

What to WATCH

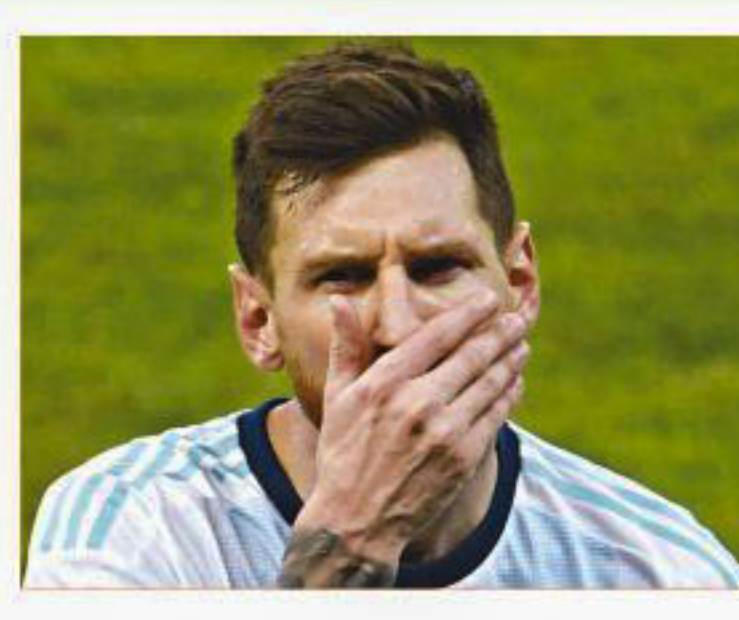
SONY SIX
The Ashes
Australia v England
First Test, Day Four
Live from 4:00pm

TEN 1
West Indies v India
Second T20I
Live from 8:30pm

TEN 2
FA Community Shield
Final
Liverpool v Man City
Live from 8:00pm

MESSI GETS THREE-MONTH BAN

Argentina star Lionel Messi was banned from playing for his national team for three months and fined \$50,000 on Friday by CONMEBOL after he heavily criticized the South American football governing body during the Copa America. The 32-year-old Barcelona forward had accused CONMEBOL of "corruption" after he was sent off against Chile during the third-place play-off during the tournament in Brazil, which ended last month. The ban means that Messi will miss a handful of friendly matches as Argentina's next competitive fixture is not until the South American qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar beginning in March. However, he has already received a one-game ban from CONMEBOL for his red card against Chile meaning he'll miss the first of those. --- AFP



Bashundhara Kings' players celebrate with the Bangladesh Premier League trophy following a 1-1 draw against Chittagong Abahani at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: COLLECTED

'Need better pitches and scheduling'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings coach Oscar Bruzon made clear his unhappiness regarding the state of football pitches and match scheduling as he looks forward to building on the success of his first season following the Bangladesh Premier League title-celebrations at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The Spaniard said this was just the beginning of success for the club, as he is intent on winning more titles next season, having already penned another year's deal with the champions.

"This is just the beginning for Bashundhara Kings. We have played brilliant football all through the season and have emerged as the new powerhouse of Bangladesh football. We will win more titles in the next season," said the Spaniard, who guided the Kings to a runners-up finish in the Federation Cup before winning the Independence Cup and the Bangladesh Premier League titles.

However Bruzon, who knows the culture of South Asian football well, having coached clubs in India and Maldives, felt that the pitches in Bangladesh need to be better for

Improving the pitches is not impossible and it can be achieved. You have much better cricket grounds here, so why not in football



OSCAR BRUZON

Bashundhara Kings' title showdown

SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings celebrated their debut Bangladesh Premier League title in style, following a 1-1 draw against Chittagong Abahani, on the last day of the 2018-19 football season at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka yesterday.

The newcomers, who had confirmed their title with two games in hand, finally laid their hands on the most coveted trophy in Bangladesh's domestic circuit in front of more than 10,000 fans and members of the club management.

The latest in line of cash-rich football clubs in Bangladesh had already won the Independence Cup title after falling just short in the season-opening Federation Cup, and they grew from strength to strength with their dazzling football, shrugging off challenges from six-time champions Abahani and one-time champions Sheikh Russel.

Even though they finished the last game with a draw, their third alongside one defeat in 24 matches, Bashundhara Kings had

the joy of scooping two more top awards -- the best coach (Oscar Bruzon) and most valuable player (Daniel Colindres).

