

Star DHAKA THURSDAY MARCH 14, 2024, FALGUN 30, 1430 BS

SPORT

What to WATCH

SONY SPORTS 2

UEFA Europa League
AC Milan vs Slavia Praha
Live from 11:45 pm
Liverpool vs Sparta Prague
Live from 2:00 am (Friday)

SONY SPORTS 1

Villarreal vs Marseille
Live from 11:45 pm
Bayer Leverkusen vs Qarabag
Live from 2:00 am (Friday)

Mushfiqur lauds Riyad's intent, Shanto's mentality

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh neither started well with the ball nor began well with the bat but came up with the right modus operandi during the crucial junctures of the game to pick up a comfortable six-wicket win in the first ODI against Sri Lanka in Chattogram yesterday.

Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto was the star of the show with a career-best score, holding the innings together but Mushfiqur Rahim, with an unbeaten 73, was not far behind. And neither was the impact left by Mahmudullah Riyad in the chase.

Shanto and Mushfiqur's unbroken 165-run partnership off 175 deliveries saw Bangladesh coast to victory but Mushfiqur heaped praise on the way Mahmudullah impacted the chase after the Tigers had slumped to three for 23.

"Our partnership was obviously good but ultimately the main partnership was from Riyad bhai and Shanto. The ball was new at that time and the dew did not start to affect the match. There was seam movement and they got early wickets. Riyad bhai and Shanto batted tremendously. The run-rate was manageable [after that]. We were never behind and did not need to do anything fancy," Mushfiqur said at the post-match press conference.

Shanto's 62-ball 69 fourth-wicket stand with Mahmudullah, who scored a run-a-ball 37, brought things under control before Mushfiqur and Shanto's unwavering and calculative partnership saw them home.



Pacer Tanzim Hasan Sakib celebrates with teammates after dismissing Sri Lanka opener Pathum Nissanka in the first of the three-match ODI series in Chattogram yesterday. After the visitors got off to a smooth start, it was Sakib who pegged them back with three quick wickets before the Bangladesh bowlers eventually managed to tighten the grip. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Ravindra youngest to win Hadlee medal

SPORTS DESK

New Zealand all-rounder Rachin Ravindra became the youngest player to win the Sir Richard Hadlee Medal, the highest award for men's cricket in New Zealand, on Wednesday.

Twenty-four-year-old Ravindra received the award from Kiwi legend Hadlee himself, capping off a spectacular breakthrough season that saw him rise as a star in the



2023 World Cup where he amassed 578 runs at an average of 64 with three centuries.

The left-handed batter also scored his first Test century which he converted into his maiden double ton, a 240-run knock, against South Africa last month 3 which was his first match in more than two years. His efforts in that Test, the first of the three-match series, helped the Kiwis to a thumping 281-run win. The Kiwis also won the second Test and clinched a historic first Test series win against South Africa.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Sri Lanka: 255 all out in 48.5 overs (Kusal 59, Liyanage 67, Nissanka 36, Avishka 33; Shoriful 3-51, Taskin 3-60, Sakib 32-44)

Bangladesh: 257 for 4 in 44.4 overs (Shanto 122 not out, Mushfiqur 73 not out, Mahmudullah 37; Madushanka 2-44)

Result: Bangladesh won by 6 wickets

Player of the match: Najmul Hossain Shanto

'Skiddy' customer Tanzim makes his mark in first SL ODI

SPORTS REPORTER

Ahead of the three-match ODI series against Sri Lanka, Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto was asked whether Mustafizur Rahman was an automatic choice, a suggestion he declined and said did not apply to anyone in the team. With Mustafizur not making the lineup in the series opener in Chattogram yesterday, Tanzim Hasan Sakib responded with the ball and the rest of the bowling unit followed suit.

Opting to bat, Sri Lanka openers put Bangladesh bowlers under the cosh early but the bowlers responded well following the brisk start, putting Sri Lanka under pressure with wickets. Tanzim, however, was the star of the show.

It was a teasing length, more importantly the late seam movement away from the right-handed batter, which led to Avishka Fernando feeling for it and the outside-edge was taken by Mushfiqur Rahim behind the stumps, leading to Sri Lanka's first wicket after the openers piled up 71 inside 10 overs.

That he was a skiddy customer was evident when Pathum Nissanka was trying to play a pull but ended up toe-ending it to third-slip. Tanzim went on to get the third Lankan wicket too, with another

outside edge, as he continued to cause trouble for the visitors with the off-stump line.

While Bangladesh bowlers often struggle on flat wickets, especially as they did in the recent World Cup, Tanzim's aggression allowed them to get out of a slippery slope at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium. Taskin Ahmed responded after conceding runs early on and picked up three crucial wickets after a good partnership from Kusal Mendis and Janith Liyanage.

Tanzim's aggression was pivotal for the Tigers in finding a way back in the game. Abahani Limited coach Khaled Mahmud, who has coached the young pacer in Dhaka Premier League, admires that facet.

"In one word it's aggressive; how I like them to be. A fast bowler should be like Tanzim and from a young age. He bowls with aggression and wants to take on the challenge and against every other opponent he wants to fight," Mahmud told members of the media when asked to define Tanzim yesterday at Mirpur Academy Ground in Mirpur.

