

‘I hope to keep going’

REUTERS, Paris

Spain's Rafael Nadal will look to continue his remarkable career after crushing Norway's Casper Ruud 6-3, 6-3, 6-0 on Sunday to lift a record-extending 14th French Open, saying despite injury concerns he would battle on.

The Spaniard, the world's best ever claycourt player, won 11 games in a row to cruise through the second and third sets to take his tally to an all-time best 22 men's Grand Slam titles, two more than rivals Swiss Roger Federer and world number one Novak Djokovic of Serbia.

"I don't know what can happen in the future. I will keep fighting to try to keep going," he told the crowd at Court Philippe Chatrier.

"For me it is incredible to play here with an amazing support from you to me." Nadal found little resistance as Ruud, the world number eight, was too busy battling to hang on for dear life.

Thundering groundstrokes moved the Norwegian across the baseline as the Spaniard gave his opponent no chance. "For me personally it is very difficult to describe the feelings that I have," Nadal said.

"It's something that I for sure never believed, to be here at 36, being competitive again, playing in the most important court of my career one more final."

At the final in January's Australian Open, Nadal, who turned 36 on Friday, came from two sets down to beat Daniil Medvedev and bag a second title there.

A couple of months earlier he was even considering retiring after a foot problem that has troubled him throughout his career resurfaced, forcing him to miss much of the 2021 season including Wimbledon, the Olympics and the U.S. Open.

He arrived in Paris with his own doctor to get through the tournament despite the injury.

"Especially in the very tough moments we went through in terms of injuries, if you don't have great support from the team nothing of this would happen because I would have retired much before," Nadal added.



Spain's Rafael Nadal poses with the French Open trophy after beating Norway's Casper Ruud in straight sets in the men's singles final at the Court Philippe-Chatrier in Paris on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

‘It’s not easy to fill the shoes of Mushy bhai’

Yasir Ali Chowdhury has shown great potential in his fledgling Test career and the right-hander is expected to play a big role in Bangladesh's middle-order on the tour of the West Indies as he fills a vacancy left by the absence of the experienced Mushfiqur Rahim. The 26-year-old, who will travel to the Caribbean today, spoke to The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin before boarding a flight, discussing his plans and some other topics during an exclusive interview. The excerpts are below:

The Daily Star (TDS): The upcoming Test series in the West Indies is surely going to be a crucial tour for you.
Yasir Ali (YA): It will not only be important for me, but for the entire team. We are desperate to perform well in the longest format of the game and we know it will be challenging for us as a unit. But I am confident of giving my best and contributing to the team's success.

DS: In the absence of the experienced Mushfiqur Rahim, head coach Russell Domingo sees you as a bright prospect in the middle-order. What are your thoughts on your batting order?
YA: It is a big change in the Test side because I will be playing in place of Mushfiqur. It's not easy to fill the shoes of someone like Mushy bhai because there are high expectations from everyone. I also have my own expectations, which I want to fulfil. At the moment, I am not in a position to bat wherever I want. I have to play according to the demands of the team management. But I may get a chance to bat up the order and it would be great if I could utilise the opportunity. Coach [Russell Domingo] told me to prepare mentally.



DS: You had some good starts in your young career, showing good technique and temperament. Do you think you are one big knock away from that kick-start in international cricket?
YA: Everyone wants to kick-start their international cricket and I am looking forward to it and I will be trying to prove my worth in the tough Windies conditions. It will be a big boost for me as a batter because a big knock always gives you confidence moving forward. I just want to adapt and adjust initially and try to play according to the merits of the situation.

DS: Caribbean conditions and the seam-friendly tracks have always been challenging for Bangladesh, especially in

the Test format. Are there any specific areas you are working on as a batter?
YA: I had a chat with Jamie Siddons and he gave me a brief idea about the venue for our games in Antigua. He said that it is expected to be a slow and low surface. What he said is that the old ball can prove to be tricky for us compared to the new ball. So I worked accordingly. The old ball swings a lot and normally in the West Indies they use Duke balls, not Kookaburra balls. These are small things that could prove crucial in the Caribbean.

DS: What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think about West Indies?
YA: The first thing that came to my mind is that I had to carry drinks for six games in West Indies during my Under-19 days back in 2013. The difference is that I am expected to play game this time around. I am keen to perform and give my best. I have the determination that I will try to make it count whenever I play in the West Indies. Another thing that comes to my mind when I think about West Indies is Brian Lara. I used to be a huge Lara fan since my childhood and I am excited to play a Test match in the West Indies.

Tamim wants show of patience and trust

SPORTS REPORTER

England's Joe Root came off a match-winning innings yesterday, having scaled the 10,000-run mark in his Test career during an incredible unbeaten 115 in the fourth innings against New Zealand.

