

## England seek consolation win

REUTERS, Dharamsala

England, chasing a consolation victory in the five-match Test series against India, will be banking on two pacers and two spinners to do the trick in the final game in Dharamsala on Thursday.

England announced their lone change for the game, with seamer Ollie Robinson making way for fast bowler Mark Wood. Robinson remained wicketless in the fourth Test in Ranchi, where India grabbed an unassailable 3-1 lead.

Wood joins James Anderson in England's seam attack, while Tom Hartley and Shoaib Bashir will shoulder the spin load with Joe Root chipping in with his part-time off-spin.

"I think going with two seamers and two spinners is probably the right call when unsure of pitch," England captain Ben Stokes told reporters on the eve of the match.

Stokes expected batters to dominate the contest and would particularly want his good friend Jonny Bairstow to shrug off his poor form in what would be the batter's 100th Test.

Having secured their 17th consecutive Test series win at home, India can afford to relax in Dharamsala but Ravichandran Ashwin will be keen to make his 100th Test a special occasion. "It's a big achievement for any player to play 100 Tests," India captain Rohit Sharma heaped praise on the off-spinner, who claimed his 500th Test wicket in the ongoing series.



Taskin Ahmed celebrates with Mahmudullah Riyad after dismissing Avishka Fernando early, setting in motion a good bowling display as Bangladesh restricted Sri Lanka to 165 runs before chasing the target down with eight wickets in hand and draw level in the three-match T20I series at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday. [Bottom] A large crowd turned up for the game in Sylhet, a city which rarely disappoints in this regard.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Bellingham suspended two games for dissent

REUTERS

Real Madrid midfielder Jude Bellingham has been suspended for two games by La Liga for showing contempt towards the referee having received a red card after the final whistle in their 2-2 draw with Valencia on Saturday.

The referee's report said the England international had displayed an "aggressive attitude" as he disputed referee Jesus Gil Manzano's decision to blow the whistle when he headed Brahim Diaz's cross into the net in the ninth minute of added time for what would have been a winning goal.

Real Madrid are seven points clear of Girona at the top of La Liga. Bellingham will miss Sunday's home game against Celta Vigo and the trip to Osasuna on March 16.

The 20-year-old is the leading scorer in La Liga with 16 goals in his first season at the club.

Bellingham can play in Madrid's Champions League last-16 second leg against RB Leipzig on Wednesday.

### 100-TEST CLUB ENTRANTS

The fifth and final Test between India and England, starting today, and the second Test between New Zealand and Australia, which will start in the wee hours of Friday, will see a total of four players get their landmark 100th Test debut.

### THE PLAYERS ARE

Ravichandran Ashwin (INDIA)  
Jonny Bairstow (ENGLAND)  
Tim Southee (NEW ZEALAND)  
Kane Williamson (NEW ZEALAND)

## Improved bowling keeps visitors at bay

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

Bangladesh produced a far superior bowling performance in yesterday's second T20I against Sri Lanka in Sylhet, significantly improving their hopes of levelling the series, should the top-order batters make their presence felt in chasing down 165 for five.

It is telling how a good fightback, that too with a local boy in the middle, can have an effect on morale despite not ultimately producing a win in the first T20I which the Tigers lost by just three runs. The quality of cricket in the series opener had created an expectation, which could explain a better crowd presence at Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.

Jaker Ali Anik had said that there were lots of positives to take from the first T20I and the bowlers had to improve on a track which had more consistent grass covering and a harder makeup compared to the wicket used in the first T20I.

After opting to bowl first, captain Najmul Hossain Shanto introduced Shoriful Islam, who started with a maiden even as there was not much swing this time around. The hardness of the surface made for some extra bounce and Taskin Ahmed

utilised that pressure created from the maiden to pick up Avishka Fernando's wicket after the left-hander shuffled across to try and whip one through mid-wicket, only to get a top-edge that Taskin gathered himself.

Kusal Mendis, however, had other ideas, taking on Taskin and Mustafizur Rahman almost immediately. He and Kamindu

Mahedi Hasan effected a run-out to see the back of Kamindu for 37 before he was able to squeeze some pressure back with the ball as well.

And Mustafizur, after going for 15 runs in his opening over, finally got his variations to help the Tigers get a foothold as Samarawickrama departed after a rusty innings. Mustafizur was able to get a measure of the length he needed to hit and the off-cutter held up enough to induce an early shot from Lankans' top-scorer as he lobbed it back to Mustafizur.

Meanwhile, Rishad did not allow the big shots and remained economical, conceding 21 in three overs. Fellow spinner Mahedi then got in on the act with a drifter that castled Charith Asalanka in the 14th over. The last five overs would then produce 43 runs with Taskin and Mustafizur dropping their lengths and pace slightly to get some purchase off the wicket.

Shoriful, who conceded 20 runs in his four, managed 13 dot balls in the innings alongside his first-over maiden. The execution of plans went pretty smoothly despite the good batting track on offer and the improvement of death over performance significantly improved Tigers' chances in this game.



