

Star

DHAKA SATURDAY MAY 4, 2024, BAISHAKH 21, 1431 BS

SPORT

What to WATCH

T SPORTS
 Indian Premier League
 Bengaluru vs Gujarat
 Live from 8:00 pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT
 HD1

English Premier League
 Arsenal vs Bournemouth
 Live from 5:30 pm
 Manchester City vs
 Wolves
 Live from 10:30 pm

Shakib, Mosaddek end ton drought

SPORTS REPORTER

Shakib Al Hasan raised both hands in the air, but his celebration was a little muted for someone who struck his first ton in five years, during a Dhaka Premier League match for Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club against Gazi Group Cricketers at BKSP Ground 4 on Friday.

Shakib's last ton had come in the 2019 World Cup -- an unbeaten 124 at Taunton against the West Indies. A five-year wait to finally vanquish a century drought, Shakib's stay at the crease did not go on for much longer as he fell for a 79-ball 107, laced with nine fours and seven sixes.

Shakib batted freely to his usual game plan, but there was a hint of nervous nineties working into the innings when he played out a few dot balls after moving to the high nineties. A push to long-off in the 39th over saw him reach the three-figure mark, his 10th List A ton and 18th career ton.

Shakib had played 199 innings in all recognised formats since that ton against the West Indies. The closest he had been to a ton in those 199 innings was when he hit an unbeaten 96 against Zimbabwe in Harare in 2021. He produced 33 fifties in the intervening period, twice getting out



in the nervous nineties.

It must have been a relief to finally get a ton but Shakib would have been keener on his preparations for the upcoming international assignments, having used the DPL as a platform for that. The quality, control and ability to hit big shots were all in full display.

Despite the innings, Sheikh Jamal did not manage to win as youngster Mahfuzur Rahman Rabby, who captained Bangladesh side in the recent U-19 World Cup, struck a 118-ball 125 to help Gazi win by two wickets.

Meanwhile Abahani's Mosaddek Hossain played a blinder against Mohammedan Sporting Club in Fatullah, hitting a 101-ball 133 -- his highest List A knock -- to end his own five-year ton drought. Earlier, opener Sabbir Hossain struck a 78-ball 91 but barring the two top scorers, no other batter contributed significantly as Abahani were bowled out in 44.4 overs, reaching 303.

Imrul Kayes and Rubel Mia hit fifties to keep the chase going and then Mohammedan's hero Abu Haider Rony, who turned up on many occasions this DPL with either bat and ball, hit a 27-ball 40. Needing 27 runs in the last over, Rubel hit two sixes off Mosaddek but Mohammedan fell short by nine runs.

The day's most-destructive innings, however, came from Prime Bank's Zakir Hasan against Shinepukur Cricket Club at BKSP Ground 3. His 132-ball 158 featured 12 sixes as Prime Bank managed 341 for seven before they restricted Shinepukur to 230, registering a 111-run win.



Following a return to national colours after over 18 months -- mostly due to his recurring back injury -- all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin shone with the ball in hand in Bangladesh's first of the five-match T20I series against Zimbabwe at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday. The pacer claimed three wickets for 15 runs in his four overs, helping the Tigers bundle out Zimbabwe for 124 in 20 overs.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Saifuddin, Tanzid make their cases in first T20I

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh were keeping an eye on two players who would have key roles in bolstering the World Cup squad. Mohammad Saifuddin's three wickets and Tanzid Hasan's debut fifty against Zimbabwe during the eight-wicket win in the first T20I in Chattogram yesterday would reassure the team management ahead of the T20 World Cup in June.

Eighteen months since his last outing for the national team, Saifuddin produced a fine performance, bagging three for 15 runs. He conceded just one more run than fellow pacer Taskin Ahmed, who also claimed three Zimbabwe wickets as the pace duo led the charge for the Tigers in bowling out the visitors for 124.

The injury and form concerns kept Saifuddin out of contention for quite a few major tournaments and saw him sit out the initial stage of this year's Bangladesh Premier League (BPL). But his bowling became crucial for Fortune Barishal in the latter part of the tournament.

Yesterday, he scalped Zimbabwe's second wicket and initiated the batting collapse which saw Zimbabwe go from 36 for one to 41 for seven. A trademark yorker to remove Blessing Muzarabani in the death overs would have given him the required boost.

There was a keenness to perform and then there was the nervousness following all the injury troubles and pressure to perform.

"I was nervous today. Although I have

played international matches before, it was very important to perform today. Fizz [Mustafizur Rahman] will return in one or two days and then what the final eleven will be is up to the management. There are four more matches, and I will try to do better than I did today," Saifuddin said at the post-match press conference.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ZIMBABWE

124 all out in 20 overs (Madande 43, Masakadza 34; Taskin 3-14, Saifuddin 3-15, Mahedi 2-16)

BANGLADESH

126 for two in 15.2 overs (Tanzid 67 not out, Hridoy 33 not out, Shanto 21; Jongwe 1-14)

RESULT:

Bangladesh won by 8 wickets

PLAYER OF THE MATCH
Taskin Ahmed

"I have played BPL here some days ago, so Chattogram conditions are known to me.