The last match of the season was not much more than an academic affair for the teams as the title race and that of relegation had already been decided. However, there was no lack of spirit from either team as the players tried to wrap up the campaign with a victory.

Bashundhara Kings had the first sight of goal in 15 minutes, with Colindres and Marcos Vinicius linking well to make a quick attack, which eventually resulted in a fine tackling save from Chittagong Abahani defender Mufia Lawal on an effort from Colindres.

The pre-determined champions, however, took the lead, rather fortuitously, two minutes later when Lawal, the man

LEAGUE TABLE						
TEAM	M	W	D	L	G/D	PTS
Bashundhara Kings	24	20	3	1	+40	63
Abahani	24	19	1	4	+32	58
Sheikh Russel	24	16	4	4	+23	52
Saif	24	14	5	5	+16	47
Arambagh	24	10	3	11	+1	33
Sheikh Jamal	24	7	7	10	-6	28
Muktijoddha	24	6	8	10	-12	26
Ctg Abahani	24	5	10	9	-4	25
Mohammedan	24	6	7	11	-9	25
Rahmatganj	24	4	10	10	-19	22
Brothers Union	24	5	6	13	-21	21
Nofel SC	24	5	5	14	-19	20
Team BJMC	24	2	5	17	-22	11

who made a brilliant intervention minutes ago, let a chip from Vinicius go past him with goalkeeper Mohammad Nehal haplessly rooted to his position.

Chittagong Abahani should have got the equaliser a minute later, but Moneam Khan Raju's effort came off the post while the rebound was ruled out due to offside.

Nkwocha Kingsley and Daniel Tagoe then

missed gilt-edged chances to get the port city side back into the game in the 37th minute before Nehal once again kept his side in the game with a brilliant save against Vinicius.

Chittagong Abahani, though, were handed a big break seven minutes later when Bashundhara Kings goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico thudded Chigozie off the ball, with Tagoe finding the net from the spot.

Chigozie then failed to keep his shot on target despite getting the better of Bashundhara Kings' defenders 10 minutes after restart while the Kings, too, failed to make most of their attempts in the second half.

The match tapered off a bit as the ground became heavier and legs got wearier following showers, but the Kings were happy to take a point home and begin their celebrations.

AWARDS	
Best emerging player --	Rabiul Hasan (Arambagh)
Best goalkeeper --	Ashrafur Islam Rana (Sk Russel)
Top scorer --	Raphael Odoyin (Sk Russel)
Most valuable player --	Daniel Colindres (Bashundhara Kings)

Rakib-Faruk panel cleansweeps BAF elections

SPORTS REPORTER

The Rakib-Faruk panel obtained a landslide victory in the Bangladesh Athletics Federation (BAF) elections, which were held at the National Sports Council yesterday.

The Rakib-Faruk panel swept all 28 positions in the elections, where 117 councillors cast their votes. Three voters remained absent.

Advocate Abdur Rakib Montu was elected as the general secretary, having won 96 votes against his nearest competitor Shah Alam, who received 19 votes. Sadat Hossain Sohel, the other candidate at the post, received only two votes.

Farukul Islam, meanwhile, was elected as one of the five vice-presidents during the BAF polls, where the last elections were held in 2013.

"I want to work to improve the state of athletics in the country," Rakib said in his reaction.

"I will try to work with those who have lost in the elections so that we can take the country's athletics forward," added Rakib.

Marchesin replaces Casillas

AFP, Lisbon

Porto announced on Friday they had signed Argentina goalkeeper Agustin Marchesin as a replacement for Iker Casillas, who has joined the club's coaching staff following a heart attack.

Marchesin, 31, has agreed a four-year deal at the Estadio do Dragao after completing a reported 7.2 million euro (\$7.9 million) move from Mexico's Club America.

Casillas, a former Real Madrid and Spain captain, underwent emergency surgery on May 1 after suffering a cardiac arrest during training and has taken a spell away from playing as he recovers from the scare.

Community Shield today

Pep urges City to strike early blow against Liverpool

AFP, London

Pep Guardiola has urged Manchester City to prepare for the "incredible challenge" of battling Liverpool for the Premier League title

by landing an early blow against their rivals in Sunday's Community Shield.

Guardiola's side pipped Liverpool to the Premier League by one point last season after a thrilling title race went down to the last day.

