

NEYMAR STEPS UP

AGENCIES, Paris



Paris Saint-Germain had been waiting for such a performance from Neymar, and the Brazilian more than delivered in Wednesday's Champions League victory over Liverpool.

The world's most expensive player scored what proved to be the winning goal as PSG beat last season's runners-up 2-1 to step back from the brink of an unthinkable group-stage exit.

His 14th goal of the season came at the end of a move he had initiated with his blinding pace. Neymar celebrated by performing a dance by the corner flag with Kylian Mbappe and posing for the cameras.

But Neymar's evening was about so much more than that.

Shortly after Juan Bernat's opening goal, Neymar rushed across to the touchline in front of the dugout to make a challenge and then waved his arms in a frenzy to whip up the crowd.

He spent much of the second half running his socks off to help PSG defend their lead, and he also upset Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp for being supposedly "clever" in winning fouls and buying time.

I could say 500,00 things. You can give yellow cards for everything. You act like you die and the next minute get up again? It is not sportsman-like behaviour. It is hectic and was not football anymore.

JURGEN KLOPP
LIVERPOOL MANAGER

"I was not 100 per cent," Neymar told reporters, via L'Equipe. "But it was an important match so, injured or not, I had to be there."

"For us it was all or nothing. We suffered quite a bit but we are relieved that we won, played well and showed the strength of our squad," Neymar said. "We need to celebrate that. After the game we were shouting, jumping around, dancing, so we are happy."

PSG could have been eliminated with a defeat, but are now above Liverpool in Group C and head to Red Star Belgrade in their final game in a fortnight with

qualification for the last 16 in their hands.

"It was clever of PSG, especially Neymar, but a lot of other players went down like it was really something serious and we were not that calm any more," Klopp said. We were aggressive, and unfortunately negative aggression doesn't help in football, we got rather frustrated and angry.

"But we have to deal with it, that's our job. If the referee lets that happen then we have to deal with it."

Asked what more the officials could have done, Klopp replied: "I could say 500,00 things. You can give yellow cards for everything. You act like you die and the next minute get up again? It is not sportsman-like behaviour. It is hectic and was not football anymore. I do not say Paris did not deserve (to win)."

It was a big night personally for Neymar, in PSG's most important Champions League game since the last 16, second leg against Real Madrid last season, which the Brazilian missed due to injury.

This was probably the French club's most significant result in the competition since they beat Barcelona 4-0 in the last 16 two seasons ago.

However, Neymar was far from the only man responsible. There were big performances throughout, with Marco Verratti impressive in midfield, and Thiago Silva towering over everyone in central defence.



A LEGACY OF DREAMS

ANISUR RAHMAN

It may sound like idle gossip that a person built the first stand of a stadium with the construction materials originally intended for the expansion of his own building, but that is what happened in 1953 in Jashore. It stands as a shining example of dedication towards sports from a selfless organiser named Shams-Ul-Huda, whose generosity and devotion extended to paying the salaries of office staff at Jashore District Sports Association (DSA) from his own pocket and quitting his insurance job to serve sports.

Huda, who served as general secretary of Jashore DSA from pre-liberation days until he breathed his last in 1987, thus served sports in Jashore for 40 years. Along with a legacy of invaluable contribution to the country's sport, Huda left behind an unfulfilled dream of creating a football academy, which he first thought of when the southern district became champions in the National Football Championship in 1976 in Chattogram.

Two decades after his departure,

from the institution are currently playing for different clubs in the country's top-tier Bangladesh Premier League.

The junior players from the academy helped Bashundhara Kings qualify for the 3rd Division Football League from the Pioneer Football League in 2016. Abahani tasted its first youth trophy by fielding at least seven players from the Shams-Ul-Huda FA in the starting eleven in 2018. Arambagh



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Budding footballers go through practice drills in the Shams-Ul-Huda Football Academy in Jashore, which has been stoking the passions and realising the dreams of youth in the region since 2011.

Football Academy, featuring at least six players from the academy in the playing eleven, emerged champions in the 3rd Division Football League this year. The academy itself, under the banner of Rahul Smriti Sangsad, had finished in top place in the Jashore Premier Division Football League in 2018 with nine wins in nine matches.

This procession of quality players from a district town is certainly a positive advent in the country's football, and it has been possible because the academy operates on its own premises in a calm, quiet and idyllic environment in Hamidpur, although its players are currently accommodated in a rented building.

Bearing all the expenses of the academy behind the scenes is Radiant Pharmaceuticals Ltd chairman Nasser Shahrear Zahedee, Huda's son-in-law and nephew. At the moment the academy has 32 residential and 35 non-residential students.

"He [Huda] is my main inspiration. In my boyhood I found Jashore to be a fertile land for football -- three to five players always played for the national football team. There were even players from Jashore in the Swadhin Bangla Football team during the time of the Liberation War. I wanted to revive that legacy. Now you have seen that our academy students are getting picked in the national age-group teams regularly and their performances have been appreciated by all," said

Zahedee.

"There has been another reason to build this academy -- I want the academy to produce professional footballers, who really want to take football as their career," said Zahedee. "I have a dream that my academy players will play in European leagues and take Bangladesh to the World Cup sometime in the future."

