

“It wasn’t easy. What a team we faced, the way they (Inter) defend and counter-attack. Finals are like this. Emotions and nerves are there. We competed like animals.”

Manchester City’s Rodri, 2023 Champions League final’s Player of the Match.



‘Lucky’ City create history



City are the 23rd different team – and the sixth from England – to win the European Cup.

Guardiola is just the fourth coach to win the European Cup on three occasions. The 52-year-old won this competition twice with Barcelona and ended a 12-year wait for a third triumph in Istanbul to become the first coach since Sir Alex Ferguson in 1999 to guide an English club to the treble.

City are only the tenth team in history to complete a treble of league, cup and European Cup.

City are the 15th European Cup winners to remain unbeaten throughout their campaign (W8 D5).

SPORTS DESK

The pressure of the Champions League final consumed Manchester City players right from the start while Inter Milan won the hearts of neutrals as they almost ended up painting the continent with their own darker shade of blue on Saturday.

Pep Guardiola’s team completed a rare continental treble, courtesy of a superb 68-minute strike by Rodri against the run of play, but their performance did not translate that of an era-defining team, one that was predicted to stroll to European football’s most-cherished crown.

And Guardiola did not hesitate to accept the notion. “You have to be lucky ... It was written in the stars. It belongs to us.”

City won despite not being true to their identity and playing style; especially in terms of building from the back,

starting with the goalkeeper, which demands patience and courage. In contrast, Inter under Simone Inzaghi showed no impression that they were suffering from the fear of failure on arguably the biggest night in European football.



While City had European silverware long incoming following a sustained period of domestic supremacy, Inter Milan manager Simone Inzaghi had every right to express his pride after seeing his charges in action in Istanbul.

“They showed the whole world how well they stood up to Manchester

City, a side that everyone knows has so much quality,” Inzaghi said after the match.

“I hugged my players one by one, as they were extraordinary, just as our fans were and deserved a different result, but I hope they were happy seeing the way the team played tonight.”

Throughout the game, Inter kept their shape compact and pressed well in the midfield and final third, as expected from a leading Italian side, but little did it explain why City players in possession kept on committing unforced errors, misplaced passes, and failed to establish their characteristic tempo at any stage.

To their credit, Inter mustered efforts and came agonisingly close to an equaliser and threatened to drag a cagey final into extra time with goalkeeper Ederson making two superb late saves. In the end, one may wonder what the game’s outcome might have been had substitute striker Romelu Lukaku’s header from point-blank found the net.

SL likely Asia Cup venue for India matches

AFP, COLOMBO

Asia Cup matches involving India could be played in Sri Lanka after the cricketing powerhouse refused to visit arch-rival and official host Pakistan, a board official said Sunday.

The Asian Cricket Council (ACC) is due to make a formal announcement in the coming week after calls for a different venue for India’s games in the 50-over tournament in September, a Sri Lankan official said.

Neighbours India and Pakistan have not met on either side’s soil in any version of the game since 2012, and only play each other in international tournaments on neutral grounds.

The two cricketing powerhouses have fought three wars since being carved out of the subcontinent’s partition in 1947, and are bitter political rivals.

“It is very likely that some of the matches will be in Sri Lanka,” the board official said, asking not to be named. “But we have still not officially received confirmation.”

Sri Lanka’s board had expressed willingness to host some Asia Cup matches, despite an economic crisis which forced it to default on its \$46 billion foreign debt in April last year and seek a bailout from the International Monetary Fund.

The official said it had the capacity to conduct an international tournament, even though the island was still emerging from the economic downturn.

The unprecedented economic crisis led to months of protests and the ouster of president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was accused of corruption and mismanagement.

He fled the country and resigned in July 2022.

“Even at the height of the crisis when we didn’t have fuel and electricity, we hosted the Australian team,” the official said, referring to Australia’s tour taking in three T20 matches, five ODIs and three Tests.

The Pakistan Cricket Board had threatened to boycott the World Cup in India, which is due to start in October, if the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) refused to play the Asia Cup in Pakistan a month earlier.

Ruthless Australia ‘savour’ WTC triumph ahead of Ashes

AGENCIES

Scott Boland sparked a dramatic collapse as a dominant Australia hammered India by 209 runs to win the World Test Championship final at The Oval on Sunday.

India, set a record 444 to win, resumed on 164-3 but they slumped to 234 all out before lunch on the fifth day, losing their last five wickets for a mere 22 runs.

Boland did the initial damage with two wickets in Sunday’s seventh over, including the prize scalp of Virat Kohli, on his way to figures of 3-46 in 16 overs.

Off-spinner Nathan Lyon (4-41) then polished off the tail.

Victory meant Australia had now captured the one major



SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA

1st Innings- 469 all out (Head 163, Smith 121; Siraj 4-108) and 2nd Innings-270-8 dec (Carey 66 not out; Jadeja 3-58)

INDIA

1st Innings- 296 all out (Rahane 89, Thakur 51; Cummins 3-83) and 2nd Innings- 234 all out (Sharma 43, Gill 18, Pujara 27, Kohli 49, Rahane 46, Bharat 23; Cummins 1-55, Boland 3-46, Starc 2-77, Lyon 4-41)

RESULT

Australia won by 209 runs. Player-of-the-match: Travis Head

men’s cricket title that had previously eluded them.

Defeat left India, beaten by New Zealand in the inaugural 2021 WTC final in Southampton, still searching for their first piece of global silverware in a decade.