The two clubs renew their growing

Despite a spat between the pair this week when Guardiola hit back at Klopp's jibe over City's big spending on transfers in recent years, the Spaniard remains a huge admirer of the Liverpool boss and the team he has built at Anfield.

"He inspires me in many things. He is a class manager, a top manager. He's so good and it is an incredible challenge for me every time I face his teams," Guardiola said.

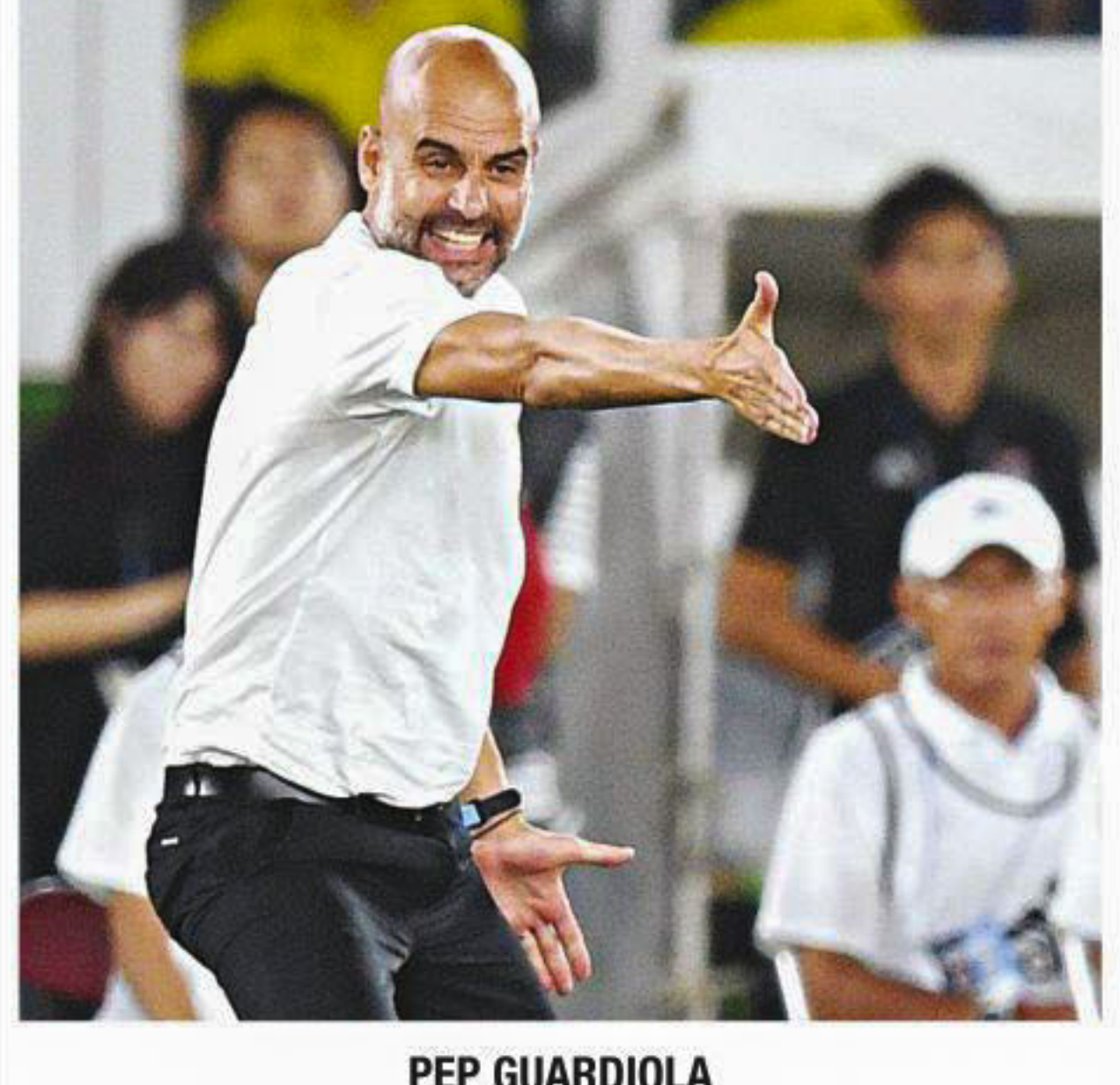
Guardiola's irritation at Klopp's suggestion that City are one of a handful

"We won almost every trophy; not all of them. It was quite remarkable," he said of last season.

