

## Real look to end Etihad voodoo

AGENCIES

Eight days on from a captivating six-goal spectacular at the Santiago Bernabeu, Manchester City and Real Madrid reconvene for the second leg of their Champions League quarterfinal on Wednesday.

The defending champions and 14-time winners shook hands on a 3-3 draw at the end of the 90 in the Spanish capital, before earning respective domestic wins to retain their standing at the top of the Premier League and La Liga tables respectively.

As records suggest, Manchester City will have the upper hand in their home. Real Madrid, despite their pedigree in the Champions League, are yet to beat City at the Etihad Stadium.

Having played a total of five matches at the Etihad, Real have tasted defeat on

► Former Real Madrid forward Karim Benzema has scored four goals against Manchester City in the knockout stages of the Champions League, the most by any Real Madrid player. A goal for Rodrygo tonight would see the Brazilian equal Benzema's tally in this regard.

► Phil Foden has scored six goals from outside the box for Manchester City this season -- the most of any player for a Premier League club across all competitions.

► Manchester City forward Erling Haaland hasn't scored in any of his three career appearances against Real Madrid (8 shots and 6 shots on target, 0 goals). Indeed, they're now the opponent he's played against most in European competition without finding the net.



three occasions. In fact, Real Madrid lost in all of their last three visits to the blue part of Manchester.

The 14-time European champions were humbled 4-0 on their visit to Manchester 11 months ago at the semifinal stage as City went on to win the Champions League for the first time, along with the Premier League and FA Cup.

And, City look in a mood to only ramp up their success.

"We want the Champions League twice in a row... and if we can do that and two trebles in a row that no one did, that would be a legacy so that's definitely motivation," City midfielder Bernardo Silva, who scored the opener in the first leg, said.

But despite being in a clear advantageous position, City are having to deal with criticisms about their main forward Erling Haaland.

Haaland's return of 31 goals in 38

games this season is still impressive, but he has not scored in City's three meetings with Madrid in the past year and failed to find the net in 13 of his last 20 matches for club and country.

His performance was described by Madrid sports daily Marca as "impotent", while AS called him "clumsy and desperate" in his attempts to get the better of Antonio Rudiger.

Madrid boss Carlo Ancelotti will not repeat the same mistake of dropping Rudiger for the second leg as he did last season after the German had kept Haaland quiet in the Bernabeu.

While City will hope for Haaland to answer his critics, Real Madrid will be looking forward to someone who does the job despite not getting much of the attention. While Vinicius Junior and England international Jude Bellingham draw most of the attention ahead of Los Blancos' most games, Rodrygo flies by under the radar.

Rodrygo struck twice in a late blitz against Manchester City in 2022 to help Madrid knock the English side out and was on target again in the 3-3 quarterfinal first leg draw last week.

And Rodrygo knows what is at stake. "We have to win there, it's all open -- whoever makes the fewest errors will go through," he said.



## Mushtaq Tigers' new spin bowling coach

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Pakistan leg-spinner and World Cup winner Mushtaq Ahmed has been appointed as the spin bowling coach of Bangladesh, a Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) press release confirmed yesterday.

The 53-year-old is set to join the Bangladesh squad ahead of the preparation camp later this month for the T20 series against Zimbabwe and will work with the Tigers until the end of the ICC T20 World Cup 2024.

Mushtaq has worked as the spin bowling coach of England (2008-2014), West Indies (2018-19), and Pakistan (2020-22) before and has also been Pakistan's bowling consultant (2014-16).

On his new assignment, Mushtaq said: "It is a great honour for me. I am looking forward to the role and want to pass my experience to the players because they are very coachable and I always believe that they are one of the most dangerous teams around. They can beat anyone because they have the capability, the resources and the talent. I will try to instil that belief into them."

## Bangladesh announce squad for India T20Is

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has announced the women's squad for the upcoming five-match T20I series against India starting on April 28 at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.

The only uncapped member in the side is 15-year-old right-arm pacer Habiba Islam Pinky.

The rest of the T20Is will be played on April 30, May 2, 6, and 9. All five matches will take place in Sylhet.

### BANGLADESH SQUAD

Nigar Sultana Joty (C), Nahida Akter (VC), Murshida Khatun, Sobhana Mostary, Shorna Akter, Ritu Moni, Rabeya Khan, Sultana Khatun, Fahima Khatun, Marufa Akter, Fariha Islam Trisna, Shorifa Khatun, Dilara Akter, Rubya Haider Jhelik, Habiba Islam Pinky



Hot favourites Bashundhara Kings survived a scare to move into the semifinals of Federation Cup with a 2-0 win over Rahmatganj MFS in the second quarterfinal in Gopalganj yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

## Shanto all for managing expectations

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto articulated his thoughts pretty well regarding many of the issues that have piled up between the Sri Lanka series and the upcoming Zimbabwe series. Still busy playing the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) with Abahani, Shanto was able to cope well during a one-on-one meeting with Tamim Iqbal on Monday, before addressing the media with much more clarity on the issue on Tuesday. For now, he seems to be laying the groundwork for managing expectations.

Expectations come in many forms in Bangladesh cricket: expectations from the team as well as expectations from individuals while camaraderie between players is expected to be of utmost level and even the slightest of disharmonies is acutely pointed out.

However, results have not managed to meet expectations for so long in major tournaments that Shanto had to urge everyone to keep their World Cup expectations in check. More often than not, Bangladesh have crumbled under weight of expectations, so he went against the grain and said something unpopular which gives an idea on how he is taking on the reigns of captaincy.

"Every year we see before World Cups that there is much being discussed regarding

expectations. I will request you that it's not necessary to have much expectations. Everyone can hold on to it in their minds. You all know what Bangladesh team wants and us cricketers know how far we want to take the team. Everyone wants us to do something big but when there is too much focus on these things, I don't like it on a personal level.



What I can say is that the team will give hundred percent," Shanto told the media in an event where he was promoting a ceramic brand.

The all-format skipper backed Mustafizur Rahman, too, following speculations regarding the pacer's commitment for the national team compared to that in the IPL.

"When Mustafizur plays for Bangladesh, he has extra motivation. Obviously he has commitment [for IPL] and he is showing it there. When he plays for Bangladesh, before every delivery he is thinking of how to help his side," Shanto opined.

The talk he held with Tamim was tricky business. The left handed opener has not played for the national team since September last year and his international future remains unclear. The situation, however, has changed slightly following Shanto's discussion with Tamim. The message from Shanto may have been loud and clear when asked if Tamim may come in for the Zimbabwe series.

"I am not thinking in that regard [Zimbabwe T20s]. Bangladesh team is nicely settled. What I believe is that for quite a few days Tamim bhai has been playing domestic cricket and there have been fitness issues which he discussed with me. So not thinking in that line. But if the team needs someone, I am prepared to call on anyone at any moment," he said.

The message to Tamim would have been concrete too, that the ball is in his court.

"Obviously what I would want is that if he is fit, despite retiring from T20s, we would be happy if he returns to any of the formats. So that's a wish. But first of all, he has to want it and then the rest of the process comes. But as a captain I discussed my wants and needs with him," Shanto concluded.

Given how the ODI World Cup went, it would be key how Shanto manages his troops with similar solidity in the build up to the T20I World Cup.



## MSC move closer to hockey title

SPORTS REPORTER

League leaders Mohammedan moved closer to reclaiming the Green Delta Premier Division Hockey League title with a hard-fought 6-5 victory over Usha Krira Chakra in the penultimate Super Six phase match in Dhaka yesterday.

Malaysian forward Faizal Bin Sarri once again led from the front, scoring a hat-trick to help the Black and Whites secure a vital victory over the Old Dhaka team, following their first setback at the hands of Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club in their previous match.

Mohammedan dominated the match from the start at Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium, taking a 3-0 lead before Usha showed their battling spirit, scoring four goals in the third and fourth quarter. However, Mohammedan eventually edged past Usha, courtesy of Sarri's hat-trick.

The win leaves Mohammedan on top of the table with 35 points from 14 matches, one more than archrivals Abahani and four ahead of third-placed Mariners, who played one fewer match than Mohammedan but have a solid chance to defend their crown with two relatively easy matches remaining.

The Motijheel-based team now needs a victory over Abahani in the league's final match on Friday to reclaim the prestigious title, whereas a draw will do if Mariners slip up, while Abahani also has a decent chance of bagging the crown by securing all three points against Mohammedan.



Chelsea forward Cole Palmer fends off teammates Noni Madueke and Nicolas Jackson to take a penalty in the 64th minute in a 6-0 thumping of Everton in the Premier League at Stamford Bridge yesterday. The 21-year-old converted the penalty to net his fourth goal of the match after he completed his second hat-trick of the season within the first 30 minutes of the match. The goals propelled Palmer to the summit of the top-scorers charts in the league with Manchester City striker Erling Haaland who also has 20.

PHOTO: AFP

## Rana shines as Shinepukur go third

SPORTS REPORTER

Shinepukur Cricket Club leapfrogged Mohammedan Sporting Club to ascend to third position in the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) after pacer Nahid Rana's five-wicket haul helped them defeat Mohammedan in a rain-affected match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka yesterday.

Rana, country's newest fast bowling sensation, troubled Mohammedan with his pace early on, picking up two wickets with the new ball before returning in the death overs to complete his fiver, finishing with five for 45.

Imrul Kayes's 56 at the top and Abu Haider Rony's resilient 51 lower down the order saw Mohammedan manage 227 for 9.

In reply, Shinepukur got off to a quick start thanks to Tanzid Hasan Tamim (36 off 36) and Jishan Alam (26 off 15) before rain halted proceedings after 24.3 overs, with the score on 122 for four.

Shinepukur was set a revised target of 158 and Akbar Ali and Irfan Shukkur made sure that they crossed the finish line without another hitch, ensuring a six-wicket win as per the DLS method.

At BKSP Ground 2, Shamsur Rahman Shuvo's 93-ball 106 saw Ruppaganj Tigers pick up their second win, beating City Club by five runs as per DLS method in another rain-affected match.

Shuvo's ton along with Abdulla Al Mamun's 81, saw Ruppaganj post 297 for eight. City were on 111 for 3 in the chase when rain interrupted the proceedings, leading to a revised target of 266 in 41 overs.

Shahriar Komol's 65 and a rampant 37-ball 69 from Sazzadul Hoque kept City in the hunt but needing 54 runs in the last four overs, City fell short by six runs.

In the day's other match at BKSP Ground 4, Habibur Rahman's 55-ball 81 along with fifties from Sabbir Hossen (74), Anisul Islam (65) and Al Amin Jr (64) saw Gazi Group post 344 for seven against Brothers Union. The target was revised to 309 in 41 overs after the rain interruption. Brothers were all out for 178, suffering a 130-run defeat.



Shinepukur Cricket Club's pace sensation Nahid Rana raises the ball after claiming his second List A five-wicket haul which helped his side set up a six-wicket win over Mohammedan Sporting Club in the ongoing Dhaka Premier League at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Rana returned five wickets for 45 runs from his 10 overs to restrict Mohammedan to 227 for nine.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED