



AUSTRALIAN TENNIS 'TRUE LEGEND' ANDERSON DIES

Mal Anderson, the first unseeded player to win the US Open men's singles title, has died aged 91, Tennis Australia said on Monday. Anderson's career started on a dirt court on a farm and he went on to become an Australian tennis great, winning the US crown in 1957 and three major doubles titles.

➤ Mominul Haque became only the third Bangladesh batter to reach 5,000 Test runs, after Mushfiqur Rahim and Tamim Iqbal.

➤ He reached the milestone by bringing up his fifth successive Test fifty with a boundary.

➤ Mominul is the second-fastest Bangladesh batter to 5,000 Test runs in terms of matches played. Tamim remains the quickest, reaching the landmark in his 68th Test, while Mominul achieved it in his 76th match. Mushfiqur, the first Bangladeshi to the milestone, took 81 Tests.



Bangladesh batters Mominul Haque and Najmul Hossain Shanto pump fists during their partnership in the second innings of the first Test against Pakistan at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur on Monday. After losing two quick wickets, the two veterans forged a 105-run partnership for the third wicket - both hitting half-centuries -- as Bangladesh moved to a position of strength after the rain-hit fourth day.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Mind games at play ahead of Day 5

SPORTS REPORTER

"Definitely, we will go for the win. If they are brave enough to give us 70 overs and a 260-run target, we will definitely go for the chase, but I don't think they will do that."

Pakistan batter Salman Ali Agha threw the gauntlet after the fourth day's play of the opening Test against Bangladesh in Mirpur on Monday.

The mind games have begun heading into the final day after rain disrupted both the third and fourth days of the Test.

With 165 minutes lost to rain on Day Four, the match remains delicately poised, with all three results still possible -- although a draw remains the most likely outcome, followed by a Bangladesh victory or a Pakistan win.

Bangladesh, however, may need to accelerate their scoring on the final morning after stretching their lead to 179 runs at 152 for 3 in 48.4 overs. The hosts must strike a balance between setting a challenging target and leaving enough time for their bowlers to take 10 wickets.

"I still think there is some help in the wicket... If we can bowl around 75 overs and set a target of around 260 runs, it will be possible to win the match," said Bangladesh batting coach Mohammad Ashraf.

The fifth day is expected to offer more turn for the spinners, while Pakistan's pacers have also extracted some zip from the surface. Neither side is particularly known for aggressive, result-driven Test cricket, making Agha's comments appear aimed at tempting Bangladesh into leaving the door open for a chase.

Asked whether he was implying Bangladesh lacked bravery, Agha clarified: "Not saying they are not brave enough or like that, but I'm just saying for them the best thing is to just take us out from the game and then give us the bat. But if they do that, like 70 overs and give us 260 to 270 target, then we will be in the game as well. And I personally want them to do that."



Milestone for Mominul, but 'big hundreds expected'

SPORTS REPORTER

Mominul Haque's number three role is one where attacking intent is mixed with defensive solidity. The former Bangladesh captain became just the third batter from the country to reach 5,000 Test runs yesterday, but expectations are that he will reach bigger scores, having now missed out in the last five of his innings.

Since the Kanpur Test in India, where he got an unbeaten 107, he has been batting more regularly at number three, having swapped the number four position with Najmul Hossain Shanto a few times. At that position, he has used his experience to counter good bowling attacks, but as recent innings suggest, he has been unable to convert his fifties into bigger knocks.

The one-down role itself appears to be changing, with top teams assigning more attacking players. Mominul, however, is a traditionalist. Shanto, on the other hand, appears to be a perfect fit as well, having got five tons in 26 matches at three. But together, they fuse into a strong baton for Bangladesh, as was evidenced again on day four of their series opener against Pakistan.

Following their 170-run partnership in the first innings, the two once again put on a 105-run stand in the second after both openers departed early in the morning. Shaheen Shah and company produced good spells, the ball zipping around. Mominul took responsibility for absorbing pressure in that period, while Shanto released it, and having reached his fifty and the 5,000-run milestone, he departed to Shaheen at a point where he looked comfortable.

There is where the disappointment lies. In his

SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh:

1st innings 413 and second innings 152-3 (Mominul 56, Shanto 58 not out; Abbas 1-35, Shaheen 1-39)

Pakistan:

1st innings 386 all out (Awaiz 103, Fazal 60; Miraz 5-102)

last five innings, he notched 82, 63, 87, 91 and now 56. The conversion rate of 34.2 percent, with 13 hundreds, suggests that a lack of focus is setting in when he looks set. When Mominul had got his 10th Test ton in February 2021, his conversion rate was 47.6.

With milestones in his sight, batting coach Mohammad Ashraf believes Mominul needs to go back to his old flow of getting big hundreds.

"After Mushfiqur, he is very close to becoming the second Bangladeshi to play 100 Test matches; he has about 24 matches left," Ashraf said. "I strongly believe he will be the second player from Bangladesh to reach 100 Tests, and he will continue to contribute like this."

"We expect big hundreds from him, just like the big hundreds we used to see from Mominul early in his career."

For now, Mominul has been able to frustrate opponents. He stymied Pakistan's attack, but if the Tigers are to get more from this WTC cycle, they need a Mominul without conversion concerns.

