

## U-19s take on USA today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will take on USA today in the third and final ICC Women's U-19 World Cup Group A match at Willowmoore Park in Benoni, hoping to finish with three wins after having already topped the group with two wins.

Both Australia and Sri Lanka in Group A are on two points each, meaning Bangladesh are already through to the Super Six. However, a win would ensure that they top the group and avoid Asian powerhouses India from Group D in the Super Six stage.

South Africa or the UAE are likely to be Bangladesh's opponents in the Super Six stage if the Tigresses can hold on to the top spot.

No points will be carried from the first group stage. Accumulated points will come into play after Super Six if a match is abandoned and cannot be played on the reserve day during the semifinal stage, with the side that has more overall points getting the advantage.

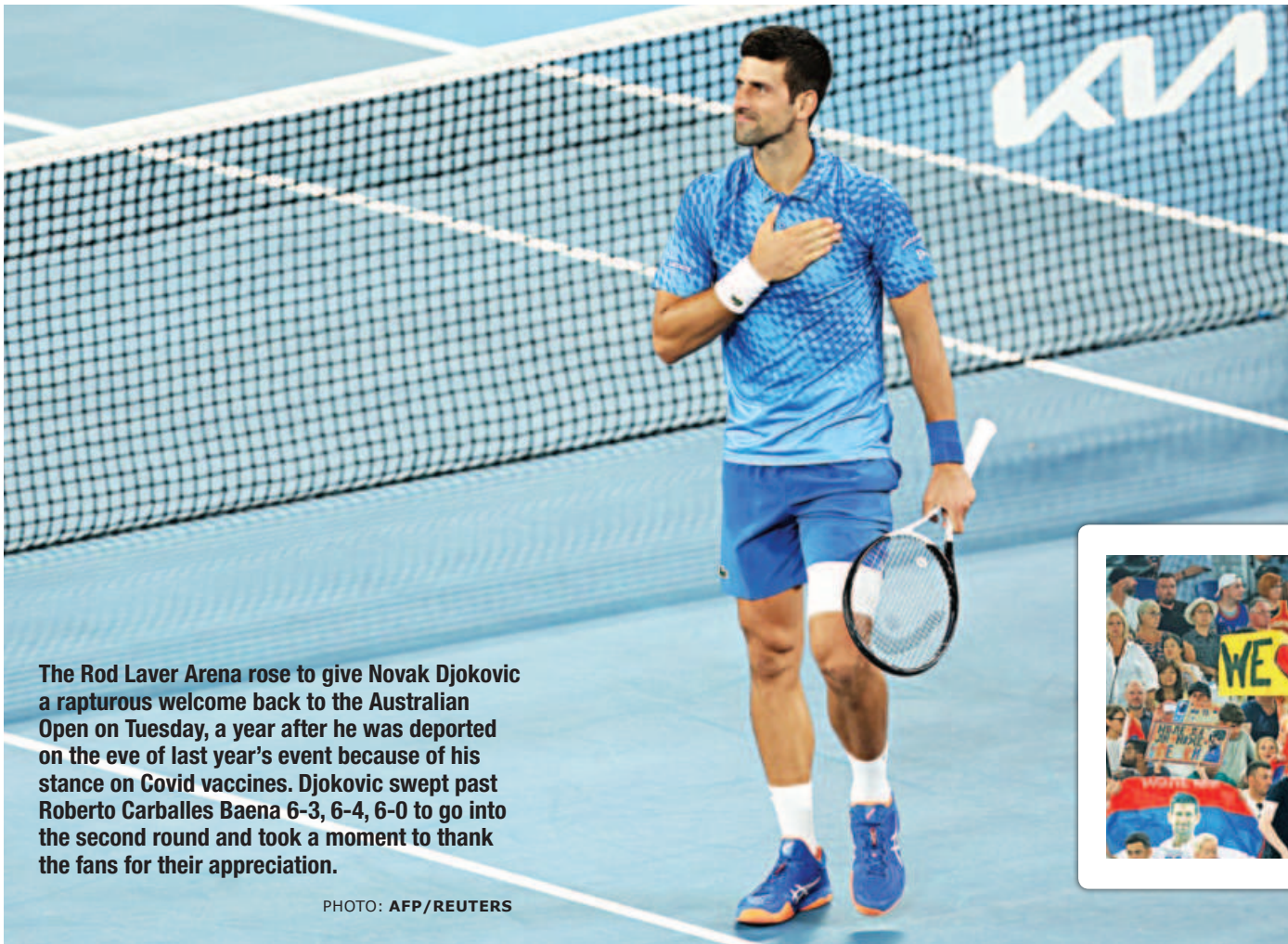
The batting effort from the young guns has come into focus with both games in the inaugural edition of the tournament seeing some tremendous shot-playing.



