



Sevilla players go berserk at the final whistle of their Europa League semifinal against Manchester United, which the Spaniards won 2-1 to book their place for the sixth time in the final of Europe's second-tier club competition. (Inset) Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes and (R) Victor Lindelof engage in an altercation following Sevilla's winning goal.

PHOTO: REUTERS/AFP

Nagelsmann meets his mentor

AFP, Lisbon

Having already outwitted Jose Mourinho and Diego Simeone in the Champions League, RB Leipzig boss Julian Nagelsmann now faces Paris Saint-Germain and Thomas Tuchel, who helped spark his coaching career 12 years ago, in Tuesday's semifinal.

The 33-year-old Nagelsmann is the youngest coach to reach the last four of the Champions League, underlining his reputation as one of Germany's brightest tacticians in Leipzig's first appearance in the competition's knockout phase.

Nagelsmann got the better of Simeone's Atletico Madrid in a 2-1 victory Thursday, claiming another famous scalp following the disposal of Mourinho's Tottenham -- last year's runners-up who were beaten home and away in the last 16.

Next up is PSG and fellow German Tuchel, under whom Nagelsmann took his first steps into coaching for Augsburg's reserves in 2008 after a persistent knee injury forced him to retire aged just 20.

"Of course I was his player, but that was many years ago," said Nagelsmann, a decent centre-back in his youth. "I'm more into the day-to-day business now, just like him." As coach of his ex-club Hoffenheim, Nagelsmann lost twice and drew against Tuchel, then in charge of Borussia Dortmund in the Bundesliga between 2016 and 2017.

"Matches against him are always interesting, because he has a



Thomas Tuchel

good idea about football," added Nagelsmann. "I have often played (as a coach) against him (Tuchel) but rarely won. That should change now," he added. "It's clear the quality they (PSG) have -- Angel Di Maria will be back and (Kylian) Mbappe will be fit enough to start.

"We will need a top performance to reach the final." A knee injury cut short his playing career in 2008, "otherwise I would have needed an artificial knee when I was 40," said Nagelsmann.

Barely out of his teens, he was offered a scouting role by his Augsburg reserves coach Tuchel. "It was a pragmatic decision -



Julian Nagelsmann

since Augsburg were still paying me, I spotted opponents for Tuchel," Nagelsmann said in a 2015 interview.

The pair have "never been extremely close", revealed Nagelsmann. "He wasn't my mentor, even if many refer to him as one. "Our relationship was too pragmatic for that, but I am grateful for him giving me the idea to become a coach."

Tuchel went onto to work at Mainz and Dortmund, who he steered to the 2017 German Cup title before joining PSG in 2018 and winning back-to-back French league titles.

All the while, Nagelsmann gained experience coaching youth teams at Augsburg, 1860 Munich and Hoffenheim before moving to Leipzig in 2019. After coaching their Under-17 team, Nagelsmann rose up the ranks in Hoffenheim.

He became the youngest head coach in Bundesliga history in February 2016, aged just 28, when Hoffenheim were second from bottom in the table, but he kept them up to earn the accolade of Germany's coach of the year.

Under Nagelsmann, Hoffenheim managed top-four finishes in the following two seasons, earning a debut Champions League campaign in 2018/19 but making a group-stage exit. He turned unfancied Hoffenheim into a side capable of twice beating mighty Bayern Munich, the icing on the cake being a 2-0 away win at the Allianz Arena in 2017.

Success with Hoffenheim attracted Red Bull-backed RB Leipzig, who Nagelsmann joined before the start of this season, finishing third in the Bundesliga.

Now more than a decade after their time in Augsburg's reserves, Tuchel and Nagelsmann clash for a place in next Sunday's Champions League final.

However, the Champions League is "not about duels against Mourinho, Simeone or now against Tuchel," insisted Nagelsmann. "It's a team sport, and the team (Leipzig) has played outstandingly well."

Nagelsmann believes PSG's quarter-final win over Atlanta lifted "a heavy burden" off Tuchel who was under pressure to make the last four.