"I remember last year we won a match against Prime Bank with him in the side. The way he bowled at the flat wicket, he was just bowling bouncers to get them out. Those were top order batters and we know that top players play from

Prime Bank. He is a real fighter," Mahmud added.

More than replacing someone like Mustafizur, Mahmud feels taking time to get into the side is good for the youngster.

"Of course. I feel that he is learning and taking his time getting into the side. It's not like constantly giving opportunities would have worked out. Mustafizur, Taskin are proven bowlers for Bangladesh and so it's not a matter of them going away. Shoriful and Sakib are of the same batch and age. Shoriful got in earlier and maybe Sakib got it in a little later but slowly he will get matches and build confidence," he said.

Using the wicket is an aspect that Bangladesh bowling unit has been working on. When not much movement is on offer, it is what can make the difference. Mahmud identified that like Taskin, Tanzim uses the seam to get extra zip. "They are not floating the ball, they hit the deck hard. Very fast [off the pitch]. He [Tanzim] is a skidder. It doesn't appear like that from his height but he can bowl fast," he added.

From here on, Bangladesh pacers will certainly look to replicate their form found in this match as Sri Lanka, who threatened to score 300-plus at one stage, were restricted to 255 all out.

SHORT CORNER



Ashwin reclaims top bowler's spot in Tests

India's Ravichandran Ashwin reclaimed the top spot in the Test bowler's rankings on Wednesday following his nine-wicket haul in the fifth and final Test against England last week. Ashwin, who claimed his 500th Test wicket in the third Test in Rajkot, replaced team mate Jasprit Bumrah at the top of the Test rankings.

Anderson in 'best shape' ahead of home summer

James Anderson says he still has to show he deserves his spot in the England Test squad ahead of the home summer but the 41-year-old seamer believes he is in the "best shape" of his life. The first fast bowler to claim 700 Test wickets, Anderson is keen to add to his tally in three-match home series against West Indies in July and Sri Lanka in August-September.

Vinicius uses football to stimulate young Brazilian minds

At a primary school in football-mad Brazil, pupils are spurred to academic greatness in classrooms resembling soccer pitches -- with a virtual avatar inspired by star forward Vinicius Junior cheering on every correct answer.

*Read full stories on The Daily Star website



Arsenal outfield players converge to embrace their saviour of the night after loan recruit goal-keeper David Raya's two saves in tiebreakers against FC Porto in the Champions League last-16 second-leg tie in London on Tuesday ensured the Gunners' first last-eight appearance in 14 years. The absorbing contest ended 4-2 on penalties after Arsenal's Leandro Trossard levelled the aggregate 1-1 shortly before first half. PHOTO: AFP

'Now what?': Xavi hits back at Barca critics

AGENCIES

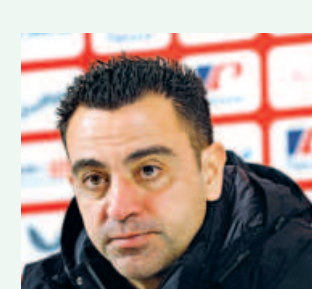
Barcelona manager Xavi Hernandez had the last laugh on Tuesday after his side defied the critics by reaching the Champions League quarterfinals for the first time in four years.

Barca's 3-1 home win over Napoli saw them advance 4-2 on aggregate in the last-16 tie. The five-time Champions League winners had failed to progress from the group stage in the last two seasons and were defeated in the round of 16 in 2020-21.

Barcelona, who are third in LaLiga and trail leaders Real Madrid by eight points, have struggled for consistency this season and Xavi announced in January that he would leave the club at the end of the season.

The coach said he would not change his mind about leaving at the end of the season, a decision he took in January. Since then the team have gone nine matches unbeaten.

"We have received unfair criticism," Xavi told reporters. "There has been too much pressure on the players like ultimatums, life or death.



Barcelona have reached the quarterfinals of the Champions League for the first time in four years.

This is the first time since the 2017-18 season that Barcelona have won all four of their home games in the Champions League.

Napoli have been eliminated at the last 16 stage of the UEFA Champions League in four of the five times they've reached this round, with the Italian side losing five of their six away games in the knockout stages overall.

Barcelona were the first side in Champions League history to start two players aged 17 or below in a knockout game as they played Lamine Yamal (16y 243d) and Pau Cubarsi (17y 50d).

"I even read that we were the joke of the Champions League. And now what?"

Xavi had said before the match that the second leg of the last-16 tie was Barca's biggest game of the season.

"We had to be better than Napoli and we were, it's a more than deserved qualification, it's one of my best moments as Barcelona coach. "We can be proud because we are one of the best eight teams in Europe."

Centre-back Pau Cubarsi, 17, was given the player of the match award and Xavi lavished praise on the young defender, key in recent weeks. "He's a very rational kid, he's got a lot of brains, he's patient, he's very humble, he wants to improve," said Xavi.

"His sudden emergence is wonderful for Barcelona and Spanish football -- we're looking at a top-level defender for years to come."

Like Xavi, Cubarsi said this was a match to remember. "This has been one of the best days of my life," Cubarsi told Movistar.

"The team deserves this player of the match trophy, I'm so happy, but we're a group."