NAGORIK TV Bangladesh Premier League Comilla Victorians vs Dhaka **Dominators** Live from 1:30 pm

Fortune Barishal vs Rangpur Riders Live from 6:30 pm STAR SPORTS SELECT

English Premier League

Manchester City vs Tottenham Hotspurs Live from 2:00 am (Friday) Sony Ten 2 and Sony Ten 5 Australian Open Live from 6:00 am (Friday)

It's difficult to accept, Nadal laments

AGENCIES, Melbourne

Defending champion Rafael Nadal hobbled out of the second round in a huge upset at the Australian Open on Wednesday, as Coco Gauff beat Emma Raducanu in a

Nadal's wife Mery was in tears as the injury-hampered Spanish great lost to 65th-ranked Mackenzie McDonald at Rod Laver Arena, where the roof was closed because of more rain in Melbourne.

The 36-year-old Nadal was clearly hindered by a hip issue that required a medical timeout, as he surrendered 6-4, 6-4, 7-5 to the American.

It was the reigning champion's earliest exit from a major in seven years and will lead to more questions about whether injury and age are catching up with the record 22-time major champion.

The men's title now looks Novak Djokovic's to lose. Nadal said defeat "hurt" and acknowledged that injuries were taking a toll.

"Sometimes it's frustrating. Sometimes it's difficult to accept. Sometimes you feel super tired about all this stuff in terms of injuries. I can't come here and lie and say that the life is fantastic. Not now. Tomorrow starts another day," Nadal said. "Now it's a tough moment. It's a tough

It's a very simple thing: I like what I do. I like playing tennis. I know it's not forever. I like to feel myself competitive. I like to fight for the things that I have been fighting for almost half of my life or even more. And that's it. It's not that complicated to understand.

Rafael Nadal, when asked why he kept going despite

day, and you need to accept that, and keep going.

"I've never been in a position to complain, life has given me so many positive things that I have no right to complain," he said. But I am tired, I am sad, I am disappointed, all this is a reality. From here on... what I want is to continue playing tennis. Don't think I'm saying all this because I want to take a step back. It is not the case, but my current feelings are bad."

In contrast to Nadal's disappointment and pain, 27-year-old McDonald is into the third round and a match against Yoshihito Nishioka of Japan.

"He's an incredible champion, he's never going to give up regardless of the situation," said McDonald of his beaten opponent. "I was trying to stay focused on what I was trying to do and he kind of got me out of my rhythm, and I just got through it."

With McDonald leading 6-4, 5-3, Nadal left the court with a physio for a medical timeout, and it was unclear if he would return. But the Spaniard showed his trademark fighting spirit by continuing on. Ultimately, the deficit and injury were too much to overcome.

"I was not able to hit the backhand at all. I was not able to run for the ball. But I just wanted to finish the match," Nadal said

In the women's draw, 18-year-old American Gauff, seen as the heir to now-retired Serena Williams, defeated Britain's Raducanu 6-3, 7-6 (7/4). There are 70 places separating seventh seed Gauff and 2021 US Open champion Raducanu in the rankings, but you wouldn't have known it as the pair tussled for an hour and 42 minutes of pulsating tennis on Rod Laver Arena.

It was a first-ever meeting between the two and a glimpse of an exciting future for women's tennis.

Earlier, world number one Iga Swiatek and dangerous American Jessica Pegula led the charge into the third



'Trolling on social media affected my image'

MAZHAR UDDIN from Chattogram

After going from being rated as one of the brightest prospects in the country to impressing upon starting his international career at a very early age, Nasir Hossain was tipped by some as the future captain of the Tigers. However, he lost his way and has been outside the national set-up for quite some time now. The 31-year-old showed glimpses of his abilities in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League, where he is captaining Dhaka Dominators, and spoke to The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin about his game before sharing some of his ambitions during an exclusive interview. The excerpts are below:

The Daily Star (DS): You have been in fine touch in the BPL so far both with both bat and ball.

