

## Abahani, Police gain ground

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani consolidated third spot in the Bangladesh Premier League while Bangladesh Police moved up to fourth position with wins in their respective matches on Friday.

Abahani came from a goal down to beat Sheikh Jamal 2-1 in Gopalganj to move to 22 points from 12 matches, one behind Mohammedan who have a game in hand.

Sheikh Jamal went ahead in the eighth minute of the match, midfielder Mohammad Abdullah driving home from the top of the box.

However, the six-time champions found the equaliser 20 minutes later, with Brazilian midfielder Jonathan Fernandes smashing home a rebound after Cornelius Stewart's initial shot was blocked in front of goal.

Stewart gave the Sky Blues the lead in the stoppage time of the first half, scoring against his former club with a simple tap-in after being squared up in front of goal by Washington Brandao with Sheikh Jamal goalkeeper Mahfuz Hasan Pritom completely out of position.

There were no goals in the second half as Abahani held on for crucial three points to remain in the title race while Sheikh Jamal slipped to fifth position with 15 points from 12 matches.

The other match of the day at the Rafique Uddin Bhuiyan Stadium in Mymensingh saw Bangladesh Police register a 1-0 win over Sheikh Russel, thanks to a superlative left-footed strike from midfielder Shah Kazem Kirmane from the edge of the box in the 26th minute.

The win took Police to 17 points in fourth position while Sheikh Russel were in seventh position with 11 points.



Mohammedan and Abahani players engage in a full-fledged brawl during their title-deciding fixture of the Dhaka Premier Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. The brawl forced match officials to abandon the tie and declare Abahani, who were trailing 3-2, as the winners of the game after Mohammedan refused to play any further part. (Inset) The Black and Whites later staged a mock victory lap even as Abahani and Mariners shared the top spot with 37 points each, with Mohammedan finishing on 35. The organisers informed that a decision regarding the champions will be declared later.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Nagelsmann extends Germany contract till 2026

REUTERS

Germany manager Julian Nagelsmann has extended his contract until the conclusion of the next World Cup in 2026, the German Football Association (DFB) said on Friday.

Nagelsmann replaced Hansi Flick as Germany coach last September and had initially signed a contract to the end of Euro 2024, which Germany will host in June.

The 36-year-old has enjoyed a mixed start to his reign, but recently won back-to-back friendlies against France and Netherlands and will have two further warm-up games with Ukraine and Greece in June before the Euros, where they will face Scotland, Hungary, and Switzerland in the group stage.

"I was very touched by the enthusiasm of the fans. Together we now want to play a successful home European Championship, we are all burning for it. After that, I'm really looking forward to the challenge of a World Cup together with my coaching team," Nagelsmann said in a statement.

## Wounded City brace for Chelsea at Wembley

AGENCIES

Manchester City's defence of the UEFA Champions League came to a heartbreaking end when they failed to put away a resilient Real Madrid, going down 4-3 on penalties, at the Etihad Stadium on Wednesday.

The Citizens, however, have no time to dwell on the defeat as head to Wembley Stadium to defend the FA Cup and face a rejuvenated Chelsea

the first side in the competition's 153-year history to have qualified for the last four in six straight seasons, will now have to put away Chelsea who made the played in the final five times in the past seven seasons.

Last season's treble winners only progressed from two of their six previous semifinal ties under Guardiola - against Brighton in 2019 and Sheffield United in 2023 - and three of their four losses have come

Premier League fixture at home that headlined star player Cole Palmer, a former academy graduate of City. Palmer netted four goals, including a 30-minute complete hat-trick, and went joint-top with Haaland for most goals in the league.

The Blues will be looking to turn around an already underwhelming season with the first trophy under Todd Boehly's regime. It can also come as a saving grace for Pochettino

Manchester City are the first team in FA Cup history to have qualified for the semi-finals of the competition in six straight seasons. However, on those six occasions that have come under Pep Guardiola, the Citizens managed to progress to the final two times.

Mauricio Pochettino's Chelsea are unbeaten against City this season, with two draws (4-4 and 1-1) in the Premier League. City have also not lost to The Blues in their last eight meetings in all competitions.

Chelsea have qualified for the final of the FA Cup five times in the past seven seasons.

Pochettino has failed to progress from four of his eight major semifinals. He has lost both of his previous FA Cup semis (with Tottenham in 2017 and 2018), as well as his only semifinal against Guardiola (with PSG in the Champions League in 2021).

as opponents in the semifinal of the competition today.

Pep Guardiola's side have failed to get the better of Mauricio Pochettino's Chelsea this season, with both fixtures in the Premier League ending in enthralling draws (4-4 and 1-1).

City won their seventh FA Cup title last season when they beat rivals Manchester United 2-1 in the final. The tournament holders, who became

against London clubs (two versus Arsenal, one against Chelsea).

Striker Erling Haaland, Kevin De Bruyne and Manuel Akanji, all of whom were in discomfort before being substituted in the gruelling 120-minute duel against Real are doubtful for City.

On the other side, Chelsea boosted their hopes of a European place when they thumped Everton 6-0 in the

and impact his long-term future as he has come under intense criticism for failing to meet expectations after a significant splurge on signings.

