

## BPL Mashup

SPORTS REPORTER

### Shoriful keen to chip in with bat

Bangladesh pacesman Shoriful Islam is going through a purple patch with the ball in international cricket, finishing as the highest wicket-taker in both the ODI and the Twenty20 series of the Tiger's tour to New Zealand in December.

After kicking back for a few days, the left-arm pacer has resumed training with his Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) side Durdanto Dhaka.

The 22-year-old pacer has already set a target for himself to improve as a lower-order batter in the league, something he hopes the other bowlers also succeed in doing.

"Not just my team, I want lower-order batters from every team to get some runs in the BPL. It will have a positive effect on the national team," Shoriful told reporters at Mirpur yesterday.

"When we play for the national team, if we, the lower-order batters, can score some runs, the team will be benefited from it," he added.

The Tigers have a packed schedule this year which includes the ICC T20 World Cup in June.

Shoriful is placing extra importance on his fitness this year, to ensure his availability for every assignment of the national team.

"I want to be as fit as possible since there are lots of matches coming up for Bangladesh. That will be my main goal," he said.

### Pending BPL title sponsor leads to jersey delays

The BPL is yet to announce a title sponsor for the upcoming season, which is set to commence in three days' time.

The delay in announcing a title sponsor has held up finalising the logo for this year's BPL.

It has also held up the production of jerseys of the seven franchises, as even if they already have their jersey designs ready, they can't go into production without knowing the tournament logo with the sponsor's name.

It's not just the board that is looking for a sponsor as many of the franchises are also still looking to add sponsors to their team.

All this will probably culminate in players from the same team wearing different coloured gear and using scotch tape to hide some logo or other team's name during matches, something fans of the league are accustomed to seeing in every edition.

### Opening day's matches get new timings

The match timings of the opening day's two fixtures were changed yesterday.

The tournament is slated to begin on January 19 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur with the opening game between Comilla Victorians and Durdanto Dhaka and in the evening, Sylhet Strikers will face Chattogram Challengers.

Both matches got pushed back by 30 minutes and will begin at 2:30 PM and 7:30 PM respectively.

The change was made for just the opening two fixtures as for the rest of the tournament, the Friday matches will begin at 2:00 PM and 7:00 PM respectively. The matches on the remaining six days of the week will begin at 1:30 PM and 6:30 PM respectively.



The forward trio of Rodrygo, Vinicius Junior and Jude Bellingham was instrumental in making El Clasico a one-sided affair as Real Madrid crushed eternal rivals Barcelona 4-1 at the Al-Awwal Park in Saudi Arabia yesterday (Bangladesh time) to secure yet another Spanish Super Cup title. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Ancelotti 'on cloud nine'

AGENCIES

A quickfire hattrick from Vinicius Jr. within 40 minutes elevated Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti "on cloud nine" as Los Blancos clinched the Spanish Super Cup after a 4-1 humiliation of arch-rivals Barcelona in Saudi Arabia yesterday (Bangladesh time).

Fellow Brazilian Rodrygo rounded off Real Madrid's rout as they won the competition for the 13th time, avenging last year's final defeat by record 14-time winners Barcelona.

The triumph also sees Ancelotti equal Zinedine Zidane's tally of eleven trophies as a Real Madrid manager, further cementing his place as one of the most influential coaches in the club's illustrious history.

"The best thing is to enjoy this moment and be focused on what is coming... I am on cloud nine. But you can also come down from the clouds. I will come down and you will be there," Ancelotti said after the match.

Despite having been the European champions in 2022, Ancelotti was under pressure after Real crashed out from the Champions League semifinals in the following season.

With a sustained dependency on several all-conquering aging campaigners in the ranks, such as Luka Modric, Toni Kroos, Karim Benzema — who eventually left for Saudi Pro League — it was reported that Real Madrid high-ups were displeased with Ancelotti regarding the passing of baton from the veterans to the aspiring superstars.

The former AC Milan and Chelsea coach, however, had dismissed any concerns about the transition, stating that it had been going smoothly even before he arrived to lead the Spanish giants in his second term with the club, beginning in 2021 after a two-year spell from 2013-15.

"This transition has already begun, before I arrived. Young players of great quality have started to arrive," the Italian had said with conviction.

Whatever shred of a doubt may have remained, all of it must have vanquished with how the new batch of

superstars-in-the-making displayed a masterclass on one of the biggest nights of the season.

As Jude Bellingham, Rodrygo and Vinicius created havoc for a Barcelona defence that were playing with an extremely high line, Real dominated every aspect of the game and toyed with last year's champions. Barca ended the contest with 10 men after defender Ronald Araujo was sent off for a second booking in the 71st minute after two fouls on the Vinicius.

Earlier, it only took Real seven minutes to draw first blood, thanks to a magnificent assist by Bellingham.



"The best thing is to enjoy this moment and be focused on what is coming... I am on cloud nine. But you can also come down from the clouds. I will come down and you will be there,"

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti.

Their second came from another long pass, this time with Dani Carvajal finding Rodrygo in the right channel, which led to a Vinicius tap-in in the 10th minute.

Yet Barca were resilient and managed to reduce the deficit with a fine Lewandowski strike from another rebound in the 33rd minute. The momentum was seemingly in Barca's favour but after Vinicius converted a penalty in the 39th minute, Real went on to dominate the second half with Rodrygo hitting their fourth from a rebound in the 64th minute.

"We wanted to win and we did it with merit," said Ancelotti.

## 'Great opportunity' for Sabina, Sanjida

ANISUR RAHMAN

The chance to test one's mettle in foreign leagues had been an uncommon occurrence for Bangladeshi sportspeople, particularly women. Two female footballers, however, now have such an opportunity following a frustrating period which was preceded by exceptional success.