Bangladesh caused a remarkable upset in the tournament opener against Australia, with Shorna Akter showing her abilities at the death. Opener Afia Protasha then turned heads with her ability to play the big shots, easily clearing the ropes during a 43-ball 53 before Shorna struck a fifty to help Bangladesh to a healthy total against Sri Lanka.

It also gives the feeling that the side are built different to the senior side. "I liked playing power-hitting shots since a very young age. The coaches saw me at the U-19 camp and did some extraordinary work and I was able to play those," Protasha had said after the Sri Lanka game.

Sharp on the field and raring to go, Bangladesh will look to sail through against USA, who were beaten handsomely by the Aussies on Monday. If the batters can keep their mojo, Bangladesh will certainly be able to go to the latter stages following the morale boosting wins in the group stage.



The Rod Laver Arena rose to give Novak Djokovic a rapturous welcome back to the Australian Open on Tuesday, a year after he was deported on the eve of last year's event because of his stance on Covid vaccines. Djokovic swept past Roberto Carballes Baena 6-3, 6-4, 6-0 to go into the second round and took a moment to thank the fans for their appreciation.

PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS



## Djokovic gets rapturous reception on return

AFP, Melbourne

Intense heat and torrential rain played havoc at the Australian Open on Tuesday, but Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray battled past their opponents and the elements to emerge with momentous victories.

Djokovic swept past Spain's Roberto Carballes Baena to launch his bid for a 10th Australian Open title Tuesday, with the Serb enjoying a rousing reception following his deportation a year ago.

The 35-year-old showed few signs of the hamstring niggle he picked up in Adelaide this month as he raced to victory on Rod Laver Arena 6-3, 6-4, 6-0.

After not being able to play last year over his Covid vaccination stance, there were concerns over how he might be received by fans in Melbourne.

But, as in Adelaide, the fourth seed walked out to loud cheers and chants of "Nole", with vocal backing during the match from a stadium awash with Serbian flags.

"Thank you for giving me such a welcoming reception that I could only dream of," said Djokovic, who is chasing a record-equaling 22nd major title. "I feel really happy that I'm back here in Australia and on the court where I have had the biggest success in my career."

"Definitely this court is the most special court in my life and I couldn't ask for a better start to the tournament."

MURRAY SILENCES HIS DOUBTERS

Andy Murray said he had silenced the doubters after defeating Italian 13th seed Matteo Berrettini in five gruelling sets to book a spot in the Australian Open second round.

His renowned grit was on full display in saving match point to topple the Italian 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 6-7 (7/9), 7-6 (10/6) in 4hrs 49mins.

"I think the last few years I've certainly questioned myself at times," said Murray, a former world number one. "There's certainly a lot of people questioned me and my ability, whether I could still perform at the biggest events and the biggest matches. I felt very proud of myself after the match. That's not something that I generally felt over the years at the end of tennis matches. I think I'm proud of the work that I put in the last few months," added Murray, who faces Thanasi Kokkinakis or Fabio Fognini next.



## Tamim rediscovers his mojo

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram

Prior to the start of the game against Rangpur Riders yesterday, Khaled Mahmud Sujon, head coach of a Khulna Tigers team still searching for a first win in the Bangladesh Premier League, was asked about his thoughts on the experienced Tamim Iqbal, who has been struggling with the bat. He replied simply: "Form is temporary but class is permanent."