"We start from zero now - we start again - but we are ready to accept the challenge."

Twelve months ago Guardiola warned of a need to guard against complacency after City's record 100-point haul in 2017-18.

But this year he is taking a softer approach after being impressed with his players' maturity under intense pressure from Liverpool.



PEP GUARDIOLA



JURGEN KLOPP

rivalry when they meet at Wembley in the annual curtain-raiser to the English top-flight season this weekend.

While City won an unprecedented English treble of Premier League, FA Cup and League Cup last term, and are the bookmakers' favourites to win the title for a third successive year, Guardiola is well aware of the challenge likely to be posed by Liverpool.

Jurgen Klopp's men lost only once in the league last season -- at City -- and erased the frustration of failing to catch Guardiola's team by beating Tottenham to win the club's sixth European Cup in June.

of clubs who live in a transfer "fantasy land" lit the fuse on what promises to be a fascinating 10-month battle for supremacy between City and Liverpool.

With City yet to win the Champions League and Liverpool without an English title since 1990, it is possible they would gladly settle for a trophy-swap this season.

But Guardiola knows Community Shield holders City could become the first team to win three consecutive Premier League titles since Manchester United between 2006 and 2009, so he won't settle for only targeting European glory.

"We will be nicer this season. These players convinced me with what they did last season. There are no doubts," said Guardiola, who may leave Ederson, Riyad Mahrez, Sergio Aguero and Gabriel Jesus on the bench after their returns from international duty.

"At the end of last season I didn't know how well we'd handle our success and I think it was incredible what they did last after 100 points. The target is to keep improving."

For Liverpool, the glamour friendly represents a chance to fine-tune their preparations after an uneven pre-season.

Makelele joins Chelsea as mentor to young stars

AFP, London

Former Chelsea star Claude Makelele has returned to the Premier League club to work as a technical mentor to young players.

Makelele is working with Chelsea for the first time in 11 years after the former France midfielder had coaching roles at Paris Saint-Germain, Bastia, Swansea and Belgium's Eupen since his retirement in 2011.

Makelele made 217 Chelsea appearances and won two league titles, an FA Cup and two League Cups during his five-year spell with the club.

"I am very happy to come back home; this club gave me a lot and now I want to give back and help the young Chelsea players dreaming of a career in football," Makelele said.

"I want to use all my experience to help them become professionals in every aspect and I am looking forward to getting started."

Chelsea director Marina Granovskaia is confident Makelele will make a big impact, saying: "We are very pleased to welcome Claude back to Chelsea, where he made such an impact during five excellent years as a player."

"His long and successful career on the field, added to his winning mentality and experience as a coach in recent years, make him the ideal person to pass on his expertise to our talented youngsters."

"He will be a valuable asset to both our Academy and first-team coaching staff."

Rodgers regrets losing Maguire to United

AFP, London

Harry Maguire, described as a "special player" by Leicester City manager Brendan Rodgers, is set to become the world's most expensive defender after Manchester United agreed to pay a reported fee of £80 million (\$97 million).

The 26-year-old central defender -- coveted by United since he starred as England reached the World Cup semi-finals -- is to undergo a medical at United over the weekend.

"The clubs have agreed (a fee) and there's still some work for it to go through," Rodgers told Sky Sports.

"He's a special player, he's not a player that of course we would want to lose."

"He's a top-class player, he's a good man as well, and everything about Harry over the course of this pre-season, he knows there has been interest over the summer and he's been super professional."

Maguire's fee out-strips Dutch international Matthijs van Ligt who in July moved to Juventus from Ajax for a combined fee of 75 million euros plus 10.5 million euros of add-ons.

De Ligt's compatriot Virgil van Dijk cost Liverpool £75 million when he moved from Southampton in January 2018.

Maguire's value has soared in five years, costing Hull just £2.5 million when they signed him from Sheffield United in 2014 -- Leicester then snapped him up in 2017 for £12 million.

Maguire becomes United's third summer signing following full-back Aaron Wan-Bissaka and Daniel James, who arrived from Crystal Palace and Swansea respectively.

His arrival -- provided he agrees personal terms and passes his medical -- should provide United with the leadership and authority that has been missing from their defence.

They conceded 54 goals last term, only West Ham and Watford of the top 13 Premier League clubs let in more.