

# PACERS IN FOCUS as Tigers face Pakistan in first T20I

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will take on hosts Pakistan in the first of the three-match T20I series in Lahore today, and the Tigers are in need of turning things around on two fronts -- reviving their much-hyped pace attack and bouncing back from a 2-1 series drubbing against a lower-ranked UAE.

The task, however, will not be an easy one, especially with the Tigers missing the services of three of their frontline pacers.

A last-minute finger injury to Mustafizur Rahman, sustained during his latest Indian Premier League (IPL) stint with the Delhi Capitals, right arm quick Taskin Ahmed's unavailability due to being in rehab for an ankle issue, and pace sensation Nahid Rana's withdrawal from the series mean Hasan Mahmud, Shoriful Islam, Tanzim Hasan Sakib and Khaled Ahmed will have to step up in the pace department.

"You miss your senior seamers right now. As we saw, how Fizz (Mustafizur) was bowling in the IPL recently. We will miss him. But again, it is also a chance for somebody to take his place in this series," head coach Phil Simmons also urged the same from the ones who are available.

Bangladesh's bowling, considered their main strength in any format with success for batters always remaining a flip of the coin, has not been up to the mark as of late -- case in point the UAE tour in

"The players are looking forward to the series. Everyone is focused and understands the challenge Pakistan poses, especially in their home conditions. This series is a great opportunity for every player to step up. We are trying a few combinations in the build-up to the T20 World Cup next year and this tour is a valuable part of that process."

LITTON DAS, Bangladesh captain



"A lot of our players are coming off strong performances in the PSL, which is one of the most competitive T20 tournaments in the world. That form and momentum are something we are hoping to carry into this series. Bangladesh are a quality side with talented players and we are expecting a good challenge from them."

SALMAN ALI AGHA, Pakistan captain

which methodical batting from the hosts saw Bangladesh bowlers lose the plot at crucial junctures of the matches.

However, with Shaun Tait on board as the newly-appointed pace bowling coach and spin coach Mushtaq Ahmed joining the team for the Pakistan series, Bangladesh are hoping to recalibrate by soaking in their experiences of working in the latest edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL). Both Tait and Mushtaq worked with different franchises in the 10th PSL.

"We will assess what's happening. We have Shaun [Tait] who has been in the PSL right from the start. Mushtaq [Mushtaq]

has also been in the PSL. We will get information from them and make our decisions," Simmons added.

Pakistan will also have their work cut out, as they are without three of their star cricketers -- Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan, and Shaheen Shah Afridi. Pacer Naseem Shah leads the charge for them in the pace department while Saim Ayub, Fakhar Zaman, Khushdil Shah, and skipper Salman Agha needing to fill in for the experienced duo of Babar and Rizwan.

Bangladesh made history in their last visit to the country when they beat Pakistan 2-0 in a Test series to clinch

their maiden series victory over the hosts in 2024. Bangladesh can eye something similar this time, as the Tigers are yet to beat Pakistan in their own backyard in the shortest format -- losing all three T20Is so far.

But Simmons only wanted to focus on their own agenda.

"I don't know if it's the best time to beat Pakistan in T20Is. I think it's time for us to play our best. Pakistan are a dangerous side at any point of time. So, you can't take anything for granted," Simmons warned the Tigers to not take Pakistan lightly even if they are missing some experienced campaigners.

## Abahani confirm second spot

SPORTS REPORTER

With only one fixture left, the 2024-25 Bangladesh Premier League is all but wrapped up, and Abahani have secured the runners-up spot for a fifth time with a commanding 3-0 win over Brothers Union in Cumilla yesterday.

Champions Mohammedan Sporting Club had clinched the title with three matches in hand, but the battle for second place went down to the wire between six-time winners Abahani and reigning champions Bashundhara Kings.

At the Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium, goals from Asaduzzaman Bablu, Raphael Augusto and Mirajul Islam sealed the deal for the Sky Blues.

Abahani could have slipped to third with a loss,



The Bangladesh women's national team held their first training session at the Polo Ground in Jordan yesterday, ahead of their upcoming FIFA friendlies. The session focused on light recovery, ball work and tactical drills as the Afeida Khandaker-led side started preparations for their games against Indonesia on May 31 and Jordan on June 3.

