

“There are a lot of players to keep a track on. Trent again did an excellent job. Rico, Cole Palmer, there’s plenty for me to think about.”

England coach Gareth Southgate

Miami to host Copa America final

Next year’s 48th edition of the Copa America, featuring 10 South American nations and six North American teams, will start in Atlanta and end in Miami, organizers said Monday.

South American governing body CONMEBOL said the June 20 opener will be staged at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta with the final on July 14 at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, Florida.

The NFL stadiums, both of which have hosted the Super Bowl, will be among US venues for the special edition of the event, typically held in South America but to be hosted in 2024 by the United States.

“We expect stadiums filled with the passion of the entire American continent for the inauguration and final of an unforgettable CONMEBOL Copa America,” CONMEBOL president Alejandro Dominguez said. “We look forward to the best CONMEBOL Copa America of all time.”

WHAT THEY SAID

Very tough game as expected. But we competed very well like we were expecting. It was a hard fight against Lebanon, who are 79 positions ahead of us in FIFA rankings. We are happy with a point but we have the conviction that we could have gotten something else [a better result] today. That has to be the feeling of everyone -- that we have to believe in ourselves, have a higher ambition and we have to target higher objectives.

Bangladesh coach Javier Cabrera

My target was always that whenever I play, I will be trying to give my 100 percent. Actually, the situation to-day was such that all of us were determined to give more than our 100 percent...It was nice to score the goal. But for me, the more important thing was the effort everybody put in. We knew we might concede any moment but we also knew that we are able to overcome the situation.

Goalscorer Sheikh Morsalin



Bangladesh forward Sheikh Morsalin celebrates with the fans after drilling home a right-footed long-ranger to secure a 1-1 draw against Lebanon in a World Cup Qualifiers fixture at the Bashundhara Kings Arena in Dhaka yesterday. His vital strike in the 72nd minute caused pandemonium in the stands which buzzed at full capacity.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Murad, Shahadat excel before NZ Tests

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national team newcomers Hasan Murad and Shahadat Hossain had good outings while the other members of the Test squad disappointed in the final round of the National Cricket League (NCL) that came to a close on Tuesday.

A total of 10 players out of the 15-member Bangladesh squad for the forthcoming two-Test series against New Zealand played in the final round of the NCL, with Chattogram Division’s Murad and Shahadat standing out.

Left-arm spinner Murad claimed 9-138 while Shahadat made 87 in the first innings in their second-tier match against Rajshahi in Chattogram which ended on Monday with the hosts winning the tie. Nayeem Hasan, who was declared the player of the tournament with 36 wickets in six games, claimed five wickets.

Najmul Hossain Shanto, who will be leading the Tigers in the New Zealand Tests in the absence of injured Shakib Al Hasan, got starts in both of his innings for Rajshahi. He made 31 and 20, respectively, but could not capitalise on the starts.

Veteran Mushfiqur Rahim went out for a duck in Rajshahi’s first innings and could only make 16 before falling to Murad.

Sadman Islam, Zakir Hasan, Nurul Hasan Sohan and Mahmudul Hasan also had unsuspecting outings with the bat for their respective teams while Hasan Mahmud claimed five wickets for Chattogram.

The Test team flew to Sylhet yesterday night ahead of the first Test against the Kiwis, beginning on November 28.

Going back to the action on Tuesday, NCL champions Dhaka, who had sealed the championship in the previous round, played out a draw against Dhaka Metro in a heavily rain-affected first-tier match in Cox’s Bazar yesterday.

In Bogura, Nasum Ahmed’s six-wicket haul catapulted Sylhet Division to a 201-run victory over Rangpur Division in the first-tier.

Rangpur finished fourth and have been relegated from the first tier and will be replaced by second-tier champion Chattogram.

Morsalin threads the needle to salvage draw

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Morsalin reinforced his reputation as the brightest young talent in Bangladesh football after his eye-catching goal helped Bangladesh earn a come-from-behind 1-1 draw against visiting Lebanon in a World Cup Qualifiers match at the Bashundhara Kings Arena in Dhaka yesterday.

