

## A chance for Tigers to gauge Texan conditions

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will take on the USA today in the first ever Twenty20 International between the sides with the Tigers eyeing the game as an opportunity to take in the Texan conditions ahead of the ICC T20 World Cup.

This will be the first T20I of a three-match series with the following two matches slated on May 23 and 25 respectively. All three matches will take place at the same venue – Prairie View Cricket Complex.

Although the Tigers will play their opening World Cup game against Sri Lanka on June 7 on a different venue – Grand Prairie Stadium – both venues are in Texas, a place where Bangladesh have never played a match before.

This series will help the team gain first-hand experience of the conditions, which should help them prepare for the showdown against Sri Lanka.

Having earlier been greeted by a major storm on arrival which left the temporary infrastructure at the Prairie View in heaps, the Tigers enjoyed a much more pleasant weather in their first training session at the complex on Sunday.

The Tigers were somewhat rattled by the batting display in the recently concluded Zimbabwe series at home, one they clinched 4-1.

When the top-order got runs, the middle or lower-order failed to reciprocate in kind. Skipper



Najmul Hossain Shanto had claimed that batting against the new ball was difficult in Chattogram. The batting display, however, did not improve a lot in Dhaka where they lost the fifth and final T20I by eight wickets.

The main concern would be whether the batters can shift gears to an approach more in line with T20 before the World Cup. The other big worry would be the form of Shanto, Liton Das and Shakib Al Hasan, who could not make the expected impact with the bat against Zimbabwe.

Given that head coach Chandika Hathurusingha had talked about shuffling the batting order, the USA series presents an

opportunity for those shuffles and gauge their merits in these conditions.

Tigers' pace attack has looked lively but with Taskin Ahmed in the sidelines, the focus will be on Mustafizur Rahman to see how effective his variations are in these conditions.

Mustafizur finds himself in good form going into the showpiece event in the USA and the West Indies and if the wicket lends some grip to his cutters, it would be something to look forward to in the World Cup opener against Sri Lanka.

The USA recently made 230 against Canada in a recent T20I at the venue, which is also the highest score at the ground. Spinners bagged majority of the wickets in that series, which means Bangladesh spinners Shakib, Mahedi Hasan and Rishad Hossain could have an opportunity to make their presence felt.

There are a few adjustments to be made for the Bangladesh players in terms of acclimatisation, with a few players feeling the effects of the time zone shift.

Bangladesh could also face a familiar foe today as former Kiwi all-rounder Corey Anderson, who seven years ago hit 10 sixes in a T20I against Bangladesh – the most against the Tigers in a T20I match – while playing for New Zealand, is likely to feature in USA colours.



Winger Ritu Porna Chakma (R) celebrates her goal with Monika Chakma and Maria Manda (L) as title contenders Nasrin Sports Academy came from behind to beat Bangladesh Army SC 3-1 in their UCB Women's Football League fixture at Birshrestha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. With the victory, national players-studded Nasrin SA put a solid stride towards securing the title, having 16 points from six matches with only two left. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Win-addict Guardiola making City unstoppable

AFP, Manchester

Pep Guardiola's ability to bend the Premier League to his will was once questioned but the Manchester City manager has seen off the early doubters during a period of unprecedented dominance, with his latest triumph making City the first side in English football history to win four top division titles in a row.

Since a difficult first campaign at the Etihad in 2016/17, Guardiola has established a remarkable record that now stands at six Premier League titles in seven seasons.

The Spaniard has turned City into a winning machine similar to those he oversaw at Barcelona and Bayern Munich in his first years as a globetrotting manager.

