Star SPORT
DHAKA FRIDAY MAY 5, 2023, BAISHAKH 22, 1430 BS

What to WATCH
T Sports and Star Sports Select HD1
Indian Premier League
Rajasthan vs Gujarat
Live from 8:00 pm

Haaland closing in on another 'special moment'

The Premier League had to wait 28 years for a player to surpass the all-time single-season scoring record, held jointly by Alan Shearer and Andrew Cole, but Erling Haaland got the job done on his debut season and received a memorable guard of honour. Although he had fewer games to contend with than the 42 matches-a-season his predecessors got, Haaland delivered his record-breaking 35th goal of the season against West Ham United yesterday in just his 33rd match. Having broken the record, the Norwegian phenomenon has five games to raise the bar even further. PHOTO: REUTERS/TWITTER

AGENCIES

Manchester City's Erling Haaland was filled with pride, elation and jubilation after his goal in their 3-0 victory over West Ham saw him claim the record for the most goals in a single Premier League season.

The Norwegian chipped in his 35th goal of the league season to surpass the previous record in the competition, held by Alan Shearer and Andrew Cole. Haaland, who now has 51 goals across all competitions and received a guard of honour from his teammates and coaching staff, was overjoyed after his landmark goal.

"Special night. Special moment. I'm really happy and proud. What more is there to say?" he said. "It was a nice feeling [guard of honour]. As it is with every single goal I score."

The goal-hungry striker now needs another three strikes to equal the Club record set by Johnson some 94 years ago. Johnson scored his 38th goal of the 1928-29 First Division (then top flight) campaign in a 1-1 draw with Liverpool at Anfield, establishing a City record that has stood for almost a century.

Johnson played for City from 1919 until 1930, amassing 158 league goals during those 11 years, which is equal to Eric Brook and bettered only by Sergio Aguero (184).

After 3-0 win against West ham, City have now scored 1000 goals under Pep Guardiola in just 404 matches.

Hatfield Heath offers Tigers quiet serenity

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh have chosen to reside in the quiet village setting of Hatfield Heath in Essex County, away from the hustle and bustle that usually accompanies the team on away tours.

Yesterday, the Tigers underwent the second day of practice at The Lays before their warm-up match against Ireland Wolves today at Fenner's.

The Lays is a quiet setting in a private school with indoor facilities, centre wickets and side nets. On Wednesday, it was windy and cloudy but on Thursday a warmer weather welcomed the team during the session. The team hotel too is a secluded farmhouse setting which is a 50-minute drive from The Lays.

There is uncertainty over whether the series will be broadcast on any television channels in Bangladesh as BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury said that Cricket Ireland had not yet been able to confirm whether the series would be televised in this region.

The need for privacy at the locations also means that the team management was instructed to not take photos or videos at the hotel or the practice facility, only being allowed some snapshots near the nets.

Liton Das, who reached England the day before, was enjoying cherry blossoms at a picturesque site while Mustafizur Rahman was also on his way to join the Tigers. Nic Pothas, who has come in as assistant coach, joined the team for the first time on Wednesday, starting his tenure in England.

Following the warm-up match today, the Tigers will enjoy a rest day before practice sessions at Fenners and Chemsford respectively on May 7 and 8, as per the itinerary from Cricket Ireland.

The Tigers will play the first of the three-match ODI series against Ireland on May 9 at Chelmsford. There is uncertainty over whether the series will be broadcast on any television channels in Bangladesh as BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury said that Cricket Ireland had not yet been able to confirm whether the series would be televised in this region.

Has Messi played his last game in a PSG shirt?

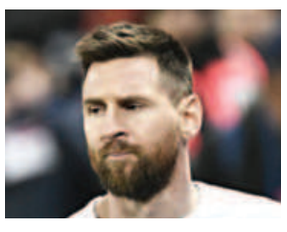
AGENCIES

The relationship between Lionel Messi and Paris Saint-Germain has soured in the past few days, with reports in France suggesting that the World Cup-winning Argentine is all set to leave the Parisians.

PSG, who are out of the Champions League and the French League Cup, have five games in Ligue 1 left this season but it seems Messi may have already played his last game for the Parisians when he featured in their 3-1 defeat to Lorient at home last Sunday.

Following the damning defeat, Messi hopped on a plane to fulfil his ambassadorial duties in Saudi Arabia. However, it has since been revealed that the trip was unauthorised by PSG's higher-ups including coach Christophe Galtier and PSG's football advisor Luis Campos.