"I'm happy for him."

Covid-19 exposing Hassan's failures

SAKEB SUBHAN



On Saturday, after a long absence due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) President Nazmul Hassan held court in a press conference. And over the course of the press conference, he proved once again that beyond obligatory soundbites about regional cricket associations come election time, problems at grassroots levels do not much capture his attention.

Just like the pandemic has done in all aspects of life around the world, it has made crystal clear the shortcomings of Hassan and his board -- the richest sporting body in the country and one of the most affluent cricket boards in the world.

At a time when the rest of the country has resumed normal proceedings amid the pandemic because livelihoods are inseparable from lives, Hassan sounded the death knell for the currently suspended season of the Dhaka Premier League -- the major source of income for most of the country's cricketers.

"The league can only start under either of two conditions," Hassan said. "Firstly, if the Covid-19 situation in Bangladesh improves, or if the vaccine arrives. Otherwise, I don't see any logic in starting the league. I don't see any point taking a risk by trying to be brave."

Much of the press conference was taken up by Hassan's plans for the Bangladesh national team's upcoming rescheduled tour of Sri Lanka. He seemed to have considered deeply the national team's safety and the logistics of going to Sri Lanka as he talked about renting out entire floors of five-star hotels. That is admirable and also expected. The failing on Saturday -- and countless times in the past -- was how he summarily dismissed the domestic cricketers' plight.

"My only message [to domestic cricketers] would be to look at the rest of the world where millions have lost their job and have no income. Let us pray to Allah to help us recover from this pandemic. Of course, the BCB will try to help them."

The head of the governing body of cricket and cricketers in the country said that they will "try to help them". The thrust of his "only message" to domestic cricketers who do not have the cushy contracts of the national stars is others are

suffering, so you must too. This neglect of domestic cricketers is not new. During the players' strike last August when the country's cricketers rose as one to demand greater respect and better pay and facilities, Hassan's anger was focused on the national stars -- the domestic cricketers were not even an afterthought.

Looking around the world, one can see England, which according to Johns Hopkins has the second-highest case-death ratio after Yemen. Yet domestic cricket is going on in that country, not to mention the ongoing England-Pakistan Test series. They have managed to do that with effective distancing and bio-secure measures in place, presumably because there was a strong will to get cricket back on the field.

Why are such measures not possible in Bangladesh? Answering that question may expose more of the failures of Hassan's regime. He talked about regional cricket associations when he became president, but nothing much has materialised.

If cricket facilities in regions not named Dhaka or Chattogram had become stronger, it would have been possible to shift cricket away from the infection hotspot that is Dhaka and focus activities on safer divisions like, say, Rajshahi and Mymensingh. But those measures, over eight years of Hassan's presidency, has paled in comparison to the much more visible activities surrounding the national team.

Even without a decentralised cricketing structure, the BCB has enough funds -- as their officials are often fond of saying -- to be able to take special measures in a time of crisis.

If the national team is the be all and end all in Hassan's eyes, then he would also do well to consider that without a robust domestic set-up the talent well will dry up. The visible cost of not doing everything possible to get domestic cricket up and running is the dwindling livelihood of the journeyman domestic player, but what of the hidden costs?

Is it a stretch to say that many youngsters, in the absence of a viable income source from cricket, will now choose to stay away from the game?

That, however, does not seem to be Hassan's problem because those youngsters and the journeyman domestic cricketer does not have the Tiger monogram on their jerseys. With the pandemic throwing BCB's incompetence into stark relief, the fear now is that it may just be the tip of the iceberg.



Mahmudullah Riyad bats in the nets of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday as the Bangladesh team's cricketers continue their training with an eye on next month's Sri Lanka tour.

PHOTO: BCB

Setien out but Messi staying?

AFP, MADRID

Barcelona insisted they had not heard from Lionel Messi that he wants to leave the club, as an emergency board meeting was being held at Camp Nou on Monday.

Barca officials, including under-fire president Josep Maria Bartomeu, were due to discuss wholesale changes following the team's humiliating 8-2 Champions League quarterfinal defeat by Bayern Munich on Friday.

