

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS 1
IPL
Mumbai Indians vs Lucknow Super Giants
Live from 04:00 pm
Delhi Capitals vs Royal Challengers Bangalore
Live from 08:00 pm

TEN 2
FA Cup
Manchester City vs Liverpool
Live from 08:30 pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
Premier League
Tottenham vs Brighton
Live from 05:30 pm

Manchester United vs Norwich City
Live from 08:00 pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT 2
Premier League
Southampton vs Arsenal Live
from 08:00 pm



Eintracht Frankfurt's Serbian midfielder Filip Kostic acknowledges the support of a strong band of travelling fans after scoring one of his two goals which stunned hosts Barcelona to a 3-2 defeat (4-3 on aggregate) in their Europa League quarterfinal second leg at the Camp Nou on Thursday. It was a good night for German clubs as Leipzig eliminated Atalanta to make the last four. West Ham and Rangers also advanced.

PHOTO: TWITTER

'Time is right to step down'

REUTERS, London

Joe Root stepped down as England Test captain on Friday, saying the job had taken a heavy toll on him recently, after dispiriting tours of Australia and the Caribbean capped a string of poor results.

England have won just one of their previous 17 Tests and the pressure had been mounting on Root even before their 1-0 series defeat by the West Indies last month, which came on the heels of a 4-0 Ashes series thrashing by Australia.



Ex-England captains Michael Atherton and Nasser Hussain were among those who had said it was time for Root to step down.

"After returning from the Caribbean tour and having time to reflect, I have decided to step down as England men's test captain," Root said in a statement issued by the England board (ECB).

"It has been the most challenging decision I have had to make in my career but having discussed this with my family and those closest to me, I know the timing is right."

Since taking charge in 2017 as Alastair Cook's successor, Root led England in a record 64 tests. His 27 wins and 26 defeats as captain are also records.

"I am immensely proud to have captained my country and will look back on the past five years with enormous pride," Root added.



Liverpool, City face defining moment

AFP, London

Liverpool will put their unprecedented quadruple bid on the line against treble-chasing Manchester City on Saturday in an FA Cup semi-final that will make or break one club's dream of football immortality.

Jurgen Klopp's men are in contention to become the first English team to win all four major trophies in one season.

With Liverpool expected to see off Spanish side Villarreal in the semi-finals of Europe's elite club competition, it is Premier League leaders City who will provide the major obstacle to their ambitions.

City are just one point ahead of their title rivals in the Premier League with seven games left after last weekend's 2-2 draw.

Pep Guardiola's team are also in the hunt for the Champions League crown and could face Liverpool in the final if they beat Real Madrid in the semis.

City have a rare feat of their own to aim for as they seek to become only the second English side to win the prized treble of the Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup.

The grand goals of both City and Liverpool mean the stakes could not be higher when they clash for the second time within a week, this time at Wembley for a place in the FA Cup final.

One team will leave the national stadium on a high, the other having to quickly refocus.

'We have learned to understand the process'

Test cricket is a game of aggression, a game where mindset, technique and mental strength become equally important over five days. Although Test skipper Mominul Haque was still reeling from jet lag a day after return from South Africa, he fielded questions on where Bangladesh went wrong in the South Africa Tests, especially approach-wise, during an interview with The Daily Star's Abdullah Al Mehdi following his side Prime Bank's Dhaka Premier League match on Thursday. The excerpts of the interview are below:

The Daily Star (DS): How do you explain the batting debacle and, in particular, the problems facing spin?

Mominul Haque (MH): What I feel is that we panic a lot. It's not that we can't play spin but in domestic cricket we don't have quality spinners. I said it and Tamim [Iqbal] bhai had said it before as well that when we face quality spin, we mess things up and the pressure gets to us.

We don't understand in what way we have to play spin. When it turns, we start hitting but the options, of how to play those shots and what areas to pick, aren't clear. When facing someone like Taijul [Islam] or [Rangana] Herath, I can't just defend all day, rather I have to shake their line and length. How long can you defend? It's a valid point since you are not scoring runs too and you get dismissed. When it's turning, it's difficult to take singles.

DS: Were you able to show authority and composure with your approach?

MH: You have to be comfortable, you just can't hit out. You have to understand the



technical aspect, aggression and attitude. We weren't able to execute properly.

DS: When did you or the management realise SA went with a different plan this series?

MH: You are thinking something [pace strength] about your opponent but your opponent goes with a different strategy [spin option]. It can happen in international cricket. I wasn't surprised since you face different challenges overseas but we might have realised their plan at the very end.

