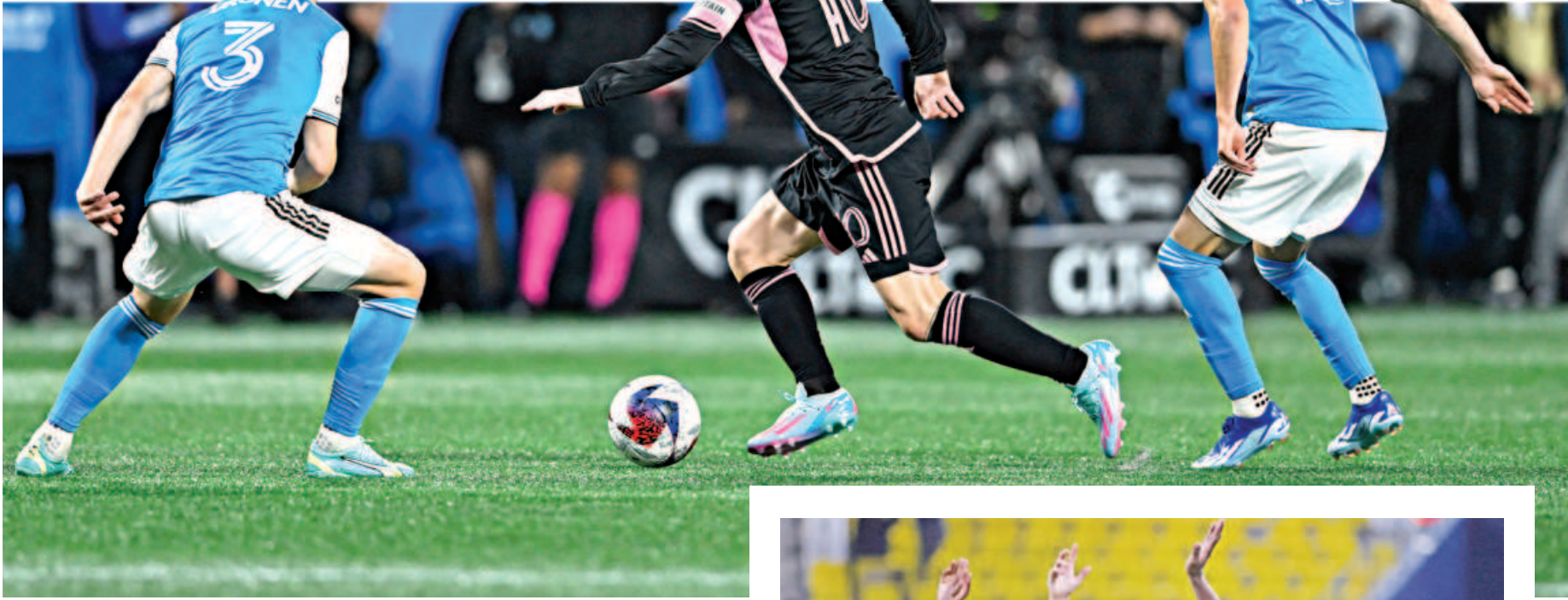




Lionel Messi returned to the starting line-up but couldn't prevent his first MLS season from ending in defeat as Charlotte FC beat Inter Miami 1-0 in front of a crowd of 66,101 at Bank of America Stadium. Messi was captain and played the full 90 minutes-plus on artificial turf in the meaningless game on Saturday for Miami, which failed to make the playoffs. (inset) Cristiano Ronaldo scored from a free-kick after seven months to lead Al Nassr to a 2-1 win over Damac FC in the Saudi Pro League in Riyadh on Saturday. This was Ronaldo's 61st career-goal from a free-kick and his 50th free-kick goal in club football.

PHOTO: AFP



'Stuff it, I'll still hit it'

REUTERS

Australia's Grace Harris not only broke records in the Women's Big Bash League on Sunday with a scintillating century but the all-rounder also broke her bat into two pieces when smashing one delivery for six.