PHOTO: BFF

## Scolari passes torch, Ancelotti embraces 'GREAT MISSION'

STAR SPORTS DESK

Carlo Ancelotti has seen it all -- Milan, Madrid, Munich, London -- but as he stepped into the heart of Rio de Janeiro, wrapped in green and yellow, the maestro found himself walking into something even he hadn't quite experienced before: a nation's collective hope.

"It is an honour to lead the best national team in the world," Ancelotti said, flashing a modest smile before a sea of more than 250 journalists on Monday.

"I have a great mission, so that Brazil can be champions again."

It's been 24 years since Brazil last lifted the World Cup, equaling their trophy drought from 1970 to 1994. In that time, five different coaches have tried and failed. The team has gone from *jogo bonito* to jumbled and bruised -- falling at the 2022 quarter-final stage and humiliated 4-1 by Argentina at home earlier this year.

But now, the weight of the drought sits on Ancelotti's shoulders, a man whose resume glitters with five Champions League titles and unmatched man-management finesse.

His unveiling was not just a press conference. It was theatre, nostalgia,

and prophecy rolled into one. Luiz Felipe Scolari, the last manager to guide Brazil to World Cup glory in 2002, handed him a coach's jacket -- a symbolic torch-passing. Messages from legends like Zico and Kaka, and the presence of former stars like Denilson and Junior gave the day a cinematic tinge.

But Ancelotti, with his characteristic calm, focused not on spectacle but on spirit -- the spirit of Brazil. "My connection with Brazil began in the 1980s, with Falcao and Cerezo," he reflected. Then with Ronaldo, Rivaldo, Pato, Kaka, Marcelo, Cafu and currently with Vini [Vinicius Junior], Rodrygo, Militao and Endrick.

"But this will be the first time I will work in Rio. I've lived in big cities around the world, but I've never lived in Rio. I want to enjoy this city."

That blend of joy and duty may prove vital. Brazil, as a footballing nation, lives through its contradictions -- flair and pressure, samba and scrutiny. Ancelotti appears to understand that.

His first squad reflects a thoughtful mix: the experienced Casemiro returning to lend leadership -- reuniting with the Italian after having played a key role as a defensive midfielder at Real Madrid from

2021 to 2023 -- and 18-year-old Estevao called up from Palmeiras to symbolise a new generation.

"Young players bring joy and enthusiasm. Experienced players bring knowledge, reading and experience," he explained. "Estevao can help Casemiro. Casemiro can help Estevao."

Of course, questions surrounded Neymar, still recovering from injury. Ancelotti ruled him out of the upcoming qualifiers against Ecuador and Paraguay but left the door open. More pressing, however, is Vinicius Junior -- a megastar in Madrid, yet often subdued in yellow.

Since 2012, not one elected president of the CBF has finished their term. Political instability has plagued the federation, but Ancelotti declined to address the chaos, instead choosing optimism.

"Our negotiations began two years ago," he explained. "But it ended because I had a contract with Real Madrid. That's why I come just now."

Now, he comes with total autonomy -- a €10 million salary, a packed calendar, and the blessing of a newly elected CBF president. But above all, he comes carrying the dream of 214 million people.



The personal relation [with players] is very important. I always pay special attention to this. It's not just a professional issue. Each player has a different character. Brazil has spectacular players. But what sets Brazilians apart is that they can do serious things and also fun things. I like that and I also care about having a great work environment."

Brazil Coach CARLO ANCELOTTI

T Sports  
Bangladesh Emerging vs South Africa  
Emerging  
2nd four-day, Day 2  
Live from 10:00 am

Pakistan vs Bangladesh  
1st T20I  
Live from 9:00 pm  
Sony Sports 1 and 2  
French Open  
Live from 3:00 pm

## Singapore match 'tickets sold out'

SPORTS REPORTER

Tajwar Awal, member of Bangladesh Football Federation's Competitions Committee, yesterday informed the media that all the gallery tickets and majority of VIP-category tickets for the Asian Cup Qualifiers fixture between Bangladesh and Singapore have been sold out through the designated online platform.

