

## Kings crash at Maziya

SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings' perfect record against Maldivian clubs ended in disastrous fashion as they were handed a 3-1 defeat in the season's first AFC Cup fixture away at Maziya S&RC in Male yesterday.

The four-time Bangladesh Premier League champions suffered their first defeat in Male despite dominating the game with better ball possession, passing and attempts.

Playing with five foreign players against six of Maziya, Kings saw their centre-forward Dorielton Gomez waste a number of early opportunities before a 35-yard thunderbolt from Vojislav Balabanovic unlocked Kings' goal in the 15th minute. Maziya doubled their advantage against the run of play with Hassan Nazeem scoring with a volley from the top of the box.

Ali Fasir scored the third goal in the first minute of stoppage time before Mohammad Ibrahim scored a consolation goal two minutes later.

The charges of Oscar Bruzon will host Odisha FC in their second match at the Kings Arena on October 2.



**Pacer Lockie Ferguson, who will be leading New Zealand in their upcoming series against Bangladesh, and left-arm quick Trent Boult gear up in the nets on Monday ahead of the first of the three ODIs against the Tigers at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur tomorrow.**

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Eight including Nasir charged by ICC

AFP, Abu Dhabi

Eight cricket players and officials including Bangladesh's Nasir Hossain have been charged with breaching anti-corruption rules in an investigation into match fixing in the Abu Dhabi T10 event, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced on Tuesday.

"The ICC, on behalf of the Emirates Cricket Board (ECB), has charged eight players and officials for breaching different counts of the ECB anti-corruption code for participants for the T10 League," cricket's governing body said in a statement.

"The charges relate to the 2021 Abu Dhabi T10 Cricket League and attempts to corrupt matches in that tournament — these attempts were disrupted," it added.

Apart from Nasir Hossain, the ones charged include team co-owners Krishnan Kumar Chaudhary and Parag Sanghvi.

The multiple charges against the group include match fixing, offering sums of money to players to engage in corruption and failing to cooperate with the ICC investigation. Six of those charged, including Chaudhary and Sanghvi, have been provisionally suspended for their alleged conduct and have two weeks to respond.

## Booters lose against Myanmar

SPORTS REPORTER from Hangzhou

Bangladesh Olympic football team's bid to make it to the Round of 16 for the second time in a row was dealt a huge blow with a 1-0 defeat against Myanmar in their opening match of the Asian Games at the Xiaoshan Sports Complex Stadium in Hangzhou yesterday.

With India and China being the two other teams in the group, Bangladesh had targeted at least a point against their cross-border rivals, however, an own goal from Murad Hasan saw their hopes dashed.

Bangladesh were deprived of an equaliser in the stoppage time of the second half with Suman Reza's header coming off the crossbar after Kyrgyz referee Abdylbaev had overlooked a Bangladesh claim for a handball inside the Myanmar box in the 88th minute.

"I think we should have won the match because we created more chances. We hit the post while a clear penalty was not awarded to us but we had to concede the goal due to our mistakes," captain Rahmat Mia said after the match.

"We created three to four open chances, but we could not take those home unfortunately and it was bad luck for us," said Rahmat, one of the players who also plays for the senior team also.

Bangladesh coach Javier Cabrera applied the same playing style that he uses with the senior team. The relatively inexperienced Bangladesh side had a comparatively better first half to deny Myanmar, who dominated with better ball possession and attacks. However, Bangladesh's defence, marshalled by Rahmat, Murad, Shakil Hossain and Issa Faisal, negotiated the dangers solidly.

But as Bangladesh defence looked a bit tired in the second half, Myanmar forwards got past both full-backs a few times before substitute Khun Kyaw Zin Hein forced debutant Murad to divert his low cross into the Bangladesh net in the 67th minute after Rabiul Hasan lost the ball in the midfield.

Bangladesh will play their second match against India, who were thrashed 5-1 by China in the day's other match, tomorrow.

