

## ‘A game-breaking spell’

AGENCIES

In his latest YouTube video ‘World Cup 2023: A Reflection’, India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who was on the Indian bench for the final against Australia, dissected the genius of Australia skipper Pat Cummins in that game, referring to his spell as a ‘game-breaking’ phenomenon.

After winning the toss, the Australian skipper sent India in to bat first, a decision that turned out to be a crucial move. Among all the bowlers who completed their 10 overs, Cummins bowled the most economical spell.

Ashwin delved deep into Cummins’ mastermind, dissecting why Indian batters found him challenging to face him. “Cummins as an ODI bowler was struggling for quite some time in the World Cup,” observed Ashwin. “But in the last 4-5 games leading up to the final almost 50% of the balls were cutters.

“And in the final, I don’t know how many people explained on TV, he has a 4:5 field, like an off-spinner – four on the off-side and five on the leg side,” he explained.

The Indian spinner pointed out that Cummins bowled his entire 10 overs without a mid-off. “He bowled only three balls in the 6-meter mark towards the stump line in the entire 10-over spell,” Ashwin emphasised.

“He knocked off crucial wickets in the final. And there were five fielders on the stump line – square leg, midwicket, deep square leg, mid-on, and long leg. He bowled his entire 10 overs without a mid-off. A game-breaking spell by Pat Cummins apart from calling the toss right,” Ashwin added.



**Manchester City striker Erling Haaland became the fastest to 50 Premier League goals when he put his team in front in the first-half with a left-footed finish against Liverpool in a top-of-the-table tussle at the Etihad Stadium yesterday. The 23-year-old achieved the feat in 48 games, smashing Andre Cole's record of reaching fifty goals in 65 games. Liverpool hit back when Trent Alexander-Arnold's fine strike 10 minutes from time salvaged a point for the visitors, meaning City remained a point ahead of the Reds.**

PHOTO: REUTERS/X



## United face ‘mad’ Everton

AFP, London

Erik ten Hag has warned Manchester United to expect a stern test from fired-up Everton on Sunday in the aftermath of their 10-point deduction.

Ten Hag’s side travel to Goodison Park for Everton’s first match since they were plunged into the Premier League relegation zone following the sanction for breaking Premier League profitability and sustainability rules.

Everton are set to appeal against the verdict, with Toffees boss Sean Dyche vowing his players would not be derailed.

United’s trips to Merseyside are always volatile occasions and Ten Hag is well aware that his team will face the wrath of both the Goodison faithful and Dyche’s team.

“It’s always about us, I can see the opposition and I can see they are mad, but then finally it’s about us,” he said on Friday.

“If they are mad and that’s their fuel, we have to match those standards. When we match the standards we have a very good chance to win the game.”

# Ebadot backs fellow quicks to catch Kiwis off-guard

With Bangladesh poised to script a new chapter in the third cycle of the World Test Championship through a two-match home series against New Zealand, the Tigers will remind themselves of their greatest achievement in the format to date – an eight-wicket victory over the Kiwis in their backyard in 2022. Pacer Ebadot Hossain, currently rehabilitating from a knee surgery that forced him out of the World Cup in India, was pivotal in that game in Mount Maunganui. In an interview with *Mazhar Uddin of The Daily Star*, the right-arm quick talked about his injury update, recalled how the Tigers prepared before that Test, and also shared his expertise that could help the Najmul Hossain Shanto-led side in the upcoming series. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:

**The Daily Star (DS):** How’s your recovery coming along?

**Ebadot Hossain (EH):** I’m feeling better. Since it was a big surgery, I had to follow the recovery process very carefully. I’m in my second phase of the rehab process and our physio, Kieron Thomas, is satisfied over my progress so far. Normally it takes nine months to recover fully from such an injury, and as part of the process I was asked by the doctor in the UK to follow up after ninety days from surgery. So, I’ll be UK-bound later this month for further consultation.

**DS:** You were seen meeting with your teammates and coach in Sylhet ahead of the first Test against New Zealand. Anything you discussed in particular?

**EH:** Well, I didn’t have the opportunity to meet with all the members of the team after the World Cup. Since I was in Sylhet, the coach [Chandika Hathurusingha] asked me to meet him. He asked me



about the state of my recovery. It was good catching up with teammates and everyone after a long time.

**DS:** You were instrumental behind the historic Test win in Mount Maunganui. As Bangladesh will once again face the Kiwis in this format again, that too at your home town, what is your message for the team?

**EH:** Before the Mount Maunganui Test, we had a good discussion led by [Khaled Mahmud] Sujon and captain Mominul Haque. It was all about creating a healthy environment around us. We said to

ourselves, ‘how long are we going to lose against New Zealand, it’s time for us to change things’. Every single member of the squad was eager to give their best. So, it will be important to remain self-motivated, regardless of the condition.

I had a chat with [Mahmudul Hasan] Joy, reminding him about his knock in that game. It helps the bowlers to bowl freely once the batters are able to put some runs on the board.

**DS:** Bangladesh pace-bowling unit will be without you as well as another experienced pacer Taskin Ahmed, also recovering

from injury. The relatively inexperienced pace unit, comprising Shoriful Islam, Khaled Ahmed and uncapped Hasan Mahmud, will thus have to shoulder the responsibility in the absence of you two. Since your home town Sylhet will stage the opening Test, what message would you transmit to fellow quicks?

