

Monfils ruled out of US Open

REUTERS

Gael Monfils has been ruled out of the U.S. Open due to a foot injury the Frenchman suffered last week in Montreal, the world number 22 said on Wednesday.

The 35-year-old, who reached a career-high ranking of sixth in 2016, returned to the Tour last week for the first time since May after undergoing a small operation for a right foot injury.

He won two matches at the Canadian Masters last week before his injury problems resurfaced against Britain's Jack Draper and he was forced to retire mid-match.

Monfils, who reached the semi-finals of the 2016 U.S. Open, flew back to Europe and said medical examinations have shown that he would not be able to participate at the year's final Grand Slam, the main draw of which starts on Aug. 29.

"I am forced to undergo a new period of treatment before being able to resume tournaments," he said on Twitter.

India test for improved Zimbabwe

AFP, Harare

Transformed Zimbabwe face their biggest challenge since Dave Houghton became coach two months ago when they host India in a series of three one-day internationals, starting on Thursday.

Although several stars, including batters Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, are being rested ahead of the Asia Cup in the UAE this month, the tourists are expected to win all three matches in Harare.

India are placed third behind leaders New Zealand and England in the ODI rankings, 10 places above Zimbabwe.

Under the guidance of 64-year-old former batting star Houghton, the southern Africa nation have won nine of 11 ODI and Twenty20 internationals.

Higher-ranked Bangladesh were expected to burst the bubble, but suffered shock 2-1 losses in both T20 and ODI series.

Pakistan-born batsman Sikandar Raza, whose childhood dream to be a fighter pilot was dashed by an eyesight glitch, played a key role in the ODI series with successive centuries.

"He is a very good player who has been representing Zimbabwe with distinction for a long time," said India vice-captain Shikhar Dhawan.

"Sikandar is a quality cricketer with bat and ball. I am sure our bowlers will come up with nice plans against him."



Captains of the eight teams representing eight divisions to compete in the 12th National Women's Cricket League, which is scheduled to kick off at two venues of Sylhet today, pose for a photograph with the trophy at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday. The league, which will be held in T20 format, will end on August 27 following round-robin format matches.

PHOTO: BCB/FIROZ AHMED

NEW FTP POSES ‘huge challenge’

SPORTS REPORTER

While it came as good news that Bangladesh will be playing a significant number of matches in the new Future Tours Programme (FTP) announced by the International Cricket Council (ICC) for the 2023-27 period, it will also be a huge challenge for the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to prepare accordingly.

According to the next FTP, all 12 Test teams will take part in 777 international games in the span of four years, where Bangladesh are set to play more than 34 Tests, 57 ODIs and 57 T20Is, apart from the global events during this period.

For the first time since 2003, the Tigers will travel to Australia for a bilateral series, in which they will partake in a two-match Test series, slated for 2027. Bangladesh will feature in 150 international bilateral matches -- the most by a team during the new cycle, starting from May, 2023. During this period, the Tigers will play 59 ODIs, which is the most by any team in the new FTP.

With a busy and challenging schedule in the coming years, does the Bangladesh think-tank have enough resources, when it comes to chalk out a long-term plan, for the coming days?

Bangladesh's pipeline has always remained an area of concern for the team management over the years where the selectors had to face hard times in forming a squad before every series.

The lack of competitiveness within the team had forced the selectors to return to players who were dropped from the

national side due to dismal performances. It is not that those players have performed exceptionally elsewhere to merit a call-up but simply due to a lack of competition, the selectors were forced to walk backwards.

"Obviously it's a positive that we will be playing a significant number of matches in the new FTP, but the fact is that it is also going to be a huge challenge for us," chairman of the BCB's cricket operations committee, Jalal Yunus, told The Daily Star yesterday.



"Many may feel the numbers are quite high to be honest, but at the same time it also prompts us to prepare a pool of cricketers for the upcoming busy schedule.

"Since we will be playing a lot of matches across all formats, our plan is to prepare players for specific formats. It will help us to get more specialist players for the various formats and think for a long-term goal," Yunus continued.

"We really want to become a good Test

unit and at the same time, we want our T20I performances to improve as well. We have the Bangladesh Tigers, where the players outside the national team are getting a platform to improve their skills. And at the same time, we want to conduct skill training camps throughout the year."