Having suffered an extra-time defeat to Liverpool in the EFL Cup final in February, Chelsea could reach both domestic cup finals in the same season for a third time, having won both in 2006-07 and lost both in 2021-22.

## Two-goal regret for Sabuj

SPORTS REPORTER



Penalty-corner specialist Shohanur Rahman Sabuj returned with a broken heart after missing out on a golden opportunity to break a 29-year-old record for the highest goal-scorer in the Premier Division Hockey League.

Sabuj, who started playing as a forward before switching to defender's role later, scored one of the four goals on Friday in Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club's 4-2 win over Bangladesh Police in their last match of the league.

The single goal took Sabuj's goals tally to 39 from 15 matches, one goal less than record 40-goal haul by former national forward Rafiqul Islam Kamal set in 1995.

"I do have regrets because I went very close to equaling or breaking the record. I am not thinking of it now because my first target was to produce good results for my club. Of course, I will remember it for a long time and but I will definitely attempt to break that record in future," said Sabuj after the match at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium.

Out of the 39 goals, Sabuj converted 22 goals from penalty corners, 14 goals from open play and three from penalty strokes. The penalty corner specialist was also the highest scorer in the last league with 33 goals.

Sabuj, who started playing in the top league in 2012 for Azad SC and started representing Bangladesh since his debut in the 2017 Asia Cup against China, wasted at least five penalty corners and an open net opportunity. He felt luck was not on his side.

"There are good and bad days for everyone but I don't want to stop here. I will try to find out why I could not break the record and will try not to make the same mistakes while playing for Bangladesh Air Force and the national team in coming days," said Sabuj.

Asked whether he was under pressure for breaking the record, Sabuj said, "Actually there was no such much pressure on me but I knew that I could touch the record if we could score goals. I could have got goals if I could play my natural game. May be luck did not favour me and I have to accept it."

## Partex survive drop, Super League lineup confirmed

SPORTS REPORTER

Partex Sporting avoided relegation league by picking up a three-wicket win against Ruppangj Tigers Cricket Club in their Dhaka Premier League game at BKSP 3 yesterday while the Super League lineup has been finalised as Abahani Limited, Shinepukur Cricket Club, Mohammedan Sporting, Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi, Prime Bank and Gazi Group Cricketers made the top six in the standings.

Ruppangj opted to bat and wicketkeeper-batter Jashim Uddin's 81 and Sohag Gazi's 67 along with 42-run cameo from Salman Hossain helped them to 259 against Ruppangj.

Following some early wickets, Tanbir Hayder played a match-winning 72-run knock, ably supported by Ahrar Amin's 58. Needing 14 runs off the last two overs, Tofael Ahmed's 17-ball 24 saw Partex win the crucial game.

Having clinched the win, it came down to head-to-head results between four bottom teams -- Partex, Gazi Tyres, Ruppangj Tigers and City Club. Even though Partex and Gazi Tyres both had two wins in the head-to-head equation, Partex finished ninth and survived the drop courtesy of their 52-run win over Gazi Tyres during the earlier phase of the league.

All three of Ruppangj Tigers, Gazi Tyres and City Club will play relegation league from which two teams will drop to lower tier.

In Mirpur, Mohammedan beat Brothers Union by five wickets as Nasum Ahmed's fifer saw Brothers bowled out for 135. Skipper Imrul Kayes hit a 71-ball 92 as Mohammedan assailed the target in 23.2 overs.

Gazi Group ensured the last Super League spot with an eight-wicket win over City Club. Ruyel Miah continued his domination over batters with three wickets as City folded for 180 all out. Habibur Rahman hit an unbeaten 81-ball 61 while Anisul Islam's fifty saw Gazi Group ensure Super League with a handsome win.

Abahani finished top of the standings with 22 points and are all but certain to clinch the league. They will need just two wins to have an unassailable lead.

## SHORT CORNER

### Lille chief slams Martinez attitude after penalty drama

Lille president Olivier Letang said Aston Villa goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez's attitude was not befitting a player of his calibre after the Argentina international earned his club a place in the Europa Conference League semi-finals. Martinez saved penalties from Nabil Bentaleb and Lille captain Benjamin Andre as Villa won the shootout 4-3 following a 3-3 draw over the two legs.



### Italy to have five teams in next season's Champions League

Serie A is guaranteed to have five clubs in next season's revamped Champions League after its teams secured a top two spot in the UEFA coefficient standings. Roma and Atalanta both made the semi-finals of the Europa League on Thursday while Fiorentina are in the last four of the Europa Conference League. That means that Italy has a coefficient of 19.428 points, ahead of Germany (17.928 points) and England (17.375) and will take one of two extra spots in the tournament.

\*Read the full stories on The Daily Star website

Paulo Dybala scored with a curled shot inside the far post 10 minutes after Roma were put ahead by defender Gianluca Mancini in their 2-1 win over AC Milan at a buzzing Stadio Olimpico on Thursday to complete a 3-1 aggregate win and set up a semifinal showdown with Bayer Leverkusen in the Europa League. (Inset) Meanwhile, newly-crowned Bundesliga champions Bayer Leverkusen almost saw their unbeaten run in the season -- now extended to 44 games -- break as a late 89th-minute strike from substitute Jeremie Frimpong helped them come out with a 1-1 draw away at West Ham United for a 3-1 aggregate victory on Thursday.

PHOTO: X

