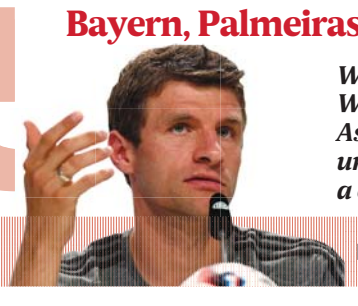
The Peninsula
Local focus, Global vision
Sport
SATURDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2021



Bayern, Palmeiras bid for more silverware at Club World Cup



We want to crown this outstanding year by winning the Club World Cup, so we're very ambitious concerning this trophy. As a European team, we are certainly favourites. We want to underline that and win the trophy as well, but it'll certainly be a challenge.

Bayern forward Thomas Mueller

Sport | 15



CRICKET: ENGLAND VS INDIA 1ST TEST England 1st innings: 263/3 (D. Sibley 87, J. Root 128 n.o.) against India (J. Bumrah2/40)









Al Duhail fans during the match against Al Ahly on Thursday.

Qatar's Al Duhail look to finish Club World Cup campaign on a high

FAWAD HUSSAIN
THE PENINSULA

Qatari champions Al Duhail gave Egyptian giants Al Ahly a run for money before going down in their debut match at the FIFA Club World Cup on Thursday, and The Red Knights after their gallant show in the opener have now shifted focus on the fifth position play-off as they aim to finish the elite tournament on a high.

A first half goal by Egyptian national team's striker Hussein El Shahat gave nine-time African champions a 1-0 win over the host country's club at the Education City Stadium. Al Duhail, however, fought well in the match particularly in the second half.

Al Duhail coach Sabri Lamouchi was overall satisfied with the performance of his side on a big stage, saying lack of experience cost his team the match.

"I do not blame my players who showed a very good performance in the second half," said the Frenchman.

"It was a great honour for me and the players to participate in the first match in this important tournament. In such matches, the fine details are what makes the difference, but despite the loss, the team gained experience and we will try to change some things," Lamouchi added.

The Red Knights now face Asian champions Ulsan Hyundai as they target fifth position at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium tomorrow, with Lamouchi hoping for an improved show from his players after their outing in the first match.

"Al Duhail lacked experience and we could have made the difference with experience, and we will work hard to achieve victory in our next match against Ulsan Hyundai," he said.

Al Duhail striker Almoez Ali, lamented that despite creating many chances his team failed to find an equaliser.

"We tried to equalise in the second half after the coaching staff made some changes, but the team did not succeed in scoring despite our clear possession of the ball," he said.

"We returned to our true level in the second half, but we did not succeed in finding the equaliser, and I must congratulate Al Ahly and wish them success in their next match."

Defender Mehdi Benatia said Al Duhail are now looking forward to the next match after gaining valuable experience from Al Ahly game.

"We played much better in the second half after mistake cost us a goal in the first half. We have learned from this match and we are now focusing on our final match of the tournament," he said.



Al Duhail players during a training session.

> *We tried to equalise in the second half after the coaching staff made some changes, but the team did not succeed in scoring despite our clear possession of the ball. We returned to our true level in the second half, but we did not succeed in finding the equaliser, and I must congratulate Al Ahly and wish them success in their next match:* ***Al Duhail striker Almoez Ali***



> *I do not blame my players who showed a very good performance in the second half. It was a great honour for me and the players to participate in the first match in this important tournament. In such matches, the fine details are what makes the difference, but despite the loss, the team gained experience and we will try to change some things:* ***Sabri Lamouchi***

Mosimane happy to defy Al Duhail's fightback

In Thursday's match, Al Duhail dominated the second half and made as many as 15 attempts with seven shots on target, and Al Ahly coach Pitso Mosimane praised his team for their resistance.

"We faced a tough opponent. They have a lot of great players, but we managed to achieve our goal and win the match," said Mosimane.

"Moreover in the last ten minutes of the game, Al Duhail SC created several chances but we managed to deal with their pressure in the best possible manner," he added.