PSG cancelled their pencilled-in day off on Monday following their defeat, as it is the norm in



the club to cancel a day off the day after a match if it is not won.

Although the Ligue 1 leaders have not made any statement, reports in France claimed that Messi was suspended for two weeks for his actions. It has also been reported that he has been banished from training and will have his wages for the period docked.

PSG were also forced to order extra security at the club's training ground and at the homes of Lionel Messi and Neymar after protests by fans angry over recent results.

Messi, who is out of contract with PSG at the end of the season, has now been linked to several clubs, including a return to Barcelona.

It was also reported that Messi has received a huge offer of more than £350m a year from the Saudi Arabian club Al-Hilal, which would exceed even the £165 million that his long-time nemesis Cristiano Ronaldo is being paid annually.

'Afif can score big when given the opportunity'

SPORTS REPORTER

Selector Habibul Bashar was surprised to learn that Afif Hossain's unbeaten 111 at Fatullah yesterday was the batter's first-ever List A ton, ending a six-year wait since making his List A debut in 2017.

Afif came into bat in the 16th at number four, in a position that the left-hander favours. With overs in hand, Afif notched a 101-ball 111 with six fours and five sixes.

Out of the national team, he had been told to return to runs this DPL and the 446 runs scored at an average of 55.75 and a strike-rate of 114.95 certainly improves his chances of returning to the national fold and Bashar felt that batting up the order had made the difference.

"Given the player that he is, he should have more centuries. But I feel that he is batting where he wanted to. The lack of centuries was because he was batting at six or seven. He batted at four today and I have seen him bat for a long time and it was a very mature knock. He played one bad shot but otherwise it was all good and knew what areas to target against which bowlers," Bashar told The Daily Star yesterday.

National team head coach Chandika Hathurusingha said that performances had factored into Afif being dropped.

"He had talked to the coach, maybe regarding technical issues too. From what I see this DPL, things look good in terms of facing pace and spin and the strike-rate he is scoring at. He is doing a fair job. When he came to bat before, there were not many overs left and the requirement was to go and hit from the off. People used to think of him as a power-hitter and even in age-level cricket he had to bat down the order. He is someone who, when given an opportunity, can score big runs. And he has a big ton in first-class too," he said.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

"There is a wrong assumption that Afif did not want to bat lower down the order. But numbers six and seven is not for genuine batters, they are for all-rounders. He has the ability to be a power-hitter. Batters want to bat further up the order and it's not like he didn't want to bat lower," he added.

Most importantly, Afif is still not out of sight in terms of World Cup plans. Will he bat lower if he returns to the national set-up?

"First things first, the most important is whether he can return to the team. I don't feel it's a big factor where he bats if he returns. It's about team requirements. The expectations were that he scores runs and selects himself. I can't say whether he returns but he is scoring runs which is important," Bashar concluded.

Courtesy of Afif's ton, Abahani reached 285 for five before Khushdil Shah restricted Prime Bank to 243 all out with a six-wicket haul to hand his side a 42-run win.

Elsewhere, Chirag Jani was once again the hero for Legends of Rupganj in a four-wicket win against Gazi Group with a 73-ball 81 in chase of Gazi's 265 for nine. Sheikh Jamal remained top with an 85-run win over Mohammedan at BKSP while Shinepukur Cricket Club won their relegation league match against Dhaka Leopards by five wickets at BKSP as well.

Up-and-coming archers to vie for bronze

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's up-and-coming archers showed their character in the Asia Cup Archery Stage-II as they set the stage to contend for two bronze medals in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, yesterday.

Six promising archers from BKSP were sent to the world ranking tournament as the nation's senior archers only recently returned from the Archery World Cup in Turkey.

Although the archers failed to shine in recurve events, two groups competing in compound events only fell short in the semifinals.

The men's compound team, comprising Tapu Roy, Radin Bin Taleb and Abdullah Al Kafi, beat Iraq 226-223 in the quarterfinals before losing 220-228 to Hong Kong in the semifinals. They will play for the bronze medal against Saudi Arabia.

The mixed compound team, featuring Tapu Roy and Pushpita Zaman, received a bye in the quarterfinals, before fighting hard in a 147-154 defeat to Kazakhstan in the semis. They will face Iraq for the bronze.

The victorious Cambrian School and College players celebrate after beating Willes Little Flower School and College by five wickets in the Dhaka Metro final of the Prime Bank National Cricket Tournament at the City Club ground yesterday. PHOTO: STAR