England have won only one of their last 17 Tests under Root's captaincy and he had said that captaincy had taken a toll on him. Even for someone with Root's mental resilience, bad results took a toll and, having stepped down from his role, he appeared to be more relaxed individual. But the English team has the skill and mental sharpness needed for Tests ingrained. What toll does it take on a captain of a Bangladesh Test team?

Frankly, that is up for debate. But in terms of the mental resilience that England have forged over many, many years, Bangladesh's Test culture is still in its infancy. Thus the pressure on Mominul Haque, who stepped down to focus on his batting, must have been difficult, even if you count out the pressure put on him.

Former England captain Nasser Hussain remarked on some of the things he heard regarding Root's tenure, especially difficulties both personal and team-oriented, that Root had to face during the pandemic. Mominul too faced all those difficulties, but his story has not yet been told.

Shakib was handed the captaincy following Mominul's decision but questions remain how he



will handle his own availability, having skipped quite a few series in recent times.

While speaking at an event yesterday at the Robi Corporate Office, Bangladesh ODI captain Tamim Iqbal too saw the challenges of captaining the Test side as 'difficult'.

"I played under him twice, when he was captain in early 2011 and then again the last time he was captain. It's not rocket science. We all know that Shakib has a very good cricketing brain and I am sure captaining the Test team is not easy since few result come in our favour in this format," Tamim, who has joined the leading digital service provider, Robi, as its brand ambassadors for the next two years..

"But as I always said when I was the captain: 'you need to give me a lot of time'. The same goes for Shakib. You need to give him lot of time. You cannot be impatient because this is one format that we are not very strong in," he said.

"With his leadership, planning and everything else alongside support from all of us, maybe we will become a good Test team in two years three years," he added.

Shakib garners attention and praise and it will likely mean the board will have more patience with him but there has already been talk about his unavailability for the tour of Zimbabwe which comes after the West Indies series.

"There are no Tests in Zimbabwe, as far as I know, only ODIs and T20s," Tamim said, thus implying Shakib's unavailability will not be an issue.

Stokes hails ‘Mr Dependable’ Root

AFP, LONDON

Joe Root was hailed as England's "Mr Dependable" by new captain Ben Stokes after his predecessor's unbeaten century helped launch the all-rounder's reign with a five-wicket win over New Zealand in the first Test at Lord's on Sunday.

Root made 115 not out as England chased down a target of 277 with wicketkeeper Ben Foakes (32 not out) providing excellent support in an unbroken partnership of 120.

Victory, achieved with more than a day to spare, saw England to just their second win in 18 Tests.

When Root completed his 26th century at this level he became the only player to have scored 10,000 runs within ten years of his Test debut.

The Yorkshireman was also only the second Englishman to do so and the joint-youngest from any country to achieve the feat, equalling retired former England captain Alastair Cook's record of 31 years 157 days.

"The game ebbed and flowed throughout the whole time," said Stokes at the presentation ceremony.

"No-one ever really had the upper hand at any stage and I thought the way we handled the pressure in the fourth innings to chase down 270 on a pretty difficult wicket was fantastic.

"And obviously 'Mr Dependable', Joe Root, stood up. Scoring and 10,000 runs -- what a player and what a man."

The New Zealand-born Stokes, brought up in Cumbria, northwest England, added: "Regardless of being captain, the first Test match of the summer has always got a buzz about it, but obviously it was a special week. "To come away with the win obviously

India legend Sunil Gavaskar in 1987 was the first player to get to the mark and since then Allan Border, Steve Waugh, Brian Lara, Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Ricky Ponting, Jacques Kallis, Mahela Jayawardena, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Kumar Sangakkara, Alastair Cook, Yonis Khan and now Joe Root have reached the milestone.

makes it even better."

Root stood down as England's Test captain after five years at the helm and a record 64 games in charge following a 1-0 series loss in the Caribbean earlier this year that came hot on the heels of a convincing 4-0 Ashes defeat.

England came into this match bottom of the World Test Championship table but are

now 1-0 up in a three-game series against title-holders New Zealand heading into Friday's second match at Trent Bridge.

For Root, playing a key role in a win was more important than any personal milestones.

"Obviously it feels fantastic," he said. "More than anything, first of all, for us to have won this Test match after such a long time is the greatest feeling of all.

"It's been a tough road for everyone but the way everyone has gone about it has been so enjoyable...I love batting and I just want to keep batting for as long as I can, and score as many runs as I can, to help us win as many Test matches as we can."

Root, a close friend of Stokes since they played youth cricket together, added: "I couldn't wish for a better person to be leading this team."

Stokes went on to make 54 and share a partnership of 90 with Root.

"The game ebbed and flowed the whole time," said New Zealand captain Kane Williamson. The Black Caps skipper, himself one of the world's leading batsmen, hailed Root's century as an "incredible innings".

"You recognise the quality of the player and his longevity as a world-class player," he added.

