

What to WATCH

T Sports
 Bangladesh women vs
 Australia women
 3rd T20I
 Live from 12:00 pm
Star Sports 1

Indian Premier League
 Gujarat vs Punjab
 Live from 8:00 pm
Star Sports Select HD1
 English Premier League
 Liverpool vs Sheffield Utd

Live from 12:30 am
 (Friday)
Star Sports Select HD2
 Chelsea vs Manchester
 Utd
 Live from 1:15 am (Friday)

Quicks bolster Sri Lanka's Test mettle

SPORTS REPORTER

The Sri Lankan pace attack picked up 33 of the 40 wickets over the two Tests against Bangladesh, an unforeseen development from Bangladesh's perspective. Skipper Dhananjaya de Silva talked about feeling the need for stepping up their pace aggression, especially on the flat wicket of Chattogram in the second Test.

Chattogram has historically produced spin tracks and there was some help for both sides' spinners but it was the pacers that made their presence felt in the heat of Chattogram. Sri Lanka in fact went without key paceman Kasun Rajitha in the second Test.

"As a captain I think more than going with a spinner on a dead wicket, I like to play a more aggressive brand of cricket, and go with fast bowlers. That's why we went with three quicks. Our bowlers don't need to have grass on the track to get wickets, and they proved that," he said.

Not just the new ball, Sri Lanka threatened with the old ball too, something Bangladesh could learn from. The short deliveries were used to good advantage, while Lankan pacers bowled good lengths, helped on by curious shot selection from the Bangladesh batters.

"To get a wicket is really hard here. It's very hot with the sun, and there was not a lot of life in the pitch, so we had to work very hard," Dhananjaya said.

The two Test wins are Sri Lanka's first in the new World Test Championship cycle. Dhananjaya said it was about improvements made every day over time.

"If we can learn day by day and raise our game by 1 percent, we can make winning a habit," he said as Sri Lanka moved up to fourth in the rankings.



Key architects of Bangladesh's abysmal batting display in their 192-run thumping at the hands of Sri Lanka in the second and final Test of the two-match series look on at the presentation party after the match in Chattogram yesterday. Struggling Liton Das only fortified his string of failures, while star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan boosted morale on his return but couldn't stop the Tigers' batting slide. Meanwhile, openers Zakir Hasan and Mahmudul Hasan Joy could do little to help their side, with the latter dropping catches to make the Tigers' plight worse.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bangladesh hobbled to 318 all-out in their second innings during their 192-run loss in the second Test against Sri Lanka in Chattogram yesterday. Having played a total of 142 Tests, this was only the fifth time that Bangladesh were able to cross the 300-run mark in the fourth innings in their history.

Sri Lanka pacers scalped a total of 33 wickets in the Test series against Bangladesh. This is the highest accumulation by Lankan pacers in a two-Test series.

Bangladesh had started the two-Test series being fourth on the World Test Championship (WTC) standings. But a 382-run defeat in Sylhet in the first Test and another heavy defeat in the Chattogram Test saw Bangladesh drop to a joint-seventh position with South Africa on the updated WTC standings. Both the Tigers and Proteas have a 25 percent points percentage after four matches.

The victory sees Sri Lanka overtake Pakistan and move up to fourth place on the WTC standings with a 50 percent points percentage.

Tamim hits fourth half-century in DPL

SPORTS REPORTER

Prime Bank Cricket Club opener Tamim Iqbal notched his fourth half-century of the ongoing Dhaka Premier League, helping his side to a four-wicket win over Partex Sporting Club at BKSP Ground-4 yesterday.

Tamim put away five fours in a gritty 100-ball 74 – his 69th List A half-century – while Mohammad Mithun scored a 66-ball 51 to help Prime Bank chase down Partex's 208-run total with eight balls remaining.

Having opted to field first, three wickets apiece from Prime Bank off-spinner Shiekh Mahedi Hasan and pacer Rubel Hossain helped restrict Partex to 208 for nine.

