

SHORT CORNER

Fifth Floor clinch first DS Intra Cricket title since 2017

The Fifth Floor team beat the Sixth Floor team by 66 runs in the final of the Daily Star Intra Cricket Tournament 2024 at the Jagannath Hall cricket field on Friday to win the title for the first time in six years. Batting first, Fifth Floor posted a daunting 103 in 10 overs. In reply, Sixth Floor could only muster a meagre 37 in 5.4 overs, with none of their undercooked batters able to reach double figures.

FIFA fines BFF

Football's governing body FIFA has fined the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) on disciplinary issues. The fines were handed in relation to the crowd trouble in the World Cup qualifying matches in October and November last year.

Pro-Israeli SA U-19 cricketer stripped off captaincy

Cricket South Africa (CSA) has relieved David Teeger from captaincy of their Under-19 side ahead of the ICC U19 World Cup starting next week following security advice regarding the position of the player on the Gaza-Israel conflict. Teeger had made pro-Israeli statements in November last year, which prompted CSA to make this decision.

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MOST WICKETS IN T20IS

- Tim Southee (New Zealand) 151
- Shakib Al Hasan (Bangladesh) 140
- Rashid Khan (Afghanistan) 130
- Ish Sodhi (New Zealand) 127
- Lasith Malinga (Sri Lanka) 107

New Zealand seamer Tim Southee starred with four wickets for 25 runs to help the Kiwis beat Pakistan by 46 runs in the T20I opener of the five-match series in Auckland yesterday. The veteran seamer became the first player to 150 wickets in the format as he helped to bundle out the visitors for 180 runs after the Kiwis posted 226 for eight, courtesy of [inset] Daryl Mitchell, who blasted four maximums and as many fours on way to a scintillating 27-ball 61.



PHOTO: AFP/NZC

ASIAN CUP

Storm is coming, warns India coach

India coach Igor Stimac warned his players "a storm is coming" as they prepare to face a physical Australia on Saturday in their Asian Cup opener.

Graham Arnold's imposing side are one of the favourites and a major threat from set pieces, with Scotland-born defender Harry Souttar bagging 10 goals in 21 international appearances.

"It's going to be a very difficult match for us because we all know the strength of Australia," Stimac said on Friday in Doha.

Asked how India would combat Australia in dead-ball situations, the Croat joked: "Don't give away set pieces. Obviously."

The former West Ham and Derby defender added: "They play very pragmatic football, insisting on what is their strengths: coming to the flanks, putting many balls into the box and attacking with wonderful strength."

"We can expect a storm is coming out from them. We need to find a way to defend such situations and stay compact."

"First, to stop distribution to the flanks whenever we can. If that's not possible, we need to do everything to stop crosses."

The former Croatia international said his team would look to play their own game, even at the expense of results, having attempted to instil an expansive football philosophy during nearly five years in charge of India.



'Motivated' Palestine seek maiden win

REUTERS, Doha

The Palestinian squad at the Asian Cup in Qatar hope to bring honour to their compatriots in the war-ravaged Gaza Strip with their first victory at the tournament since the team's debut in 2015.

"For us, the message we are here to deliver through football is to qualify for the second round because Palestine and its people want to live. This is what we can offer," midfielder Oday Kharoub told Reuters.

The 26-member squad play Asian powerhouse Iran on Sunday followed by the United Arab Emirates and Hong Kong, hoping to advance to the knockout stage.

Israel launched its campaign in Gaza after a cross-border rampage on Oct. 7 by Hamas militants in which Israeli officials said 1,200 people were killed, mainly civilians, and 240 taken hostage back to Gaza.

Kharoub said it has been difficult for players, especially those with families in Gaza, to focus on training when their eyes are glued to the news between sessions, keenly following what is happening back home. "Our hearts are with them and we can only pray for them," Kharoub said.

Mohammedan keep the heat on Kings

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club registered their second victory of the Bangladesh Premier League to stay hot on the heels of runaway leaders Bashundhara Kings, with both teams running comfortable winners as the league resumed following a 12-day break.

Mohammedan, who won the Federation Cup last season but were beaten by Bashundhara Kings in the final of this season's Independence Cup, bounced back from a draw against Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra with a thumping 5-1 win against Brothers Union at the Muktijuddho Smriti Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday.

It was the second win in two matches for the Black and Whites, who are yet to taste success in the professional football league.

A brace from captain Soleymane Diabate and Sunday Emmanuel and a goal from Mujallarov saw the Motijheel-based outfit take a 5-0 lead against the promoted side within the 68th minute.

Akmal Hossain Noyon reduced the margin of defeat in the 78th minute for the Gopibagh-based outfit, who currently occupy the bottom spot in the 10-team table with a single point from three games.

Mohammedan, on the other hand, are in second position with seven points, two behind defending champions Kings who handed a 3-1 defeat to Fortis FC at the



Fortis FC keeper Azad Hossain sees the ball sail over him and into the net following a dipping shot from Rakib Hossain in their BPL fixture against Bashundhara Kings at the Kings Arena yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bashundhara Kings Arena in the day's last match.

