

U-15s need big win against India

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh will look to notch up at least a two-goal margin win over hosts India to ensure a place in the SAFF U-15 Championship final in their last group match at the Kalyani Stadium in West Bengal today.

The match will get underway at 3:30pm Bangladeshi time.

Bangladesh's bid to making it to second successive final was jeopardized following their 4-1 defeat against Nepal in their previous match, with both these sides currently in second position with six points, three behind leaders India. Yet all three teams -- India, Bangladesh and Nepal -- have a chance to finish on top with equal points, subject to Bangladesh's win against India and Nepal's victory against Bhutan today.

According to the bylaws, if more than two teams finish on top with same number of points, group standing will be determined by higher number of points obtained in the group matches played among the teams concerned and then superior goal difference and higher number of goals scored among the matches played by those three teams will

be considered.

India (+5) are on top in goal difference, followed by Nepal (-2) and Bangladesh (-3). If Bangladesh beat India by at least a two-goal margin, then Bangladesh will topple Nepal to book the final against India. In another equation, if Nepal lose to winless Bhutan, Bangladesh will be through to final with only a draw against India.

However, beating India will not be easy for Bangladesh as India are in great form, having scored 17 goals in the three matches against Nepal [5-0], Bhutan [7-0] and Sri Lanka [5-0], keeping clean sheet in all three matches.

However, Bangladesh can take inspiration from their previous four meetings, where Bangladesh won three times including two in tiebreaker and lost only once during the second edition of the tournament in 2013. Bangladesh beat India 4-2 in tiebreaker after the regulation time of the semifinal of last edition ended in a 1-1 draw. It was a repeat for Bangladesh of the 2015 edition final in Sylhet, which the hosts won.

"If we want to play in the final, we don't have any alternative but to win over India. We have been preparing and designing our game plan in that way," Bangladesh coach Anwar Parvez Babu said yesterday.



Bangladesh team train at Kalyani, West Bengal yesterday ahead of today's crucial SAFF U-15 Championship match against India.

PHOTO: BFF

Summer athletics from Friday

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The 15th National Summer Athletics Championships, sponsored by Trust Bank, will get underway at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Friday with some 500 athletes from different districts, divisions, universities and educational boards taking part in the two-day meet.

The athletes will compete in 36 events including 14 for female athletes as Bangladesh Athletics Federation looks to find new talents for ongoing preparation camp for December's South Asian Games.

Newly elected BAF general secretary Abdur Robik Montu informed that 32 teams have sent their entries for the championships and that they may use electronic timers for the event.

Isco to miss Villareal tie

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid midfielder Isco is set to miss this weekend's La Liga match against Villareal after the club announced on Wednesday that he had picked up a thigh injury.

"Isco has been diagnosed with a muscular injury in the right femoral biceps," said Real in a statement.

The club have not given a time frame for the midfielder's return but said "his recovery will continue to be monitored".

According to sports daily AS, recovery time for this kind of injury is between two to three weeks.

Asian Champions Trophy in Oct, 2020

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The Asian Champions Trophy, the apex hockey competition of the continent, is expected to be held from October 15 to 25 next year in Dhaka, Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) high-ups informed yesterday.

BHF's general secretary Mominul Haque Shaeed and senior vice-president Abdur Rashid Shikder, who returned from a meeting with Asian Hockey Federation officials in Tokyo, informed the media that the game's Asian governing body has approved the proposed date of the tournament, which will be participated by India, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, Pakistan and hosts Bangladesh.

The BHF officials also informed that the Youth Asia Cup will be held from June 4 to 14 next year in Dhaka, and it will be named after Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as part of celebration of birth centenary of the father of the nation.

The Asian Champions Trophy will be sponsored by Hero Motocorp while BHF will buy the title sponsorship of the Youth Asia Cup from the AHF.

Norwich, Palace toppled

AFP, London

Premier League sides Norwich and Crystal Palace bowed out of the League Cup on Tuesday beaten by fourth tier sides Crawley Town and Colchester United respectively.

