



IT WAS A PROPER BATTING SURFACE WITH THE BALL COMING ONTO THE BAT NICELY," said Simmons whose ambition is to help West Indies defend their World T20 title in Australia later this year.

BCB president expects weakened Bangladesh to beat Pakistan



DHAKA: Nazmul admitted that senior batsman Mushfiqur Rahim's absence is a blow for Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hasan is confident of a strong showing from Bangladesh in the upcoming Twenty20 International (T20I) series against Pakistan, starting from January 24 in Lahore.

While talking to reporters on Sunday, Nazmul admitted that senior batsman Mushfiqur Rahim's absence is a blow for Bangladesh, who are already without suspended all-rounder Shakibul Hasan. "Mushfiq is the most dependable batsman of our team and he was always. In this BPL he proved that he is the best. If we think that way, he will be badly missed. Another thing is Shakib is

not there. So it is unfortunate that we missed both of them," Nazmul was quoted as saying by Cricfrenzy. "Still we think that there will be good contest in the series. They [Pakistan] also expect us to fight against them. Bangladesh should win." "Tamim is back after a long time and didn't play badly. Liton Das has been in form and Afif also played well. There are the likes of Shanto, Naim Sheikh who showed their capability. The courage and the spirit that is required to win the T20 game, I saw it in them. So I think if they can continue the BPL performance, it would be enough for us," he added.

Bangladesh are scheduled to play three T20Is, two Tests and one one-day international (ODI) in Pakistan between January and April in three separate phases.

Ronaldo double fires Juventus four points clear



LONDON: Cristiano Ronaldo struck twice as Juventus beat Parma 2-1 to pull four points clear of Inter Milan at the top of the Serie A table on Sunday.

Inter's title push hit another stumbling block after a 1-1 draw at lowly Lecce while Ante Rebic fired city rivals AC Milan to a last gasp 3-2 win over Udinese.

Ronaldo broke through just before the break, to score in a seventh consecutive league game, and almost set up a second just after for Aaron Ramsey, but the Welsh international rattled the post. Andreas Cornelius scored with a towering header to get seventh-placed Parma back level ten minutes after the break. But the visitors hardly had time to celebrate when Ronaldo broke through again after latching onto a Paulo Dybala cross for his 11th goal in seven games to bring his league tally this season to 16. "It was important that we win tonight," said Ronaldo. "Lazio won, Inter drew so it was important to take advantage."

"Parma pushed forward in the end, we got a little nervous, but we managed to get the result." The eight-time reigning champions have a four-point cushion on Inter, who have won only two of their last six league games, and are now also under threat from Lazio, who are just two points behind with a game in hand after hammering Sampdoria 5-1 on Saturday.



SIMMONS BLASTS 10 SIXES AS WINDIES LEVEL SERIES

LONDON: Opening batsman Lendl Simmons blasted 10 sixes in an undefeated 91 as West Indies routed Ireland by nine wickets in the third and final Twenty20 International at Warner Park on Sunday. Simmons, the nephew of West Indies coach Phil Simmons, also hit five boundaries in his 40-ball blitz. It was his highest score in the format

and came just five days before his 35th birthday.

Chasing a modest 139 to win, Simmons won the match in style with a six over midwicket off spinner Simi Singh whose three overs cost 41 runs.

Fellow opener Evin Lewis made 46 with four boundaries and three sixes as West Indies raced to victory

with 54 balls remaining.

"It was a proper batting surface with the ball coming onto the bat nicely," said Simmons whose ambition is to help West Indies defend their World T20 title in Australia later this year.

"I missed out on the last World Cup because of injury but I am looking forward to the one this

year." The three-match series ended 1-1 after Ireland edged a first-game thriller by four runs in Grenada before Saturday's match at Warner Park was abandoned due to rain.

Earlier, veteran all-rounders Kieron Pollard and Dwayne Bravo shared six wickets as West Indies restricted Ireland to 138 all out. Captain Pollard, who produced

the best bowling spell by a West Indian in T20 internationals (4-25) in Saturday's abandoned game, claimed 3-17.

Bravo finished with 3-19 to become the West Indies' leading all-time wicket-taker in the format with 57 victims in his 69th game.

That beat the previous best of 54 by leg-spinner Samuel Badree.

Liverpool go 16 points clear with win over United

LONDON: Liverpool fans should be dreaming of a first Premier League title for 30 years, admitted Jurgen Klopp even if the German is taking nothing for granted after opening up a 16-point lead at the top of the table.

Goals early and late from Virgil van Dijk and Mohamed Salah earned a 2-0 victory over Manchester United at Anfield on Sunday and a 13th straight league win since the sides last met at Old Trafford in October.

