Star SPORT
DHAKA SUNDAY DECEMBER 17, 2023, POUSH 2, 1430 BS

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS 2
Australia vs Pakistan
1st Test, Day 4
Live from 8:30 am

STAR SPORTS 1
South Africa vs India
1st ODI
Live from 2:00 pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT HD1
English Premier League
Arsenal vs Brighton
Live from 8:00 pm
Liverpool vs Manchester Utd
Live from 10:30 pm

Australia on top as Perth pitch opens up

AGENCIES

Australia and Pakistan are expecting the final two days of their first Test to be coloured by more pitch volatility after both Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith required medical attention following nasty knocks while batting courtesy of Pakistan quicks yesterday.

First it was Labuschagne, who was struck by a Khurram Shahzad delivery that jagged violently towards him off a length.

He eventually continued batting after the team doctor and physiotherapist had a lengthy examination of his right pinky finger, but just seven balls later he lost his wicket to the same bowler.

He was sent for X-rays at the close of play.

After Marnus, it was Smith's turn to face the wrath of the Pakistan quicks, who were desperately trying to keep their side in the contest after they got bundled out for 271 earlier in the day, conceding a 216-run lead.

Smith did his best to dodge the ball multiple times before finally a Shaheen Shah Afridi delivery landed a blow to his left arm, after which he too required treatment.

But Smith persevered and remained unbeaten on 43 at stumps with Usman Khawaja keeping him company on 34 and Australia reached 84-2.

After stumps, Smith downplayed the blow he suffered, insisting, "It's all right. Bit of a bruise, but I'll live."

With Australia already holding an imposing lead, signs of the pitch breaking up have encouraged the hosts' bowlers. "Batting got really tough there at the end. I think it's probably going to be tougher to play the short ball than [it was] the first innings," said Hazlewood.

Pakistan's batting coach Adam Hollioake was also wary of the cracks forming.

"I was surprised to see those and it's small at the moment. But let's see if that opens up," said Hollioake.

Earlier, off-spinner Nathan Lyon claimed three wickets in the first innings, taking his wicket tally in Tests to 499.

Lyon needs just one wicket away from becoming the eighth bowler to take 500 wickets in Tests.

Deepti stars as India clinch historic Test win

AFP, *Mumbai*

Deepti Sharma starred with both bat and ball as India thrashed England by 347 runs in their one-off women's Test on Saturday for their first ever win at home against the rivals.

Sharma, who made 67 in India's first-innings total of 428, took nine wickets including a red-hot 5-7 in the first innings, with the visitors bowled out for 131 to wrap up the match on the third morning in Mumbai.

India's victory margin was the largest by runs in women's Test cricket and also their first Test win against England at home.

Harmanpreet Kaur's team took a 292-run first-innings lead after electing to bat first, and declared on their overnight second-innings total of 186-6 for an overall lead of 478.

"It's a proud feeling... we bowled according to plan," said Sharma, who was named player of the match.

England's Heather Knight said India were "outstanding" in the game. "The way they batted in the first innings is something we can learn a lot from," she said. "The conditions (are) something we're not used to, we were trying to find a way to score runs."

Bangladesh captain Mahfuzur Rahman Rabby and UAE skipper Aayan Afzal Khan pose with the ACC U-19 Asia Cup 2023 trophy at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium yesterday, the eve of the final, as they prepare to fight for the crown today. PHOTO: ACC

Young Tigers eye maiden Asia Cup title

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh have already ascended to the pinnacle of age-level cricket once, when the young Tigers won the ICC Under-19 World Cup title in 2020 in South Africa.

Today, however, captain Mahfuzur Rahman Rabby and his troops have the opportunity to achieve something that even the World Champions 2020 batch couldn't do, win the ACC Under-19 Asia Cup title.

Bangladesh Under-19 team will face hosts UAE in the final of the ACC U-19 Asia Cup at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium today.

Bangladesh head into the final as favourites, having won all four of their matches so far, which included a comfortable 61-run win over the UAE in their tournament opener.

Despite the earlier victory, age-level selector Hannan Sarkar informed that the young Tigers are wary of the hosts.

"We still have a game left and the boys are focused to deliver their best against the UAE," Hannan told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

"Despite the fact that we started off the tournament by beating the UAE, they also played good cricket to reach the final, beating Sri Lankan and Pakistan. So there is no chance to see our opponent lightly as we have to play our best cricket to become the champions," he added.

The final presents an opportunity to add another silverware in the trophy cabinet of Bangladesh cricket, a prospect that often overshadows the main purpose of age-level cricket in Bangladesh, which is developing cricketers for the future.

> **"We have won the World Cup, but have never won the Asia Cup. We had lost in the semifinal and the final of Asia Cup. I hope that this time you will win the Asia Cup final, inshallah."**
>
> Bangladesh batter **Towhid Hridoy**, who was member of the U-19 World Cup winning Bangladesh team

Compared to the majority of the top teams around the world, the cricket authority in Bangladesh put a lot of emphasis on winning titles at the age-level, a tendency that stems from the country's lack of achievements in ICC tournaments over the years at any level.