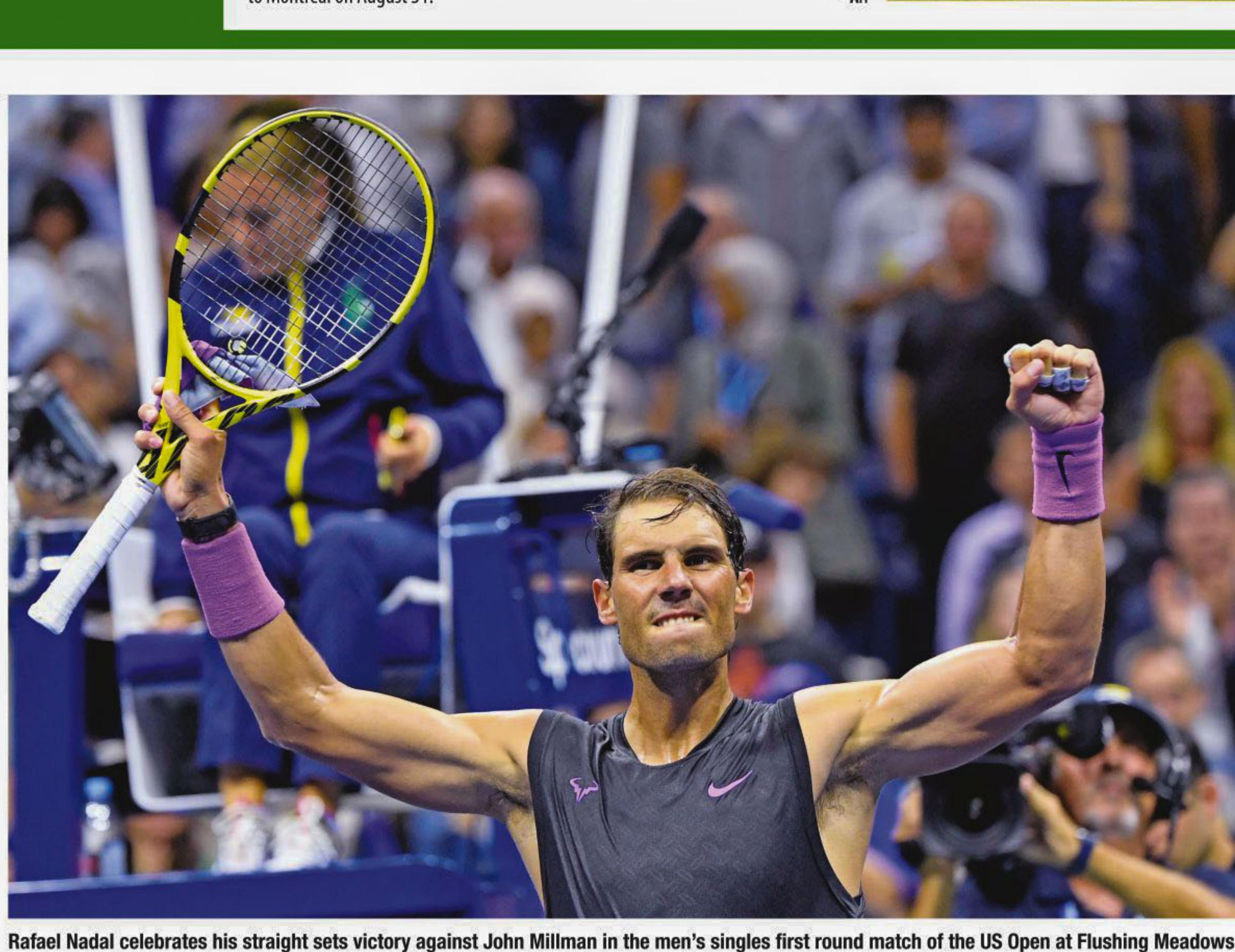
Democratic Republic of Congo-born Beryly Lubala scored Crawley's goal in their 1-0 win over a second string Norwich side for the victors first ever win over top tier opposition.

Colchester progressed on penalties after they had held Palace to a scoreless draw after 90 minutes -- Noah Chilvers converting the decisive penalty.

It was Colchester's first win over top flight opposition in the League Cup since 1979.

Watford eased a little bit of the pressure on under-fire manager Javi Gracia by securing their first win of the season beating Coventry 3-0.

Goals by Ismaila Sarr, who was making his first start since joining from Rennes for a club record fee reported to be £30million (\$37million), Daryl Janmaat -- a superb strike into the far corner for his first goal since February 2018 -- and Venezuelan forward Adalberto Penaranda saw off the third tier team.



Rafael Nadal celebrates his straight sets victory against John Millman in the men's singles first round match of the US Open at Flushing Meadows in New York on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Rollicking start for Nadal

AFP, New York

Rafael Nadal launched his tilt at a fourth US Open title Tuesday with a swift defeat of John Millman as other leading seeds in his half of the draw tumbled out in the first round.

Four players in the world's top 10 -- Dominic Thiem, Stefanos Tsitsipas, Karen Khachanov and Roberto Bautista Agut -- lost Tuesday to ease Nadal's potential path to the final.

The Spanish second seed -- US Open champion in 2010, 2013 and 2017 -- needed barely two hours to see Millman off 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 at Arthur Ashe Stadium with the world number 60 from Australia

unable to reproduce the magic that saw him stun Roger Federer here a year ago.

"The beginning, the first match, is always a little bit new even if I've played here plenty of times," said Nadal, who meets Aussie Thanasi Kokkinakis next. "I think I played well and in general am very happy with the way I started."

"He (Millman) showed last year what he's able to do when he's doing well and I came on court with a lot of respect."

Two-time French Open runner-up Thiem was upset by Italian giant-killer Thomas Fabbiano 6-4, 3-6, 6-3, 6-2, the Austrian fourth seed slumping to another first-round exit, having lost at the same stage at Wimbledon.

"I got very tired and exhausted after two sets. I'm far away from

100 percent," an ailing Thiem said. "It was not the real me there on the court."

Greek eighth seed Tsitsipas struggled with cramps and accused umpires of having "preferences" after he fell to a 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (9/7), 7-5 defeat by Next Gen rival Andrey Rublev in a gruelling four-hour slog.