After Salah galloped clear to score from goalkeeper Alisson Becker's assist deep into stoppage time, the Liverpool fans broke into a chorus of "we are going to win the league" for the first time this season.

Klopp dismissed any notion that will only ramp up the pressure on his players, but is already focusing on his next challenge away to Wolves on Thursday.

"They are allowed to dream, allowed to sing, as long as they do their job as well in the moment when we play," said Klopp, who praised the Anfield atmosphere for "carrying" his side as they tired in the closing stages.

"I have no idea whether we will be caught or not, I don't care."

"First and foremost it's the Premier League. We play Wolves on Thursday, it's our next exceptional challenge. I don't have enough space in my brain to contemplate anything else."

Liverpool also have a game in hand to come on closest challengers Manchester City and the gulf in class between the European champions and United was exposed by the 30-point gap between them in the table, if not the scoreline on the day.



England celebrate innings win over SA

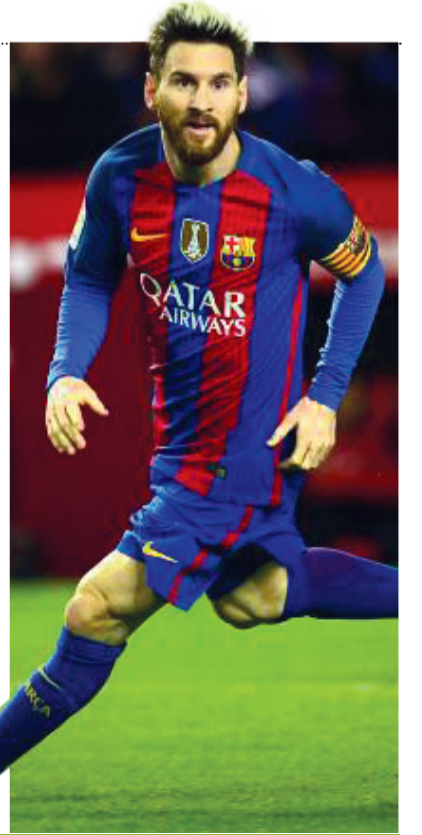
CAPE TOWN: England completed a comprehensive win by an innings and 53 runs on the fifth day of the third Test against South Africa at St George's Park on Monday, taking an unbeatable 2-1 lead in the four-match series.

England were held up by a last wicket stand of 99 between Keshav Maharaj (71) and Dane Paterson (39 not out) and it needed a direct-hit run-out by Sam Curran from mid-on to clinch the result shortly before lunch. South Africa were bowled out for 237.

The partnership between Maharaj and Paterson was easily South Africa's best of the match and showed up an otherwise poor batting performance by the hosts.

South Africa added 135 runs in losing their last four wickets, which seemed unlikely when Vernon Philander chipped a catch to midwicket off Stuart Broad three balls into the day.

Mark Wood and Dom Bess also took wickets but England captain Joe Root could not add to his four wickets taken on Sunday, conceding 56 runs in 10 overs on Monday to finish with four for 87.



MESSI GIVES NEW BARCA COACH SETIEN DEBUT WIN

LONDON: Quique Setien may want a different Barcelona but he needed the same old Lionel Messi on Sunday as the Argentinian gave his new coach a winning start by scoring in a 1-0 victory over Granada.

Messi's strike in the 76th minute decided a cagey contest at the Camp Nou and prevented the much-anticipated launch of Setien's new era becoming something of a damp squib.

Victory also sends Barca back to the top of La Liga on goal difference, after Real Madrid had briefly claimed first place following their win over Sevilla on Saturday.

"I have seen many things from the team today that I want to see,"

said Setien. "But I already saw some of them against Atletico (last weekend) because Barca has been doing great things for many years."

It would have been different if Granada's Yan Eteki hadn't struck the post with just over 20 minutes left or their central defender German Sanchez not been sent off for a needless second yellow card soon after.

The extra man was the boost Barca needed and Messi duly poked home his 17th goal in 21 games this season following good work by Arturo Vidal, Antoine Griezmann and the 20-year-old Riqui Puig.

All three had reasons to impress, particularly Puig, whose inclusion

on the bench was an early indication of Setien's belief in youth. Puig's contribution after coming on should mean more opportunities are to come.

Setien said last week that if he could make one guarantee, it was that Barcelona would play good football while he is in charge and although few could argue this was a transformative display following the sacking of Ernesto Valverde, there were certainly some encouraging signs.

The passing was faster, the pressing higher and Messi spent most of the match playing down the middle, with Griezmann on the left and Ansu Fati, another youngster, on the right.