## Will batting woes find a fix ahead of World Cup?

SPORTS REPORTER

"Our batting [has] deteriorated in the last six months. It is going downwards, so we have to rectify quickly," skipper Shakib Al Hasan had remarked after the Super Four game against Sri Lanka. Bangladesh assistant coach Nic Pothas, who looks after the batting side of things, joined the Tigers in a two-year contract and his first assignment was the series against Ireland in England. As far as Shakib is concerned, the appointment of Pothas is yet to bear fruit.

Bangladesh's batting had turned a leaf in recent times with more aggression in the middle-over phases. However, Tigers' failure in reading game scenarios have often come under the microscope. This time, with the World Cup at the doorstep, head coach Chandika Hathurusingha will be absent due to a family emergency for the first two games against New Zealand at home. Pothas would have to ensure the Tigers carry confidence before heading to the World Cup.

"Chandika Hathurusingha would not be here for the first two ODIs as his wife is having a surgery. He will arrive on September 25th and join the team on the 26th. We have appointed Nic Pothas as interim coach," cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus told the media on Tuesday.

Since Pothas' arrival, the top

three in the batting order has averaged just over 26. Count out the fine form Najmul Hossain Shanto has been carrying, and the picture would look gloomy. Many have been tried in the opening slot and the lower middle-order, specifically the number seven and eight, average over 14 with seven players featuring in that period.



While Mushfiqur Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan and Tawhid Hridoy have found runs, it is some of the younger players who have not lived up to their potential. Shamim Hossain and Afif Hossain have been dropped from the New Zealand series. With the New Zealand series being a step towards World Cup selection, would there be improvement in decision-making in the right time? With most of the World Cup squad already being put in a cotton wool,

the series would be important for finding backup options alongside veterans such as Tamim Iqbal and Mahmudullah Riyad returning to form.

Given how batters struggled against the bit of mystery spin of Maheesh Theekshana in Asia Cup, or how they attempted shots that do not go with match scenarios, a lot more work surely would be needed.

Pothas himself had identified after the Pakistan match that Bangladesh made it easier for the Pakistan seamers by trying to go after them.

"Yes, we need improvement in that area, but if it was that easy, everybody would be doing it," he had said.

On a flat batting wicket, when batters throw away the advantage of winning the toss and batting first, it is likely that the message has not gotten across.

Pothas originally had been earmarked as a wicket-keeping specialist and was part of the Bangladesh U-19 team's coaching staff in March this year for a one-off assignment in Abu Dhabi. He, however, was appointed assistant coach for the national team a month later to also look after the batting. It remains to be seen whether the South African's new role as interim coach brings any luck.

## Tuchel backs Nagelsmann for Germany job

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich coach Thomas Tuchel on Tuesday backed the rumoured appointment of the man he replaced in the dugout, Julian Nagelsmann, for the Germany job.

German media reported earlier on Tuesday that Nagelsmann was on the verge of being named coach of the men's national team following the sacking of Hansi Flick, just nine months out from Germany hosting the European Championship.

Nagelsmann has been out of work since being sacked in March by Bayern, with Tuchel brought in to replace him.

"Why not?," said Tuchel, speaking at a pre-match press conference ahead of Bayern's Champions League match against Manchester United on Wednesday, when asked about Nagelsmann's possible appointment.

"Julian has the quality and (if) the DFB has decided for him, that's the most important requirement."

"There's been a decision and influence things positively."

German tabloid Bild reported that Nagelsmann, 36, will take the reins on a deal which will run to the end of Euro 2024.

Flick became the first Germany coach in history to be dismissed from his post after his side slipped to a 4-1 friendly loss against Japan earlier in September.

Flick's men also failed to get out of the group stage at the World Cup in Qatar last year.

Germany have lost four of their six matches since then, as they prepare to host Euro 2024.



## Pressure mounts on Ten Hag as Bayern clash looms

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag is starting to feel the heat from frustrated fans of the Red Devils after a disastrous start to the season has left hopes of Premier League glory already looking forlorn.

