-1 draw against Seychelles on Wednesday, after which he talked to The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman over phone from Sri Lanka.

The Daily Star (DS): How did you feel after scoring against Seychelles?
Mohammad Ibrahim (MI): It was my second international goal since I had struck one of the three goals against Sri Lanka during the 2020 Bangabandhu Gold Cup. It has always been a good feeling to score for your country but it turns into sorrow when you go on to lose or draw such a game.

DS: But what caused you to surrender the lead?
MI: We didn't expect to concede a goal against Seychelles. After taking the lead, it seemed to us that we were going to score more goals as we were playing well and had full control over the game but ultimately we could not widen the lead.

DS: You also got two more good chances but could not capitalise.
MI: We could've taken the game away from them had we scored

one more goal in the first half but we didn't. Yes, I also got chances to double the lead but I could not hit the ball properly on both occasions.

DS: What happened to Bangladesh, especially in the second half?
MI: The condition of the playing field was poor and we actually lagged behind as the match progressed because we ran more on the heavy ground in the first half and had exhausted ourselves before coming into the second. When Seychelles began taking control of the match, we defended deep but instead, we should've kept defending high, similar to what we did in the first half.

DS: Why did Bangladesh fail to overcome Seychelles, who have not played domestic football since December, 2020 due to Covid-19 surge?
MI: To be honest, our focus

was hampered after the match was postponed for two days in succession. Each time we took the match preparation but the deferment of the match twice took us down mentally. Following the deferment, we felt that the tournament might be cancelled due to conditions and it was really hard to maintain focus from then on.

DS: Is it now possible to regain focus to get into the final as you have two crucial matches against Maldives and Sri Lanka on Nov 13 and 16, respectively?
MI: Having played the first match already, there is no room to divert focus. With all four teams on equal one point from one match, we are looking forward to the next two matches, and especially motivated against Maldives now because we lost to them in the SAFF Championship. I think Sri Lanka will have an edge on the home ground, unlike Maldives.

‘I’m convinced I can play’

REUTERS

Former world number one Andy Murray is convinced that he can once again compete at the top level after taking down Italian Jannik Sinner at the Stockholm Open on Wednesday for only his second win over a top 10 player in 2021.

The 34-year-old Murray had hip surgery in 2018 and 2019. Since his breaks for injury, the British player has not been able to revive the old form and consistency that saw him win three major singles titles.

Murray, ranked 143rd, secured his first win over a top 10 player in 14 months when he beat Poland's Hubert Hurkacz in the opening round of the Vienna Open last



month.

"I'm convinced I can play ... well, I can. I'm playing at the top level and I'm winning matches against the best players in the world," Murray told reporters after taking down top-seeded Sinner, ranked 10th, 7-6(4), 6-3.

"The ones that I'm losing, I'm pushing the best players in the world. That argument is finished. I can compete at the top level."



Ben Stokes joined the England squad for a training session for the first time after his six-month lay off from cricket at the Metrocity stadium in the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia yesterday. Stokes joined captain Joe Root and seniors like Stuart Broad in one of the first full training session for the players who have arrived early in Australia. The England all-rounder is on course to be available for the first Ashes Test in Brisbane on December 8. Stokes took an indefinite break from cricket in July to focus on his mental health, while also recovering from a second operation on a broken finger, and was not included in coach Chris Silverwood's initial squad for the series.

PHOTO: TWITTER