**EH:** What I said before, it will be important how motivated you are for this opportunity. I honestly feel the likes of Shoriful, Khaled and Hasan have got the ability, as their track records suggest.

Since the first Test will be played in Sylhet, it’s important for the bowlers to keep trying to bowl on top of the off stump. Even on flat surfaces the batters face difficulty if the bowler continuously asks questions by bowling at the stumps. I think there will be some help with the new ball in Sylhet, so it’s important to start confidently.

Another important factor would be to gain rhythm, which I’m sure one of the seamers will achieve. It’s important we cash in to that and provide the support from the other end to allow the pressure mounting on the batter. I’m very confident over this bunch of pacers, and I believe this pace unit can surprise the Kiwi batters this time around too and play a big role in winning Tests.

**DS:** It was an utterly disappointing World Cup campaign for Bangladesh. What’s your take on the Tigers’ World Cup show?

**EH:** Look, I was also disappointed like others. I think everyone tried their utmost best. However, things didn’t go well for us throughout the tournament. Such things do happen at times. What’s important, though, is to appear stronger than the past.

## Morsalin, Son share spotlight

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Morsalin’s sensational goal against Lebanon has earned the young striker a place alongside South Korea superstar Son Heung-Min as one of the eight standout performers of the first two rounds of the FIFA World Cup 2026 Asian qualifiers.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) published the list on their website on Saturday, placing Morsalin alongside Son, Japan’s Ayase Ueda, Qatar’s Almoez Ali, UAE’s Ali Mabkhout, Australia’s Harry Souttar, Malaysia’s Dion Cools, Iran’s Mehdi Taremi and Saudi Arabia’s Saleh Al Shehri.

The 17-year-old forward earned the recognition after his fierce right-footed strike against Lebanon helped Bangladesh earn a 1-1 draw coming from behind at the Bashundhara Kings Arena in Dhaka on November 21.

With his strike, the Bashundhara Kings forward helped Bangladesh earn a precious point after they suffered a 7-0 thrashing at the hands of Australia in their first match of the qualifiers.

The attacker came on as a substitute in the 72nd minute in the Australia match, which was his first appearance for the national team after the row over illegally bringing alcohol to the country after Kings’ away tie in the AFC Cup against Maldivian club Maziya SRC.



**Maziya Sports and Recreation Club players trained at the Armed Police Battalion Field yesterday afternoon after arriving in Dhaka in the early hours of Saturday. The Maldivian champions, who are at the bottom of their AFC Cup group, will take on group leaders Bashundhara Kings at the Kings Arena tomorrow.**

PHOTO: STAR

## ‘Argentina’s future No. 10 shirt in good hands’

AGENCIES

Turning in a stunning performance in Friday’s quarter-final against Brazil at the FIFA U-17 World Cup in Indonesia, Claudio Echeverri’s hatrick helped Argentina beat the four-time winners of the competition for the first time in the age group.

With the No. 10 stamped on his back and the captain’s armband firmly in place, Echeverri – nicknamed El Diablico (the Little Devil) – produced a display worthy of comparison with Lionel Messi, almost a year on from his heroics in Qatar.

Aside from sharing a certain likeness with the Argentina talisman and a similar gift for dribbling and bringing the ball under instant control, the youngster also made a little piece of history that Messi can relate to. Back in 2005, Messi produced a virtuoso performance of his own against Brazil at the FIFA U-20 World Cup in the Netherlands.

Following a shock defeat against Senegal in the ongoing tournament opener, Echeverri told FIFA in an interview that he idolises Messi and one of Messi’s idols, Pablo Aimar. “I always said that my idol was Messi, but I’m nowhere near Messi. I also really liked Pablo Aimar ... and he gives me useful pointers about what I need to correct in my game.”

Despite being only 17, Echeverri’s reputation has preceded him for a number of years. In fact, he was barely ten when his four-goal haul versus Juventus in a youth competition became the talk of the internet.

Daniel Brizuela, who discovered Echeverri while scouting for River Plate, recalled his initial impression of the exceptional talent.

“When I had just arrived and I saw him one day, I told one of the coaches ‘he’s a mix of [Diego] Maradona and Messi’... because he has the mettle, personality and character of Maradona and the characteristics are similar to those of Messi.”

“We have the team’s number 10 shirt in good hands for the future, and that is something incredible.”

Once the tournament draws curtains on December 2, Echeverri is likely to be in the radar of several European heavyweights. Echeverri, though, desires to follow in the footsteps of Messi, donning the FC Barcelona colours.

Prior to the tournament, he said, “As well as River, I would like to play for Barça. I used to watch Messi play for Barcelona, so I’ve had this team inside me since I was very young.”

Echeverri, currently the joint-top scorer in the competition with Agustín Ruberto on five goals, is all set to lead Argentina to their only missing silverware. But first, they have to pass the Germany hurdle in Tuesday’s semifinals.



PHOTO: BSPA

**The Max-BSPA Journalist Award 2022, organised by the Bangladesh Sports Press Association (BSPA), was held at the Bangladesh Olympic Association’s Dutch-Bangla Bank Auditorium yesterday. Channel 24’s sports journalist Ekram Hossain won the Sports Journalist of the Year 2022 award and received the Tawfiq Aziz Khan trophy and a cheque for Tk 50,000.**