Rakib Hossain gave the hosts a flying start with a scintillating strike in the ninth minute of the match, picking the top of the net with a dipping shot from the top of the left side of the box, finding enough space in between two defenders and having enough dip on the shot to give the opposition goalie no chance to stop it.

Fortis hit back four minutes later when

Omar Sarr's placing shot was blocked by Kings keeper Mehedi Hasan Srabon but rebounded off defender Tariq Kazi before nestling at the back of the net.

Dorielton Gomes, the top-scorer of the league, restored the champions' lead eight minutes later with his fifth goal in three games, smashing home a rebound after his initial attempt was parried straight back at him by Fortis goalkeeper Azad Hossain.

Azad was at fault again in the 77th

minute as he let a thumping strike from Kings defender Rimon Hossain slip through his hands. A second defeat in three matches kept Fortis in eighth position while Kings sat pretty on top with nine points.

Meanwhile, six-time professional league champions Abahani got their first win of the campaign with a 1-0 win against Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club at the Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium in Gopalganj.

Cornelius Stewart scored the only goal of the game in the 88th minute for the Sky Blues, who were reduced to 10 men 50 minutes earlier for a challenge from Riyadul Hasan Rafi on Sheikh Jamal forward Faisal Ahmed Fahim just in front of the box as the latter was through on goal.

However, Stewart's powerful diagonal shot following a through-pass from Jonathan Edwards gave coach Diego Andres Cruciani his first win of the league as they moved into fourth position with four points, leaving Sheikh Jamal in seventh with three points.

The fourth match of the day saw Chittagong Abahani and Rahmatganj MFS play out a 1-1 draw at the Birshreshtho Matiur Rahman Stadium in Munshiganj, with the former registering their first point of the campaign and the latter moving to three points.

City look to amp up title race

AGENCIES

Unlike most other European leagues where clubs get a sizeable chunk of time off around December and January, the Premier League churns on in relentless fashion.

The title race will certainly not be going into temporary hibernation this weekend with champions Manchester City travelling to out-of-form Newcastle United on Saturday with the chance to cut Liverpool's advantage to two points.

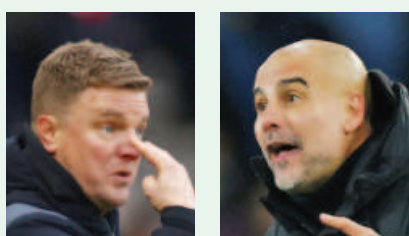
Eleven points currently separate these two teams in the table, with the Citizens occupying third place and the Magpies sitting six positions further back in ninth.

City's FIFA World Club Cup commitments mean they have played only 19 games to leaders Liverpool's 20 and should they win on Saturday will be looming very large in what is gearing up to be a compelling scrap for the title over the coming months.

Norwegian goal-machine Erling Haaland could return for City this weekend having been out since early December with a foot injury while Kevin De Bruyne's return in the FA

Cup win over Huddersfield Town was a further tonic for boss Pep Guardiola.

Largely owing to Arsenal's recent drop-off, City's chances of retaining their league title rose by 18% between 20 December 2023 and 3 January 2024, according to the Opta supercomputer, and they are one of just three Premier League teams who have not lost any players to the



Africa Cup of Nations or Asian Cup tournaments for the coming weeks.

With City starting to click into gear, boosted by the return of key players and the missteps of their rivals, Pep Guardiola's men will definitely look to amp up their title hopes against an off-form Newcastle.

Newcastle's top-four challenge has faded badly with five defeats in their last six league games as injuries and fatigue have seen Eddie Howe's side struggle.

In the latest blow for Newcastle, midfielder Joelinton will be sidelined for at least six weeks with a quad injury as injury problems continue to deepen at St James' Park.

The 27-year-old Brazilian picked up the injury during their third-round visit to rivals Sunderland in the FA Cup, a tie that the Magpies won 3-0.

Harvey Barnes, Jacob Murphy, Elliot Anderson, Matt Targett, Joe Willock, Nick Pope and Callum Wilson are among the long-term absentees at Newcastle.

However, Howe, who will manage his 650th game on the weekend, said his side will put up a strong fight against champions City.

"They are the team to beat, their record in recent seasons has been incredible. They have the best manager in the world, their style of play is difficult to combat, but I believe we can really compete in this game," he said.



Reigning champions Barcelona advanced to the final of the Spanish Super Cup following a hard-earned 2-0 victory against Osasuna at the Al-Awwal Park Stadium in Riyadh yesterday (Bangladesh time), courtesy of second-half goals from Robert Lewandowski and Lamine Yamal. The win sets up a high-voltage El Clasico on Sunday (1:00 am on Monday, Bangladesh time) with Real Madrid having inflicted a 5-3 defeat to Atletico Madrid in the first semifinals of the competition.

PHOTO: BARCELONA