



Bangladesh batting mainstay Mushfiqur Rahim joyfully plays football during a training session while another batting stalwart, Tamim Iqbal, returns from a gruelling net practice yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. Both the batters will look forward to continue their good form in the second Test, starting today, after returning to form with hundreds in Chattogram Test.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Tigers hopeful of Mirpur turnaround

"I don't think this is going to be an easy game at all. Both teams want to win this game. I think the last game [in Chattogram] was a close-fought contest. I think this will be similar. The game will go forward at a quicker pace. We have to be ready for that. I'm looking forward to some exciting cricket."

Chris Silverwood
Sri Lanka head coach



SPORTS REPORTER

The conditions in Mirpur, the added spin threat and Bangladesh's record in the past few Tests in Mirpur against spin all come into view as the Tigers gear up for the second Test in Dhaka today. Injuries in the pace and spin department further dampened the outlook and the Tigers will be wary of just how favourable home conditions turn out to be.

Conditions in Mirpur have remained stable over the course of the past five years, but results fluctuate wildly. At times the hosts have won handsomely. Other times results have been nothing short of embarrassing. Bangladesh lost the last two Tests in Dhaka, to the West Indies and Pakistan.

The last time Sri Lanka toured Bangladesh before this series, there was a high-scoring, albeit largely uneventful, draw in Chattogram despite Mominul Haque's tons in both innings. Bangladesh then suffered a 215-run defeat in Dhaka to lose the series 1-0.

Asked if he was hopeful of a positive result, Mominul said he was, given Tests in Mirpur usually produce results. The last time a draw played out in Mirpur was against South Africa in 2015, but that was only because no play was possible after the first day.

"I feel that we have a good opportunity. We have to start from scratch, without thinking of what happened in Chattogram.

As you said, we are trying to get out of that scenario," Bangladesh skipper Mominul said at the press conference yesterday.

Mominul had been spotted in discussion with coach Russell Domingo and curator Gamini Silva ahead of the press conference yesterday. Conditions will play a big part in the second Test and Mominul perhaps wanted to get his coordinates right.

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The last two times Bangladesh have played Tests in Mirpur, they lost the toss. On both occasions, the away team batted first and put the squeeze on Bangladesh in the latter stages of the game with spin. So, even at home and on a surface where the Tigers play a majority of matches, Mominul was wary of calling it his side's best opportunity to get a win.

"Considering conditions and everything else, it is a good opportunity. It's not the best opportunity but it is another opportunity for us to win a series. There are rarely matches at Mirpur which do not see a result," he said.

West Indies' Rakheem Cornwall got nine wickets and Pakistan's Sajid Khan scalped 12 in the last two Tests in Mirpur, which is as much an example of Mirpur's spin-friendliness as it is of Bangladesh's batting instability.

On top of that, Bangladesh have injuries to off-spinners Nayeem Hasan and Mehedi Hasan Miraz.

Mominul, who now realistically has to go with four front-line bowlers due to Shoriful Islam's injury as well, admitted that Mosaddek Hossain had a good chance of making the playing eleven. With pacers not amongst the wickets in Chattogram, the burden of shouldering the lion's share of overs will fall squarely on Taijul Islam and Shakib Al Hasan.

"If Mosaddek plays, his role will be different. It's important to use him intelligently. At times you have to deal with situations like this [injuries] and you have to face up to them accordingly. Since they [Taijul and Shakib] are there, hopefully it won't be too much of a problem," Mominul said, knowing full well that the Test can go either way but given Sri Lanka's batting depth, it will be a difficult task for the Bangladesh bowlers.

Familiar faces back into squads

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday named the squads for all three formats for the upcoming tour of West Indies with Mustafizur Rahman returning to the Test squad for the first time since February 2021.

Mushfiqur Rahim had opted out of the whole tour while Mehedi Hasan Miraz returned to the Test setup after missing the ongoing Test series against Sri Lanka through injury.

Anamul Haque Bijoy has been included in the ODIs and T20Is following his performances in the recently-concluded Dhaka Premier League. Mohammad Saifuddin also returned in the white-ball formats while Nurul Hasan has been included as Mushfiqur's replacement.

TEST SQUAD: Mominul Haque (Captain), Tamim Iqbal, Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Shakib Al Hasan, Liton Das, Mosaddek Hossain Saikat, Yasir Ali Rabbi, Taijul Islam, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Ebadot Hossain, Khaled Ahmed, Rejaur Rahman Raja, Shohidul Islam, Mustafizur Rahman and Nurul Hasan Sohan.