The current Under-19 cricket team has played a lot of matches together and after some underwhelming results early on, the team has been clinical in the ongoing Asia Cup.

"We have played 25 one-day matches during this period and although we managed to win 11 of those, I think those defeats also helped us to learn from our mistakes," Hannan said.

The Under-19 team advanced to the knockout stage as group champion, beating the UAE, Japan and Sri Lanka.

Before the semifinal, the team management arranged a virtual session with the Under-19 World Cup winning captain Akbar Ali to share his experience with the players before the big game.

Akbar's motivation seemingly worked as Bangladesh managed to hold their nerves and went on to beat a strong Indian side by four wickets to reach the final.

Although star batter Ashiqur Rahman Shibli, who hit a century and a couple of half-century in the group-stage, got out cheaply, left-arm pacer Maruf Mridha's four-for and top-order batter Ariful Islam's brilliant knock helped Bangladesh complete an easy win.

Whatever the outcome today, the challenge for the think tank would be to ensure these young cricketers get the right direction and improve their skills in order to prepare themselves for the senior level.

Hannan feels that the players are on the right track and the team is in good shape ahead of the upcoming ICC Under-19 World Cup in South Africa in January.

"There are few players who have shown great maturity and I think the boys are getting in the right shape ahead of the World Cup."

BD-NZ ODI SERIES

2027 WC in mind for NZ

ICC

New Zealand head coach Gary Stead discussed the addition of uncapped players from the lens of the next ICC Men's Cricket World Cup.

The Kiwis ODI squad has four players – Adithya Ashok, Will O'Rourke, Ben Sears, and Josh Clarkson – with no experience at the ODI level. Of these, Ashok and Sears have represented the Black Caps in T20Is.

He pitched the upcoming series as a starting point for a new World Cup cycle, and thus an opportunity for the Kiwis to look at some new faces.

"It's also the start of an ICC [World Cup] cycle. So this is the first ODI games we have to prepare for the 2027 World Cup. And whilst that might seem a long time away, we don't actually play any other ODIs for another nine or ten months after this. So it's an opportunity to look at some potential faces for the future."

Stead believed that each uncapped player had something to offer to the Black Caps.

"The reason they've been selected is we've seen things we like in their game. So it's really about coming in and just being themselves. We try and put them in roles similar to what they play in domestic games.

The Bangladesh cricket team took a photo with the national flag at the University Oval in Dunedin, New Zealand yesterday to commemorate the 52nd Victory Day of Bangladesh. The Tigers are now in New Zealand to play three ODIs and as many T20Is against the hosts. PHOTO: BCB

Anfield annihilation of Man Utd not to be repeated, says Klopp

AGENCIES

Liverpool's massive 7-0 victory over Manchester United at Anfield last season was a once-in-a-lifetime result that will not be repeated but Sunday's derby promises to be a 'special' game, manager Juergen Klopp said.

Erik ten Hag's United were flying high after winning the League Cup last season to end a six-year trophy drought but came crashing down to earth a week later when Liverpool handed the Old Trafford side their worst defeat in 92 years.

"The 7-0 we knew on the day was a freakish result that happens once in life pretty much. And if it helps anybody for the next game, it's the team who lost 7-0 and not the team who won 7-0, that's another thing," Klopp told reporters.

"If you take it all out of consideration then we just play a football game against the rival, the historical rival, of Liverpool FC, at home, at Anfield.

Liverpool go into the weekend as league leaders, while United are sixth, 10 points behind. United have been in dire form in recent weeks with just one win from their last five games in all competitions.

Ten Hag is also under immense scrutiny after his side crashed out of Europe when they finished bottom of their Champions League group. He said that misfiring United can show they have learned from last season's 7-0 humbling at Liverpool on Sunday, insisting the future is bright for his beleaguered club.

With the exception of a 2-1 win at Old Trafford in August 2022, United's recent record against the Reds is dire -- they have lost four of the past five meetings, conceding 21 goals in the process.

"It is a great place to go," the Dutchman said on Friday. "We know it is going to be tough, but I think every top footballer wants to have that challenge.

"Last year we take that in our memory but you also have to take the benefit from it, learn from it and on Sunday we can prove that."

United captain Bruno Fernandes faced particular criticism after March's Anfield annihilation and will miss Sunday's match after collecting a fifth booking of the season for dissent.

Fernandes joins a long list of absentees, including injured players Lisandro Martinez, Casemiro and Tyrell Malacia.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board carried on the tradition of marking the country's Victory Day with the Victory Day Exhibition match to commemorate the country's 52nd year of liberation at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur. Former players, divided into two teams, namely Shaheed Mushtaque XI and Shaheed Jewel XI, took part in the 15-over-a-side contest. [INSIDE] Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salauddin unveiled nameplates carrying the names of the Shadhin Bangla Football Team members at the BFF House in the capital yesterday. PHOTOS: BCB/BFF