## Aussies out to spoil Kane, Southee's 'huge achievement'

AFP, Wellington

Seamer Mitchell Starc said Australia's bowlers aim to ensure New Zealand world-class batter Kane Williamson doesn't stay long at the crease in his 100th Test in Christchurch on Friday.

The tourists lead the two-match series 1-0 after Australia romped to a 172-run win in the opening Test.

Both Williamson and New Zealand Test captain Tim Southee will play their 100th Test at Hagley Park.

"During the game, (the aim is) to make it as short as possible," Starc told reporters Wednesday when asked about Williamson's milestone.

"Anytime you can get one of the best batters in the world out is always a nice little touch."

Williamson, who has chalked up nearly 9,000 Test runs, had a torrid time in the first redball game against Australia as he scored a duck and nine in the two innings.

The Australian paid tribute to the two milestone-approaching New Zealanders' lengthy careers.

Williamson scored a hundred on his debut against India back in 2010, while Southee took five wickets on his first Test appearance in 2008 against England.

"For Kane and Tim, it's a huge milestone this week," Starc added.

"Especially for Tim - we all know how taxing it can be as a fast bowler on the body, so to play 100 Tests is a huge achievement. I'm sure they will both enjoy the week."

"We're looking forward to celebrating with them... but hopefully winning the Test match as well."



Bayern Munich top scorer Harry Kane struck once in either half to steer the Germans to a 3-0 win over Italy's Lazio on Tuesday and into the Champions League quarterfinals with a 3-1 aggregate victory, reigniting title hopes among their fans. Kane headed in for the lead in the 38th minute, which was also his first Champions League knockout stage goal in five years, to cancel out Lazio's first leg 1-0 advantage and then tapped in their third goal on the rebound in the 66th after Thomas Mueller's first-half stoppage time effort had made it 2-0.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Eyes on big four as hockey league rolls today

SPORTS REPORTER

All four title contenders - Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club, Abahani, Mohammedan SC and Usha KC - are quietly confident about winning the title but showing enough respect to the oppositions as the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League gets underway today at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium.

On the opening day, holders Mariners will take on promoted Usha KC at 4:00pm before last edition's runners-up Abahani take on Dilkusha SC at 6:00pm in the 11-team league. The title race once used to be confined between Mohammedan, Abahani and Usha before Mariners joined the race by splashing money to become league champions in 2016.

Even though all the Big 4 teams fielded foreign players in their Club Cup matches, they are set to bring either wholesale or partial changes in foreign players' roster in a bid to strengthening their squads or recover from the weakness.

"The league is not going to be an easy one because the Club Cup was a trial for all the teams and they found their weaknesses there. The other teams must have analysed Mariners' style of play and will come out strongly. Of course we will also try to adapt accordingly," Mariners coach Mamonur Rashid told The Daily Star.

"I think Abahani are ahead of all the teams on

paper even though they could not win the Club Cup. I have heard that an Indian coach and four new Indian players are going to join Abahani. However, we are confident about defending the title but we not overconfident," Rashid said, adding that they will replace two foreign players.

"There is no point being the top team on paper unless you perform on the pitch. We lacked finishing and coordination in the midfield during the Club Cup and we are working to fix the problem and we are hopeful of performing better in the league," Abahani coach Hedayetul Islam Razib said.

Mohammedan coach Shahidullah Titu said, "I think there are no clear favourites for the title because no one can guarantee becoming champions until performing well on the ground. We have taken better preparation this time around compared to the Club Cup."

Titu informed that they are going to replace all of their four foreign players to strengthen their squad.

"I think foreign players will make the difference but Usha are ready to fight till the end," said Usha coach Ashikuzzaman, who kept Mariners ahead of Abahani, Mohammedan and his team.

Even though the focus will be on four big teams, the mediocre ones like Ajax SC and Shadharan Bima may also cause an upset or two to derail the title contenders.

### SHORT CORNER



#### Messi's Barca napkin contract up for auction

To the untrained eye, it might look like just another used napkin. But the serviette, expected to fetch up to \$635,000, was actually soccer legend Lionel Messi's springboard to greatness at FC Barcelona, and records the promise of a contract made to him at the tender age of 13.

#### Shabnim Ismail bowls fastest delivery in women's cricket

Former South Africa pacer Shabnim Ismail created history on Tuesday when she bowled the fastest delivery ever recorded in women's cricket. Ismail broke the record with a delivery that clocked the speed of 132.1km/h (82.08mph) when bowling for the Mumbai Indians in their Women's Premier League (WPL) clash against the Delhi Capitals at Arun Jaitley Stadium.

#### Spain prosecutors seek jail term for Ancelotti

Spanish prosecutors on Wednesday called for Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti to be jailed for four years and nine months for allegedly failing to declare earnings to the tax office. Madrid state prosecutor's office accused the 64-year-old Italian of having deprived Spain's treasury of over one million euros in earnings from image rights in 2014 and 2015.

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