ODI SQUAD: Tamim Iqbal (Captain), Liton Das, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Shakib Al Hasan, Mahmud Ullah Riyad, Mosaddek Hossain Saikat, Yasir Ali Rabbi, Afif Hossain Dhrubo, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Ebadot Hossain, Nasum Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Nurul Hasan Sohan, Anamul Haque Bijoy, Mohammad Saifuddin, Taskin Ahmed and Shoriful Islam.

T20I SQUAD: Mahmud Ullah Riyad (Captain), Munim Shahriar, Liton Das, Anamul Haque Bijoy, Shakib Al Hasan, Afif Hossain Dhrubo, Mosaddek Hossain Saikat, Yasir Ali Rabbi, Sheikh Mehedi, Nasum Ahmed, Shohidul Islam, Mustafizur Rahman, Nurul Hasan Sohan, Mohammad Saifuddin and Shoriful Islam.

Mahmudul Hasan Joy and Khaled Ahmed have been excluded from the ODI setup. Mosaddek Hossain found his way into the shorter format squads too. Shoriful Islam was only included in the white-ball formats while Taskin Ahmed has been left out of the T20I series.



Milan regain Serie A supremacy

REUTERS, Sassuolo

AC Milan clinched their first Italian Serie A title in 11 years after earning a 3-0 final-day victory at Sassuolo on Sunday, with a double from Olivier Giroud and one from Franck Kessie sealing the Scudetto in style.

Stefano Pioli's side came into the final round of fixtures knowing a point would be enough for them to finish top ahead of rivals Inter Milan, but after Giroud squeezed the ball home in the 17th minute, a 19th Serie A title never looked in doubt.

Frenckman Giroud stabbed home a second in the 32nd minute after further fine work from Rafael Leao to put Pioli's men on course for the trophy, without needing to be concerned with how Inter were getting on back at their shared San Siro stadium.

There was no relenting from Milan as Kessie slotted home a third four minutes later to effectively put the game, and title race, to bed before halftime.

In-form Jabeur exits French Open

AGENCIES

Tunisian Ons Jabeur became the first major casualty on the opening day of the French Open on Sunday when the in-form sixth seed crashed out with a 3-6, 7-6(4), 7-5 loss to Poland's Magda Linette.

Jabeur, seen as one of the big threats to world number one Iga Swiatek at the claycourt Grand Slam, came to Paris at a career-high ranking and with a tour-leading 17 wins on the surface this season.

Former French Open champion Garbine Muguruza was knocked out in the first round on Sunday, losing 2-6, 6-3, 6-4 to Estonia's Kaia Kanepi, the oldest woman in the tournament.

Twice French Open finalist Dominic Thiem crashed out of the tournament in the first round on Sunday, losing in straight sets to Bolivian world number 87 Hugo Dellien.

Austrian Thiem, who has failed to win a match at any of the tournaments he has played since his wrist injury comeback in March, made 42 unforced errors as his once dominant claycourt game deserted him.

City storm back to win Premier League title

AFP, Manchester

Manchester City won the Premier League for the fourth time in five seasons after a pulsating title race reached a dramatic conclusion as the champions staged an incredible comeback from two goals down to beat Aston Villa 3-2 on Sunday.

Pep Guardiola's side were teetering on the brink of blowing the title after falling 2-0 behind midway through the second half at the Etihad Stadium.

But Ilkay Gundogan sparked an astonishing City revival as the German midfielder reduced the deficit before Rodri grabbed the equaliser.

Gundogan turned in City's third goal in the space of five minutes in the 81st minute, triggering wild celebrations and rendering second-placed Liverpool's 3-1 victory against Wolves irrelevant.

City finished with 93 points, one ahead of Liverpool as they ended their rivals' hopes of winning an unprecedented quadruple.

On a breathtaking final day, Burnley were relegated as Leeds beat the drop, while Tottenham qualified for the Champions League at the expense of their north London rivals Arsenal.

It was City who hogged the spotlight on a day their fans, who spilled onto the pitch in delight, will never forget.

Guardiola's men can rightly be called a dynasty after joining Manchester United as the only clubs in the Premier League era to have won four titles in five seasons, with Alex Ferguson's teams doing it on three



separate occasions.

The eighth league title in City's history is Guardiola's ninth major trophy since arriving at the club in 2016.

"It was an unbelievable game," Gundogan said.

"It was about getting that goal and then the momentum was on our side. These are the days you look back to." Once again, City saved the best until last as they edged Liverpool out on the final day of the season for the second time after beating

them to the finish line in 2019.

It was 10 years since Sergio Aguerro's famous last-second goal against QPR sealed City's first title since 1968 and this jaw-dropping success was almost as unlikely.