At the end of the game, those words rang true as Khulna finally registered their first win with a nine-wicket triumph after Tamim smashed an unbeaten 60 to chase down a modest 130-run target at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram.

The 33-year-old has been out of action in recent times as he battles injuries, notably missing the last home series against India with a groin injury.

Interestingly, it was Tamim's first fifty at any level since a half-century against Zimbabwe in August last year. Although

the left-hander was mostly sidelined over the last six months by various injuries, the fact that he had not scored 50 in his last ten innings belied his caliber.

Bangladesh's ODI skipper scored a 37-ball 40 in the second game of the BPL against Chattogram Challengers, but the southpaw did not look comfortable at all.

Yesterday was a different case, with Tamim looking more assured despite being watchful initially. Finally, the stylish batter came down the track and unleashed a gorgeous inside-out shot to off-spinner Mahedi Hasan for a six over extra cover.

It was one of two sixes to go along with four boundaries, but the most important aspect was that the innings came at a time when Khulna were desperately seeking a first win after losing three on trot.

There was no looking back for Tamim after that first maximum, with the veteran playing strokes all across the ground.

His flick off Pakistani pacer Mohammad Haris provided a glimpse of the vintage Tamim when on song.



### 'Egg is the secret behind bowling quick'

Pakistan pacer Haris Rauf, who played his first Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) game for Rangpur Riders against Khulna Tigers at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday, revealed that strict adherence to his diet is what helps him generate such blistering pace.

The 29-year-old's fastest delivery clocked in at 150kph and although he did not get a wicket, he remained economical, conceding just 19 in his four-over spell.

Asked about the secret behind his ability to bowl at such speed, Haris said: "Eggs. You need to have protein as it's very important for fast bowlers. When you have enough protein in your

body you will be able to perform well on the ground.

"Training and diet is very important [for players]. Recovery is also important before and after every game once you return to the hotel. Having a good sleep is also crucial," Haris added.

The seamer also revealed how he worked on his accuracy over the years which made him more lethal.

"You have to train a lot in the nets and bowl in a simulated environment where you can feel the match pressure. Working hard at training prepares you to perform in the game as well. Obviously, it can't be achieved overnight as accuracy comes by working day by day," he said.

Despite losing Munim Shahriar at the other end, Tamim showed no intention to hold back. Alongside young Mahmudul Hasan Joy, he added an unbeaten match-winning 89-run stand.

Tamim also ran hard between the wickets to eke out those singles and doubles, reflecting his fitness, which has also come under the scanner since his injury. Unlike in the first three games, Tamim looked comfortable using his feet against both pacers and spinners yesterday.

Tamim smashed his second six when he came charging down the track to left-arm spinner Mohammad Nawaz, bashing the ball over long-on and hinting at a return to form as he reached his fifty off 35 balls.

It was Tamim's 24th BPL fifty and his first in this edition, but more importantly the innings was one that is bound to provide the left-hander relief.

## Robson steals the show

SPORTS REPORTER

A brilliant performance from Robson De Silva helped Bashundhara Kings qualify for the quarterfinals of the Federation Cup with a fighting 4-3 win over Muktiyoddha Sangsad yesterday.

The Brazilian scored one and assisted two during a show-stopping performance at the Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium in Gopalganj and, although Spanish coach Oscar Bruzon rested some players, Kings were unstoppable and were leading 4-1 at one stage.

Although Muktiyoddha Sangsad struck two goals within the span of three minutes in the dying moments, the Bashundhara Kings did not allow an upset.

In the other Group B game, Chittagong Abahani were held to a goalless draw by newcomers Fortis FC.



Inter Milan had a fruitful training session at the Prince Faisal Stadium in Riyadh yesterday on the eve of their Supercoppa Italiana clash against AC Milan. After training, a few of the players met youngsters involved in the Madh Sports Academy for a workshop, doing some drills with aspiring footballers.

PHOTO: INTER MILAN

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