Thanks to Morsalin’s fourth international goal in nine matches, Bangladesh eventually left the ground with the first point in two matches. Had the equalizer not materialized, the charges of Javier Cabrera would have likely headed towards a downward spiral after a defensive blunder five minutes prior led to the visitors breaking the deadlock.

Bangladesh revived through Morsalin, who had a great opportunity to win the game with two minutes remaining. The Bashundhara Kings forward hit the side-net with just the goalie to beat after being set up inside the box by Mohammad Sohel Rana, one of the four changes alongside Morsalin introduced by Cabrera following Rakib Hossain and Saad Uddin’s suspension.

Prior to the match, there was some doubt whether the men in red and green could return to their form, evident in the last six months, after a thrashing 7-0 loss to Australia in their World Cup Qualifiers opener. Cabrera’s men appeared unsure at first against superior Lebanon, but they grew in confidence as the match progressed in front of an electrifying crowd.

Lebanon may have had more ball possession in the first half, but Bangladesh created more chances than the side ranked 79 places higher after resisting initial pressure. Forced to try from distance, all of Lebanon’s efforts in the first half were off-target.

Bangladesh’s best chance came in the 45th minute, when Faisal Ahmed Fahim whipped a low cross from the



left wing for Morsalin, who saw his placing shot within the six-yard box fly over the goalpost.

The hosts later dealt a setback when regular goalkeeper Mitul Marma suffered an injury and was replaced by Mehedi Hasan Srabon, who experienced some uncomfortable moments under the post as Lebanon pressed hard from the opening of the second half.

As the game was witnessing more end-to-end action, the pressure got to the Bangladesh defence, resulting in the opening goal in the 68th minute.

Rookie goalie Srabon lived through a nightmare under floodlights as he fumbled in a struggle to hold the ball while defenders failed to clear it. Substitute Majed Osman eventually capitalised, firing home from close range to silence the home fans.

Five minutes later, Morsalin, who received a forward ball from Fahim, raced on the edge of the box from the right flank before unleashing a powerful yet highly accurate shot to pull Bangladesh back into the game.

Lebanon also launched a massive offensive to regain the lead, but Bangladesh stood firm to deny the superior oppositions of all three points.

Although a stalemate, the result is immense for Bangladesh, who showcased fighting spirit and their most promising talent, who rose to prominence during the SAFF Championship by scoring against Maldives and Bhutan and went on to score an equaliser against Afghanistan in a FIFA friendly match.

However, Morsalin was handed a suspension by his club, Bashundhara Kings, following his involvement in an alcohol-related incident on the way back from Maldives after an AFC Cup encounter. He had missed the pre-qualifiers against Maldives as a result and, thus, his latest strike under sheer pressure is bound to work wonders for his evolution.

Stop clocks to be trialed in ODIs, T20Is

AFP, New Delhi

The International Cricket Council on Tuesday said it will trial stop clocks between overs in men’s one-day and T20 internationals in a bid to speed up the game.

The move, approved after a meeting of the ICC board in the Indian city of Ahmedabad, will be put to the test from December to April.

If the bowling team is not ready to bowl the next over within 60 seconds of the previous over being completed, a five-run penalty will be imposed the third time it happens in an innings.

“The clock will be used to regulate the amount of time taken between overs,” the ICC said in a statement.

Slow-over rates in limited over cricket have been a perennial concern and last year the ICC introduced penalties in both men’s and women’s cricket.

Currently, if the fielding team fails to start the final over by the stipulated time, they are docked one fielder from outside the 30-yard circle.

This is in addition to the fines teams have to pay for slow over rates.

Stop clocks are used in other sports including tennis in an effort to speed up games.

The issue of speeding up play in cricket hit the headlines after Sri Lanka’s Angelo Mathews became the first batsman to be dismissed “timed out” in an international match during the just-concluded World Cup.

Mathews was declared out after he failed to take strike within the stipulated time of two minutes during Sri Lanka’s group match against Bangladesh.

Mathews attempted to argue he had a problem with his helmet strap, but the umpires had to uphold the decision when Bangladesh chose not to withdraw their appeal.