“The way Travis and Smith put on that partnership put us at ease,” said Australia captain Pat Cummins.

The fast bowler added: “Boland was fantastic, he’s now my favourite player, everyone just did their role really well...We’ll savour this and then turn our attention to the Ashes.”

India skipper Rohit Sharma

said: “In the second innings, we didn’t apply ourselves with the bat...Playing two (WTC) finals is a good achievement for us but, yeah, we would like to go a mile

ahead of that as well.

Australia’s triumph was hailed by the International Cricket Council, who wrote on Twitter: “The all-conquering Australia have now won every ICC Men’s Trophy” along with a list of all their limited-overs and Test achievements.

Australian paceman Mitchell Starc, who picked up four wickets in the match, was delighted with the result.

“It’s been a fantastic Test match... some fantastic cricket to watch. And yeah, we’re just really we’re gonna enjoy this moment,” he said.

Concern grows as Tamim’s back issue flares up

SPORTS REPORTER

Tamim Iqbal’s back issue had resurfaced during the national team camp and he had been rested on Thursday owing to the pain. Three days later on his return to the Tigers’ practice yesterday, Tamim’s back problem has not shown signs of relenting.

According to team sources, Tamim was not supposed to be undergoing a fielding session yesterday. He, however, joined in with Nic Lee’s advice. While leaning for a ball close to the ground from Shane McDermott, Tamim felt the pain in his back. The team physio came running in but the left-hander asked him to talk to the coaching staff present. Tamim’s fielding session ended soon as it appeared that the circumstances of the drills changed for him, taking a few high catches instead of ground fielding drills before he left, understandably feeling some discomfort on his back.

Having rested for a bit, Tamim moved in for a net session. Here too, a carefully curated net session followed where he asked throwers to pitch it full. One thrower



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

was changed following an abrupt length ball. Tamim would also play the pacers, Taskin Ahmed and Khaled Ahmed, with the instructions being pretty much the same. He looked comfortable with flowing drives on full deliveries. The back issue was still in force, causing him discomfort on anything slightly short.

When he moved in to play the

spinners, a pull shot off Mehedi Hasan Miraz saw him pull up and grimace in pain while holding his back. In fact, the management wanted to see how things shape up once Tamim undergoes a training session since the back problem resurfaced.

Chief physician of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), Debashish Chowdhury, said, “We asked

Tamim to go through the training session since we needed to know the extent of the pain when he bats. Yes, he had pain in his back and waist yesterday. It doesn’t, however, mean that it’s possible to say whether he will play or not [against Afghanistan]. We can’t say yet whether it is a risk. There are three days left and we will have him under observation till the last day before the match.”

Tamim’s absence may see Mahmudul Hasan Joy and Zakir Hasan as the prime contenders to open the innings. The duo batted at the nets yesterday with Zakir facing a fiery and energetic spell from Ebadot Hossain in particular. Ebadot once went up in a huge appeal, going right up to the batter and turning to pace-bowling coach, Allan Donald, who was standing in as the umpire and observing the proceedings. After a few seconds, Donald signalled a review, one that is akin to Tamim’s current injury concern. Whether it would be a risk to play him in the upcoming Test may just be a late call, depending on the player and the team management.

Cabrera aims to fine-tune tactics

SPORTS REPORTER

Head coach Javier Cabrera will look to have a rehearsal of his tactics for the SAFF Championship when his charges take on Cambodian premier league outfit Tiffy Army FC in a warm-up match in Phnom Penh today.

The men in red and green had their first training session yesterday after reaching the Cambodian capital the day before for a FIFA friendly on Thursday.

The practice match will be a big opportunity for the Spaniard to see how his charges react to his tactics ahead of the SAFF Championship, where he has targeted a semifinal berth.

“We started our preparation from Dhaka and in today’s training, the coach showed us the tactics we want to play against Tiffy Army and we are hoping that we will perform according to the plan



and get the expected result,” defender Rahmat Mia said in a video message.

Echoing the sentiment, forward Faisal Ahmed Fahim said, “Today we had a good practice where the coach worked made us understand the jobs of the players in the practice match.”

Cabrera, too, is pleased that everything is going in a positive direction.

“It is great that we are finally playing one game even though we wanted to play another game against the national team (Cambodia) but they are not available. Tiffy Army FC is a very competitive team of the Cambodia Premier League; they have always been a top-five team and they have several national players and foreign players and I think it is a perfect game to prepare the team for the SAFF Championship,” said Cabrera.

WDPL ends with title decider today

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Mohammedan Sporting Club’s comfortable seven-wicket win over BKSP yesterday means that the last match of the Dhaka Premier Division Women’s Cricket League (WDPL) between Mohammedan and Rupali Bank Krira Parishad today is set to be the title-deciding encounter of the tournament.

With six wins and 13 points in seven games, Mohammedan are currently on top of points table while Rupali Bank, also unbeaten but saw two of their games washed out due to rain, occupy second place with 12 points in as many games.

In yesterday’s match, after electing to bowl, Mohammedan bundled out BKSP for just 80 runs in 35.2 overs as Rupali Bank kept losing wickets at regular intervals. Ayesha Rahman picked up three wickets while Suraya Azmin scalp two for the Black and Whites.

Mohammedan, in reply, reached the target with seven wickets in hand and 34.4 overs to spare. Sanjida Islam top-scored with 32 off 48 balls, striking six fours.