DHAKA FRIDAY NOVEMBER 13, 2026, KARTIK 28, 1433 BS

SPORT

WHAT TO WATCH

T Sports
Pakistan vs Sri Lanka
1st Test, Day 5
Live from 10:30 am

Sony Sports 1, 2, 5
New Zealand vs India
3rd ODI
Live from 8:00 am

UEFA Nations League
Moldova vs Kazakhstan
Live from 11:00 pm

Slovenia vs Switzerland
Serbia vs Germany
Netherland vs Greece
Live from 1:45 am (Saturday)



(From L to R) Bangladesh's Shuki Itofusa, Mohammad Ridoy, Bishwanath Ghosh, and Faisal Ahmed Fahim train at Kings Arena yesterday, fresh off a 4-0 thrashing of Sri Lanka. Focus now shifts to Saturday's second semifinal against Pakistan, where Bishwanath is expected to cover right-back for the injured Saad Uddin. PHOTO: BFF

A perfect 10, but the best is yet to come

TANVIR AHMED PRANTO

Very few matches leave you with the kind of satisfaction that goes beyond the relief of simply winning. Bangladesh's 4-0 victory over Sri Lanka on Wednesday was one of those. The joy was unmistakable, from the stands to the pitch, as supporters even broke through the gates to get inside. They were watching a team play with a confidence and fluency that had been missing for some time.

What made the performance particularly satisfying was not just the scoreline, but how well the different parts of the team worked together.

Bangladesh were organised without the ball, composed in midfield and dangerous going forward. The four goals came from four different players, but the bigger development was that head coach Thomas Dooley appeared to have found a structure that allowed his best players to complement each other.

The biggest adjustment came in midfield: Shamit Shome and Quazem Shah operating as a double pivot, with captain Hamza Choudhury pushed into the No 10 role.

Quazem, who had been in and out of the national setup over the past year and was left out of the FIFA ASEAN Cup squad, brought a measure of defensive stability. He sat deeper, screened the back four, closed passing lanes and helped Bangladesh retain possession under pressure. His positioning also allowed Shamit to move forward more often, joining attacks without leaving the midfield exposed.

The arrangement also gave Hamza greater influence closer to goal. Previously deployed in a deeper role, he often had to cover ground and contribute defensively. Against Sri Lanka, he could use his passing range, strength and ability to drive into space in more dangerous areas.

Dooley wanted to use Hamza's football intelligence to link up with the wide players and the centre-forward, while allowing him to shoot from distance and attack the box. Sharing the defensive workload also gave the other midfielders more freedom. Dooley's experiments with Hamza and Quazem paid off, both of them excelling in a position where they don't usually operate.

The benefits were visible out wide. With Hamza occupying the opposition centrally, Farhaan Ali Wahid found room to take on defenders from the left. His 53rd-minute goal was the night's standout moment, as he used close control to evade three defenders before cutting inside and scoring with a deflected effort.

On the opposite flank, Rakib Hossain offered pace and a threat in behind, completing the rout in the 87th minute with a delicate chip over the advancing goalkeeper.

That attacking freedom rested on defensive security. Bangladesh have now kept clean sheets in consecutive victories, following on from their 1-0 opening win over Bhutan. Zidane Yousuf continued to settle into the side, Saad Uddin impressed before an injury ruled him out of the remainder of the tournament, and Mohammad Hridoy made a positive impact off the bench.

Dooley described the defensive organisation as "perfect", saying he felt comfortable with everyone from the goalkeeper to the players further forward. That solidity allowed Bangladesh to commit players to attack without losing their shape.

Despite rating the display 10 out of 10, Dooley stressed that Bangladesh had not reached their highest level."In the next game, we don't want to go backwards. We don't want to play with less power, less pressure, or less football and chase more. No, we want to continue to play. I love to play football; I don't like to chase football," he said.

Wednesday showed what this team can produce when the pieces fit. In Saturday's semifinal against perhaps a more incisive and clinical opponent in the form of Pakistan, they will have to show they can do the same.



Right-back Saad Uddin has been ruled out of the remaining SAFF Championship with an Achilles injury he suffered during the game against Sri Lanka, and will likely be out of action for months.

Remote VAR will be used in the SAFF Championship semifinals and final, with match footage sent from Dhaka to a centralised hub in Thailand.

CITY GROUP-PROTHOM ALO SPORTS AWARDS

Hamza named Sportsperson of the Year

SPORTS REPORTER

Star footballer Hamza Choudhury was named Best Sportsperson of the Year 2025 at the City Group-Prothom Alo Sports Awards ceremony at a city hotel on Thursday. He also won the Readers' Choice Award.



Hockey player Amirul Islam and women's footballer Ritu Porna Chakma were runners-up. Hamza was absent as he is with the national team for the ongoing SAFF Championship.

Bangladesh women's ODI captain Nigar Sultana Joty won Sportswoman of the Year, while table tennis player Khoi Khoi Sai Marma was named Emerging Athlete of the Year. Veteran cricketer, organiser and author Lutfur Rahman Makhan received the Lifetime Achievement Award.

How much is too much for Hasan?

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

While Nahid Rana's injury may have been unfortunate, a worrying pattern seems to be developing with Hasan Mahmud, one Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) should be wary of.

BCB sources say the pacer's tennis elbow has been "flaring up lately, so he has to manage it".