30 DAYS TO GO



The legacy of Czechoslovakia

Before splitting, Czechoslovakia participated in the World Cup eight times, playing a total of 30 matches. They finished runners-up twice: in 1934 to Italy and in 1962 to Brazil. In 1993, Czechoslovakia dissolved into the Czech Republic and Slovakia -- both of whom have participated in one World Cup each to date.

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SHORT CORNER

NSC forms committee to probe Bangladesh's T20 WC pull-out

The National Sports Council (NSC) has formed a three-member probe committee to investigate the reasons behind Bangladesh's absence from the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka earlier this year.

Australia leave out Cummins, Starc, Hazeldwood for Bangladesh ODIs

A trio of fast bowlers are notable omissions as Australia revealed their white-ball squads for upcoming tour of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Experienced quicks Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazeldwood will all sit out the tour.

Abahani break duck; Mohammedan extend perfect start

Two unfinished matches of the Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League third round were completed on Monday, with Abahani and Mohammedan securing emphatic victories as expected.

HC rejects writ petition challenging BCB's ad hoc committee

The High Court on Monday summarily rejected a writ petition that challenged the legality of formation of 11-member ad hoc committee of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB). The bench of Justice Razik-Al-Jalil and Justice Debasish Roy Chowdhury passed the rejection order after hearing arguments on the petition.

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FORTY-EIGHT TEAMS More opportunities, less jeopardy?

AFP, Paris

The 2026 World Cup will be the first to feature 48 teams, with the expansion of the field offering opportunities to several debutants -- but will FIFA's determination to have more nations participating remove much of the jeopardy which helped make the competition so great?

The expansion is the delivery of a key proposal made by Gianni Infantino not long after he became president of world football's governing body in 2016.

He talked of the importance of giving "more chances for more teams" and indicated that the World Cup needed to be seen as "more than a competition, it's a social event."

'Natural evolution'

Certainly, for much of its history, the World Cup could not be described as genuinely global. It was dominated by Europe and a few South American nations as it settled on a 16-team format until being expanded to 24 in 1982.

Ten of the 16 participants in 1978 were European, while by 1990 in Italy there were 14 European sides out of 24.

Africa sent a total of four representatives to the first 11 World Cups before 1982. But even by 1990 there were just two teams each from Africa, Asia and the CONCACAF zone of North and Central America and the Caribbean.

The expansion to 32 teams from 1998 gave a fairer distribution of places worldwide, but still only five African nations went to Qatar in 2022, while 13 came from Europe.

The move to 48 ensures a more even share without removing qualifying spots from Europe -- it now has 16 teams, while there are 10 from Africa, nine from Asia, six each from South America and CONCACAF plus New Zealand.

"It's a natural evolution. We want to make football global all over the world," Arsene Wenger, FIFA's chief of global football development, said in December.

"I believe that 48 teams is the right number. It's less than 25 percent for 211 countries who are affiliated to FIFA."

The expansion has allowed some of the world's smallest countries to qualify for the finals for the first time --



notably the tiny Caribbean island of Curacao with its population of barely 160,000 as well as first-timers Cape Verde, Jordan and Uzbekistan.

With the top two in all 12 groups progressing along with the eight best third-placed sides, one win in the first

round could suffice to advance.

'Dilution of spectacle'

But that means the competition will lose much of its early jeopardy, with the leading nations probably not too concerned even if they suffer a defeat straight off -- unlike in 2022 when eventual champions Argentina were genuinely panicking after a defeat by Saudi Arabia.

Seeing a giant go out in the group stage is likely now a thing of the past. To go all the way, teams now have to play eight matches -- potentially in energy sapping conditions in a North American summer -- instead of seven previously, further adding to an already heavy load for leading players.

"I see the argument about increasing representation but I think a 32-team finals was perfect," says Jonathan Wilson, author of *The Power and the Glory, A New History of the World Cup*.

"The biggest problem with this is not really the quality, it's the dilution of spectacle in the first round with eight third-placed teams to go through," he tells AFP, suggesting the group stage may end up "trying peoples' patience".

Bosnia first to name final World Cup squad

REUTERS

Bosnia manager Sergej Barbarez opted for a blend of experience, youth and new faces when he announced his World Cup squad on Monday, with veteran striker Edin Dzeko leading the line and uncapped midfielder Ermin Mahmic also included.

Dzeko is Bosnia's most capped player and all-time top scorer. The 40-year-old is one of two survivors from his country's only previous World Cup appearance in 2014, alongside defender Sead Kolasinac.

Barbarez wasted no time in calling up Mahmic after the 21-year-old Austrian-born player had his request to change allegiance to Bosnia approved by FIFA earlier in May.

Mahmic featured for Austria at Under-17 and Under-21 level, and had also played with Bosnia's Under-19 team, and Barbarez already sees him having a long career with the national side.

Bosnia play two warm-up matches against North Macedonia on May 29 in Sarajevo and Panama in St. Louis and begin their World Cup campaign against Canada on June 12 in Toronto.

SQUAD

Vasilj, Zlomislic, Hadzagic; Kolasinac, Dedic, Mujacic, Katic, Muharemovic, Radeljic, Hadzidakunic, Celik; Hadziahmetovic, Sunjic, Basic, Burnic, Mahmic, Benjamin Tahirovic, Memic, Gigovic, Alajbegovic, Bajraktarevic; Demirovic, Lukic, Bazdar, Tabakovic, Dzeko