

T SPORTS

FIFA Women's World Cup
Japan vs Spain
Live from 1:00 pm
Canada vs Australia

SONY SPORTS 5

The Ashes
England vs Australia
5th Test, Day 5
Live from 4:00 pm

STAR SPORTS 3

Lanka Premier League
Galle vs Dambulla
Live from 3:30 pm
Kandy vs Colombo
Live from 8:00 pm

History-maker Ramhim aware of the challenge

ANISUR RAHMAN

Ramhim Lian Bawm fell in love with table tennis in his childhood, after watching a game on television. That love dragged him towards the game some eight years back, eventually seeing him becoming the first indigenous player to lift the crown in men's singles event of the National Table Tennis Championships on Saturday.

In doing so, the 18-year-old also became the only player in the country to win both boys' and men's singles titles in the national meet while also playing a key role behind Chattogram becoming the champions in men's team event.

"I am proud of being an indigenous table tennis player and really happy after becoming champion," Ramhim told The Daily Star over the phone from Chattogram yesterday, with his voice seemingly filled with joy.

Son of a priest in remote Bandarban, Ramhim had gone to great lengths to come to this stage since Quantum Foundation and Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation (BTTF) laid the foundation in 2012 to groom indigenous paddlers in the hilly district.

"Table tennis started at the Quantum Foundation in 2012 with the help of the federation and I started playing the game in 2015 but could not play continuously due to my exams. In 2016, I trained under a Korean coach from the federation and gradually developed more interest in the game. When I started, I never thought I would come this far, I just stuck to the game," said Ramhim, who beat two-time champion Mohtasim Ahmed Hridoy in the semifinal on way winning the senior championship.

Ramhim, along with his teammates at the Quantum Foundation, tried to participate in every national-level competition such as the junior championships and school and madrasa sports events before the BTTF picked him and others for a long-term training in Dhaka.

"Everyone wants to become a champion but in the end, the one who works hard and makes sacrifices ends on top. I took preparation for two years for the national championships, which is why I succeeded. I want to thank all federation officials who gave me support in the long-term training camp," said Ramhim, who has gained experience by representing Bangladesh in a number of international junior and senior competitions.

The young paddler is determined not to disappear from the scene after becoming champion.

"It is more challenging to defend the title than winning it and I know I have to work hard to defend it," he said.

"The federation is undoubtedly doing its best to provide the facilities but we need advanced training under a good coach and also practice partners if we want to go beyond the boundaries," Ramhim said. "As we are performing well in Junior South Asian Table Tennis Championships where we have won gold and bronze, we believe we can perform well in the South Asian Games in near future."

As there are hardly any financial benefits from playing table tennis, Ramhim urged sponsors and the government to come forward to help paddlers financially so that they can have a secured future.



Veteran batter Mahmudullah Riyad continued his individual training at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, hoping to get a ticket for next month's Asia Cup. With the fitness camp scheduled to start today, there is a high chance that Mahmudullah might make the cut.



"You will notice players from all three formats, from [Bangla] Tigers and HP, training together. From there we picked the 32-member squad. We, however, won't reveal it but name the 21-22-member squad later."

Chief selector
Minhajul Abedin.

PHOTO: FROZ AHMED

Critical decisions due before final call

SPORTS REPORTER

As the fitness camp for the 32-member squad gets underway at the Sher-e-Bangla National stadium in Mirpur today, Bangladesh selectors will also enter the critical step to finalise squad for the upcoming Asia Cup and World Cup this year.

It will be interesting to see whether the criteria of the team-selection would eventually boil down to personal preferences, team combination or the need of experience. The selectors are thus in for an anxious ride in prioritising their agendas.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) seems to have a clear vision when it comes to having a plan with or without Bangladesh ODI captain Tamim Iqbal for the coming days. However, the team management is bound to struggle in finding a replacement for the experienced left-hander.

Apart from Tamim, however, few names are already creating a lot of interest: the possibility of the return of experienced Mahmudullah Riyad or Soumya Sarkar – which according to many is because of Tigers head coach Chandika Hathurusingha possessing a soft spot for the elegant stroke-maker.

Soumya was a major find of Hathurusingha during his first stint, where the left-hander made his mark with some blistering batting.

However, things have changed a lot over the years. Soumya, who last played an ODI back in 2021, was dropped due to his prolonged poor run of form with the bat. The team management had also tried to use Soumya as a seaming all-rounder but the 30-year-old could not turn the tide.

Soumya's latest inclusion in the ACC Emerging Asia

Cup also raised plenty of eye brows as he failed to make impact while batting at number six position. It remains to be seen whether team management would go for a short-term solution for the mega event by bestowing the role of a finisher to Soumya.

It was learned that some part of the team management and board officials are not fully convinced over the potential inclusion of Soumya in the national team, considering his abysmal form for around the past year. The talks over the inclusion of Riyad for the mega events based on his wealth of experience, on the other hand, has been widely discussed. At the same time, reservations exist within the team management over his fitness and form.

The 37-year-old, who was dropped since the England series in March this year, will feature in the preliminary camp from today. The topic of Riyad will be in midst before the selectors announce a 22-23-member squad later next week.

According to sources, it is still a 50-50 chance for Riyad to make the cut in the Tigers final squad for the upcoming events.

Tamim Iqbal, meanwhile, is rested for a week after the cricketer was administered a few injections as he currently remains under observation in the UK.

The 34-year-old is then expected to start his rehabilitation. According to sources, Tamim may take another dose of injection as part of his treatment process.