Speaking to reporters yesterday afternoon, Tajwar claimed that there has been a huge demand for tickets for the June 10 fixture to be played at the National Stadium in Dhaka, with tickets brought from outside the country as well as from inside.

Following the four-year-long renovation, the country's premier multisport venue will stage the eagerly anticipated fixture of the Asian Cup Qualifiers five days after hosting a friendly match against Bhutan on June 4.

The renovated venue has a seating capacity of 22,660, with most tickets, except for corporate and hospitality boxes, supposed to be sold online through ticketing platform, Tickify. The ticket prices were set from Tk 400 to Tk 5,000.

However, the experience for fans eager to buy tickets to see Hamza Choudhury and Co take on Singapore have not been a pleasant one to say the least. Following an opening-night fiasco, which Tickify and BFF later claimed to be the result of a 'cyber attack', the fans had to go through a long waiting game on Monday night. While some fans eventually succeeded in getting virtual receipts, others were left empty-handed.

Later on Tuesday, the site went up again for about an hour before it was announced by both BFF and Tickify that all tickets had been sold out, leaving many wondering how all tickets were sold out so quickly when the BFF had on Monday announced that the eastern gallery tickets would be sold later.

Iftikhar Ifty, founder of Tickify, told The Daily Star around noon yesterday that the short window they had opened saw smooth selling of tickets.

Speaking about the huge demand for tickets, Tajwar said: "Last night we witnessed 30,000-plus people searching for tickets online in a five-minute span. We created a queue system, there were two or three DDoS attacks again, but we successfully prevented those. We saw that tickets were being sold by the ticketing company each minute."

"Expats have applied for tickets too. Tickets have been brought from Teknaf to Tetulia, from USA to Australia," Tajwar said. "There was one from Uganda too."

Tajwar said that they were going through a forensic audit to find out any mismatches or any tickets remaining unsold. Someone with valid proof will definitely get tickets, he said, in case they haven't got their tickets yet.

When asked about the possibility of counterfeit tickets or black marketing, Tajwar claimed that a magistrate will be on duty to apprehend black marketers or counterfeit ticket sellers. He added that that with the ticketing issue for the Singapore match solved, they would open up online ticket sales for the Bhutan match on Wednesday and then move on to logistical issues related to organising a concert, setting up fan zones and ensuring the overall security of the area.

had Kings managed a bigger win but they ended their campaign on a high, beating Dhaka Wanderers Club 5-3 at the Kings Arena in Dhaka, but it wasn't enough to reclaim second.

There had been doubts about Abahani's campaign early on, especially after the political transition in August last year, which affected their squad-building process. Yet, the Dhanmondi-based outfit impressed with a core of local talent and finished the season with two runners-up trophies.

Under coach AKM Maruful Haque, Abahani briefly looked poised to challenge Mohammedan for the title, but inconsistent results in the second phase saw them fall short. Still, they ended ahead of the Kings for the first time in six seasons.

Kings, who had won five straight league titles since their top flight debut in 2018-19, failed to keep pace this year. A dip in form under their new coach and a low conversion rate in front of goal proved costly. Nevertheless, they salvaged their season by lifting the Challenge Cup and Federation Cup.

Mohammedan, meanwhile, ended their long wait for a maiden professional league title. A settled core -- with several players in their third or fourth season -- played a key role, especially in the first half of the campaign. Although they wobbled in the second phase, they capitalised on Abahani and Kings' inconsistency to stay ahead.

They capped off their triumphant campaign with a 6-1 thumping of Fakirpool Young Men's Club, led by a five-goal blitz from captain Souleymane Diabate.



MINISTRY OF COMMERCE  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Export Competitiveness for Jobs (EC4J) Project

Bangladesh Engineering Industry Owners' Association

BANGLADESH LIGHT ENGINEERING EXPO  
11:00 AM TO 08:00 PM  
29-30 MAY 2025  
VENUE: SHAHID ABU SAYED  
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE

