



Underperforming midfielder Paul Pogba (L) has garnered much of the media attention despite uncertainty about his fitness ahead of Manchester United's first ever European meeting against Sevilla at the Sanchez Pizjuan Stadium tonight.

PHOTO: REUTERS

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE Pogba the focal point in Seville

AFP, London

Manchester United's Champions League trip to Sevilla on Wednesday night is the type of occasion for which the English giants swallowed their pride to pay £89 million for Paul Pogba, four years after he left Old Trafford for Juventus as a free agent.

Yet, it remains to be seen whether the French midfielder even starts at the Sanchez Pizjuan for the first leg of the last-16 tie as much due to his form as his fitness.

Pogba hasn't completed 90 minutes in a month as he has been hauled off by Jose Mourinho in defeats at Tottenham and Newcastle. Mourinho described rumours of a breakdown in communication between he and Pogba as "big lies", but has not hid his criticism of the 24-year-old's form.

"In this moment he is not playing well... and the team needs him at a good level."

No more so than in the next few weeks as in between their two legs against Sevilla, United also host Chelsea and Liverpool in the Premier League with all three sides locked in a battle to finish in the top four.

"When he is not playing at a good level the team is not as good as the team can be," added Mourinho.

"I think it happens with every team when the best players, the most crucial players, for some reason are not performing."

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
T20I Tri-Series
New Zealand v Australia
Live from 12:00pm
TEN 1
South Africa v India
2nd T20I
Live from 10:00pm

SONY ESPN
La Liga
Leganes v Real Madrid
Live from 11:45pm
SONY SIX
UEFA Europa League
Moscow v Belgrade
Live from 11:00pm

UEFA Champions League
Shakhtar v Roma
Live from 1:45am (Thursday)
TEN 2
UEFA Champions League
Sevilla v Man United
Live from 1:45am (Thursday)

Frederick's impact being felt

SPORTS REPORTER



It might seem surprising that within a week German archery coach Martin Frederick has already had a positive impact on Bangladeshi archers but it is true according to local coach and former national archer Ziaul Haque.

Though Frederick signed a five-year deal as the national team's head coach only this Monday, the 50-year-old began working with local archers after his arrival on February 14. And a few have already benefitted from some of Frederick's tips.

Iti Khatun, a recurve bow archer, came into the limelight when she won a bronze medal in the National Archery Championship in January. However, the promising archer faced troubles to improve her scores in training until she recently showed signs of drastic improvement through Fredrick's aid.

"Iti could not improve her scoring in training but Frederick figured out her problems after seeing her shooting. Her problem was with basics so Fredrick rectified her basic technique. Now Iti has hit a highest of 316 from her average score of 260 to 270," said Zia.

Sanwar Hossain felt discomfort in his left hand and could not shoot properly but after Frederick amended Sanwar's technique, the archer has been able to shoot smoothly.

Praising Frederick, Zia said: "I have worked with a few foreign coaches but Frederick is different as he emphasises on the archers' basic techniques as well as educating local coaches, who will groom budding archers in their native tongue so that the archers don't need basic training after being called for the national team."

Zia also informed that Frederick wants to build a proper pipeline for grassroots archers so that every archer has competition and feels the pressure to keep per-

forming at their respective levels.

However, Bangladesh's top archer Roman Sana made a cautious observation about the German coach.

"It is not possible to judge him within a week but he seems like a good coach and he sticks to discipline. The way he has been planning looks good to take Bangladesh ahead," Roman said. "I still did not get any tips but he increased my daily volume of shooting. I am now shooting 400 arrows every day while earlier I used to shoot 300 per day."

"I think the coach is finding our weaknesses and strengths at the moment and does not want to change anything ahead of next month's Asia Cup in Thailand."

"However it is a positive sign that he will stay here for a long time and we will get enough time to adapt to new techniques," opined Roman, who is supposed to travel to Switzerland to train under the Olympic Solidarity Committee scholarship next month.

City crash out

AFP, Wigan



Pep Guardiola's quest to win an unprecedented quadruple with Manchester City came to a stunning and controversial end when they fell to a 1-0 defeat at third-tier Wigan in the fifth round of the FA Cup on Monday.

In an uncanny repeat of the 2013 FA Cup final, in which City had a player sent off before losing to a late Wigan winner, Fabian Delph was dismissed amid stormy scenes before Will Grigg's 79th-minute goal decided the game.

A famous night was marred, however, by a post-match pitch invasion by Wigan supporters which saw a number of them confront City players, with striker Sergio Aguero required to defend himself and the Football Association are likely to launch an investigation into the turbulent end of the game.

The pivotal sending-off arrived in first half injury-time when Fabian Delph made a rash challenge on Wigan's Max Power, prompting referee Anthony Taylor to pull a yellow card out of his pocket before changing his mind and producing red.

Television cameras in the tunnel capturing footage of Guardiola and Wigan manager Paul Cook in a major verbal confrontation and being kept apart by staff. But the City boss played down his spat with Cook.

"Nothing happened in the tunnel, nothing happened with my colleague," he said. "It was just please stay in your position, that's all, and then finished."

The Catalan admitted Delph and City only had themselves to blame for the defeat.

Camp for strikers, keepers

SPORTS REPORTER

In a quest to overcome the lack of suitable players in the striking and goalkeeping positions, UEFA A licensed coach Maruful Haq has taken an initiative to train interested individuals at his Creative Football School next month.

According to a press release, the three-week training camp will begin on the first week of March and concerned strikers and goalkeepers from teams of the Bangladesh Premier League, Bangladesh Championship League and First, Second and Third Division Football Leagues have been requested to apply and pay the fee by February 28.

A maximum of 24 strikers and as many goalkeepers can participate in the camp.



The FA Cup's top-scorer so far, Will Grigg of Wigan decided an ill-tempered affair with Manchester City with his seventh goal of the tournament on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

AFC wants BNS pitch improved

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS), the country's lone FIFA and AFC certified venue, is not up to the standard to host international matches, opined an AFC match commissioner following the AFC Cup play-off qualifier between Saif SC and TC Sports Club last month.

"The AFC recently instructed us to improve the ground's condition and make it playable before the March 7 AFC Cup match between Abahani and New Radiant Club of Maldives as the AFC match commissioner, after the match between Saif SC and TC Sports Club, reported that the BNS ground is not up to the mark to host international matches," informed Bangladesh Football Federation general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag yesterday.

During the match on January 23, players from both sides struggled to control the ball on a bouncy BNS pitch, which last season hosted 170 fixtures of the Federation Cup, Bangladesh Premier League and Independence Cup apart from matches of the Bangladesh Championship League, Pioneer Football League and JFA U-14 Women's Football tournament.

Shohag informed that they have taken initiatives to improve the ground's standard since February 17 such as planting grass, watering the pitch and utilising fertilizers.

Groundsman Chand Mia said the pitch turned bouncy due to the use of heavy rollers once a week.

"As we don't have any light roller to level the ground, we are forced to roll the ground with a 10-ton roller of the City Corporation, so the ground turns bouncy. The problem will not arise if we have a light roller," said Chand, adding that the BNS had light rollers but those were shifted to Mirpur once cricket was shifted to Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

However, Chand is optimistic about making it softer and greener by March 5 ahead of the match on March 7.

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