

‘It’ll hit me only when I go out for toss’

REUTERS



Pat Cummins is focused on doing justice to his appointment as Australia’s new Test captain and believes limited-overs leadership would be “too much” for him, the 28-year-old said on Saturday.

Cummins is the first Australia paceman to lead the team in 65 years after Tim Paine stood down earlier this month following a “sexting” scandal.

Cummins, who has insisted he does not want to miss Test cricket, said he has been flooded with messages since landing the Test captain’s role but the feeling had not sunk in yet.

“Probably not fully,” he said after a practice session on the Gold Coast.

“I think until I walk out at the Gabba and see a big home crowd, pull on the Baggy Green (cap) and go out for the toss – that’s when it’ll probably hit me. It’s a bit of a weird feeling.”

Former fast bowler Geoff Lawson has hailed Pat Cummins’ appointment as Australia’s captain after the 28-year-old was named Tim Paine’s replacement.

Cummins is Australia’s 47th captain and the first fast bowler to lead the team in 65 years, prompting Lawson to celebrate the New South Welshman’s promotion to the top job ahead of the upcoming Ashes series against England.

“The stranglehold has been broken, the envelope pushed and the pace ceiling smashed,” Lawson, who played 46 tests for Australia, wrote in his column in the Sydney Morning Herald.

“A cricketer, whose main skill...is to bowl fast, has been granted the office of national captain.

“Cricket realists all over the continent are sighing with relief after turning blue from holding their breath since...Tim Paine resigned.”

Limited-over skipper Aaron Finch led Australia to their maiden Twenty20 World Cup title earlier this month, and Cummins reckoned split-captaincy suited them.

“It’s probably too early to say, mainly because I start this role and see where we go,” Cummins was quoted as saying by the Australian Associated Press.

“My gut feeling and preference at the moment is to have separate captains. “I think it’s too much to ask, certainly of me. I’d love to just concentrate on Test cricket.

“Aaron’s doing a fantastic job,” Cummins said, saying it was best to have “someone who can take the white-ball squad teams to make it their own, take it in their own direction”.



PHOTO: STAR

Mariners regain hockey league title

SPORTS REPORTER



Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club made it a double success in domestic hockey this year, adding the title of Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League to the Club Cup Hockey title they won earlier in the year.

The Arambagh-based outfit beat arch-rivals Mohammedan Sporting Club 3-2 in the last match of the league at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium to clinch the prestigious title for the second time after having broken their duck five years ago.

Shohanur Rahman, who had scored two goals when Mariners beat Abahani 3-0 in the final of the Club Cup last month, scored twice for the winning side.

Pradeep Mor scored Mariners’ third goal while Gonzalo Peilet and Sarwar Hossain scored for Mohammedan in the entertaining encounter.

The win took Mariners to 42 points from 15 matches while Abahani finished second on 39 points and Mohammedan ended on third with 36 points.

Following their Club Cup triumph, Mariners had started the campaign emphatically by winning all 11 matches in the first phase of the league.

However, as they needed a point from their last two matches, Mariners were stunned with a 4-3 defeat against Abahani in their last Super Five match -- conceding two goals in the last minute of the match. The result meant a defeat for Mariners in yesterday’s match would have put all three teams on equal points, forcing a three-way play-off.

Those fears of Mariners became more palpable when Mohammedan broke the deadlock in the 10th minute, Gonzalo Peilet flicking home the second penalty corner of the game dragged by Rasel Mahmud Jimmy. But Mariners hit back five minutes later, with Sohanur striking from

a PC initiated by Milon Hossain. The same combination worked again 10 minutes later as Mariners took a 2-1 lead going into the half-time break.

Mohammedan were less impressive from open play and spurned a slew of PCs and they were punished for their profligacy when Pradeep Mor scored a wonderful field goal on 51 minutes to give Mariners breathing space.

Even though Sarwar Hossain scored for Mohammedan in the 57th minute to reduce the margin, there was no more dramatic defeat for Mariners as they held onto the lead to clinch their second trophy of the season.

Winning starts for Sk Jamal, Sk Russel

SPORTS REPORTER



Former champions Sheikh Russel KC and Sheikh Jamal DC made winning starts as the new football season kicked off through Riviera Independence Cup yesterday following a break of two months and seven days.

Sheikh Russel, the 2011 edition champions, beat Uttar Baridhara Club 1-0 in the first match of the day at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur before Sheikh Jamal, who won their only Independence Cup title in 2013, beat Bangladesh Air Force 3-0 at the same venue.

The two results mean Sheikh Jamal grabbed the top spot in Group B after the first day while today Mohammedan will take on Muktiyoddha Sangsad and Saif Sporting Club will square off against Bangladesh Army in two Group C matches.

A total of 15 teams -- 12 from the premier league and three services teams -- will vie for the title of the Independence Cup, which is being held after a gap of three years.

All the matches of the three-week tournament will be held on the synthetic turf of Kamalapur as the Bangabandhu National Stadium, the premier football venue of the country, continues to undergo renovation.