DS: Tough time for you as a captain and batter?

MH: If I start thinking it's a big pressure since I'm not scoring runs and the team aren't getting results, I won't go far. I've learned to absorb these things. If I can work on my game, I'll be able to make a comeback. The important thing about

captaincy is that it opens up your thinking brain and your game opens up too. In Test cricket, you are saying that we are learning after 20 years but I think that back then we used to learn but now we have learned to understand the process. It will take time.

DS: How much are you enjoying your captaincy?

MH: I enjoy it a lot. I enjoy what goes on in the field and it doesn't affect my batting. In fact, it helps me understand the game.

DS: The difference in team's approach compared to Moun Maunganui?

MH: It wasn't different. Not even the second Test.

DS: How do you view Tamim's aggression at the top? Was the team's approach feasible over five days?

MH: He [Tamim] has gotten his success in one way and just because I am captain, I can't change his game. When an opener can take on bowlers the way he did, it's good. Tamim bhai's approach is different to say that of [Mahmudul Hasan] Joy or Liton [Das]. We adopted a strategy in Moun Maunganui because we lacked experienced batters bar me and Mushfiqur [Rahim] bhai. Everyone has a different role. When you have a young team, you have to change strategies.

DS: What is aggression in Test cricket in terms of batting?

MH: For me, it means you get your feet in position before leaving the delivery or you go back before leaving well. If it is a half volley, you play your shot. If it's an in-swing, you use your feet to play off your legs. If there are bouncers, you take your time. Everyone's game plan varies. Mindset is very important.

MSC exit with win

SPORTS REPORTER

An all-round performance helped Mohammedan Sporting Club register a convincing 80-run victory over Mashrafe Bin Mortaza-led Legends of Rugganj in their final Dhaka Premier League game at the BKSP-3 ground yesterday.

Despite the dominating victory, the Mahmudullah Riyad-led side could not make it into the Super League stage, ending their campaign in seventh position with 10 points from five wins in as many games.

After a century from Kusal Mendis (101 off 91) and quick-fire fifties from skipper Mahmudullah (70 off 47) and Parvez Hossain (76 off 68) propelled Mohammedan to 307 all out in 47.5 overs, it was spinner Nazmul Islam Apu who led from the front as he bagged a fiver to bundle out Rugganj for 227 in 49.1 overs.

At the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, table-toppers Sheikh Jamal beat City Club by 53 runs while Brother Union registered a 13-run victory over Khelaghar at the BKSP-4 ground.

Can Abahani get past Mohun Bagan hurdle?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh has always struggled against Indian sides in football competitions, whether it be the national team or club outfits, and there are very few instances of Bangladeshi representatives felling their cross-border rivals in invitational or AFC-sanctioned tournaments. So, Abahani will be expecting a tough assignment on Tuesday when they travel to the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata to take on ATK Mohun Bagan in the AFC Cup play-off.

Six-time professional football league champions Abahani have participated in the AFC Cup, Asia's second-tier club competition, four times, notching seven wins, five draws and 10 losses from 2017-2020.

The 2019 AFC Cup was a historic campaign for Abahani as they emerged as group champions and played the zonal semifinals after recording five wins from eight matches. However, the 2017 and 2018 editions AFC Cup were miserable as the Sky Blues finished fourth and third respectively in their four-team groups, with Indian outfits proving the most challenging.

In 12 AFC Cup encounters against Indian sides, Abahani have recorded five defeats, three draws and four wins against the likes of Mohun Bagan, Bengaluru FC, Aizawl FC, Minerva Punjab and Chennaiyin FC.

Abahani played two games against Mohun Bagan in the 2017 edition, suffering a 3-1 defeat away before



playing out a 1-1 draw at home. Apart from Abahani, Mohammedan and Muktijoddha Sangsad also failed to get past Mohun Bagan in the now-defunct Asian Club Championship, with Mohammedan playing out a 2-2 draw in 1987 and Muktijoddha Sangsad losing 2-1 and drawing 0-0 in 2000.

"Mohun Bagan are definitely strong opponents and are going to play in familiar surroundings in front of a home crowd. But it is possible to beat them because we beat Chennaiyin FC and Minerva Punjab in 2019 as we became group champions. We are ready to face them," Abahani forward Nabib Newaj Jibon told The Daily Star yesterday ahead of the team's departure this morning.

"We are in good shape mentally and physically and have good preparation. We believe that we can beat Mohun Bagan if the players can play their best in their respective position," said Jibon.

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