Al Ahly will meet tournament favourites Bayern Munich in the second semi-final to be played at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium on Monday.



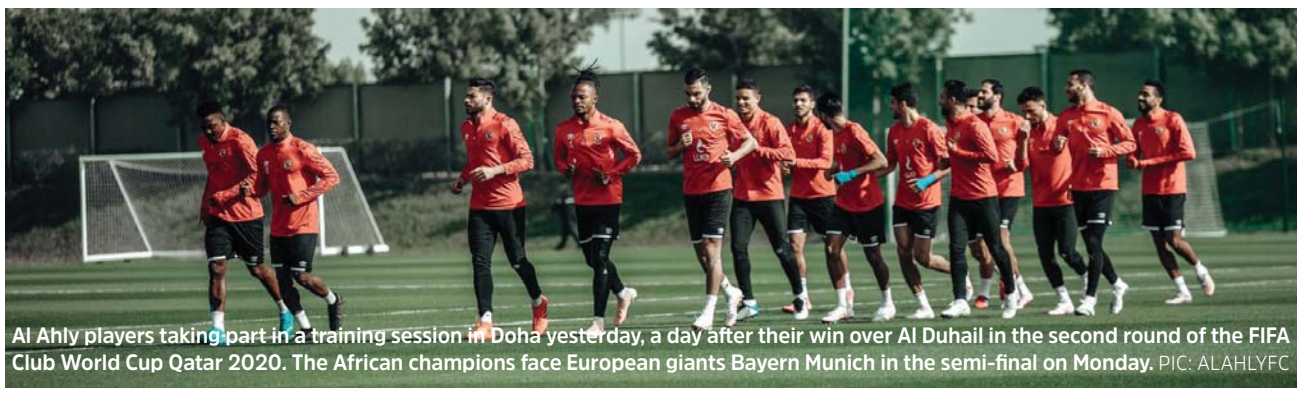
Tribute to Maradona, Rossi

QNA – DOHA

The FIFA Club World Cup 2020 organising committee paid tribute to football legends Paolo Rossi and Diego Armando Maradona, at Education City Stadium. The committee played clips of the two late legends, that included their goals for Italy and Argentina, before the match between Al Ahly and Al Duhail.

Al Ahly get set for Bayern semi-final

> *We played much better in the second half after mistake cost us a goal in the first half. We have learned from this match and we are now focusing on our final match of the tournament. We have to fight and show the same performance we did in the second half against Al Ahly. We need to have confidence and we have to respect the coach's plan to improve and score goals:* ***Al Duhail defender Mehdi Benatia***



Al Ahly players taking part in a training session in Doha yesterday, a day after their win over Al Duhail in the second round of the FIFA Club World Cup Qatar 2020. The African champions face European giants Bayern Munich in the semi-final on Monday. PIC: ALAHLYFC

> *All Al Ahly players were at the highest level during the match against Al Duhail, and everyone was at the top of their focus. We have a big match against Bayern and we are trying to appear in a manner befitting the name and popularity of Al Ahly. We promise Al Ahly fans to do our best to make them happy:* ***Al Ahly defender Ayman Ashraf***



Palmeiras, Bayern bid for more silverware at Club World Cup

REUTERS – DOHA

Teams from two of football's superpower nations found out their opponents in the Club World Cup semi-finals on Thursday as Tigres of Mexico set up a showdown with Brazilian club Palmeiras and Al Ahly qualified to face German giants Bayern Munich.

Tigres beat South Korean side Ulsan Hyundai 2-1 and Egyptian side Al Ahly overcame Al Duhail 1-0 to firm up the last four in Qatar.

No South American team have won the tournament since Corinthians beat Chelsea in 2012 and Palmeiras are eager to go one better than in 1999, when they lost 1-0 to Manchester United.

The Sao Paulo club won their second Copa Libertadores less than a week ago, beating Santos with a last-gasp goal at the Maracana stadium.

FIFA rules mean Breno Lopes, who scored that winner, cannot participate but in Danilo, Gabriel Menino and Patrick de Paula, they have a young and highly-rated midfield, as well as exciting wingers Rony and Gabriel Veron and veteran goalkeeper Weverton.

