

## ‘Crazy party’ caps West Ham’s historic night

REUTERS, Prague

Jarrod Bowen ensured the biggest game of his career had a fairytale finish as he snatched a 90th minute winner to kick off a “crazy” party as West Ham United clinched their first major European trophy in 58 years.

A tense Europa Conference League final against Fiorentina at Prague’s Eden Arena looked like it was heading to extra time when Bowen latched onto a through ball and then outpaced the defenders before firing into the net to secure a 2-1 win.

“I’m so buzzing. We’re just going to go mad I think. I’m not going to put a filter on it. I’m not going to give a responsible answer. This party tonight is going to be crazy,” he told reporters.

“There was one more chance and we won it,” he added to BT Sport.

“We had a dream, we haven’t had the best season, myself included, but to give these fans this moment, I’m over the moon. Never (have I felt like this in my life). This is the biggest game of my career. The emotion, there was time for one more chance. I’m just so happy.”

The winning goal, after Fiorentina had dominated possession for large portions of the game, sent West Ham manager David Moyes racing down the touchline in celebration.

## Players guaranteed \$30k at Women’s WC

AFP, Lausanne

Every player at next month’s Women’s World Cup is guaranteed to earn at least \$30,000, FIFA says, with the winners taking home \$270,000.

Women’s football is at an all-time high but there have been concerns from players that its growing popularity is not reflected in what they earn, especially compared to men.

The World Cup in Australia and New Zealand kicks off on July 20 and when it does players from the 32 teams are guaranteed at least \$30,000.

That amount increases depending on how far teams go in the tournament, which concludes on August 20.

The average club salary of women players is \$14,000, according to FIFA, a fraction of what their counterparts in men’s football earn.

FIFA says the ring-fencing of money for players is a first and its investment is three times what it was at the Women’s World Cup in France four years ago.

“We have taken steps towards greater gender equity in our game at its highest levels,” the global players’ union FIFPro welcomed the move.

“The legacy of this action is by the players, for the players, of both today and tomorrow.”

## Djokovic faces Alcaraz in era-defining duel

AFP, Paris

Having battled through 59 encounters with Rafael Nadal over 16 years of epic rivalry, Novak Djokovic faces the Spanish legend’s apparent heir Carlos Alcaraz at the French Open in a match laced with era-defining potential.

Djokovic will be playing a 45th Grand Slam semifinal on Friday; for Alcaraz, it will be just his second.

With Roger Federer retired and Nadal nursing a hip injury until next year, 36-year-old Djokovic has the responsibility of preserving the legacy of the ‘Big Three’.

“It’s definitely the biggest challenge for me,” said Djokovic, chasing a third French Open title and men’s record 23rd Slam which would break the tie he currently shares with Nadal.

Friday’s showpiece will be the first time Djokovic and Alcaraz have met at a Grand Slam and only the second time in their careers.

Alcaraz, then still 19, defeated the Serb from a set down in the semifinals of the Madrid Open last year, a day after he had knocked out Nadal on the faster, higher altitude courts of the Spanish capital.

Star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan started fitness training at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The Bangladesh Test and T20I skipper has been nursing a finger injury, picked up during the Tigers’ Ireland series last month which also rendered him unavailable for the only Test against Afghanistan starting next week. The 36-year-old is expected to be fit for the second part of the Afghanistan series, including three ODIs and two T20Is next month but the champion cricketer, as mentioned by the Bangladesh Cricket Board chief physician Dr. Debashish Chowdhury, “would need to work hard on his fitness” and that the “X-Ray result of his injury was satisfactory.”

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



## Mushfik takes his cue from pacers’ resurgence

SPORTS REPORTER

20-year-old Mushfik Hasan’s call-up to the national squad for the one-off Test against Afghanistan was a bit surprising, but those who can recall his recent domestic performances will know the right-arm pacer has a knack for troubling batters of calibre. Pacers across the country were terrorising batters in the last National Cricket League but Mushfik’s performances appeared to have a statement of intent about them.



**“I have learnt from watching him[ Shakib]. On the field, he was instructing me about what to do. Whatever I was asking him, he answered according to the situation,” Mushfik Hasan said.**

He rattled Tamim Iqbal’s stumps with a venomous delivery during one NCL game, bringing himself to the limelight. He would then bring down Dhaka Division almost single-handedly, picking up eight wickets in a single innings for 73 runs. His haul

of 25 wickets across six games saw him in the top bracket of the wicket-takers’ list that season.

Pace, bounce and a little bit of movement worked in his favour. He also bagged 16 wickets in four Bangladesh Cricket League matches last season, ending third in the wicket-takers’ list.

Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is not short of awareness and the Test captain, who will be missing the Afghanistan Test due to a finger injury, showed up to training on Thursday and attended the session from the beginning.

When young Mushfik got out of the dressing room, he approached Shakib first to shake his hand, having played alongside the all-rounder in the recent Dhaka Premier

League for Mohammedan. The player informed during a press conference later that Shakib congratulated him and said ‘carry on Mushfik’. He also talked about his DPL experience and Shakib’s impact, having bagged 10 wickets this season for Mohammedan.

“I have learnt from watching him. On the field, he was instructing me about what to do. Whatever I was asking him, he answered according to the situation,” he added.

He identified that his first-class performances had possibly landed him a place in the Test squad and maintained that his ‘line, length, accuracy and pace’ were his key mechanisms.

In the NCL, he left his captain Akbar Ali impressed with contributions to a trophy-winning side. Akbar had told The Daily Star after the win that the way Mushfik became the main attacking threat was a big boost to Rangpur Division.

Mushfik also played the recent four-day series against West Indies A in Sylhet and felt he needed to maintain his process.

“I played the A team matches the same way I played NCL and BCL. If I get into the playing eleven for the national side, I will play the same way.”

Mushfik, Ebadot Hossain and Taskin Ahmed bowled in the nets of the main Sher-e-Bangla ground yesterday and appeared to have great rapport with the rest of the pacers. It was the other faster bowlers inspiring the young gun. “I get inspired by Bangladesh’s pacers. They are helping me out a lot. They work very hard and it’s inspiring,” he said, adding that he also follows South Africa pacer Kagiso Rabada.

The youngster appears to be taking his cue from the rest and whether he makes the final eleven or not, being a part of the process will help him add to Bangladesh’s pace strength. His coaches have told him ‘do what is natural.’ Pace and aggression is his natural instinct as Mushfik waits in the wings.

## Smith hits landmark hundred at the Oval

AGENCIES

Mohammed Siraj led an India fight back as they finally saw the back of Australia centurions Travis Head and Steve Smith on Thursday’s second day of the World Test Championship final at the Oval.

India eventually dismissed Australia for 469 after lunch.

After Head’s hundred on the opening day, Smith, who relishes English conditions, wasted little time in reaching his hundred, taking just two more balls in Thursday’s opening over to reach the landmark by clipping successive Siraj deliveries for legside fours.

The 34-year-old batter joined compatriot Steve



Waugh in having scored seven Test hundreds in England. Among non-England batter, only Australia great Don Bradman, with 11 centuries, has scored more.

It was also Smith’s third Test century at The Oval and 31st in total, leaving him 12th on the all-time list.

While the debate continues to rage on who among Virat Kohli and Smith is the best batter in the world and will likely continue to be argued for many years to come, Kohli has no doubt it’s the Australian that stands out from the rest.

“When it comes to Test cricket, I don’t think anyone is close to him in this generation,” Kohli told the ICC.

“His record speaks for itself. To average almost 60 over a span of 85 or 90 games is unbelievable. He is the best Test player of our generation, there is no doubt about it.”

## Pakistan cleared for SAFF participation

AGENCIES

The Indian government has cleared the Pakistan football team’s participation in the SAFF Championship in Bengaluru from June 21 to July 4, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said on Thursday.

AIFF secretary general Shaji Prabhakaran said India has “done its part” by clearing Pakistan’s participation in the eight-nation regional tournament and it’s now up to the neighbouring country to complete the formalities.

“Yes, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs and Sports Ministry all have cleared (Pakistan’s participation),” Prabhakaran told PTL.

“We have done our part. We welcome them (Pakistan). All the participating countries have got visa clearance. They have to do their part of the visa formalities.”

India and Pakistan are in the same group and they face each other on June 21 in their campaign opener.

This is the first time in five years that the two neighbouring countries would be playing against each other.



UEFA unveiled a unique display in the Ataturk Olympic Stadium in Istanbul, highlighting their green initiative by using recycled boxes to recreate some of the most iconic stills from past Champions League finals, including Gareth Bale’s stunning overhead kick against Liverpool in Kyiv, Lionel Messi kissing his boot after scoring in Rome, Cristiano Ronaldo’s header against Chelsea in Moscow and Steven Gerrard celebrating after completing Liverpool’s miracle comeback in Istanbul. As the city gears up for Saturday’s final, UEFA yesterday also opened the Champions Festival, a build-up to the final which will feature various forms of entertainment and have the glittering prize on display.