Harris opened the batting for Brisbane Heat in their match against Perth Scorchers and she was unbeaten on 136 off 59 deliveries in her team's 50-run victory.

Her knock set the record for the highest individual score in WBBL history while she also hit a record 11 sixes, breaking her bat with one shot that cleared the rope when she was on 64.

"Hey guys, I need a new bat... Broken handle," Harris was heard saying in the 14th over as Piepa Cleary went back to her mark for the next delivery.

"Stuff it, I'll still hit it!"

As Cleary delivered the next ball, Harris launched the ball over long on for a 72-metre six and the bat duly broke at the handle, nearly hitting her batting partner Bess Heath at the non-striker's end.

"(The handle) just clicked a little bit and I didn't want to be given out snicked off, if it clicked as the ball went past and I didn't hit the ball," Harris said.

"But when I faced up, I just thought that it was probably hanging on... When they do get that looser handle they are at their best, they're pingin."

"So I thought, 'Nah I'll still hit it for six, they've been going miles today so I'm going to keep using this bat as long as possible'."

Head ready to repay Australia's faith

AGENCIES

After injury forced him to watch his team in action in the World Cup from his couch at home in Adelaide, Travis Head has finally joined the Australia team in India and is counting down the days before he can repay the faith shown by the team management.

Head was an important part of Australia's plans heading into the World Cup but his participation in the tournament got jeopardised when he fractured his left hand during Australia's South Africa tour in September.

The Australian selectors still kept him in the 15-man squad for the World Cup and sent him home to recover and join the team later in the tournament.

Head, who is now with the Australian squad in New Delhi, was grateful to the selectors for giving him a chance to recover and is eagerly waiting for an opportunity to repay their faith.

"When it first happened [the injury] I thought my chances were done," Head was quoted as saying by the Australian newspaper The Sydney Morning Herald.

"But as those three or four days played out, and [I got] back to Sydney and [saw the] specialist, there was definitely light at the end of the tunnel. It was nice to have the confidence to hold me. A lot had to go right," he added.



The right-hander had his first net session in India at the Arun Jaitley Cricket Stadium on Saturday. The batter revealed that although he is feeling much better, he is still experiencing pain while batting.

"I had a really good hit yesterday [Saturday]. I think each session is getting better but [I've] got to be mindful... Everything seems to be going well. But it's how I wake up this morning. It's how I can potentially back up tomorrow and train and there's still a few things I need to tick off," said the 29-year-old.

"You can deal with it [pain] as long as I'm not doing any damage to it, and I've got the confidence to know that I'm not doing damage to it. A little bit of pain is ok," he added.

Australia's next match in the World Cup is against the Netherlands in Delhi on Wednesday.

Although Head is optimistic about playing that match, Australia chief selector George Bailey wants to exercise caution.

"Clearly the whole point of having him and carrying him to this point is not to risk it by bringing him back early. If it works out that it's the Dutch game, great. If it's a little bit further on, then that's okay," said Bailey.

Visa delays put Kings' Bagan clash in doubt

SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings' AFC Cup away match against Mohun Bagan is under threat of cancellation or postponement as the reigning Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) champions saw a delay in receiving their visas for their India trip just two days before the match.

The BPL champions are scheduled to take on Mohun Bagan on Tuesday in their Group D match of the AFC Cup at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar. The Kings were supposed to leave for India at 7:15pm yesterday.

However, the Kings officials informed that they had to cancel their tickets as they got hands on their visas at around 7:50pm.

It was learned that the Kings management tried to procure tickets of around a 60-member contingent right after receiving their visas yesterday, but failed to do so as no aviation company could arrange tickets for such a big group in a short time.

"It is really tough to manage 60 air tickets for our registered members for the AFC Cup match by tomorrow [Monday]. We haven't taken the decision in this regard yet," said Bashundhara Kings media and marketing manager Ahmed Shaek.



Shaek also informed how this predicament could hamper the Kings' preparation for such a crucial encounter.

