

MAN CITY

end 44-year wait

AFP, London

 Manchester City were crowned Premier League champions on Sunday after an incredible fightback which saw them score twice in injury time to beat QPR 3-2 and seal the title on goal difference.

City's dreams of a first title in 44 years appeared to be in tatters as 10-man Rangers led 2-1 after 90 minutes courtesy of goals from Djibril Cisse and Jamie Mackie following Pablo Zabaleta's opener.

But as Manchester United prepared to celebrate snatching a 20th league title following their 1-0 win at Sunderland, Edin Dzeko and Sergio Aguero struck twice in two minutes to seal the most enthralling title duel in years.

"The last few minutes were incredible. This is for our supporters, they deserve this," City manager Roberto Mancini said.

"To win like this is incredible. I have never seen a finish like this,

"We had a lot of chances, we deserve to win this championship. It's fantastic. After 44 years I dedicate this to all our supporters. It's a crazy season, crazy last minutes."

After a nervy start, City took the lead five minutes from half-time through Zabaleta, the Argentinian fullback darting onto a deft through ball from Yaya Toure to shoot high into the net past Rangers keeper Paddy Kenny.

The goal sent relief coursing around Eastlands as City prepared for their championship party.

But Eastlands was stunned into silence shortly after half-time when a blunder by Joleon Lescott let in Cisse who raced clear and thundered an equaliser past Joe Hart.

Even then, the force still seemed to be with City, as QPR captain Joey Barton was sent off in an incident that defied belief.

The fiery midfielder was given his marching orders by referee Mike Dean for a retaliatory elbow on Carlos Tevez following an off-the-ball clash.

As Barton left the pitch, the midfielder then angrily kneeed Aguero in the back of the thigh to leave himself facing a lengthy ban.

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Manchester City's Argentine striker Sergio Aguero (grounded) is mobbed by his teammates after his 94th minute winner against Queens Park Rangers in what was probably English Premier League's most dramatic championship-deciding game at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

What about Premier League?

MOHAMMAD ISAM

 The straw-coloured, barren outfield at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur symbolises a change in season for cricket in the country. With the monsoon now just weeks away, the off-season work in the country's most visible sporting venue means that it is time to wrap up the 2011-12 season.

The groundstaff, led by curator Gamini de Silva, are working on planting new grass seeds, of the Bermuda kind, on the Mirpur outfield. Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) grounds committee has decided to undertake the overhauling of the playing area since there is no scheduled cricket at the venue till October this year when the new season begins. The sterile look in Mirpur is because

the groundstaff have burned the grass and are now about to plant the new seeds from May 25.

They have undertaken similar projects at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium and Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong to renovate the drainage system.

In the meantime, the Tigers will begin a fitness camp from May 20 within the Mirpur premises as it is now resourceful enough to hold a few camps in the adjacent facilities.

The closing up of the Mirpur ground and the beginning of the camp also mean that no chance of a resumption of the Dhaka Premier League is now almost a foregone conclusion.

None of the sides involved will budge, despite encouraging words whenever the media enquire.

Now the BCB president AHM Mustafa Kamal will sit with the six

Super League clubs -- Abahani, Mohammedan, Victoria Sporting Club, Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, Old DOHS Club and Gazi Tank -- on May 15 to discuss the stalemate.

The president, if one can remember, was requested to intervene by the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) when they had first stopped the proceedings on the evening of March 28, the day Abahani refused to continue their match against Victoria Sporting Club in Mirpur.

When the CCDM put it at the BCB chief's behest, an emergency meeting decided that a high-powered four-member committee would bring about a solution. But senior vice-president Mahbubul Anam, Gazi Ashraf Hossain, Sirajuddin Mohammad Alamgir and Dewan Shafiu Arefin failed to find a solution.

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Rajasthan punish Pune

PTI, Jaipur



Ajit Chandila claimed four wickets, including the first hat-trick of the season, in a sensational spin-bowling spell as Rajasthan Royals crushed Pune Warriors by 45 runs in a lopsided Indian Premier League match on Sunday.

Little-known Chandila claimed his four wickets for just 13 runs from four overs as he single-handedly demolished Pune, who were already out of play-offs contention. The Sri Lankan off-spinner needed just 17 balls to grab his four wickets.

Chandila, who was playing in only his second match of the IPL, was though not getting prodigious turn from the Sawai Man Singh Stadium pitch and the batsmen were also partly to be blamed for their poor shots.

With the win, Rajasthan remained in contention for a play-offs spot with 14 points

from 14 matches.

Set to score a challenging 171 for a win, the match was as good as over for Pune by the fifth over when they were down four wickets for just 26 with their top-four failing to reach double digit.

Captain Sourav Ganguly, who was embroiled in a controversy over his place in the team, scored two while Jesse Ryder, Robin Uthappa and Anustup Majumdar made one, six and nine respectively.

Steven Smith top-scored with 37 while Callum Fergusson and Angelo Mathews made identical 23. Smith and Mathews shared 39 runs from four overs for the sixth wicket to give a semblance of a fight before the former was out in the 15th over.

Earlier, Watson and Ajinkya Rahane struck half centuries as Rajasthan scored a challenging 170 for four.

The highlight of Rajasthan innings after choosing to bat first was the 94-run stand for

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BSF mulling Indian coach

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Swimming Federation (BSF) is considering signing Indian Rajib De as national swimming coach up to the next South Asian Games. The FINA certified coach arrived in Dhaka on Friday to conduct a 10-day training camp.

The Indian coach has already conducted training for two days with 10 swimmers at the National Swimming Complex and will continue till May 20 before travelling to the USA to conduct another training programme at the Southern University for six weeks.

"We are happy with the way he has been conducting training and it seems to us that he is well-versed in modern technology as well as sports medicine," said BSF general secretary Mahubur Rahman Shaheen yesterday.

The BSF is expecting to get a coach who has a good knowledge of modern technology like former Korean coach Park Te Gun, who coached Bangladesh swimmers for more than a year for the 11th SA Games held in Bangladesh in 2010.

"Indian coach Rajib is supposed to be back in Bangladesh again on July 7 to work with Olympic-

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Nasir the crowd favourite



SPORTS REPORTER

Nasir Hossain made a decent contribution with the bat as Asia-Canada XI beat the World XI by three wickets in an all-star Twenty20 game at the Rogers Centre in Toronto on Saturday.

Though he got out in the twenties and didn't take a wicket, it was enough to leave an impression on the Bangladeshi expatriates who made up the majority of the spectators at the game.

The Asia-Canada XI reached their target of 167 runs in 19 overs after World XI 164-6 in 20 overs.

Coming in to bat at No 4, the Tigers all-rounder struck three boundaries in his 20-ball 21 and shared a quick 35-run third wicket stand with Hiral Patel, before he gave South Africa wicketkeeper Mark Boucher an edge off paceman Tino Best. Nasir apart, Sri Lanka great Sanath Jayasuriya hammered 41 off 24 balls with seven fours and a six during the chase.

Nasir also took two catches to dismiss New Zealander Jacob Oram (a spectacular one at the long-on boundary) and Boucher but was generous with his off-spin; he gave away 22 runs in his only over.

Not only were the supporters treated to his on-field performance, Nasir fulfilled all their requests for autographs and photos at the end of the game.

"After the match was over, Nasir immediately walked up to the sidelines where the majority of the Bangladeshi fans

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

The Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur has gone into off-season mode with the groundstaff having burned the entire outfield so that they can plant a new kind of grass from May 25.