

England look to salvage Ashes pride

AFP, Sydney

A demoralised England have vowed to salvage some pride when their shambolic and Covid-hit Ashes tour resumes in the fourth Test at Sydney on Wednesday.

Joe Root's men face another difficult clash against a rampant Australia, who crushed them by an innings and 14 runs inside three days in the third Test at Melbourne to retain the Ashes with an unassailable 3-0 lead.

It followed heavy defeats in Brisbane and Adelaide, where batting collapses, poor fielding and questionable selections cost the tourists dearly.

They are facing a 5-0 whitewash, although rain forecast for Sydney could come to England's rescue.

Veteran seamer Jimmy Anderson admitted that "the lads are pretty flat at the minute if I'm being brutally honest".

"We've just not been at the races. We've now got two games to do something about that," he added.

Both sides have been hit by the coronavirus, which is surging in Sydney, with more than 20,000 cases being reported daily in New South Wales state.

Australia will be missing number five Travis Head after he tested positive in Melbourne.

Veni, vidi, vici for Imranur

SPORTS REPORTER

England-based sprinter Imranur Rahman created history in his maiden appearance in the Sheikh Kamal 45th National Athletics Championships at the Army Stadium in Banani yesterday.

By clocking 10.50 seconds in the 100m event, the 28-year-old dethroned Mohammad Ismail as the country's fastest man.

Imranur, representing Bangladesh Army, also surpassed a 22-year national record of 10.54 seconds yielded by the late Mahabub Alam during the 1999 South Asian Games.

Furthermore, Imranur came tantalisingly close to matching the fastest South Asian man Saaid Hassan's timing of 10.49 seconds, through which the Maldivian sprinter had bagged gold in the 2019 South Asian Games' 100m event.

Mohammad Rakibul and the four-time fastest man Ismail, both of Bangladesh Navy, stood second and third by clocking 10.66 and 10.69 seconds, respectively.

"I'm happy with my performance," was the first reaction of Imranur, who grew up in Sheffield.

"I want to represent Bangladesh in the South Asian Games and bring a gold medal from a different condition," said the new fastest man. "If I'm given a call to the national team's training, I want to train in England before representing Bangladesh in the international competitions," Imranur added.

BKSP's Sumaiya Dewan also dismantled the long reign of Shirin Akter to become the fastest woman by clocking 12.32 seconds.

Navy's Shirin and Sharifa Khatun secured silver and bronze with timings of 12.36 seconds and 12.54 seconds, respectively.

All timings in the aforementioned events have been clocked under the electronic board.



SPORTS REPORTER

Sacrificing the comfort of a winter sleep to wake up at 4:00 in the morning, thousands of miles away from the action in New Zealand, to watch Bangladesh play to the best of their Test abilities is surely worth it for the Bangladesh cricket fans these days.

The morning daze slowly begins to dissipate when you witness an elegant Liton Das present the full face of the bat for a cover drive over Tim Southee for a boundary.

As time goes by you might look for a cup of coffee and jump out of the comfort of the blanket when Liton rides on top of the bounce of a short-pitched delivery and pulls it to perfection. Or when he brings out that late cuts using the pace of the bowler to mesmerize a Bangladesh fan.

Skipper Mominul Haque may have chosen to work extremely hard at the other end for his team-high 88, but Liton seemed to be batting on a totally different surface. The pair added a vital 158-run fifth-wicket

stand that helped Bangladesh take a rare 73-run first-innings lead against the Kiwis and, more importantly, take control of the game at the conclusion of the third day.

Ultimately, Liton's innings might not get what it deserved. The right-hander could also blame luck. After batting so well for 177 balls, the only false shot cost him his wicket, edging Trent Boult away from his body and walking back towards the pavilion.

"Everyone batted well and Liton's batting has always been fluent. We may have gotten at least a hundred in the innings, especially Liton. He batted how he normally does and it's always a treat to the eyes to watch him bat because he times the ball so well. While watching him bat today (Monday), I never felt he was under any sort of pressure at any point in time. It was brilliant to see how fluently he handled the Kiwi bowlers," team director Khaled Mahmud said yesterday.

