



ROLL OF HONOUR

2021 – New Zealand. The Black Caps produced a dominating display to beat India by eight wickets.

2023 – Australia. India were on the receiving end again as Australia handed them a 209-run loss.

2025 – South Africa.

South Africa captain Temba Bavuma circles the ground alongside his teammates with the ICC World Test Championship Mace in hand after his side defeated Australia by five wickets in the final on the first session on Day 4 at Lords yesterday. The Proteas overcame their nerves to score the remaining 69 runs of their 282-run target on the day to end their 27-year trophy drought in major ICC events. Opener Aiden Markram (R) hit a career-defining 136 and his mammoth 147-run third wicket stand with Bavuma, who made 66, set the foundation of this chase. The Australians threw everything in their arsenal on the fourth day but could claim only three of the eight wickets they needed for a victory as Kyle Verreynne (L) took the winning single to break the jinx for the Proteas.

PHOTO: ICC, REUTERS, AFP

PROTEAS SILENCE DOUBTERS

- This was South Africa's first ICC Men's title win since 1998 when they won the ICC Knockout Trophy in Dhaka by beating the West Indies in the final.
- In 18 previous attempts in the ODI and T20 World Cups, South Africa had only reached a solitary final. That was in last year's T20 World Cup in Barbados when they lost to India.
- South Africa's run chase was the joint second-highest at Lord's, alongside England who chased as many against New Zealand in 2004, and bettered only by West Indies' pursuit of 342 against England in 1984.
- Temba Bavuma has now won nine of his first 10 Tests as captain, the joint-most for anyone in Tests alongside England's Percy Chapman.
- This was Australia's fourth defeat in an ICC Men's tournament final against 10 wins.
- This was Aiden Markram's third hundred in the fourth innings of a Test, a number bettered only by Sunil Gavaskar and Graeme Smith (four each).

We've been relentless, getting to the doorstep consistently and experienced heartache, the sun's been with us. We got ourselves into the final, there were doubters on the route we took, this win squashes that. Here's an opportunity for us as a nation, divided as we are, to unite.

TEMBA BAVUMA, South Africa captain

Aiden and Temba didn't give us a chance. South Africa showed why they're here and are deserved winners. They kept themselves in the game throughout.

PAT CUMMINS, Australia captain

BFF boss outlines SIX-MONTH ROADMAP

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Tabith Awal faced the media yesterday in an extended press conference that lasted over two hours at a convention hall in the capital -- his most elaborate interaction since taking charge last October.

While the agenda officially revolved around the BFF's ongoing activities, development plans and six-month roadmap -- discussed by Tabith alongside 15 others, mostly heads of Standing and Ad-hoc Committees -- the session was soon overshadowed by mounting frustration over national team coach Javier Cabrera.

The Spaniard, already under fire for Bangladesh's subpar form, faced renewed criticism after a 2-1 loss to Singapore in Tuesday's Asian Cup Qualifiers. The pressure escalated when Shakhawat Hossain Shahin, an executive and national teams committee member, publicly demanded Cabrera's removal during the press briefing.

"As a member of the national teams committee, I want the resignation of Cabrera because it has been a demand of the country's 18 crore people," said Shahin, catching many in the room off guard.

Tabith, who also heads the National



Teams Committee, chose a more measured tone, terming Shahin's comments an "internal matter". He assured that Cabrera's future would be assessed thoroughly in the coming days.

Questions were also raised about Cabrera's swift return to Spain after the Singapore defeat, which many saw as a lack of accountability. Addressing the issue, Tabith said the "process" of evaluation was ongoing.

"... we also did it after the India match. After analysing our data as well as taking opinions from others, we will sit with the coaching staff and the management team

internally, because everyone from the head coach to the physio and doctor is accountable."

The BFF chief also admitted to organisational lapses during the Singapore fixture and promised improvements in future home matches.

Beyond the immediate controversy, Tabith touched on broader issues in local football. Citing the limited allocation for sports in the national budget, he urged the government to increase funding and reduce the high tax on sports equipment.

"We observed approximately Tk 2,000 crore allocation for sports in the national

budget, which is a small amount. Out of the budget, Tk 900 crore will be spent on salaries, bonuses, and maintenance," said Tabith.

"We have also seen a 36 percent tax on sports equipment. It is a country where we all want to develop sports, competitiveness and professionalism, but no one is investing in sport or allocating a budget behind it. Rather, we are punishing sport by imposing a large amount of tax on sports gear. I think the finance ministry will consider this."

He also laid out plans for youth development, pledging support for 220 BFF-accredited academies across the country, as well as the revival of district football through U-15 and U-17 tournaments leading up to inter-district competitions.

"We could not start district football yet, but it doesn't mean we are ignoring it," he said.

