



PHOTO: AFP/X

Thousands of fans joined street celebrations in Madrid after Euro 2024 champions Spain returned home to a royal welcome on Monday, having beaten England 2-1 in the final in Berlin on Sunday. After receptions with King Felipe VI and prime minister Pedro Sanchez, the record four-time Euro winners paraded through the capital city on an open-top bus as supporters gathered at Cibeles Square and lined the streets in anticipation of seeing their heroes and the coveted trophy. Meanwhile, similar scenes were witnessed at the Ezeiza International Airport in Buenos Aires on Tuesday, as thousands of people gathered around the airport to receive the Argentina team that returned home to a heroes' welcome about 24 hours after they beat Colombia to win a record 16th Copa America title. Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni, winger Angel di Maria, who on Sunday played his last match with the Albiceleste, and the Argentine Football Association president Claudio Fabian Tapia posed with the trophy upon the team's arrival.

The debate over Rishad's red-ball readiness

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

In Test cricket, the importance of having a skilled leg-spinner cannot be overstated as they bring a unique variation and unpredictability that can turn the tide of a match, even when there is little assistance from the pitch.

Bangladesh, traditionally reliant on orthodox, finger spinners, saw the impact of leg-spin with Rishad Hossain's stellar T20 World Cup performance in the USA and West Indies: the 22-year-old went on to pick 14 wickets, including two match-winning spells against Sri Lanka and the Netherlands.

However, as the team prepares for Test series against Pakistan and India, Rishad's readiness for the longer format has sparked a debate.

While all-format captain Najmul Hossain Shanto has reservations about his current Test credentials, chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu considers Rishad "a prospect for the longer version".

Moreover, the player himself has expressed his willingness to get integrated into the Tigers' Test setup.

Rishad has recently returned for individual practice in Mirpur after completing a two-week vacation following Bangladesh's World Cup campaign.

On Tuesday, the player was seen honing both his batting and bowling skills at the National Cricket Academy, keeping an eye on the national team's next white-



ball assignment: against India in October, where they will play three T20Is after a two-match Test series.

Before the T20I series, Bangladesh will feature in Tests against hosts Pakistan, between August 21 to September 3. However, it seems the 22-year-old will have to sit idle during these four Tests as he is yet to be in consideration for Bangladesh in red-ball cricket despite having made his first-class debut in 2018.

The kind of spin Rishad produces can be an asset for the Bangladesh Test team, who have often found wanting in away series due to a lack of variety.

Although Bangladesh possess Test specialist spinners like Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Taijul Islam, and Nayeem Hasan,

alongside their superstar all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, none provide the variation of a leggie.

However, asked about his stance regarding Rishad's inclusion in the Test fold, captain Shanto was skeptical.

"I think it would be better to ask this to the selectors, but from my experience, I don't think he [Rishad] is fully ready for red-ball cricket at the moment," Shanto said during yesterday's private programme at Pragati Sarani.

When this reporter contacted Rishad for his comments on playing Tests, he said that he has "no conditions" about playing any format.

"I'm currently preparing for white-ball games... Let's see how it [prospect of

playing Tests] turns out for me," Rishad told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, the chief selector Lipu believes that Rishad can be counted on as a prospect in the Test fold, but it is dependent on many factors.

"Rishad has been in the pipeline for a long time. Regarding his inclusion in red-ball [format], we can't reach a conclusion by ourselves," said Lipu, who is in Chattogram to oversee the ongoing white-ball series between HP Unit and Bangladesh Tigers alongside one of his deputies, Abdur Razzak.

"Rishad is definitely a prospect for the longer version as well. But when we will give the exposure, only time can tell. The kind of caliber he possesses, he will definitely be in the plan.

"But a Test match is a different ball game, and it's a test for every bowler; it's not like T20. He needs to be competent for it. He is working on googlies and all other variations.

"We will definitely try to give him exposure, but we need the opinions of the captain and head coach as well," the chief selector concluded.

Having received a big round of applause from the country's cricketing fraternity for Rishad's selection in the World Cup squad, now it remains to be seen whether the selectors and team management opt for a similar bold move by having Rishad on board for the upcoming Test hurdles.

Spanish players dominate Euro team of the tournament

REUTERS

Spain midfielder Rodri and 17-year-old Lamine Yamal were among six Spain players named in UEFA's team of the tournament for Euro 2024 on Tuesday.

UEFA's technical observers chose a 4-3-3 formation, which was one of the most frequently used during the tournament, with defender Kyle Walker earning his second successive appearance in it. He was England's only player named in the team.

Spain defeated England 2-1 in the final for their fourth European Championship title.

The remainder of the team was: Mike Maignan (France); Manuel Akanji (Switzerland), William Saliba (France), Marc Cucurella (Spain); Daniel Olmo (Spain), Fabian Ruiz (Spain); Jamal Musiala (Germany), and Nico Williams (Spain).

UEFA's technical observer team was made up of 12 former players and current or former coaches.

Southgate: England's nearly man

AFP, London

Garth Southgate leaves his job as the second most successful England manager in history but with a string of agonising near-misses to his name.

Two days after the Three Lions came up just short yet again -- losing the Euro 2024 final to Spain -- the 53-year-old has stepped down, deciding it is time for a "new chapter".

The mild-mannered Southgate transformed England into a consistent force on the international stage after decades of under-achievement.

He also reshaped the team culture, breaking down barriers that had previously existed within the camp between players from rival clubs.

But he ultimately failed to end the nation's long wait for a major trophy dating back to Alf Ramsey's 1966 World Cup victory despite having a richly talented generation of players to work with.

Southgate took over with England at a low ebb after a series of humiliations on and off the pitch.

A woeful Euro 2016 exit against Iceland brought a suitably depressing end to Roy Hodgson's reign, while his successor, Sam Allardyce, lasted only 67 days and one match before being forced out after a newspaper sting.

Southgate, short of top-level managerial experience, gained credibility among previously sceptical fans with a surprise run to the 2018 World Cup semifinals in Russia.

He followed that impressive achievement by leading England to their first major final for 55 years at Euro 2021, where they lost on penalties to Italy.

England went out to eventual finalists France in the quarterfinals in Qatar in 2022 but there were still positive signs that this was a young and exciting team heading in the right direction.

Southgate's men were among the favourites to finally get over the line at Euro 2024 but it turned into a roller coaster of emotions for the manager, who went from having beer cups thrown at him to within touching distance of winning the cup in Berlin.

Despite England's success, criticism of his perceived lack of tactical nous and inflexibility has always simmered.

At Euro 2024 he was accused of being too cautious, of an unwillingness to allow his men to express themselves.

But he leaves an important legacy and a framework in place for a tilt at future honours.

'My target is to qualify for the final round in Olympics'

Robiul Islam will become the ninth shooter from Bangladesh to compete in the Olympic Games through wild-card entries. The multiple-medal winner in junior and senior level, in both air rifle and air gun events, dreams of becoming the first shooter from the country to make it into the final round of the Olympics. The 25-year-old spoke to The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman regarding his preparation and ambition in an interview, the excerpts of which are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): There were whispers that Shaira Arefin, who got an IOC scholarship, would receive the wild card for Paris Olympic but eventually you got it. What do you think was the reason behind this?

Robiul Islam (RI): I missed a quota by only 0.3 points in an event in Indonesia in January. I also produced good results in two other quota-place tournaments. I think the IOC considered these scores when considering awarding the wild card to Bangladesh.

DS: How has your preparation been for the Olympics?

RI: My 10m air rifle event is on 28 July and I have been preparing for a long time by setting a goal. The preparation got hampered a bit over the speculation regarding Shaira's wild card entry. But once I got the wild card, I started afresh with maximum motivation. Our coach has also intensified the training to make up for the lost

time. I have been practising 250 to 300 shots per day now, compared to 150 shots in the past.

DS: Since Barcelona Olympics in 1992, Bangladeshi rifle shooters have participated in every edition but there has been no remarkable performance. Will that be the case for you too?

RI: I never think that I will go there, participate and return home. I feel I am carrying Bangladesh on my shoulders; it is a matter of pride and I want to deliver for the nation. My target is to qualify for the final round.

DS: Bangladeshi shooters have never been able to convert practice scores into competition scores. What makes you confident about

qualifying for the final with a best score of 627?

RI: I recently scored 630.2 points in a competition in Dhaka. Besides, we recently visited Munch where I fine-tuned my rifle, tested the barrel and did some small things which help a shooter to increase his scores. I have also been doing yoga and meditation so that I can stay focused during the event.

DS: Where does Bangladesh shooting lag behind?

RI: We lag behind in many areas. If you compare, a total of 138 Indian shooters participated in a World Cup in Korea while there were only four from Bangladesh. We need to participate more in overseas tournaments to make a mark in big events.

DS: Bangladeshi shooters won many medals in SA Games and Commonwealth Games but always failed in Asian Games and Olympics. Do you believe the shooters can succeed in coming days?

RI: The shooters from our generation are scoring more than 625 and some even finished among 20 in ISSF World Cup. I believe Bangladesh will take part in 2028 Olympics with direct quota and more international medals will be earned during this time.

DS: What do you expect from the other athletes from Bangladesh?

RI: I will expect that they play for the nation. When athletes play for the nation, their responsibility and focus are boosted but when they play for themselves, they only focus on improving own performance. So, I hope everyone will play for the nation.



PHOTO: REUTERS

'A dream come true'

AFP, Madrid

French superstar Kylian Mbappe was officially unveiled as a Real Madrid player on Tuesday, telling 80,000 fans "my dream has come true".

The striker, who had completed his medical earlier on Tuesday morning, signed a five-year contract and was handed a No. 9 shirt by club president Florentino Perez.

"Wow," Mbappe said in Spanish to roars from a packed Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

"For years, I've dreamed of playing for Real Madrid and today my dream has come true," said the 25-year-old former Paris Saint-Germain player.

Even though the crowd was expected to be bigger than that 15 years ago when Cristiano Ronaldo was unveiled, the attendance remained somewhat similar.