Sabina Khatun, Krishna Rani Sarkar, Sanjida Akhter, Sirat Jahan Swapna, and Akhi Khatun were offered contracts to play in the Indian Women's League a year after Bangladesh won the SAFF Women's Championship for the first time in late 2022. However, none of them received approval from the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) due to the launch of a franchise-based Women's Super League, which ultimately did not materialise.

Nevertheless, in the absence of no domestic competitions in Bangladesh, Indian club authorities have once again turned to two of the five players — captain Sabina and winger Sanjida — for their services in the ongoing Indian Women's Football League.

While Sabina left for Bengaluru-based club Kickstart yesterday, Sanjida is awaiting completion of her formalities to play for Kolkata-based East Bengal, who appear very interested in Sanjida despite initially rejecting her due to Bangladesh national women's team international commitments.



Striker Krishna, defender Akhi, and forward Swapna would have received calls as well, but while Krishna has been rehabilitating from an injury, Akhi and Swapna quit football last year.

Back in the 1990s, the country's top male footballers like Momen Munna, Sheikh Mohammad Aslam, Kaiser Hamid, Rummon Bin Wali Sabbir, Golam Gaus, Rizvi Karim, and Mahbubur Rahman Roxi were regulars in the Kolkata-based football league, but those

days are long gone. Mamunul Islam was the last footballer to sign for Atletico de Kolkata for the 2014 Indian Super League but did not play a single match.

Now, the signing of Bangladeshi female footballers by Indian clubs is a positive indication for the country's women's football, as the footballers will have a new platform to compete in the lack of a competitive local league, in addition to financial benefits.

"It is a great opportunity to play

in a different environment under a professional approach. The girls will play home-away matches, travelling in different states which our girls don't get to experience at home," said Saiful Bari Titu, national women's team coach.

"The girls will also get the opportunity to gain experience playing with other foreign players in the Indian Women's League," Titu said, further adding that the participation of Sabina and others in Indian [Women's] League will also inspire other players to avail such opportunity in future.

Assistant coach Mahbubur Rahman Litu believes Sabina and Sanjida will be able to justify their reputation in the Indian Women's League.

"In Bangladesh, only two clubs — Bashundhara Kings and Aaur Rahman Bhuiyan College team — competed for the title while Sabina struck a lot of goals in the domestic competitions. So, they can see their standard compared to other players in the Indian league," said Litu.

Litu also feels Sabina and Sanjida may help other players get into other Indian teams in the future, similar to how Sabina took Sumaya Matsushima to the Futsal championship in the Maldives.

However, Saiful Bari Titu stated that football agents play an important part in finding a foreign team for a footballer, and Bangladesh does not have such a system of appointing players' representatives.

## Osaka crashes out as Medvedev, Gauff power on

AFP, Melbourne

Two-time Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka's Grand Slam comeback ended at the first hurdle on Monday but US Open winner Coco Gauff and men's third seed Daniil Medvedev surged on in Melbourne.



On a baking-hot day, men's seventh seed Stefanos Tsitsipas and women's sixth seed Ons Jabeur also tasted first-round victory.

But Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova and veteran Andy Murray made early exits, with the British former world number one hinting he may not return.

Japanese star Osaka, 26, stepped away from the sport in September 2022, citing mental health concerns.

After giving birth to a baby girl in July, she decided to return for the new season and was back at the scene of her title-winning exploits in 2019 and 2021.

But she was unable to rediscover her championship-winning form.

## SHORT CORNER



### Sachin appalled by technology's misuse

Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar took to X, formerly known as Twitter, to call out a deepfake video of his which has been widely circulated online, where he is seen promoting a betting app. In the advertisement, Sachin is heard talking about an app and how his daughter Sara Tendulkar is earning a lot using it. The video was actually made using the deepfake technology, where the voice was added on top of an old clip of Sachin's. "These videos are fake. It is disturbing to see rampant misuse of technology," Tendulkar wrote in the post.

### AFCON: Salah rescues Egypt

Mohamed Salah saved Egypt from an embarrassing defeat in their opening game at the Africa Cup of Nations on Sunday, while Nigeria were held by Equatorial Guinea despite Victor Osimhen getting on the scoresheet. Egypt coach Rui Vitoria blamed a brief lack of concentration for his side's surprise 2-2 draw. "We lost concentration for three minutes, but we are still in the race to qualify; nothing is lost," Vitoria told beIN Sports.

### Warner's missing baggy green mystery solved

Following what became a national issue in Australia during the recently concluded Test series between Pakistan and hosts Australia, it was revealed that the bag containing David Warner's Test cap had never left the Intercontinental hotel in Double Bay and was right there with the rest of the assorted baggage of the team.

### PSG's Lee upstages misfiring Son



Paris Saint-Germain's Lee Kang-in upstaged Son Heung-min with two goals as South Korea began their bid for a first Asian Cup since 1960 with a 3-1 win over Bahrain on Monday. The 22-year-old attacking midfielder, has impressed at PSG since joining from Mallorca last summer, showcased his sublime skills with a second-half brace after team-mate Hwang In-beom had opened the scoring before the break.

### Ten Hag hopes Hojlund-Rashford partnership will flourish

Rasmus Hojlund and Marcus Rashford are beginning to display signs of a potent partnership, Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag said after the attackers both scored in Sunday's 2-2 Premier League draw with Tottenham Hotspur. Hojlund has scored only two league goals this season while Rashford has four but the pair appear to be developing an understanding and were involved in the build-up to each other's goals.

\*\*Read full stories on The Daily Star website