



China's Liu Gang returns during the girls' semifinals of the Bangabandhu International Invitational Youth Table Tennis Championship at the Wooden Floor Stadium yesterday.

Mashrafe to start rehab soon

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Pace spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortaza will return home tonight from Australia with renewed hope to make a return to international cricket this year.

"I'm now fine. Dr. David Young checked me this morning and he was really happy with the improvement and what he told me is that he will be surprised if I miss the Pakistan series in December this year," said an excited Mashrafe while talking to The Daily Star Sport over phone from Melbourne yesterday.

The "Narail Express" underwent another operation on his right knee in Melbourne on May 11 under the guidance of Australian orthopedic surgeon Dr David Young. He had injured his right knee in December last year during a Premier Division Cricket League match at BKSP.

"It is too early to say anything about when I will get back my full fitness as only two weeks have gone after the operation but right at this moment I am feeling good. There is no swelling on the operated knee and I can walk with the support of a crutch," informed Mashrafe adding that he is very much confident about prolonging his international career. Mashrafe said that the doctor has advised him to slowly start cycling and swimming now and after two months the rehabilitation program will start.

"Generally it needs four weeks from the operation to start the



MASHRAFE BIN MORTAZA

BANGABANDHU INT'L TT

All Chinese finals today

SPORTS REPORTER

It will be all Chinese finals in both boys' and girls' singles of the Bangabandhu International Invitational Youth Table Tennis Championship at the Wooden Floor Stadium today.

In the girls' group, Liu Gang of China routed Indian peddler Sutirtha Mukherjee 11-02, 15-13, 11-09 and 11-08 to set up the final clash against compatriot Meng En, who however faced a tough challenge before beating Thailand's Sangpao Areeya in 4-2 sets to confirm the final berth.

Meng beat Areeya 11-2 in the first game but suffered two successive defeats (8-11 and 4-11) before hitting back to crush her opponent in the last three sets 11-08, 11-07 and 17-15.

In the boys' group, Zhang Di of China came from behind to thrash S Tanapol of Thailand in 4-1 sets. Zhang lost the first set 7-11 before winning four sets straight in 11-08, 11-01, 11-06 and 11-08.

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AFP, London



Barcelona will seek to seal their status as the finest team of their generation here Saturday when they face Manchester United at Wembley in the most eagerly-anticipated Champions League final in years.

A second triumph in three years -- and their third since 2006 -- will provide irrefutable proof that Pep Guardiola's team deserve to be bracketed alongside legendary teams like Real Madrid's 1950s vintage, Johan Cruyff's Ajax or the Dutch-influenced AC Milan of the 1990s.

Blocking the route to immortality, however, are United, the newly crowned English champions who are desperate to avenge their bitterly disappointing defeat to the Spanish giants in the Rome final two years ago.

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson has never spoken in detail about what he believes went wrong in 2009, when his team were taken for a dizzying ride on Barcelona's famous midfield "carousel" in a 2-0 defeat.

The obvious temptation for Ferguson as United attempt to avoid a repeat of that chastening experience, is to bolster his midfield with an extra man.

Yet to do so would mean having to sacrifice the burgeoning partnership between Wayne Rooney, back to something close to his best, and Javier Hernandez, the young Mexican striker who has been the find of United's season.

The bolder option would be to keep faith with the midfield formation which served United so well en route to the final: a central pairing of Ryan Giggs and Michael Carrick flanked by Antonio Valencia and Park Ji-Sung, with Rooney dropping deep when Barcelona are in possession.

Ferguson has hinted that he is leaning towards a tactical approach

Barcelona

Coach: Josep Guardiola

Path to the final

Quarter-finals

Shakhtar Donetsk

1st leg 5 - 1

2nd leg 0 - 1

Semi-finals

Real Madrid

1st leg 0 - 2

2nd leg 1 - 1

Statistics

Goals for 27

Goals against 8

Yellow cards 13

Red card 1

Honours

Spanish champions 21

Champions League 3

UEFA Cup 3

Manchester United

Coach: Sir Alex Ferguson

Path to the final

Quarter-finals

Chelsea

1st leg 0 - 1

2nd leg 2 - 1

Semi-finals

Schalke

1st leg 0 - 2

2nd leg 4 - 1

Statistics

Goals for 18

Goals against 4

Yellow cards 12

Red cards 0

Honours

English champions 19

Champions League 3

UEFA Cup 1

London, May 28, 2011

Wembley stadium

90,000 spectators

Referee: Viktor Kassai (HUN)

Lionel Messi

Aged 23

Argentine

12 matches played

11 goals scored

Wayne Rooney

Aged 25

English

8 matches played

3 goals scored

Previous winners

2010 Inter Milan

2009 Barcelona

2008 Manchester United

2007 AC Milan

2006 Barcelona

that is more in keeping with United's attacking traditions.