A report from Esporste Interativo on Sunday even claimed Messi has made up his mind to leave this summer,

although a Barcelona source told AFP shortly before the board meeting was due to start that there had still been no communication with the club to that effect.

Messi's frustration will be among the issues to be discussed along with the future of coach Quique Setien, who is expected to be sacked.

Ronald Koeman had emerged as the favourite on Monday to replace Setien given concerns around the suitability of Mauricio Pochettino, who has previously said he would never coach Barcelona due to his links to rivals Espanyol.

Another option is Barca B coach Garcia Pimienta, who could oversee a greater emphasis on youth before a longer-term appointment is made after the presidential elections next year. Former Barca midfielder Xavi Hernandez would be the preferred option of Messi and other senior players but Xavi has recently signed a new deal with Qatari club Al-Sadd and is against working under the current board.

Another possible outcome of Monday's meeting is that the club's presidential elections, due in June 2021, are brought forward, although it is more likely they would be advanced to earlier next year than the next few months.

Sporting director Eric Abidal will also have his future discussed and could be moved on.



Hockey GS removed

SPORTS REPORTER



AKM Mominul Haque Shaeed, the general secretary of Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF), has been relieved of his duties due to his 10-month absence in hockey activities.

The decision was made on Sunday, 15 months after Shaeed was elected general secretary of the game's local governing body. Shaeed went abroad more than 10 months ago and has been hiding ever since following allegations of his involvement in casino scandal in Motijheel Club Para in September last year.

"We took the decision of his termination in line with the BHF constitution -- article 16 (Gha) -- on Sunday. The BHF president (Air Chief Marshal Masihuzzaman Serniabat) had a meeting with five vice-presidents and acting general secretary and no one objected to the move," BHF's vice-president Sajed AA Adel told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We never faced a similar such situation before. Besides, we did not have any option as Shaeed violated constitution by not attending the executive meeting four times and remained absent for more than 10 months even though the constitution approved only six months absence," Adel said.

Former DCC councillor-turned-organiser Saheed was asked to submit an explanation for his continuous absence in hockey meeting by July 27, but he has not yet replied.

The notice of the decision was sent to all corresponding addresses of Shaeed, and copies of Shaeed's release letter were sent to National Sports Council and Youth and Sports Ministry.

Archery training resumes with Covid-19 tests

SPORTS REPORTER



After footballers and cricketers, archers also underwent the Covid-19 test yesterday as part of the pre-requisite to resume sports activities as the archers are all set to restart preparations for next year's Tokyo Olympics at Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master Stadium in Tongi.

Some eight archers including Ruman Sana, three coaches, masseurs and catering staff went to Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital in Dhaka to submit their samples for Covid-19 tests. The Bangladesh Archery Federation (BAF) decided to restart the camp with 18 archers in three steps with the first batch of archers comprising eight who have been at the camp from Sunday while the second batch (four archers) and third batch (six archers) are scheduled to join on August 22 and 29.

"We have taken the lessons from football and are aware instead of afraid of coronavirus. We resumed training after taking all health measures provided by the health ministry," said BAF general secretary Kazi Razibuddin Ahmed Champal, adding

that some 18 persons underwent the Covid-19 test and the results are expected within the next 72 hours.

If anyone tests positive, they will be kept in an isolation room at Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master Stadium and the federation will even transfer them to hospital if needed, he added.

Some eight archers on Sunday reported to German coach Martin Fredrick for individual training, who has been in Dhaka since the postponement of the archery camp in late March.

"On Sunday, Fredrick gave a motivational speech for the archers, who are going to training officially after four and a half months. The archers have also been taught how to stay safe from coronavirus," said assistant coach Ziaul Haque.

"The archers have been in observation. We will start full-swing training soon after getting the results of the Covid-19 test. The motivational speeches and hygiene lessons will continue in the coming days," said the former national archer. The archers were supposed to shoot arrows from a five-metre distance and that will continue for at least one week before archers switch to 70-metre distance.