For the first time in the Premier League era United have lost three of their opening five games and face a daunting task to open their Champions League campaign away to Bayern Munich on Wednesday.

Ten Hag had been sheltered from criticism in the early weeks of the campaign as supporters concentrated their anger towards a series of off-field issues.

Despite the fans' desire to see them gone, the Glazer family appear to have put a process to sell the club on hold.

Brazilian winger Antony has been given a leave of absence to fight domestic abuse allegations made by his ex-girlfriend.

Meanwhile, United decided Mason Greenwood had no

future at Old Trafford last month despite abuse charges against the 21-year-old being dropped.

Ten Hag was credited for returning United to the Champions League by finishing third in the Premier League last season and ending the club's six-year trophy drought by winning the League Cup. However, he was the target for a chorus of boos when he substituted new signing Rasmus Hojlund midway through the second half of Saturday's 3-1 home defeat to Brighton.

The Dutch coach tried to spin that moment into a positive show of support for Hojlund, who was making his home debut after a £64 million (\$79 million) move from Atalanta. The Dane has only recently returned to fitness and Ten Hag could ill afford to

lose another key player by forcing him to play 90 minutes too soon.

But United's bet on the 20-year coming good in the long run could face a backlash should they be undone by Harry Kane in Germany.

Despite their need for a striker, United never tested Tottenham's



resolve for the England captain, who instead joined Bayern in a 100 million euro (\$110 million, £86 million) deal.

Kane has hit the ground running with four goals in as

many starts, while Hojlund is yet to find the net for United.

Despite domestic dominance which has seen Bayern win the past 11 Bundesliga titles, the club judges itself on its performances in the Champions League.

Since winning in Lisbon in 2020, Bayern have been eliminated at the quarter-final stage of the Champions League for three straight years.

These early eliminations led to the exits of former managers Hansi Flick and Julian Nagelsmann. Current Bayern boss Thomas Tuchel, who took over from a sacked Nagelsmann who had won eight from eight in the Champions League, is aware that making it at least to the semis is considered par for the course in Munich.

While this understanding is not new for Bayern or indeed any of the handful of modern superclubs where domestic success is assured, the big money addition of Kane makes winning now a necessity.

## Bellingham ready for 'real' Madrid debut

AFP, Barcelona

Jude Bellingham scored for Real Madrid on his debut, and in four of the five matches which have followed, in a superb start to life in the Spanish capital for the former Birmingham boy.

The England midfielder has five goals in five games in La Liga, taking the Spanish top flight by storm after his 103 million euro (\$110 million) move from Borussia Dortmund this summer.

Real Madrid boast a 100 percent record for their opening raft of domestic games, but their season begins in earnest with the start of the Champions League this week.

Bellingham, 20, is set to make his 'second' debut for Los Blancos against Union Berlin on Wednesday at the Santiago Bernabeu, in the competition they value above all others. The record 14-time European champions were thrashed 4-0 by Manchester City in the second leg of last season's semi-final, 5-1 on aggregate, with Bellingham's purchase in part a response to that stinging defeat.

Madrid have started reducing minutes for their veteran players in midfield — Luka Modric and Toni Kroos — while allowing Bellingham, Eduardo Camavinga, Aurelien Tchouameni and Fede Valverde more opportunities.

Bellingham adds to the tougher core Madrid sport this season, shorn of



Ballon d'Or winner Karim Benzema, who departed for a new adventure in Saudi Arabian football in the summer.

Facing a Bundesliga side in Europe, Bellingham should feel comfortable — although it has become clear that he has already made himself at home.

In his first appearance at the hallowed Bernabeu the England international nearly blew the stadium's new roof off with a last gasp 95th minute strike to earn Madrid a narrow win over Getafe in a derby on September 2.

Wearing the No 5 on his back in tribute to Zinedine Zidane, Bellingham has quickly become a fan favourite at Madrid.

Celebrating his goals with his arms open wide, as if to share his joy with the supporters, they have instantly taken to him in a way which never happened with Welsh winger Gareth Bale.