Tsitsipas, for whom it was also a second successive Grand Slam opening-round defeat, was hit with a point penalty for a time violation in the final set.

Russian ninth seed Khachanov lost to Canada's Vasek Pospisil in five sets, with 10th seed Bautista Agut of Spain succumbing in similar fashion to Mikhail Kukushkin of Kazakhstan to leave that quarter of the draw wide open for Nick Kyrgios.

The volatile Australian eased past American Steve Johnson 6-3, 7-6 (7/1), 6-4 in a match that finished at 1:12 a.m. local time.

Alexander Zverev, seeded sixth, outlasted Moldova's Radu Albot 6-1, 6-3, 3-6, 4-6, 6-2, while Marin Cilic, the 2014 champion, advanced in straight sets over Slovakia's Martin Klizan.

Wimbledon champion Simona Halep, ousted in the opening round the past two years at Flushing Meadows, beat US lucky loser Nicole Gibbs 6-3, 3-6, 6-2.

Sloane Stephens, the 2017 champion, slid to a 6-3, 6-4 loss to Russian qualifier Anna Kalinskaya, while 15-year-old Wimbledon sensation Coco Gauff edged past Anastasia Potapova, 18, in three sets on her US Open debut.



The captains of the participating teams in the upcoming Women's T20 World Cup qualifiers including Salma Khatun -- the skipper of Bangladesh women's team -- posed with the trophy during the captain's photoshoot in Scotland yesterday. Bangladesh will be playing a warm-up match against Netherlands Women today before facing Papua New Guinea Women in the opening match of the tournament on August 31 at Forthill Dundee.

PHOTO: BCB

Rafa offers boat to Andy

AFP, New York



Rafael Nadal revealed Tuesday he had offered to provide Andy Murray with his boat in Mallorca, where the Scot is playing in a second-tier Challenger event as part of his comeback following hip surgery.

The Spaniard swept into the second round of the US Open with a 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 rout of Australian world number 60 John Millman on the same day as Murray won his second singles match at a tournament that bears Nadal's name.

"I'm very happy to have Andy Murray playing there," Nadal said. "It's great news for us, of course, but for him and for the world of sport that's great news and I wish him the very best."

"I just text him a couple days ago saying, 'If you need anything, just let me know. You want to go out with the boat or anything, I can help you, and just let me know.'"

Murray, playing on the Challenger circuit for the first time in 14 years, defeated 115th-ranked Norbert Gombos of Slovakia 6-3, 6-4 in an event he is using to rebuild his singles form.

The three-time Grand Slam champion underwent a hip operation in January following his first-round exit from the Australian Open and began easing his way back by playing doubles, starting with a title at Queen's in June.

"Best of luck, and more than playing in my home it is great news that he is back on the tennis court playing singles after a lot of struggles in recent years. I am happy for him, it is very special," Nadal said.

"The decision to go and play a challenger is because he feels well, my feeling, the way that I see it."

"If you don't feel it very well, you play normal tour and just let's see how it goes. If one player like Andy is able to go and play a challenger is because physically he feels well and he wants to play matches."

Nadal has his sights fixed on a fourth US Open crown this fortnight and will face another Australian, Thanasi Kokkinakis, in the second round after taking just over two hours to see off Millman, the player who stunned Roger Federer in the last 16 here a year ago.

"I'm happy the way that I was able to win tonight. It's a good start," Nadal said.

"It's very special to be back in the night session at Arthur Ashe Stadium. The beginning, the first match, is still a little bit new even if I've played here plenty of times."

"I think I had more or less positive feelings tonight," he added. "I need to keep improving every single day. Winning with that result allows me more to have a good practice. I hope to be ready for after tomorrow knowing it's a tough challenge, Thanasi in the second round."

Neymar fulfils his Netflix dream

AFP, Paris

Neymar said he had "realized" his dream with a cameo appearance in his favourite Netflix show as later Tuesday there was a fresh plot twist in his long-running drama.

The Brazil forward is anxious for a move back to Spain with both Barcelona and Real Madrid trying to seal a deal before the European transfer window closes next Monday.

"We are continuing negotiations, we are closer to a deal," Barca director Javier Bordas told reporters at Barcelona airport after returning from a meeting with PSG in the French capital. But he added: "As yet there is still no deal."

According to French newspaper Le Parisien, Neymar's former club have upped their offer to 170 million euros, payable in two

instalments, with possibly players attached.

Barca sold the 27-year-old to PSG in 2017 for a world record 222 million euros.

Earlier Neymar tweeted his delight at appearing in the Netflix crime drama La Casa de Papel (Money Heist).

He was originally edited out by pending the outcome of his rape case.

Once Brazilian police dropped their investigation last month, Netflix re-released the episodes to include the Paris Saint-Germain forward.

"I was able to realize my dream and be part of my favorite series. And now I can share Joao (his character) with you all! Thank you @lacasadepapel!" he told his Twitter followers.

The world's most expensive player has a small role in Season 3 of the crime drama, which follows a gang of robbers and their assault on the Bank of Spain.

"I don't like football nor partying," Neymar's character says.