BGF to host FIG’s EC meeting today

SPORTS REPORTER

In a bid to strengthen the cooperation and growth of gymnastics in the country, the Bangladesh Gymnastic Federation (BGF) is set to host the International Gymnastic Federation’s (FIG) two-day executive committee meeting at a city hotel on Wednesday.

FIG president Morinari Watanabe of Japan along with other members including Asian Gymnastics Union president Abdulrahman Ben Saad Alshathri of Qatar, African Gymnastics Union (UAG) President Ehab Esawy of Egypt, European Gymnastics (EG) President Farid Gayibov of Azerbaijan, Pan American Gymnastics Union (PAGU) representative Naomi Chicco Valenzo Aoki from Mexico, and Oceania Gymnastics (OG) President Mowbray FCG FGNZ of New Zealand have already arrived in Dhaka for this momentous occasion in which Bangladesh Olympic Association president and Bangladesh Chief of Army General S M Shafuiddin Ahmed will preside over the inaugural event as the chief guest, said a press release yesterday on Tuesday.

“This event marks a special milestone for Bangladesh gymnastics, showcasing our commitment to the sport’s global development and recognition. We are honoured to host this prestigious gathering and look forward to fruitful discussions and collaborations,” stated BGF President Sheikh Bashir Ahmed.

The FIG executive committee meeting in Dhaka is expected to foster international cooperation and contribute to the continued growth of gymnastics on a global scale.

AFP, Leverkusen

A relieved Italy midfielder Davide Frattesi said the European champions will try and “repeat something fantastic” in Germany next year after Monday’s 0-0 draw with Ukraine in Leverkusen secured qualification for Euro 2024.

The result means Italy, who failed to qualify for both the 2018 and 2022 World Cups either side of their Euro 2020 triumph, avoid another embarrassing tournament miss.

The two nations finish level on 14 points behind England in Group C, but Italy have the better head-to-head record having won 2-1 in Milan in September.

“We knew if we were unable to break the deadlock in the first hour, it would become really tough. Ukraine then made it a more physical match,” Frattesi told RAI Sport.

“We were under pressure, but overall it was a good performance. What mattered was that we qualified...”

“We suffered, but it was important to get through. Now we’ll try to repeat something fantastic.”

The final score belied the true nature of the match, with Italy’s high-octane attack and Ukraine’s counter-attacking threat creating several chances for both teams.



Ukraine had a late penalty appeal turned down, despite Italy midfielder Bryan Cristante looking to have made contact with Mykhailo Mudryk’s foot in injury time.

“From my point of view that was a penalty, but again I was not there and it’s only about my emotions,” Ukraine coach Serhiy Rebrov told a post-match press conference.

Italy travelled to Leverkusen knowing they would progress by avoiding defeat,

while Ukraine knew only a win would suffice.

New Italy coach Luciano Spalletti has only been in charge for three months after Roberto Mancini surprisingly left for the Saudi Arabia national team job.

“We had to keep attacking -- but Ukraine proved they are a very good team who gave us a lot of problems,” Spalletti, who led Napoli to their first Serie A title since 1990 last season, said.

Italy will go into either pot three or four

for the tournament draw, which will take place on December 2 in Hamburg.

Spalletti added his team would “have a moment to pat ourselves on the back” before turning their focus to the finals in Germany, the site of their 2006 World Cup triumph.

“Now, the level will step up. Now, the fun begins.”

Midfielder Nicolo Zaniolo said his side’s nervy qualification campaign, which included two losses to England and a draw with North Macedonia, would not dampen their hopes of defending the title.

“We had the right motivation. Italy must go to the Euros not just to take part, but to compete as reigning champions.”

Ukraine can still qualify, but will need to navigate the play-offs in March 2024.

Mudryk was lively down the left for Ukraine and crafted a number of half-chances early, with his side denied by poor finishing.

Italy continued to attack early in the second half but as the game wore on the increasingly nervous Italians sat back, allowing Ukraine more space up front.

Mudryk was always a threat and appeared to have been brought down in the box after contact from Cristante, but the referee waved his team’s desperate pleas for a spot-kick away.