"It's been almost 18 months before I returned to internationals. It was very tough for me. If I want to make it to

the World Cup squad, there is nothing better than performances. I did not make the 2022 [Australia] World Cup due to performances, so I was very serious and wanted to perform," he said.

Tanzid, meanwhile, lived dangerously like the proverbial cat with nine lives in what was his debut T20I for the Tigers. Having been provided three lives by Zimbabwe fielders, Tanzid did what was required during the moments when the rain-breaks would make things a little complicated. He upped the ante, playing his shots and with an approach required in the format during a 47-ball 67.

He went on to finish the game alongside Tawhid Hridoy, who struck 33 off 18 deliveries as Tigers won with 4.4 overs to spare.

Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto credited the batter and said: "The way he batted really helped us. I think Towhid batted really well and showed character. Really happy for Tamim as he finished the match."

Both Tanzid and Saifuddin are being earmarked for the World Cup and both have performances to back their cases. Saifuddin, too, was impressed by Tanzid's approach and acknowledged that opportunity has to be grabbed.

"He [Tanzid] was fantastic. The aggressive approach he brought on in his first game is laudable. Maybe if Soumya [Sarker] bhai was fit, he wouldn't have played. But he took his opportunity and I expect him to be consistent," Saifuddin said.

Arsenal hope for Man City slip-up

AFP, London

Arsenal resume their quest for Premier League glory against Bournemouth this weekend knowing they have no margin for error with Manchester City hot on their heels.

Mikel Arteta's Gunners are a single point above Pep Guardiola's men with three games left but City, who host Wolves, crucially have a game in hand.

Arsenal have hit a rich vein of form since their 2-0 defeat by Aston Villa last month, but are competing against a City side who are now unbeaten in 31 games in all competitions.

The Gunners have a chance at least to apply some pressure by beating Bournemouth in the early kick-off at the Emirates on Saturday.

Bournemouth have registered their highest-ever points tally in a Premier League season to climb to 10th spot but have only beaten Arsenal once before.

City were not at their best against Nottingham Forest last weekend but still found a way to win and are strong favourites to wrap up an unprecedented fourth straight English title.

Arsenal will cling to the hope that Wolves can complete a rare double against City after they won 2-1 at home earlier this season.

Guardiola, for his part, does not believe his side can afford to drop any points in the run-in.

"With four games left, it's like climbing a mountain," he said. "They are very tough games... If we draw a game, we are not going to win the Premier League. It is what it is."

Meanwhile, Arteta, who saw his side get the better of local rivals Tottenham Hotspur in a hard-fought 3-2 win in the London derby, asked his side to not get carried away after the win last Sunday.

"Don't get carried away with yourself. There's a margin for improvement and we go again against Bournemouth," said Arteta.

'Everyone wants to beat Leverkusen'

AGENCIES

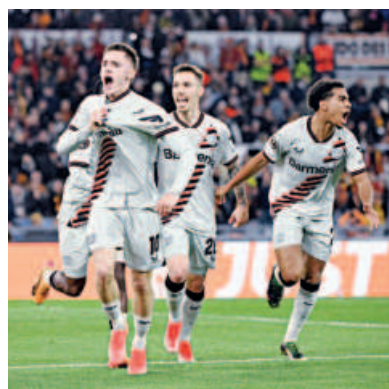
With his Bayer Leverkusen side three games from a record-breaking unbeaten season, manager Xabi Alonso said Friday he knows the team has a target on their heads.

"Everyone wants to beat us, of course. But we want to stay unbeaten. Every week it's a bit more difficult but the goal is bigger," Alonso said before Sunday's trip to Eintracht Frankfurt.

Leverkusen, who ended Bayern Munich's 11-year stranglehold on the Bundesliga title to secure their first trophy since 1993, travel to sixth-placed Eintracht Frankfurt on Sunday.

Already crowned league champions for the first time, Leverkusen are three games from becoming the first team to go unbeaten in a Bundesliga season -- a feat not even Bayern Munich have achieved.

On Thursday, Leverkusen won 2-0 at AS Roma in their Europa League semifinal first leg to have



one foot in the final, extending their season-long unbeaten run in all competitions to 47 games.

Leverkusen won their first meeting with Roma in almost 20 years, since they beat Italy's capital side 3-1 at home in October 2004 in the Champions League group stage. They were winless in five games against Roma since.

Already in the German Cup final where they will face second-division

Kaiserslautern, Leverkusen could win a remarkable treble in Alonso's first full season at the club.

The German champions will however have to beat Frankfurt without Alonso on the sideline, with the coach to watch from the stands due to a yellow card suspension.

"It's a new situation but hopefully it won't have any influence on the team.

"I'm not worried about it." Alonso said the ban may be an advantage from a tactical perspective.

"From the grandstand, you can see better and I will be allowed to communicate with the bench.

"I can't communicate with the team, but they're intelligent enough to decide things on the pitch themselves."

Star midfielder Florian Wirtz, who opened the scoring in Thursday's win in Rome, turned 21 on Friday.

"We celebrated with him and he gave a bit of a speech. He's got a big future in front of him."

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