"We have players who can cause any team a lot of bother and hopefully those attacking players will give Barcelona the problems that everyone thinks they are going to give us," Ferguson said.

"It's not just about Barcelona, it's about us too. We have to work out what gives us the best chance of winning the match. It will be down to how we operate the attacking part."

Yet the threats for United are obvious and many.

To prevail at Wembley they will have to come up with a gameplan that neutralises an attack led by Lionel Messi, operating in front of a bejewelled midfield encrusted with the twin talents of Andres Iniesta and Xavi Hernandez.

Messi has been in magical form for Barcelona in Europe, contributing 11 goals and evoking tributes

PROBABLE TEAMS

BARCELONA (4-3-3):
Valdez; Alves, Pique, Puyol, Abidal; Busquets, Xavi, Iniesta; Messi, Villa, Pedro

MANCHESTER UNITED (4-4-2):
Van der Sar; Rafael, Ferdinand, Vidic, Evra; Valencia, Carrick, Giggs, Park; Rooney, Hernandez

from some admirers that he already deserves to be ranked alongside the likes of Pele and Diego Maradona.

One more goal on Saturday will see Messi equal Ruud van Nistlerooy's record of 12 in a single Champions League campaign.

But displaying the sort of modesty that is part of the diminutive

Argentinian's appeal, Messi says he is not interested in personal milestones.

"Goals are only important if they win you games," Messi said. "If I don't score and Barcelona win the Champions League, it's unimportant whether I find the net or not. My interest is in the collective success of the team."

Ferguson is confident however that Messi can be dealt with.

"We have played against Barcelona three times with Messi in the team," Ferguson said. "But there is always a solution to every good player. Hopefully we can find one on Saturday."

United will take encouragement from the fact that other teams have already demonstrated that Barcelona can be vulnerable against opponents who counter-attack at speed.

Arsenal scored a 2-1 victory over the Catalans in the last 16 first leg in

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It's Bangalore vs Chennai

AFP, Chennai

Chris Gayle hammered 89 off just 47 balls as Royal Challengers Bangalore thrashed Mumbai Indians by 43 runs to storm into their second Indian Premier League final.

The hard-hitting West Indies opener hit nine fours and five sixes to help Bangalore pile up an imposing 185-4 before Daniel Vettori grabbed three wickets to restrict Mumbai to 142-8 in 20 overs at the Chidambaram Stadium.

Gayle, the highest run-getter of the tournament with 608 runs from 11 innings, also shared 113 runs with his young opening partner Mayank Agarwal who made a fine 41 off 31 balls.

Bangalore, losing finalists of the 2009 IPL

edition, will now take on Chennai in the title clash at the same venue on Saturday.

Mumbai's chase began on a promising note but Bangalore bowlers struck back to reduce them to 89-6 by the 13th over.

After losing opener Aiden Bizzard early, Mumbai promoted Harbhajan Singh up the order at number three but the bold move backfired as he was dismissed by medium-pacer Sreenath Aravind for a seven-ball 13.

Skipper Sachin Tendulkar kept Mumbai in the hunt, mixing caution and aggression during a 40-run effort off 24 balls but his dismissal in the eighth over triggered a batting collapse.

Middle-order batsman Rohit Sharma (13) was caught by Luke Pomersbach off Vettori and two balls later Ambati Rayudu was trapped leg before by the left-arm spinner.

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Chris Gayle launches one of his five sixes against Mumbai Indians during Royal Challengers Bangalore's IPL qualifier two match at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai last night.

SET Max
Indian Premier League
FINAL
Bangalore v Chennai
Live from 8:30pm

TEN Action+
UEFA Champions League
FINAL
Man United v Barcelona
Live from 12:45am (Sunday)

STAR Cricket
England v Sri Lanka
First Test, Day 3
Live from 4:00pm

STAR Sports
French Open
Live from 3:00pm

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