"With players, they go through high-intensity training and can't rest much when it flares," an official said.

Hasan missed the March ODIs against Pakistan due to the same injury. His Test career had even been questioned amid poor form and injuries before he revived himself with a red-hot form in red-ball format.

The 27-year-old has had an incredible seven-month run across continents and formats, starting with a county stint in England and the one-off Test against Zimbabwe in June. After a brief Vitality Blast stint with Kent, he joined the Lanka Premier League but returned early for the Australia tour.

After the Australia Tests, he returned to Kent for first-class action before joining Bangladesh's Asian Games T20 contingent. He then became the first Bangladesh pacer to take a Test hat-trick, against Afghanistan in the UAE, despite extreme heat. He complained of pain during that Test.



He subsequently remained with the ODI squad for the tri-nation series in the UAE, played two home Tests against West Indies and travelled to South Africa this week for the two-match Test series, where the high-altitude conditions could place additional demands on his body.

BCB has keenly monitored his workload, but the breaking point is never far away for a fast bowler. Excessive county bowling had already prompted the board to pull him back to manage his readiness for the Tigers.

Across his last three Tests, he has taken three five-fors. The latest came in Sylhet against West Indies, where he scalped five in the first innings but conceded 61 in 11 overs without a wicket in the second. At Abu Dhabi, too, he followed five for 55 in the first innings with a wicketless second.

After his five-for in Sylhet, Hasan told The Daily Star how he managed his workload. "After bowling our quota of overs in a match, we get two-three days off to recover.

"Food intake and gym recovery are key to how I build myself up. If I bowl for two days straight, I may get a day off while the batters are batting to recover. It's basically in-game management," said the 27-year-old.

The concerns over Hasan may not appear pressing for the team management, just as there were none over Rana before he broke down and missed months of cricket. Hasan had shouldered much of the burden in Rana's absence, taking 23 Test wickets during that period.

Former West Indies pacer and commentator Ian Bishop recently stressed the need to manage Rana's workload, saying: "Don't kill the goose that lays the golden eggs because you want immediate success."

The warning applies to the wider pace group, too. Tanzim Sakib, Taskin Ahmed and Ebadot Hossain have all faced injury problems, some ongoing and not all aptly managed. Where does the team management draw the line with Hasan?

'WHEN ONE DOOR CLOSES, ANOTHER OPENS'

Sylhet Division spinner Nasum Ahmed has claimed 36 wickets in the ongoing National Cricket League (NCL), topping the charts ahead of the final round. Despite being a regular in Bangladesh's white-ball setup, particularly the T20I side, and currently ranked eighth in the ICC T20I bowling rankings, the 31-year-old left-armer is yet to make his Test debut. However, he remains eager to feature in the longest format. Nasum spoke to The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan about his career, domestic cricket and other issues. Excerpts follow:

The Daily Star (DS): How would you assess your season so far?

Nasum Ahmed (NA): The season is not over yet. Let me finish the final match before commenting. People's expectations never end.

DS: Did you set yourself any targets for the season?

NA: No specific target. I just wanted to play and perform. I value the NCL because I once missed an entire season and subsequently failed to get a Premier League team. First-class cricket is Bangladesh's main pathway; without it, getting into the Dhaka First Division or Premier League is difficult. I missed out despite wanting to play, probably in 2015-16 [2012-13], after being selected for Barishal. Later, I got a Premier League opportunity as an injury replacement.

DS: Have you received enough first-class opportunities, after debuting in 2011 with five first-innings wickets?

NA: I need three more wickets to reach 200.



I had fewer opportunities after my debut, while national-team commitments have kept me from playing regularly since 2020.

DS: Despite your success in white-ball cricket and domestic red-ball cricket, you are yet to get a Test opportunity. Why do you think that is?

NA: Honestly, I do not know, and I will not speculate. I focus on performing whenever and wherever I get an opportunity.

DS: Is playing Test cricket still a dream for you?

NA: Absolutely. It is also the dream of my coach, Emon [Mahbub] bhai, and Rajin [Saleh] bhai.

DS: You took five wickets in two ODIs against West Indies last year but were subsequently dropped. Any regrets?

NA: I have been left out despite performing, so I have no regrets. I believe when one door closes, another opens. Had I performed poorly, you probably would not be asking me this.

DS: Sylhet has lacked league tournaments for years. Could more local competitions help the region produce more players?

NA: Absolutely. Many players sit idle because they lack opportunities. Without matches, they cannot perform, and nobody can assess their abilities. Grounds across Sylhet remain occupied throughout the year, but organised matches are scarce.

DS: What is holding back the development there?

NA: Team owners must be willing to invest. A player deserves at least Tk 50,000-60,000 for a season; nobody can be expected to play for free. Owners are simply not interested in forming teams. There is also little publicity, so sponsors do not come forward in sufficient numbers. Even available sponsorship money is not properly utilised.

DS: Are you optimistic about the upcoming Domestic 3 tournament?

NA: Let it begin first. Then we can see who is doing what and what we are getting out of it.

DS: How would you assess Mohammad Ashraful's work as batting coach before his removal?

NA: He was good... There is no point blaming coaches. Once appointed, a coach becomes our teacher, and we must follow his instructions. We make the mistakes, although coaches are held accountable. A coach cannot play for us; he can only guide us. If I do not follow his advice, how can that be his fault?