Nasir Hossain (NH): It feels good because I always believe the first few games are very important. But it's important to continue

DS: Did you work on your batting before the start of the tournament? **NH:** Not really as we were playing four-day matches even four days before the tournament. So it was quite difficult to adjust to the white-ball format. It took some time. But I worked in the nets.

DS: Your team is struggling despite you leading from the front. Is that frustrating at times?

NH: When the team does well, it makes the job easier. But I think our top-order hasn't been able to perform. In T20 cricket, you



need to play as a team instead of depending on individual heroics. an impact with the bat so far in the BPL. What's your take on

NH: We definitely have faith in him. He is going through a tough time but I think he is working hard and is talking with the coaches about his game. We are confident. The type of player he is, he will definitely come back well.

DS: Do you want to return to the national team again?

NH: I dream of returning to national team but at the moment there is no alternative to performing. To be honest, I don't want to think that way at the moment. I want to enjoy my game

wherever I get the opportunity.

DS: Do you think T20 cricket is the ideal format for you to stage a comeback to the national team? NH: I enjoy one-day cricket, but it's not like you have to hit every ball in T20. As a batter, the position I normally bat in requires one or two boundaries in between those singles and doubles. Then you see your strike rate go to 120-130. Being a middle-order batter, I can't afford to concede dot balls. The situation demands quick runs. I try to play according to the

DS: Do you ever feel regret about falling off track despite having all that potential?

NH: What I realised is that everyone will be with you during the good times, but when things aren't going your way, no one will be with you. When I was in the national team, I performed well harder. I took things very easy. But the fact is that international cricket is not that easy, which I now realise.

DS: You were embroiled in all sorts of controversies. Do you think that took your focus away from cricket? NH: If you think overall, I did perform in all the domestic competitions. But I got trolled on social media, which affected my image which is the reason I went off track.

DS: Is Nasir a changed person now? NH: I haven't changed. I am still the same as I was before. I got married, I have family and I stay busy with them.

BFF jumps the gun on Argentina visit

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) kept the country's football fans and the media guessing as it postponed yesterday's press conference, scheduled the day before to apprise the media of the progress of the arrival of Lionel Messi's Argentina for a friendly match 11 years after La Albiceleste's first visit of the country.

The BFF high-ups on Tuesday said that the Argentine Football Association (AFA) agreed in principle to come to Bangladesh in the FIFA window in June and that it was working to finalise the terms and conditions.

However, BFF postponed the scheduled press conference yesterday morning, prompting journos to flock to the BFF headquarters to unearth the reasons. BFF executive committee members and the BFF general secretary could not be found at the BFF house and there was also no follow-up statement from the country's football governing body explaining the reason behind the surprise postponement.

The BFF high-ups also did not respond to repeated phone calls.

It was learned that the BFF officials were due to talk to their Argentine counterparts on Tuesday night but they could not finalise anything and were under pressure to have jumped the gun on

Moreover, Gaston Edul, an Argentine sports journalist for TyC Sports, tweeted from his verified account that there was no communication set up between Bangladesh and the AFA.

Edul's tweet in Spanish, when translated, reads: "There have been no talks between Argentina and Bangladesh to play in June. AFA is not going to advance with anything until it resolves the continuity of [Argenitna coach] Lionel Scaloni. And, it is a priority that Argentina finalises opponents for March friendlies."

The cost for possible arrival of Argentina has been estimated to be around \$10m or roughly around 100 crore taka, something that has been heavily criticised on social media, especially in the current economic turmoil.

Argentina had previously visited Bangladesh in September, 2011 and played a friendly match against Nigeria in which Lionel Messi assisted twice in a $\bar{3}$ -1 win against the African side at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

BFF never made the cost behind Argentina's last visit public, but its president, Kazi Salahuddin, told reporters a couple of weeks ago the board had to splurge around three to \$4m. BFF still has an outstanding loan of TK 8cr to the IFIC bank.

Amla retires from all forms of cricket

REUTERS

South African batting great Hashim Amla announced his retirement from all forms of cricket on Wednesday after helping Surrey to the English county championship

last year. The 39-yearold had already retired international from cricket in 2019. Amla scored 18,672

runs for the Proteas across the three formats from 2004-2019 and is South Africa's second highest Test run scorer behind Jacques Kallis.

His 311 not out against England at The Oval in July 2012 is still the highest Test score by

a South African.

"I have great memories of the Oval ground and to finally leave it as a player fills me with immense gratitude," he told. Surrey Director of Cricket and former England captain Alec Stewart said Amla was a "true professional"

Jawad, Tushar second again

SPORTS REPORTER

Jawad Bhuiyan and M Tushar had to be content with the runners-up trophy once again in the ITF Asia U-14 Development Championships as the Bangladeshi duo suffered a comprehensive defeat against their Pakistani opponents in the final of the boys' doubles event at the Sheikh Jamal National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

Jawad and Tushar, who were beaten 6-1, 6-1 in the previous tournament's final a week ago, conceded a 6-2, 6-0 defeat to the same opposition - Hamza Roman and Abubakar Talha.

Yan Rong Tzeng and Yen-Ni Chiang of Chinese Taipei were crowned champions in girls' doubles as they beat Htay Hyat Myint and Yon Che Char of Myanmar 6-3, 7-5 to clinch the second successive title in their second ITF development tournament

The final of the boys' singles event will be held this morning and will be followed by a prize distribution ceremony.

Age-old rivalry reignites

REUTERS

The rivalry between Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo dominated football for more than a decade and the world will on Thursday get the chance to see another contest between the Portuguese and Argentine, which may not be the last time they face each other.

After 20 years in Europe's top leagues, Ronaldo has taken his talents to Saudi Arabian side Al-Nassr after his contract with Manchester United was terminated and ironically his first match in the Middle East will be against his age-old

Messi's Paris St Germain take on a combined Al Hilal-Al Nassr team in an exhibition match, giving Ronaldo and Messi a chance to rekindle their old 'El Clasico' rivalry when they played for Real Madrid and Barcelona, respectively.

With nothing for Messi left to prove in Europe or on the international stage, there is also speculation that Al Hilal want to bring the 35-year-old to Saudi Arabia when his PSG contract expires at the end of the season.

Minister of Finance, had recently indicated that the door was open for moves by Saudi clubs to try and sign both of soccer's biggest stars.

"Well we talked about that before and



Mohammed Al-Jadaan, Saudi Arabia's the quality of life is a critical part of the 2030 vision and quality of life in Saudi has improved, sports is a significant part of that," he told CNBC when asked about Ronaldo or Messi moving to the



"The young population of Saudi watch sports and perform sports and anything we can do to enhance this industry will pay back and improve the quality of life not only for our people but for the working people from outside."

Messi and Ronaldo won every Ballon d'Or award from 2008-2017 until Real Madrid midfielder Luka Modric broke their hegemony and the Argentine has since won two more to lead 7-5 over his Portuguese rival in the race to be the world's best player.

When the pair first faced off in 2008 as young upstarts looking to make their mark, Manchester United and Barcelona played out a 0-0 draw in the Champions

Since then they have never both been involved in a goalless draw for their clubs and national teams in memorable matches with millions tuning in to witness the greats in their prime.

The spotlight was on the pair at the World Cup in Qatar last year but whereas Ronaldo faded and was left out of Portugal's starting lineup in the knockout stages as they were eliminated in the quarter-finals, Messi went on to lift the trophy.

Messi became the first player ever to score in every round at a World Cup and finished with seven goals as he completed his trophy collection and was named player of the tournament.

Should the Argentine move to Saudi Arabia, Thursday's encounter between the sport's two biggest stars of the modern era could signal the dawn of a new age in Asian football.