Injury is also another big concern for the Bangladesh team management and according to Yunus, the board is planning to form an injury-management unit that will work throughout the year to assist

Highlights

- Bangladesh will play the most number of matches in next cycle of FTP from 2023-2027.
- The Tigers are scheduled to play 34 Tests, 59 ODIs and 57 T20Is.
- Bangladesh will play (21) the most number of matches against Ireland in the cycle with two Tests, nine ODIs and 10 T20Is scheduled against them.
- Bangladesh will be playing all other full members of the International Cricket Council (ICC) in the next cycle.

players' rehabilitation.

"We have a plan to create an injury management unit for the national team. And since we are going to have a busy schedule, there are chances of more injuries. We would like to have a specialist physio from abroad who will work in Bangladesh throughout the year and help manage the injuries quickly, according to the demand of the team management," Yunus concluded.

Archers settle for a silver, two bronzes

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh archers won one silver and two bronze medals at the 5th Islamic Solidarity Games in Konya yesterday.

Bangladesh compound women's team had earlier confirmed silver medal by qualifying for the final but the team of Roksana Akter, Shamoli Roy and Puspita Zaman offered little challenge to hosts Turkiye, as the favourites on paper easily handed a 229-222 defeat to Bangladesh in the final match.



In the men's recurve team event, Bangladesh -- comprising Sagor Islam, Hakim Ahmed Rubel and Ruman Sana -- beat Saudi Arabia 6-0 in set points in the bronze-medal decider after suffering a 6-2 defeat against hosts Turkiya in the semifinals.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh women's recurve team -- featuring Nasir Akter, Beauty Roy and Diya Siddique -- beat Uzbekistan 6-2 in set points to win bronze. Earlier, the women's team faced an upset against Malaysia.

Jacobs storms to Euro 100m crown

AFP, Munich

Olympic champion Marcell Jacobs put an injury-ravaged season behind him to storm to gold in the 100m gold in the European Athletics Championships in Munich on Tuesday.

Jacobs, who was world indoor 60m champion in Belgrade in March, but withdrew before the semi-finals of the 100m at last month's world championships in Oregon, clocked a championship record-equalling time of 9.95 seconds.

Defending champion Zharnel Hughes claimed silver in 9.99sec with another Briton, Jeremiah Azu, taking bronze in 10.13.

"This was a difficult season with problems, with injury," said the 27-year-old Italian, who has been beset by leg injuries and who competed with a



heavily-strapped left calf in Munich.

"My leg is not good and I am not happy about how the race went technically, there were some problems.

"But I am over the moon with the gold medal. After Olympic gold, I've now got the European gold. I've got to get the world championship gold now."

Ronaldo blasts ‘lies’ over Man Utd future

AFP, London

Cristiano Ronaldo has hit out at the "lies" surrounding reports about his future at Manchester United.

The Portugal forward missed United's pre-season tour to Thailand and Australia due to personal reasons as speculation swirled over whether he would be leaving Old Trafford.

It has been reported Ronaldo wants to play Champions League football, but United maintain the 37-year-old is not for sale and remains an integral part of the plans of new boss Erik ten Hag.

The former Real Madrid star played the full 90 minutes of United's 4-0 defeat at Brentford on Saturday, which left them bottom of the Premier League.

In a reply to a fan account on Instagram that referred to a report linking the United frontman to Atletico Madrid, Ronaldo said fans would "know the truth" in a couple of weeks, adding: "The media is telling lies."

"I have a notebook and in the last few months of the 100 news I made, only five

were right. Imagine how it is. Stick with that tip."

Manchester United will seek to kickstart their Premier League campaign when they host fierce rivals Liverpool on Monday.

United's owners, the Glazer family, have come under fire following the team's terrible start.

Former United defender Gary Neville has warned the club could finish in the bottom half of the Premier League if they do not address their "horror story" recruitment strategy.

Manchester United supporters' group The 1958 is planning a protest march outside Old Trafford against the club's owners ahead of the Liverpool match.

In a statement the group said the ownership was "systematically starving and killing the greatest football institution in world football, for greed".

"We appreciate emotions are running high," it added. "We must keep it legal, we must keep it peaceful.... Bring the heat, bring the noise, bring the passion. Let's show the Glazer family that this time it will not blow over."



South Africa pacer Anrich Nortje celebrates the dismissal of England captain Ben Stokes during the opening day of the first Test at Lord's cricket ground in London on Wednesday. Nortje took three wickets as the hosts were reduced to 116 for six before rain stopped play. PHOTO: BCB