

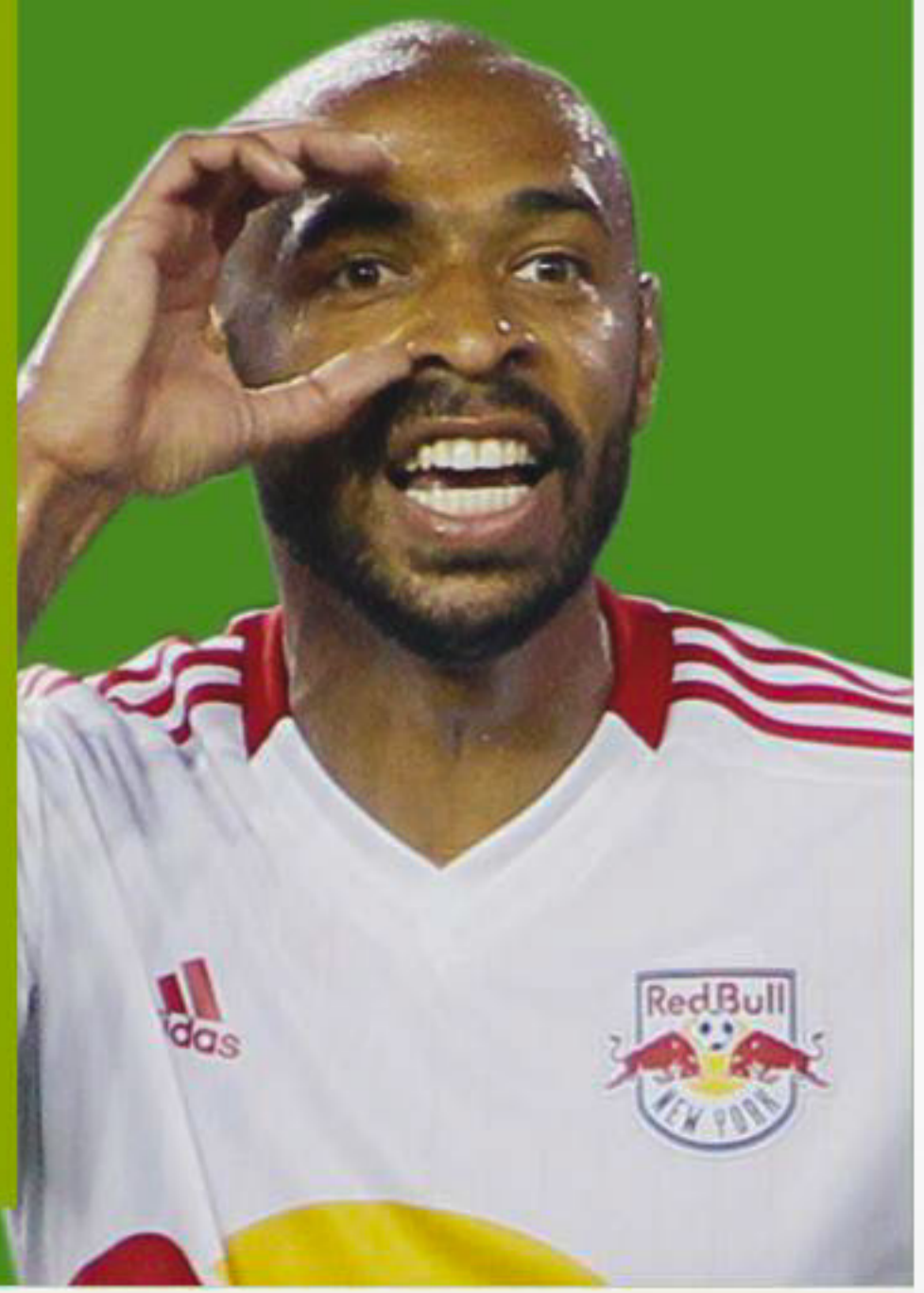
Star SPORT

DHAKA SUNDAY MAY 27, 2012, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Henry MLS's top earner

Thierry Henry has eclipsed David Beckham as the highest-paid player in Major League Soccer after Beckham took a pay cut to stay with the Los Angeles Galaxy this season, according to figures released by the player's union on Friday. The 34-year-old Henry, France's all-time leading scorer, now tops the salary table earning \$5.6 million (4.5 euro) in 2012 playing for the New York Red Bulls. Henry's Red Bulls teammate Rafa Marquez of Mexico -- who like Henry joined the team in 2010 -- is second at \$4.6 million.

-- AFP



Tigers to play four-nation meet in T&T

SPORTS REPORTER

BCB XI will play more matches than previously scheduled on their tour of Trinidad & Tobago as Jamaica and Afghanistan confirmed their participations in the tournament in August-September.

BCB XI were initially scheduled to play a three-match T20 series against Trinidad & Tobago but it has been turned into a four-nation tourney with the inclusion of Jamaica and Afghanistan.

The Tigers are going to play enough T20 matches before the ICC Twenty20 World Cup to be held in Sri Lanka in September as Cricket Ireland (CI) also agreed to BCB's new proposal to play T20 matches instead of ODIs in late July.

"Ireland is ready to play the T20 matches but they want to play the last two matches in the Netherlands. We told them to keep one venue for all the matches and we are waiting for their reply," informed Sabbir Khan, BCB's cricket operations committee manager.

BCB will also play a tri-nation T20 tournament in Zimbabwe in June.

And the good news is that the Tigers are all set to play two more practice matches in Sri Lanka before their World Cup campaign.

"We have two practice matches as per scheduled before the World Cup but we requested the authorities concerned to arrange one match each against Ireland and Afghanistan who will reach the island on September 4 and we got positive feedback, so our team is going to play two more practice matches before the tournament," added Sabbir.

The Tigers are in Group D alongside New Zealand and Pakistan in the ICC Twenty20 World Cup.

Euro 2012 on Maasranga

SPORTS REPORTER

Football lovers of the country can watch the upcoming Euro Football 2012 on Maasranga Television.

The satellite TV channel has earned the sole rights to telecast all matches live in Bangladesh. Euro 2012 will kick off from June 8 in Poland.

In connection with the event, Maasranga Television has arranged a press conference today at 2.45pm at Sonargaon Hotel.



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Abahani's Ghanaian forward Twum Frank celebrates of one his two goals against Brothers Union during their Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Abahani won 4-2.

10-man Abahani rip BU

SPORTS REPORTER



Ten-man Abahani thrashed Brothers Union 4-2 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday to restore a three-point lead at the top of the Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League.

The win took the three-time champions to 33 points 14 matches, three clear of second-placed Muktijoddha Sangsad while Brothers remained in seventh position with 15 points. The

first-leg match between the two teams ended 1-1.

Both teams came into this match on the back of shock defeats -- Aabahni lost for the first time this season against archrivals Mohammedan while an erratic Brothers Union were humbled by newcomers BJMC. However, this match turned out to be a lopsided affair as they completely dominated the proceedings from the beginning, even after going down to ten men on the half-hour mark.

The goal-fest started in the 16th minute, when Abahani's nippy winger Zahid Hossain was brought down inside the box by Brothers defender Mohammad Javed and Ghanaian striker Twum Frank converted the resulting penalty kick with a grounder.

Roles reversed as the duel between Zahid and Javed got intense. Zahid, the temperamental winger, fouled Javed once to get a yellow card and then pulled his shirt from back to

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Experience at a price

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

It was a month and a half spent on the other side of the rope for Tamim Iqbal who even thought of getting his teammates to sign his substitute's bib rather than the jersey.

The Pune Warriors experience was a new one for the Tigers' opener who didn't get to play a single game out of sixteen during the fifth season of the Indian Premier League. He had waited for the previous four seasons for his shot at the money-spinning Twenty20 competition but the lack of opportunity meant that he spent more time running the drinks.

When asked how he used to react to being overlooked, Tamim said that even his teammates found it amusing.

"The guys even told me that you're not used to not playing, how do you feel in this situation? I didn't know what to say but the selfish thing to say would have been that they didn't let me play. I have always been a team-man, wherever I've played," he told the media upon his return to the country last night.