A former Arambagh KS player and now an industrialist, Tabith further committed to aiding clubs in the top-tier professional league, acknowledging their diverse and unmet needs.

"We will provide financial help to the clubs when we receive money from sponsors, because the federation, in the context of Bangladesh, also has a responsibility to help the clubs."

SHORT CORNER

David Beckham knighted

Former England football captain and global fashion icon David Beckham was knighted on Friday for his services to sport and charity, with The Who singer Roger Daltrey and actor Gary Oldman also receiving the honour. Beckham, who played 115 times for England as well as for some of the world's most high-profile clubs including Manchester United and Real Madrid, will now be known as "sir" and his wife Victoria, a former member of the Spice Girls pop group, will be known as Lady Beckham.



Cunha determined to change fortunes of Man Utd

Matheus Cunha says he is determined to help Manchester United bounce back from their worst league season in 51 years after becoming the club's first major signing of the transfer window. Brazil international Cunha, who completed his

£62.5 million (\$85 million) switch from Wolves on Thursday, said: "It is the most common phrase that you can say at this moment, but this is the dream come true."

Fritz beats Auger-Aliassime to reach Stuttgart final

Taylor Fritz has his eyes on a ninth ATP title after beating Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) in the Stuttgart semi-finals on Saturday to reach his first final this year. The tournament serves as a warm up for Wimbledon, where Fritz, even though his game is suited to grass, has never done better than the quarter-finals.

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Rain threat looms over Galle Test

SPORTS REPORTER

Rain threat looms large over the opening Test of the two-match series between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at the Galle International Stadium as the city is likely to witness light to heavy rain throughout five days of the match according to the weather forecast.

Galle is currently witnessing persistent rain for the last few days and according to Accuweather, an online weather forecasting service, the weather is expected to remain the same throughout the Test.

According to the weather forecast, the first Test, which is scheduled to get underway on Tuesday, may witness scattered showers up to the third day of the Test and light rain is likely on Day 4 and 5.

Bangladesh Test squad, which reached Galle in two separate groups on Thursday and Friday, had a gym session at the team hotel yesterday. The players also passed some time playing a volleyball game outside the team hotel.

Both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are expected to begin their preparation for the first Test, which will also be the opening game of the 2025-27 cycle of the ICC World Test Championship, today but rain may force them to complete the first day's preparation indoors.

This is the first time since 2021 that Bangladesh are playing a Test in Sri Lankan soil. Bangladesh last played a Test at this venue in 2017 and suffered a 259-run defeat against the hosts.



PSG have sights set on Club World Cup glory

AFP, Los Angeles

Freshly crowned kings of Europe, PSG arrived this week in the United States for the Club World Cup and are treating FIFA's lucrative new competition not as a nuisance at the end of an exhausting season but as a serious objective.

"I think it is an incredible competition," PSG coach Luis Enrique said about the competition in Munich two weeks ago.

"Our aim is to be competitive and try to win a fifth trophy of the season."

The French giants could be forgiven for wanting some time to bask in the glory of their 5-0 victory over Inter Milan in Munich which allowed them to finally win the Champions League for the first time in their history.

"We have made history for the club, for the city and for the whole country," defender Lucas Hernandez told sports daily L'Equipe after the PSG squad paraded their trophy down the Champs-Elysees avenue in Paris, attended a reception with President Emmanuel Macron and celebrated with almost 50,000 fans at their Parc des Princes stadium.

PSG have played 58 matches since last August and also swept all the



available domestic trophies in France this season, as has become the norm in recent years. But there is simply no time to stop and reflect.

Many of their players, including Champions League final hero Desire Doue, spent last week on international duty before returning to their club and departing for Los Angeles, where they will begin their Club World Cup adventure this weekend.

"The tournament itself is a really

attractive prospect," Luis Enrique told FIFA.com.

"We have to strike the balance between managing the physical and mental fatigue we're experiencing now at the end of a long season and harnessing the motivation that comes with being involved in the competition."

PSG's opening game will be against another European heavyweight as they take on Antoine Griezmann's Atletico

Madrid at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, just outside Los Angeles, on Sunday.

They will then also face South American champions Botafogo, of Brazil, before moving north to take on Seattle Sounders in their remaining Group B matches.

Expected to qualify for the knockout phase without too many issues, PSG could end up playing a total of seven matches if they make it all the way to the final in New York on July 13 -- just a month before their scheduled first game of next season in the UEFA Supercup against Tottenham Hotspur.

The strain of such a long campaign is telling, with Ousmane Dembele -- their top scorer this season with 33 goals -- struggling with an injury picked up playing for France last year.

They did not manage to add any new players to their squad during the brief transfer window that opened at the start of this month ahead of the tournament.

But the rewards for success in the Club World Cup are enticing and should be enough to keep Luis Enrique's squad focused on their objective, with up to a stunning \$125 million in prize money on offer for the winners.