However, even reaching the final is no longer a given for the South Americans.

When this title was reserved solely for South America and European teams before 2005, the Latin clubs won 22 to Europe's 21.

In two of the last four years, however, they have fallen at the semi-final stage to teams from Japan and the United Arab Emirates.

Palmeiras's opponents Tigres are the standout Mexican side of recent years, winning five league titles and a CONCACAF Champions League since 2010, all under the guidance of Brazilian coach Ricardo "Tuca" Ferretti.

Mexican clubs have reached the last four of the Club World Cup nine times but never the final, and their top scorer Andre-Pierre Gignac lauded his team after they came from 1-0 down to beat the Koreans. "We came here to make history and we are through a first round that wasn't easy," Gignac said.

"We had the character to come back."

The winners of the Tigres-Palmeiras match will likely face Champions League winners Bayern Munich in the final.

The German champions hope to cap a successful year in which they won the Champions League and their eighth consecutive Bundesliga title and whose striker Robert Lewandowski was crowned the Best FIFA Men's Player of the Year. Victory in Qatar would be Bayern's sixth title in nine months, a record for German football.

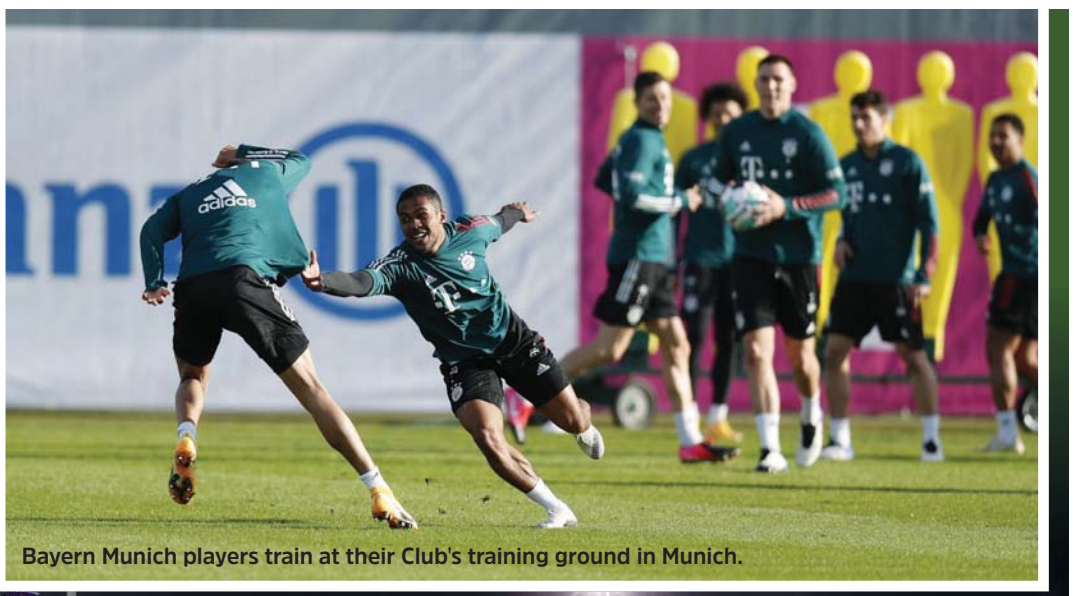
"The tournament is an opportunity for us to wrap up this huge run of success we had with the Champions League win last summer," said Bayern forward Thomas Mueller.

"We want to crown this outstanding year by winning the Club World Cup, so we're very ambitious concerning this trophy. As a European team, we are certainly favourites. We want to underline that and win the trophy as well, but it'll certainly be a challenge."

No South American team have won the tournament since Corinthians beat Chelsea in 2012 and Palmeiras are eager to go one better than in 1999, when they lost 1-0 to Manchester United.

The winners of the Tigres-Palmeiras match will likely face Champions League winners Bayern Munich in the final.

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Bayern Munich players train at their Club's training ground in Munich.


Palmeiras players taking part in a practice session at Aspire Zone yesterday.

UEFA hands Ajax keeper Onana 12-month doping ban

REUTERS – AMSTERDAM

Ajax Amsterdam goalkeeper Andre Onana has been suspended for 12 months by European soccer's governing body UEFA for violating doping rules, the club said on Friday.

Traces of the banned substance Furosemide were found in the Cameroon international's urine during an out-of-competition test on Oct. 30, Ajax said, leading to a year-long ban for the player from all football activities effective from Friday.

Furosemide is not known to be performance enhancing itself, but can be used to mask the use of other kinds of doping, according to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

Onana said the violation was the result of a mistake, as he accidentally took a medicine meant for his girlfriend on the morning of Oct. 30.

"I mistakenly took it for a aspirin because the packaging was almost identical, which I greatly regret", Onana said in a post on his Instagram account.

"I respect the UEFA Appeals Body, but I do not share their decision in this case. I consider it excessive and disproportionate as it has been acknowledged by UEFA that it was an unintentional mistake." Ajax and Onana said they would appeal the ban at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

Onana's doping ban is the second blow for Ajax within a few days after the discovery earlier this week that they had failed to register their record signing Sebastien Haller for the Europa League knockout rounds.

The 24-year old Onana has played 142 matches for Ajax since 2015 and has been one of the key players behind the club's recent domestic and European success.

Ajax have won the Dutch league in the past two seasons, and currently hold a seven point lead over rivals PSV Eindhoven. Onana helped Ajax reach the semi-finals of the Champions League in 2019 and the final of the Europa League two years earlier.

Onana has also earned 15 caps for Cameroon.


Chelsea's Jorginho scores their first goal from the penalty spot.

Tuchel's good start continues as Chelsea beat Spurs

REUTERS – LONDON

Thomas Tuchel continued his impressive start as Chelsea manager by getting the better of Jose Mourinho in a 1-0 Premier League win at Tottenham Hotspur on Thursday courtesy of Jorginho's first-half penalty.

German Tuchel, who replaced Frank Lampard last week, has now seen his side take seven points from his three Premier League games in charge with no goals conceded.

Jorginho's 24th-minute penalty, awarded for a clumsy foul on Timo Werner by Eric Dier, did not do justice to Chelsea's domination of a Tottenham side who have now lost three league games in a row for the first time since 2012.

Chelsea had numerous chances to stretch their lead after the break with Callum Hudson-Odoi and Mason Mount going close, although Tottenham striker Carlos Vinicius, playing in place of the injured Harry Kane, headed one glorious late chance wide.

Chelsea were well worth the victory that lifted them into sixth spot with 36 points from 22 games while Mourinho's Tottenham, who topped the table in December, have slumped to eighth on 33 points.

Our biggest strengths are our mentality and quality, says Bayern star Kimmich

FIFA.COM

In an August 2016 entry in The Players' Tribune, Joshua Kimmich tells his story of learning to play football in his parents' garden in the small German village of Bosingen. Total population? About 1,700.

When one grows up in a small town, there's not a lot to do, so it's important to get creative. After breaking too many of his parents' windows and ruining their plants with stray shots in the garden, Kimmich's parents got two regulation goals from the local club and instructed him to play with his friends across the street on an open space of land. It was there, where he and his friends built their own "stadium" with makeshift stands, that his dreams started formulating firmly in his head.

Fast-forward over 18 years and Kimmich is one of the most important players on arguably the world's best team and is preparing for his FIFA Club World Cup debut, where he will be playing in stadiums that will be used at the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

FIFA caught up with Kimmich ahead of Bayern's semi-final, which coincidentally, will land on his 26th birthday.



Bayern Munich's Joshua Kimmich.

FIFA.com: *2020 was a fantastic year for Bayern. What was your favourite moment of the year?*

Joshua Kimmich: Of course it was an outstanding year. There were a lot of positive moments, but for me the best moment was winning the Champions League, defeating Paris and knowing that we are the champions now.

There's a chance you could win a sixth title on the spin. What would it mean to you to win the FIFA Club World Cup?

Every player wants to win this trophy because the qualification for this trophy is the hardest qualification! You have to win the Champions League to get a chance to win this trophy. We want to win our sixth title in one year. For me and also for my team-mates it would be outstanding, so we're totally motivated to win this big title.

Now you're facing teams from different continents. Is there a special motivation to play against them?

It is special because you play against other countries from far away. It is really interesting because it's not often that you get to play against such teams.

It will be a new stadium for you, too. How much are you looking forward to play in these brand new stadiums, which will also be used in the FIFA World Cup in 2022?

It's always nice to play in new and big stadiums. Fortunately here in Germany we also have really big and nice stadiums but there are no spectators at the moment. This is not that nice, but to play in these stadiums is always a really good feeling.

What do you think is the biggest strength of Bayern Munich right now?

Our biggest strengths are our mentality and our quality. Both are really important and we have both. We have a great mentality in our group. We always want to win, even when we don't play very well. You can always see that we want to win those types of games. Everyone knows we have a lot of quality in our squad. It doesn't matter who plays, there is always a world class player in the first 11 and that is a big strength.

You've been raising a lot of money with your #WeKickCorona initiative. What does it mean to you?

We wanted to help a lot of people and we also wanted to give other people who wanted to help the chance and initiative to help. For us it's a lot of trust they put in us. We wanted to take this responsibility and give money to these organisations who are helping people. This is the big goal: to help a lot of people. We did it in the past and we will do it in the future.



England's Joe Root celebrates his century with team-mate Dom Sibley yesterday. PICTURE COURTESY: ENGLAND CRICKET

Root scores century as England punish India

REUTERS — CHENNAI

England's Joe Root celebrated his 100th Test with an unbeaten 128 against India as he and opener Dom Sibley put the tourists in a commanding position in the opening match yesterday.

The England captain had demanded a big first-innings total from his team after electing to bat at Chennai's MA Chidambaram Stadium.

When they threatened to squander their strong start, Root partnered Sibley in a marathon 200-run stand to help England post a strong 263-3 at stumps.

Root's unbeaten knock was studded with 14 boundaries and a six.

Sibley made 87 before Jasprit Bumrah trapped him lbw with the final delivery of the day.

"Really pleased with the position we've got ourselves into now," Root told the broadcasters after the opening day's play.

"Bit of a shame to lose Dom at the end of the day there but we're just going to try and match that again tomorrow, make use of a really strong first day."

Root won an important toss and unsurprisingly elected to bat, avoiding the potentially tricky task of batting in the fourth innings on a crumbling wicket.

SCOREBOARD

ENGLAND, 1st innings
R. Burns c Pant b Ashwin 33
D. Sibley lbw b Bumrah 87
D. Lawrence lbw b Bumrah 0
J. Root not out 128
Extras (lb4, nb11) 15
TOTAL (89.3overs, 3 wickets) 263
Fall of wickets: 1-63 (Burns), 2-63 (Lawrence), 3-263 (Sibley)
To bat: B. Stokes, O. Pope, J. Buttler, D. Bess, J. Archer, J. Leach, J. Anderson
Bowling: Sharma 15-3-27-0 (nb4), Bumrah 18.3-2-40-2 (nb3), Ashwin, 24-2-68-1, Nadeem 20-3-69-0 (nb4), Sundar 12-0-55-0
INDIA: V. Kohli (capt), R. Sharma, S. Gill, C. Pujara, A. Rahane, R. Pant, W. Sundar, R. Ashwin, I. Sharma, J. Bumrah, S. Nadeem

England began their innings with a 63-run stand between Sibley and Rory Burns but faltered ahead of the lunch break.

Burns made 33 before attempting a reckless reverse-sweep against Ravichandran Ashwin and offering a simple catch to Rishabh Pant.

Bumrah then trapped Dan Lawrence lbw for a duck but Root and Sibley denied India a wicket in the steady second session.

Root survived an early run-out chance and the lack of carry in the wicket meant a couple of edges fell short of the fielders behind the stumps.

His battle against Ashwin is one of the sub-plots of the four-Test series and the England captain took a single off the spinner to bring up his 20th hundred.

Root jumped in celebration while India counterpart Virat Kohli clapped.

Root, who suffered cramps towards the end, provided a template for playing spin bowling, using his feet and frequently playing the sweep shot after his early caution against Ashwin.

India, playing their first home series since the COVID-19 pandemic struck last year, looked sloppy in the field with several misfields while Pant dropped a low catch to reprieve Burns early in his innings.

They bowled 11 no-balls, four of them by left-arm spinner Shahbaz Nadeem.

Bumrah, playing his first Test on home soil, said there was not much help from the pitch.

"The ball became soft, the wicket was on the flatter side and the bounce was low -- we were left with limited options," he told a video conference.

"We put some pressure but gave away 20-25 extra runs in the last session. We'll come back tomorrow and put pressure on them again," he added.

Nortje takes five-for but hosts Pakistan fight back

REUTERS — RAWALPINDI

Anrich Nortje took five wickets as Pakistan were dismissed for 272 but South Africa's struggles with the bat in the sub-continent continued as they limped to 106 for four at the close on the second day of the second Test in Rawalpindi yesterday.

Captain Quinton de Kock (24 not out from 11 balls) and Temba Bavuma (15 not out) survived in the gloom at the close, but the tourists still trail by 166 runs and will be looking for a counter-punch on day three.

South Africa have passed 300 just three times in their last 25 innings on the sub-continent, and have been prone to spectacular collapses, as they seek to level the two-match series after a seven wicket defeat in the first Test in Karachi.

Nortje (5-56) was superb with the ball, his aggression and accuracy leading to a third five-wicket haul in Tests to restrict Pakistan to a manageable first innings score. South Africa's openers Dean Elgar (15) and Aiden Markram were positive at the start of the innings, but disaster struck as they lost two wickets in the final two balls of the middle session.

Elgar was caught by wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan off the bowling of Hasan Ali (2-29), and the very next delivery Rassie van der Dussen was deceived by a ball that kept low and clattered into his stumps.

Faf du Plessis (17) looked in control until he inexplicably tried to cut a wide Faheem Ashraf delivery and edged to Rizwan.

The visitors were dealt a further blow when left-arm spinner Nauman Ali deceived Markram (32) and the latter chipped a simple catch to Shaheen Shah at mid-wicket.

Pakistan had resumed their innings on 145 for three but lost their two set batsmen from the day before in quick succession.

Captain Babar Azam (77) edged the second delivery of the morning from Nortje to Du Plessis at second slip, before the centurion from the first Test, Fawad Alam (45) was run out by a direct hit from Bavuma.

Babar and Fawad had put on 127 for the fourth wicket to rescue the home side from a precarious 22 for three on the first morning.

Faheem Ashraf picked up the momentum with a superb unbeaten 78, but ran out of partners as Nortje chipped away at the wickets column to leave the home side all out just before tea.

SCOREBOARD

PAKISTAN 1st innings (overnight 145-3)
Imran Butt c de Kock b Maharaj 15
Abid Ali c Markram b Nortje 6
Azhar Ali lbw b Maharaj 0
Babar Azam c du Plessis b Nortje 77
Fawad Alam run out 45
Mohammad Rizwan c Rabada b Nortje 18
Faheem Ashraf not out 78
Hasan Ali c Elgar b Maharaj 8
Yasir Shah c and b Mulder 8
Nauman Ali c Markram b Nortje 8
Shaheen Shah Afridi c Elgra b Nortje 0
Extras: (b2, lb2, nb5) 9
TOTAL (114.3 overs, all out) 272
Fall of wickets: 1-21 (Butt), 2-21 (Azhar), 3-22 (Abid), 4-145 (Azam), 5-149 (Alam), 6-190 (Rizwan), 7-221 (Hasan), 8-251 (Yasir), 9-272 (Nauman)
Bowling: Rabada 21-2-72-0, Nortje 24.3-8-56-5 (3nb), Maharaj 45-11-90-3, Linde 5.5-2-4-0, Elgar 1.1-0-6-0, Mulder 17-7-40-1 (2nb)