Prime Bank's reply saw Tamim play a steady hand from one end as his side were in a spot of bother having lost three wickets under 100. But a 70-run stand between Tamim and Mithun helped their side motor to the target. The duo, however, left the job undone, leaving Prime Bank five down for 176. Veteran Alok Kapali and seamer Ashiqur Zaman scored 15 and 10 respectively to finish the job in the 49th over.

At Ground-4 in BKSP, Shykat Ali's 106-ball 93, and 40 each from Nurul Hasan Sohan and Ziaur Rahman proved to be decisive as Sheikh Jamal Dhanomdi Club beat Legends of Rugganj by 60 runs.

Batting first, Shiekh Jamal posted 247 for nine and had Tipu Sultan and Saif Hassan take three wickets each to bundle out Legends of Rugganj for 187.

Meanwhile, the pacer-friendly conditions at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah saw left-arm pacer Ruyel Miah take a fiver to set up a nine-wicket win for Gazi Group Cricketers against Gazi Tyres Cricket Academy.

Ruyel's five-wicket haul spearheaded the demolition of Gazi Tyres, who were bundled out for 84 in 25.4 overs which Gazi Group chased down in 19.3 overs.



Tigers still await better Test preparations

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite losing by 192 runs in the second and final Test against Sri Lanka in Chattogram yesterday, Bangladesh's focus will soon shift to the shortest format since the T20 World Cup will be held in the United States and the West Indies this year. Yet for Bangladesh, it is also a year of Test flavours in the ICC World Test Championship's scheme of things.

The red-ball format has, however, proven to be a daunting prospect for the Tigers in the previous Test Championship cycle. Bangladesh lost to Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India at home while they were swept aside by the West Indies pace attack in the West Indies. Even in South Africa, it was South Africa's spin that dismantled them.

The Tigers' only solace was a historic first Test win against New Zealand in the previous cycle. However, the processes shown in recognising the tones and flavours of a Test to a beat and, most importantly, execution of plans through staunch determination did not carry over from that win to the rest of the cycle.

This cycle, they won a Test against New Zealand at home but banked on the tried and tested spin tactics in Mirpur, only to see their plans fall on its face. It raised questions like, "What is Bangladesh's home advantage?"

Indeed, their capitulation against

SCORES IN BRIEF

Sri Lanka: 1st innings 531 & 2nd innings 157/7 dec

Bangladesh: 1st innings 178 & second innings: 318 all out (Miraz 82 not out, Mominul 50, Liton 38, Shakib 36; Lahiru 4-50, Kamindu 3-32, Jayasuriya 2-99)

Result: Sri Lanka won by 192 runs to take the series 2-0

Player of the match: Kamindu Mendis

Player of the series: Kamindu Mendis

lacking for the Sri Lanka Tests, how to plan for the immediate future. Shanto, though, has some ideas of his own.

"If we can send our Test specialists in the Bangladesh A team to play in our next Test destination, we will be better prepared. Even if the A team series is at home, it will help," he said.

The problem area was not with Test specialists like Mominul Haque. The whole batting unit did not put up required partnerships and there were no big individual scores, showing that mental adjustment has been difficult. If A team and High Performance (HP) tours prove to be beneficial, it would help build for the future.

However, it remains to be seen how the current crop of batters get some lead in their mental makeup. Shanto dictated that domestic wickets needed to be better alongside playing more matches overall. It gives the impression that there is a general lack of planning around Tests.

"Better wickets in domestic first-class will help, but we don't face a lot of challenges there," he opined.

Bangladesh's only silver lining is that despite Ebadot Hossain and Taskin Ahmed's injuries, others are stepping up from the fast-bowling department.

"Our fast bowlers were not of this quality even three or four years ago. Now they are taking wickets on these types of wickets [as seen in Chattogram]," he added.

Injury-hit United brace for tough Chelsea test

REUTERS, Manchester

Manchester United next visit a Chelsea side who may be reeling in 12th place in the Premier League but have the ability to beat just about any team, manager Erik ten Hag said on the eve of Thursday's Premier League clash.

United are sixth in the standings with 48 points, 11 behind fourth-placed Aston Villa but with a game in hand and need a win at Stamford Bridge in the pursuit of Champions League football.