Such injections generally help players to manage pain within three months but pain may occur before the time frame. In that case, Tamim's call will remain as the final.

BFF special committee finally puts forth findings

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) special committee, which further investigated the financial irregularities involving FIFA funds, finally submitted its report to the BFF president Kazi Salahuddin yesterday.

The investigative committee, led by BFF vice-president Kazi Nabil Ahmed, took around three-and-a-half months to put forward findings after FIFA on April 14 banned the then BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag, citing use of falsified documents to justify payments made by BFF with FIFA funds.

The committee, from which two vice-presidents resigned and another did not attend any meeting, had a total of 12 meetings and some of BFF employees were interviewed since its first meeting on May 7. However, the prime accused, Shohag, or any member of BFF executive committee, was not summoned.

"The findings in the report have come through discussion with everyone in the committee, and we are satisfied with the work we did," said Nabil after submitting the report but he refused to disclose their findings.

After receiving the report, Salahuddin informed reporters that he would soon call a meeting of the executive committee to take a decision on the basis of the report and also discuss whether to make it public or not.



PHOTO: AFP

Setting aside camaraderie for the sake of professional rivalry, Vinicius Junior, Raphinha and a plethora of talent showed their prowess in a pre-season clash between Real Madrid and FC Barcelona in Texas yesterday, which ended 3-0 in latter's favour. The result means that Real's wait to beat their eternal rivals in 90 minutes outside Spanish soil will extend beyond 41 years.

Colombia upset Germany

AFP, SYDNEY

Colombia will celebrate their stunning upset victory over Germany at the Women's World Cup on Sunday but have no intention of resting on their laurels, assistant coach Angelo Marsiglia said after the 2-1 win.

Manuela Vanegas scored a last-gasp winner to put the South Americans top of Group H and all but secure their progress to the knockout stage of the tournament.

"We need to give this win to our whole country," said Marsiglia, who was standing in for Nelson Abadia while the head coach served the second match of his ban for a red card he received at the 2022 Copa America tournament.

"After the game, we were overcome by emotions. Emotions were running high but we gathered in a circle on the pitch and we said 'look, let's enjoy this but keep our feet on the ground'. We will go step by step."

Test 'addict' Broad draws curtain while on top

AGENCIES

England great Stuart Broad, self-proclaimed Test "addict", was able to quit on his own terms.

Broad, who became the first England bowler to reach 150 wickets in Ashes contests during the final Ashes Test at The Oval, surprised everyone after stumps on day three on Saturday by revealing his decision to walk away from all forms of cricket at game's end.

The 37-year-old claims he had been contemplating his long-foreshadowed move to the television commentary box for a few weeks, but only broke the news first to England captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum around 8.30pm on the night following day two's action.

He sent Stokes a text message and went to visit his skipper at the team's London hotel to confirm, after 167 Tests as well as 177 limited-overs internationals, his time had finally arrived.

"I walked in, shook his (Stokes's) hand and said, 'that's me, thanks for everything you've done for me'," Broad said.

He admitted of having struggled to break the news to his teammates upon arriving at the ground yesterday morning, especially his former skipper Joe Root with whom he shared a handshake but "couldn't say a word" beyond that.

It is all a far cry from a setback early in his international career when Broad was hit for six sixes in an over by India's Yuvraj Singh during the 2007 World



England great Stuart Broad receives a guard of honour from Australia as he walked out to bat on the fourth day of the fifth and final Ashes Test at The Oval yesterday. With the ball later, however, Broad and company were denied any enthusiasm as the visitors remained on driving seat at stumps, at 135 for naught in reply to 384-run target, after rain stopped play. Will Broad sign off with a bang on his last day in international scene?

PHOTO: AFP

Twenty20 in South Africa.

Broad, who made his name at English county Leicestershire before joining Midlands rivals Nottinghamshire, recovered and became renowned for an ability to turn a game with match-winning bursts – he has taken five or more wickets 20 times in a Test innings.

He took an astounding 8-15 on his

Trent Bridge home ground in Nottingham when, leading the attack in the absence of the injured Anderson, he sparked an Australia collapse to 60 all out during England's 2015 Ashes triumph.

By then he was already a public enemy in Australia for his refusal to leave the crease after edging to slip in an Ashes clash on the same ground two years

earlier, only for umpire Aleem Dar to rule in his favour.

Broad, then on 37, made 65 in a match England won by just 14 runs.

Australia great Glenn McGrath, a childhood hero of Broad's, said his fellow seamer's ability to raise his game when most needed made him a "true champion".

A four-time Ashes winner, Broad, with blond hair and boyish good looks, has been a fierce competitor throughout his career.

That was never more evident when, having been left out of England's tour of the Caribbean last year, he regained his place to flourish again under the 'Bazball' regime of captain Stokes and coach McCullum.

England's leading bowler in the ongoing Ashes series, Broad became just the fifth man to take 600 Test wickets during last week's rain-marred draw in Manchester.

"I am addicted to Test cricket," he said afterwards. "I like the grit and competitive nature of it. It's great to be on that list with some of the greats of the game."

Although not a bowler of express pace, Broad's ability to generate bounce and late movement from a 6 feet 5 inch (1.95 metre) frame has repeatedly troubled the best batters of his generation.

But he said he hoped cricket-lovers would remember him for his will to win, as much as his talent.

"I can't think there'll be too many cricketer fans out there who would think I've slacked off for a moment."