Shams-Ul-Bari Shimul, Huda's son and admin director of the



SHAHIDUL ISLAM
6 for 64

SCORES IN BRIEF

CENTRAL ZONE V NORTH ZONE

CENTRAL ZONE: 220 all out and 50 for three (Shanto 22 not out, Ayub 9; Ebadat 1-15, Mohor 1-1, Ziaur 1-24)

NORTH ZONE: 255 all out (Mizanur 81, Farhad 54, Naeem 61; Shahidul 6-64, Mosharraf 2-56, Hider 2-59)

EAST ZONE V SOUTH ZONE

EAST ZONE: 473 all out (Rony 53, Shamsur 153, Tasamul 48, Yasir 112, Enamul 46; Razzak 5-171, Mahedi 2-99, Fazle 2-14, Al-Amin 1-40)

SOUTH ZONE: 89 for four in 40 overs (Fazle 29, Raqibul 33 not out, Nurul 19 not out; Mahmudul 2-26, Hasan 1-19, Saifuddin 1-19)

Shahidul shows the way; South feel the heat

SPORTS REPORTER



A green wicket is a fast bowler's paradise -- a common knowledge in cricket. However, only a cricket expert may possess enough wisdom to realise that even on a green-top, a bowler needs to know which areas to hit and have the skill to exploit it.

According to national selector Habibul Bashar, Central Zone fast bowler Shahidul Islam did exhibit some of that wisdom yesterday as he was able to utilise the green surface at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogura during the second day of their Bangladesh Cricket League second round encounter with North Zone.

Shahidul picked up five wickets in the process, ending with figures of six wickets for 64 runs -- a personal best in first class cricket.

"It was an ideal fast bowling track but credit goes to Shahidul as he could bowl in the right areas and knew exactly where to hit the seam," said Bashar.

Shahidul delivered the first blow when he picked up Mizanur Rahman's wicket after the batsman and Farhad Hossain doubled the first day's total, taking the score to 144 for two after 35 overs. However, North's struggles began after that as they lost another wicket off the very first ball of the following over.

It was an ideal fast bowling track but credit goes to Shahidul [Islam] as he could bowl in the right areas and knew exactly where to hit the seam.

HABIBUL BASHAR
NATIONAL SELECTOR

Central then kept North at bay by taking wickets at regular intervals. North finished their first innings with the scoreboard reading 255, a 35-run lead.

Coming in to bat, Central managed only 50 runs for the loss of three wickets by the end of the day's play.

At the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi, East Zone batsman Yasir Ali struck a 174-ball 112-run knock which helped his side post a mammoth first innings total of 473 runs against South Zone.

In reply, South stumbled to 89 for four at stumps. Raqibul Hasan and Nurul Hasan were the only positives for South, remaining unbeaten for 33 and 19 runs while the rest of the top order had struggled. Mahmudul Hasan was the pick of the bowlers for East, scalping two wickets for 26 runs from his 12 overs.



that dream came true as his son-in-law and sons took the initiative to create a football academy named after the prominent sports organiser. The Shams-Ul-Huda Football Academy started its activities from 2011 in a rented school ground in the village of Hamidpur, some three kilometres from the country's largest movie theatre, Monihar, in Jashore. It has since shifted to its own 35-bigha plot of land and has been gradually transforming into what is hoped will be a hub for producing talented footballers in the future.

Avid followers of the country's football may recognise Miraz Mollah, an striker of the Under-15 national team who struck four goals during the 2017 SAFF U-15 Championship, during which two other Shams-Ul-Huda FA graduates -- Arif Hossain Lal and Mohammad Shawdhin -- played in the starting eleven. Later, midfielder Shawdhin along with Mannaf Rabbi, also an academy striker, were picked for the preliminary squad of the senior national team by the then coach Andrew Ord. Another product of the academy -- defender Al Amin -- was in the Bangladesh squad that won the SAFF U-15 Championship this year, while some 10 to 12 players

academy, informed that they have already prepared two greenish grounds while an artificial-turf is expected to be installed soon on the third ground. Plans are also afoot for a dormitory, gymnasium, swimming pool, collegiate school, mosque, teacher and staff quarters and a tennis hostel to rent out for club and national teams.

Academy head coach Kazi Mahruf Hossain said that they have been selecting players from southern and northern districts through an annual talent hunt. They then provide a month-long training programme at the academy before finalising the selection. They also ensure a high standard by dropping unimpressive players from the academy regularly. The next talent hunt will be conducted on December 19.

"We can't provide training for footballers for two sessions a day because we don't have a school. They attend school in the morning and train in the afternoon. We have been trying to train the boys in a scientific way by emphasising on sports science as well as taking the players' age and physical condition into account," said AFC C licensed coach Mahruf, who has a diploma in sports science from the BKSP.

It remains a singular example of dedication to sport that has transcended a generation. Just as he fulfilled his father-in-law's dream, it will be of great benefit to the country's sport if Zahedee's special dream is taken up by future generations as their own.



Lionel Messi opened the scoring against PSV Eindhoven on Wednesday night in a Champions League match, netting a record 106th goal for Barcelona in Europe's elite competition. That took him past Cristiano Ronaldo's 105 goals for Real Madrid, making the Argentina the top-scorer for a single club in the competition.

PHOTO: AFP

'The assist was an accident'

AGENCIES, Barcelona



A delighted Lionel Messi admitted after the Champions League encounter against PSV that his assist to Gerard Pique was an accident.

After scoring a brilliant opener that saw him eclipse Cristiano Ronaldo as the top-scorer in the tournament with his 106th goal, Messi mishit a set-piece that was poked in by Pique in the second half of Barca's 2-1 victory on Wednesday.

"The free-kick didn't come off but Gerard was in the area and he saw it and fortunately it went in but it was not something we had planned," Messi said.

Luuk de Jong pulled a goal back late on for PSV, but Barca saw out victory to seal top spot in Group B.

About overtaking Ronaldo, he said: "I am delighted, I have just found out now. I am happy for this new stat."

Messi was also thrilled to see his side clinch top spot in a group that includes Inter and Tottenham. "We have achieved our objective of finishing top of a difficult group," he said. "We are really happy, it has been a tight group with tough away trips."

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