They defeated Mauricio Pochettino's Chelsea side 2-1 at Old Trafford in December thanks to a Scott McTominay double.

"It's a tough competition, it's very tight, and also a lot about which players are available and not," Ten Hag told reporters.

"When you are on the right side of the line you can have a successful season but when on the wrong side you can have a much more difficult season.

"For the rest, they (Chelsea) have a fantastic team, fantastic players, and play very good football, they can beat anyone."

United have suffered a double injury blow with defenders Lisandro Martinez and Victor Lindelof facing a spell on the sidelines of at least a month with muscle issues.

With the defensive problems, the return of Raphael Varane and Jonny Evans back in training is a welcome sight for the Dutchman.

"You can't prevent the problems," Ten Hag said. "The standards of the Premier League are so high. The overload in the schedule and in international football is so huge. We have all internationals in our squad."

"(Manchester) City, Liverpool and Newcastle (United) have the problems, especially in the defending department."



Cristiano Ronaldo kept on defying age as the 39-year-old forward scored his 65th career hat-trick, second on the trot, and provided two assists to help Al-Nassr thrash Abha 8-0 in a Saudi Pro League encounter on Tuesday. Ronaldo scored two trademark freekicks and then cleverly chipped the goalkeeper for his third, all in a blistering first half, before being removed at the break.

PHOTO: X

Mohammedan stay unbeaten, Abahani taste first loss

SPORTS REPORTER

Title contenders Mohammedan Sporting Club climbed to the top of the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League with an emphatic 7-2 victory over Bangladesh Sporting Club, after leaders Abahani fell to second place after losing 2-1 to holders Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club in the final match of the first leg at Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Even though Mohammedan brushed aside Bangladesh SC to remain the only unbeaten team, courtesy of a hat-trick from Din Islam Emon, all eyes were on the day's second match where Mariners once again emerged superior after having defeated Abahani 3-0 in the Club Cup final a month earlier.

During the match, it was evident that Mariners were aware of what is at stake, in terms of staying in the title race. Abahani, on the other hand, seemed to be lacking urgency and energy, as four of their Indian recruits chased shadows throughout the game, perhaps struggling to overcome the scorching heat from the artificial turf.

Mariners asserted their authority early, with Moinul Islam Koushik opening the mark after receiving a forward pass from Indian midfielder Deepak in the 16th minute before Sohanur Rahman Sabuj converted their first penalty corner four minutes later to double the lead.

Despite being two goals behind, Abahani could not come up with solutions to avoid their first league defeat. However, rookie forward

SUPER SIX

Team	Match	Win	Draw	Loss	Pts
Mohammedan	10	8	2	0	26
Abahani	10	8	1	1	25
Usha	10	8	1	1	25
Mariners	10	7	1	2	22
Police	10	5	2	3	19
Ajax	10	4	2	4	18



Rakibul Hasan squandered two good chances and the equaliser came through Pushkor Khisha Mimo in the 50th minute after he executed a wonderful flip following Indian Shreshe Gowad's hit.

After 10 rounds of matches, Mohammedan tallied 26 points from 10 matches, one more than Abahani and Usha Krira Chakra, while Mariners occupy fourth spot with 22 points despite their seventh victory.

Bangladesh Police Sporting Club and Ajax Sporting Club, with 19 and 18 points, respectively, have also qualified for the Super Six battle, which begins on Friday. Meanwhile, Dilkusha Sporting Club were relegated from the H team league after having registered a solitary point.

Mohammedan forward Rassel Mahmud Jimmy is pleased to be at the top of the standings. "Our

goal was to win every match by doing well in the first leg," Jimmy stated, adding that despite having one point advantage over others, the Super Six will be a challenging contest.

Abahani coach Hedayetul Islam Razib hopes his charges will come back strongly in the Super Six to win the title. "We were also surprised by the performance of our boys. We never imagined they would perform so poorly today. Even it appeared to us that the players are too fatigued to move," he stated.

Meanwhile, Mariners coach Mamun Ur Rashid said his team could execute the game plan effectively against strong Abahani, adding that it will be "extremely difficult" for them to clinch the title from here on. "There is still a mathematical chance, and we will do our absolute best," he said.