"As per the AFC regulations, a team has to arrive two days before the match. If we reach there one day before the match, it won't be ideal preparation because the players also need rest," Shaek added.

The Kings officials have written an official letter to the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) to inform them about the visa situation.

For the Kings, the ideal situation will be if the match gets deferred by at least a day or more but Shaek feels a deferral seems unlikely.

"The match should be deferred by at least one day but that is also not possible. The AFC will give the final decision in this regard."

As per the letter Kings sent to the AFC, they started the process of obtaining the visas on August 28 and submitted all necessary documents to the visa application centre on September 20.

Meanwhile, Maldivian club Maziya SRC reached Odisha on Saturday night for their AFC Cup match against Odisha FC on the same day at the same venue.



Bangladesh national women's team players train at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday ahead of a three-match T20I series against Pakistan, starting on October 25. The T20 series will be followed by a three-match ODI series, which will be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

PHOTO: BCB

Emerging side suffer thumping defeat

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Emerging side slumped to a five-wicket defeat to lose the one-day series 2-1 against hosts Sri Lanka in Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium yesterday.

Sent in to bat, opener Parvez Hossain's 32 and Pritom Kumar's 35 ensured a solid start for the visitors before Sri Lanka got back into the game with a few wickets.

Mahmudul Hasan Joy struck a 36-ball 37 and stitched a 67-run stand with Shahadat Hossain Dipu for the fourth wicket but as Joy fell to Chamindu Wickramasinghe, Bangladesh stuttered.

Dipu held the innings together with a team-high 79 off 75 deliveries as Wickramasinghe and Ashian Daniel's three-wicket hauls saw Bangladesh bowled out for 220 in 47 overs.

Ripon Mondol bagged the wicket of Sohan de Livera in the first over and would later remove the other opener, Shevon Daniel, in the ninth over.

But No. 3 Pavan Rathnayake's blistering 56-ball 85 took the game away fast.

Navod Paranavithana also struck 47 as the hosts secured the chase in 31.2 overs. The first of the two unofficial Tests would begin at the same venue on October 25.

Khulna, Rajshahi secure tight wins

SPORTS REPORTER

Chattogram's Hasan Murad had already had a four-for before Day Four began and had scalped three wickets in four deliveries on the previous day before stumps at Sylhet International Cricket Stadium in the NCL's tier 2 game. He would bag two more to put Khulna Division under the cosh but Afif Hossain turned saviour, guiding Khulna through the tricky 31 runs that were needed on Day Four in a one-wicket win.

Having started the day at 102 for six, Khulna scored 15 runs in the 35th over of the innings bowled by Murad, with Ziaur Rahman hitting a six before Afif managed a reverse-sweep through third-man for four. Enamul Hoque Ashiq would rattle Ziaur's stumps next over with an in-dipper.

Afif relied on the No. 8 Aridul Akash, who contented with 24 deliveries for five, Murad then struck again twice in the 41st over. Afif managed a streaky single off Nayeem Hasan to tie the score and took the strike in the 42nd over before sweeping the first delivery off Murad in the next over for four. The win helped Khulna to the top spot in Tier 2 with two wins in two matches. Murad finished with six for 17.

At Mirpur, Rangpur secured a 65-run win over Dhaka Metro in a Tier 1 game as a Mohammad Naim ton was not enough to chase down the target of 410 in the fourth innings. Naim carried on from overnight score of 96 to hit 120 off 124 deliveries before falling to Abdul Gaffar Saqlain, who bagged three as Dhaka Metro were wrapped up for 345.

In the Tier 2 game in Rajshahi, Barishal Division's Iftikhar Hossain held his side's hopes against Rajshahi Division but once he fell to Sunzamul Islam for 60, the innings stuttered and they eventually fell short by nine runs. Rajshahi skipper Taijul Islam, who bagged a four-for, was the player of the match.

Dhaka Division, courtesy of their seven-wicket win on Saturday, are top of Tier 1 after the second round.