Tamim went into the IPL on the back of four consecutive half-centuries during the highly successful Asia Cup. The run of fifties was one of the reasons for the Pune management to pick the left-hander, but still they kept him waiting.

"It was very frustrating because I went there with very good form. I thought I would play from the start, but the team is the most important factor.

"So I thought everyday was an opportunity for me, despite not playing. The thing that I liked the most was that despite being from Bangladesh, I did speak during team meetings.

"These are very important because our

team needs a lot of leadership qualities, so if we can speak to big players and in big team meetings, leadership qualities will rise. I'm sure Shakib has done it, and I did it," he said when asked about his frustration at not being able to play.

In a jovial mood at the BCB headquarters yesterday, Tamim said that there was an instant during the tail-end of the IPL season when he thought of taking everyone's autograph on his bib as he always had to wear it on top of his jersey as a substitute.

"[At the end of the season] everyone was getting each other's signatures on their jerseys. I said I should get everyone's signature on my bib, since I wore it most of the time," he quipped.

During a press conference on Friday, Pune Warriors owner Subrata Roy told reporters that he had called captain Sourav Ganguly to let Tamim play in the last few games.

"I was very close to playing a lot of the games, but I don't know whether he [Subrata] called anyone or not. There were many instances when I was asked to get ready but in the end I didn't play.

"I was being told, when six matches were left to play, that I'll get a game. When I shared my problem with them with two matches in hand, they told me to solve it first," he said.

He further added that if he had a disciplinary issue with the team management, it would have come out at the time. "IPL is a very big stage so if I had disciplinary issues with the team, it would have come in the papers. But nothing like this has happened, I have an excellent relationship with them; the owner asked me to meet him and I did from 9am in the morning. It is very disappointing where it comes from and why it is always me who is associated with such issues."

French Open from today

None is an outright favourite

SHAFEEEN MAJID

The Roland Garros Grand Slam event (colloquially and more commonly known as the French Open) begins today and this one offers all kinds of interesting possibilities for the world's top three men -- Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer.

Nadal already has a jointly-held record six titles on the Paris dirt, and will look to go one ahead of Bjorn Borg, who won his titles in the 70s and early 80s. Djokovic is looking to complete a career Grand Slam by adding the French trophy to his collection of three Australian, one Wimbledon and one US Open win. One the other hand, Federer is aiming to add to his already 17 titles and his first in two years in Paris.

The French Open marks the end of the claycourt leg of the ATP World Tour, which is based primarily in Europe, and for over half a decade, it has been the part of the tour where Nadal rises head and shoulders above the rest. This year has been no exception.

After the four Grand Slams, and possibly the year end World Tour Finals, the nine Masters Series events are the most prestigious events in tennis. Three of those -- Monte Carlo, Madrid and Rome -- are played on clay as lead-ups to the French Open. Nadal claimed titles at Monte Carlo and Rome recently, as well as at a less prestigious event in Barcelona and has a 16-1 record

going into the tournament. His only loss came on the controversial blue claycourts of Madrid.

Djokovic's only dalliances on clay this year has been at the three masters events (season record 10-3). He finished runner-up to Nadal in Monte Carlo and Rome -- reversing the results of the previous year's tourneys -- and like Nadal, failed on the blue clay. The Serb has his own possible date with destiny in Paris. He currently holds the Australian Open, the US Open and the Wimbledon crown, and victory at the French will make him the first man since Rod Laver in 1969 to hold all four major titles simultaneously, as well as the only man to do so on more than two surfaces.

Federer's record on clay for the season reads 8-2. He skipped Monte Carlo, triumphed on blue Madrid, and fell convincingly to Djokovic in Rome (his other loss came to John Isner in a Davis Cup rubber).

How are things likely to play out? Nadal, ranked two in the world, starts as the favourite. 2011 marked the first time since 2004 that he did not lift at least two of the three Masters events held on clay, courtesy of Djokovic, who was in the process of building a seven match winning streak against the Spaniard. Nonetheless, he triumphed in Paris. This year, he is back to

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Fans watch clay king Rafael Nadal training at the Roland Garros in Paris on Saturday, a day before the start of the French Open that the Spaniard has won six times.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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