Sheikh Russel failed to break the deadlock in the first half of the first game against their premier league opponents despite finding three good scoring chances.

Machado de Souza saw his header glance past the near post on 14 minutes before Mohammad Jewel’s sliding volley went straight to the goalie in the 34th minute.



Mannaf Rabbi then struck straight at goalie at the stroke half-time before making amends 14 minutes after restart, poking in from the goalline a well-judged chip from Sheikh Russel captain Esmael Ruti Tavares.

Saiful Bari’s charges were denied a second 12 minutes later when Aizar Akmatov’s corner was cleared off the goalline before Baridhara keeper Saiful Islam Khan made a double save on 87 minutes against De Souza and Tavares to keep the margin of defeat to a solitary goal.

Sheikh Jamal, meanwhile, had a much more comfortable victory against Bangladesh Air Force in the second match.

Valijonov Otabek gave Sheikh Jamal a 16th-minute lead with a right-footed curler from the edge of the box before Solomon King made it 2-0 in the 52nd minute with a placing shot on a thorough-pass from Otabek. Sohanur Rahman put the icing on the cake with a third goal, beating the opposition goalkeeper following a thorough-pass from Rahbar Khan on 55 minutes.

Arsenal stroll past rock-bottom Newcastle

REUTERS, London

Arsenal returned to winning ways and deepened Newcastle United’s relegation worries as goals by Bukayo Saka and Gabriel Martinelli sealed a comfortable 2-0 Premier League win on Saturday.

Bottom club Newcastle had new manager Eddie Howe on the touchline for the first time after he was forced to isolate due to a positive COVID-19 test, but they were well beaten in the end and remain without a league win after



A coach that merits the talent

SAMAMA RAHMAN



While most Manchester United fans would have been well within their rights to feel sadness at the departure of club legend Ole Gunnar Solskjaer from the dugout, there must have been a tinge of optimism.

The Norwegian knew Manchester United’s expectations for the season were at an all-time high after a very successful transfer window. Their subsequent struggles were attributed to the coach. It was also apparent that he could not win a battle of minds against the likes of Pep Guardiola, Thomas Tuchel or Jurgen Klopp.

Manchester United, after their dithering perhaps cost them Antonio Conte, acted quickly and somehow appear to have failed upwards, landing on ‘the godfather of German football’ as most everyone has labeled him, Ralph Rangnick.

There is little to base any speculation about the manager, given that he has only completed two seasons as a coach since 2011, but his tactics being at the forefront of modern coaching provide some indication of his ability.

The 63-year-old also has a knack for identifying and quickly developing talent, famously signing



a then 20-year-old Sadio Mane for 450,000 from Metz in 2012 before molding him into a world-beater. But above all, it is his ability to organise a team and imprint a clear idea of how to play that were the major factors. As Thomas Tuchel showed at Chelsea last season by winning the Champions League, organisation and knowing what to do with and without the ball is imperative.

What that may look like, given his time at Leipzig, is a quick press. He remarked once that he had checked some recent statistics and found that 60 per cent of their goals had come within 10 seconds of winning the ball.

In order to accomplish that, Ragnick relied on young, hungry players that could win the ball and flood beyond the opposition backline. Timo Werner, now at Chelsea, often played that role, but it is also a mold that fits perfectly onto the likes of Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Mason Greenwood.

With the need for such a dynamic front three, the question becomes what to do with Cristiano Ronaldo, whose unwillingness to press has caused many to question if he is the right man to be at the forefront.

Those not convinced by CR7’s consistent goals can find relief in the knowledge that Ragnick’s

system of positionally marking zones on the pitch instead of following around players will cause the Portuguese’s instincts and anticipation to come into play more than a form of more direct pressing would. He will also be backed up by one of the more willing pressers in the team, Bruno Fernandes.

In midfield, Fred again underlined his pressing credentials by winning the ball back quickly for both of Manchester United’s goals in their Champions League win against Villarreal, but others have not quite been up to the task and reinforcements in that department must be a priority.

There are similar problems in a leaky defense, where Harry Maguire and his compatriots have been guilty of individual mistakes. But one could argue that lack of a coherent identity -- no patterns of play out of defense or any kind of plan B when caught in a trap -- also led to them playing as individuals, which left more room for mistakes.

If Manchester United fans were already convinced that the individuals in their team were good enough to compete for the Premier League or Champions League, they now have a manager who is capable of backing those claims.

13 games.

Arsenal, whose 10-game unbeaten run in all competitions came to a juddering halt at Liverpool last week, dominated the opening half with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang missing a sitter.

But their patience was rewarded as Saka finished superbly in the 56th minute before substitute Martinelli volleyed the second 10 minutes later with his first touch of the game.

Newcastle’s Jonjo Shelvey was denied by the woodwork in the first half but once they went behind, a 17th defeat in 18 league games against Arsenal looked inevitable.

Arsenal stayed fifth in the table, level on points with fourth-placed West Ham United.

Newcastle have six points and are five behind 17th-placed Leeds United who play later on Saturday.