SOUTH AFRICA 1st innings
D. Elgar c Rizwan b Hasan 15
A. Markram c Shaheen b Nauman 32
R. van der Dussen b Hasan 0
F. du Plessis c Rizwan b Ashraf 17
T. Bavuma not out 15
Q. de Kock not out 24
Extras: (nb3) 3
Total: (28 overs; for four wkts) 106
Still to bat: G. Linde, W. Mulder, K. Rabada, K. Maharaj, A. Nortje
Fall of wickets: 1-26 (Elgar), 2-26 (Dussen), 3-55 (du Plessis), 4-81 (Markram)
Bowling; Shaheen 5-1-19-0, Hasan 5-0-29-2 (nb3), Ashraf 5-0-16-1, Nauman 9-5-19-1, Yasir 4-1-23-0



Pakistan's Faheem Ashraf (left) celebrates his half century with team-mate Yasir Shah.

Bangladesh stay in control of first Test

AP — CHATTOGRAM

Mehidy Hasan followed up his first Test century with 4-58 as Bangladesh stayed in control of the first Test against West Indies yesterday.

Bangladesh reached 47-3 in its second innings at stumps on day 3, stretching its lead to 218 on an increasingly deteriorating pitch.

Captain Mominul Haque (31) and Mushfiqur Rahim (10) are at the crease. Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam hopes Bangladesh can set West Indies a target of more than 350 but said "we are capable of even defending 250 runs on this wicket."

West Indies was bowled out for 259 in its first innings in reply to Bangladesh's 430, giving the hosts a 171-run lead.

Skipper Kraigg Brathwaite led the charge with 76 after West Indies resumed on 75-2.

The captain's innings was vital in resisting Bangladesh's spinners. Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam (2-84) broke through on the opening delivery, dismissing Nkrumah Bonner for 17. But Brathwaite led the repair job, sharing a 55-run partnership with debutant Kyle Mayers.

Nayeem Hasan (2-54) ended the stand, removing Brathwaite who was unable to judge a delivery that spun sharply to rattle his stumps. Brathwaite's innings included 12 boundaries.

Offspinner Mehidy, who scored 103 in the first innings, claimed Mayers for 40 to take the first of his four wickets.

Mehidy's excellent bowling, with support from Nayeem and Taijul, covered up the absence of Shakib Al Hasan due to a fresh thigh injury. Shakib was playing this Test after recovering from a groin injury.

SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH 1st innings 430
WEST INDIES 1st innings (overnight 75-2)
Kraigg Brathwaite b Nayeem 76
John Campbell lbw b Mustafizur 3
Shayne Moseley lbw Mustafizur 2
Nkrumah Bonner c Najmul b Taijul 17
Kyle Mayers lbw b Mehidy 40
Jermaine Blackwood c Liton b Mehidy 68
Joshua Da Silva c Liton b Nayeem 42
Rahkeem Cornwall b Mehidy 2
Kemar Roach c Sub b Mehidy 0
Jomel Warrican b Taijul 4
Shannon Gabriel not out 0
Extras (lb 1, nb4) 5
TOTAL (all out; 96.1 overs) 259
Fall of wickets: 1-11 (Campbell), 2-24 (Moseley) 3-75 (Bonner), 4-130 (Brathwaite), 5-154 (Mayers,), 6-253 (Da Silva), 7-253 (Blackwood), 8-253 (Roach), 9-259 (Cornwall), 10-259 (Warrican)
Bowling: Mustafizur 15-4-46-2 (nb1), Shakib 6-1-16-0, Mehidy 26-9-58-4(nb1), Taijul 33.1-11-84-2 (nb2), Nayeem 16-1-54-2
BANGLADESH 2nd innings
Shadman Islam c Da Silva b Gabriel 5
Tamim Iqbal Lbw b Cornwall 0
Najmul Hossain c Blackwood b Cornwall 0
Mominul Haque not out 31
Mushfiqur Rahim not out 10
Extras (nb1) 1
TOTAL (three wickets; 20 overs) 47
To Bat: Shakib Al Hasan, Liton Das, Mehidy Hasan, Nayeem Hasan, Taijul Islam, Mustafizur Rahman
Fall of wickets: 1-1 (Tamim), 2-1 (Najmul), 3-33 (Shadman)
Bowling: 4-1-5-0 (nb1), Cornwall 9-1-28-2, Gabriel 6-0-13-1, Warrican 1-0-1-0

ATP Cup: Germany end Serbia's title defence to reach semi-finals

REUTERS — MELBOURNE

Alexander Zverev shrugged off a tight loss to Novak Djokovic to end Serbia's ATP Cup title defence with victory in the doubles as Germany advanced to the semi-finals of the team-based event in Melbourne yesterday.

Germany will meet Russia in the last four, with Spain to take on Italy.

Zverev, beaten 6-7(3), 6-2, 7-5 in a high-quality match by world number one Djokovic earlier yesterday, stepped up to partner Jan-Lennard Struff to a rousing 7-6(4), 5-7 (10-7) victory over Djokovic and Nikola Cacic on Rod Laver Arena.

Djokovic's 11-match winning streak in the team tournament was broken, and he will have no more match practice before his Australian Open title defence. A year after crashing out of the inaugural ATP Cup with a huge tally of double-faults, Zverev's serving demons returned under pressure against Djokovic in the singles and again in the doubles on Friday.



Germany's Alexander Zverev (foreground) and Jan-Lennard Struff (left) with Serbia's Novak Djokovic and Nikola Cacic (right) after their group stage doubles match, yesterday.

He was broken at 5-5 in the second set of the doubles after two double-faults but nailed his serves when Germany grabbed match points in the super tiebreak.

Djokovic consoled himself that he had an excellent warmup against Zverev in the singles.

With Rafa Nadal still sidelined with a back problem, Pablo Carrena Busta guided a depleted Spain into the last four by claiming a 6-3, 6-4 win against Greece's Michail Pervolarakis at John Cain Arena.

Though eliminated, Greece ended up winning the tie 2-1, with Stefanos Tsitsipas easing past Roberto Bautista Agut 7-5, 7-5.

Spain retired after losing the opening game of the doubles, handing Greece the win.

In a dead rubber between Austria and France in the evening, world number three Dominic Thiem's hopes of getting some match practice were cut short when his French opponent, Benoit Paire, retired while trailing 6-1.

Barty downs Rogers as Serena pulls out of semi

REUTERS — MELBOURNE

Serena Williams withdrew from the Yarra Valley Classic semi-finals yesterday due to a shoulder injury, just days before the American begins her quest for a 24th Grand Slam title at the Australian Open.

Williams had advanced to a mouth-watering semi-final clash against world number one Ash Barty after getting past Danielle Collins 6-2, 4-6 (10-6), and while she showed no sign of discomfort the WTA Tour later said the 39-year-old was pulling out with a right shoulder injury.

Barty had also needed a super tiebreaker to beat Shelby Rogers 7-5, 2-6 (10-4) in her quarter-final.

Super tiebreakers are being played after two sets in all WTA matches as organisers look to clear a backlog caused by Thursday's suspension of play after a worker at one of the Melbourne quarantine hotels contracted COVID-19.

In the other half of the Yarra Valley draw, Garbine Muguruza dumped Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin out of the tournament 6-2, 6-2 in a re-match of last year's Grand Slam final at Melbourne Park.

Muguruza will next play Marketa Vondrousova after the Czech took down Nadia Podoroska 4-6, 6-3 (10-4).

At the Gippsland Trophy, world number two Simona Halep suffered a surprise 6-2 6-1 defeat to Ekaterina Alexandrova.

Former Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka advanced at the Grampians Trophy with a 6-4, 1-6 (11-9) win over Yulia Putintseva but top seed Belinda Bencic fell 7-5, 6-2 to Sorana Cirstea.