"We all know how good a player he is despite being unable to score runs in the World Cup. But we had no doubts about his ability. In fact, Liton has always scored

less than his ability, but watching him bat is always soothing to the eyes."

In the absence of experienced cricketers such as Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal, a relatively young and inexperienced Bangladesh team being able to banish their reliance on individual heroics and put up a collective approach has been the highlight.

According to Mahmud, seeing these young players successfully execute plans in the middle had been satisfying.

"Perhaps we couldn't do hundred percent, but what this young team was able to execute from our plan was satisfying. Results will come later, but we can play with courage. These are tough conditions for every visiting side, but I felt that we could do well. I tried to pass that onto this young team. Definitely, there was fear within us. We have five batters -- Shadman, Joy, Shanto, Yasir and Liton -- who are not very experienced in Tests. They all possess the ability to play well, but working in specific areas really paid dividends for us," he added.



Imranur Rahman came from London and set the track alight with a record-breaking effort, winning the 100m sprint with a timing of 10.50 seconds in the Sheikh Kamal 45th National Athletics Championships at the Army Stadium in Banani yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

They played very, very well. They were decisive. They made us come back and bowl spell after spell. It is exciting to see the game so evenly poised.

TRENT BOULT
New Zealand's premier pacer



Mithun century evens up final

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Mithun scored a spectacular century in his first match of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) but failed to keep the momentum going in the following two matches. However, the Central Zone batsman got his rhythm back in the final as his unbeaten ton to answer South Zone's Zakir Hossain's century on the second day set up a competitive contest at the Sher-e-Bangla Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Starting the day with 46 runs, Zakir remained unbeaten in South Zone's first innings after scoring 107 runs and smashing 15 boundaries. His 119-run stand with Farhad Reza for the sixth wicket proved pivotal as South Zone amassed 387.

Hasan Murad bagged five wickets for Central Zone while Shuvagata Hom Chowdhury scalped three. Coming down to bat, Central Zone found themselves under pressure as they lost four wickets for 16 runs. All four wickets were picked up by right-armers Farhad Reza. Star performer Soumya Sarkar returned to the dressing room scoring only three runs.

Afterward, opener Mithun and middle-order-batter Shuvagata Hom started to repair the damage as they strung together an unbeaten 168-run partnership stumps were drawn for the day.

Mithun's resilient 102 featured 16 boundaries and a maximum while Shuvagata's 67 was laced with seven fours.



Rahmatganj, Abahani in last four

SPORTS REPORTER

Giant killers Rahmatganj stunned big-spenders Sheikh Russel in a 4-3 thriller to move into the semifinals of the Bashundhara Group Federation Cup at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

In the last quarterfinal, Abahani thrashed Sheikh Jamal 6-0 to book the last semifinal spot. Abahani will play against Saif SC while Rahmatganj will take on Mohammedan in last four. Earlier, it was Rahmatganj's Ghanaian recruit Philip Adjah Tettey who broke the deadlock in the 28th minute and presented a 2-0 cushion for his side at the stroke of half time.

Following resumption, Russel initiated their revival act, first with a free-kick from Thiago Eduardo in the 63rd minute. Then, within a span of six minutes, Aizor Akamatov converted a spot-kick in the 80th minute before Ailton Machado found the net, Russel went from equalising to having a foot in the semis. However, two minutes from the regulation time, Sunday Chizoba equalised and Ashrafur Islam struck the decider for Rahmatganj in the 118th minute.

What to Watch

T SPORTS & GTV
New Zealand vs Bangladesh
1st Test, Day 5
Live from 04:00 pm (Wednesday)

T SPORTS
South Africa vs India

2nd Test, Day 2
Live from 02:00 pm

SONY SIX
The Ashes
Australia vs England
4th Test, Day 1
Live from 05:30 am (Wednesday)