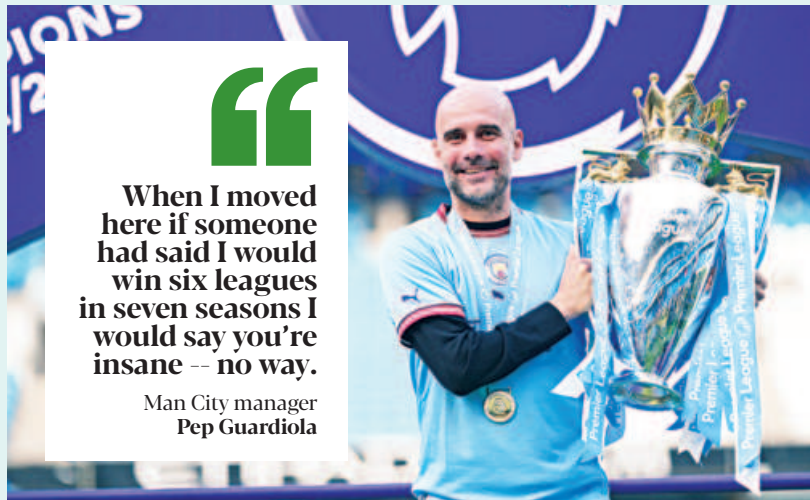
The 53-year-old has now won 12 league titles in 15 seasons as a senior coach across three of the toughest divisions in the world, in Spain, Germany and England.

Guardiola also has three Champions League titles to his name – the joint second-highest tally in the history of European club football's elite competition.

With numerous other trophies in his collection, he is already one of the most decorated coaches in football history.

Former Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson won 13 Premier League titles in 27 campaigns at Old Trafford but Guardiola's strike rate when it comes to the grind of a 38-game season is unmatched.

In two of the three campaigns in



“When I moved here if someone had said I would win six leagues in seven seasons I would say you're insane – no way.”

Man City manager Pep Guardiola

which he has failed to win league titles, it took club-record points tallies from Liverpool (99 points in 2019/20) and Real Madrid (100 points in 2011/12) to trump the former Barcelona midfielder.

“It's a bit demanding at times. It's tough, but look what he's done,” City striker Erling Haaland said of Guardiola. “He demands a lot every single day. If you don't live up to what he expects, you have a big problem.”

Guardiola's influence goes well beyond lifting silverware.

His brand of passing football and insistence on building out from the back, even under pressure, is now a key part of the game from grassroots through to the elite level.

Even City's competitors have turned to Guardiola's disciples to catch up.

Second-placed Arsenal, managed by Guardiola's former assistant Mikel Arteta, narrowly missed out on their first Premier League title for 20 years this season, amassing 89 points to City's 91.

England manager Gareth Southgate praised Guardiola whose arrival to the country has coincided with an upturn in the national team's performances at major tournaments.

“It has been brilliant for our players to work with him,” said Southgate. “They have learned from him, individually and tactically and, as much as anything, their mentality.”

However, Guardiola's notoriously exacting standards have helped chip away at the competitiveness of the Premier League.

City are now displaying the type of

dominance shown by PSG and Bayern Munich.

“There used to be an argument that clubs couldn't win the title back-to-back,” said West Ham manager David Moyes after his side were unable to spoil the party following a 3-1 defeat by City at the Etihad on Sunday.

“He has blown that sky-high. Four in a row is incredible.”

“Everyone in football is in awe of his coaching but there is more to it than that. He is a really good man-manager and has the ability to control players. His ability to manage is second to none.”

Sadly for the competition, there appears at least one more year of the glorious Guardiola reign to come, with his contract running until 2025. But he also hinted that his future is unclear after that.

“I want to be here next season whatever happens,” said Guardiola when quizzed on his future.

“The reality is I'm closer to leaving than to staying,” Guardiola told Sky Sports. “It's eight years, will be nine.”

Asked whether he felt as though he had “completed English football” and what he felt was left to achieve, Guardiola said: “I had that feeling last season.”

“When we won in Istanbul (in the Champions League final) I said, ‘It's over, what am I doing here? It's over, there's nothing left’.”

“But I have a contract, I'm here and still enjoying. Some of the moments I'm a bit tired but some of the moments I love.”

### SHORT CORNER



#### Four players lead in National Women's Chess C'ship

The 42nd National Women's Chess Championship got underway at Bangladesh Chess Federation Hall Room on Monday. The top five finishers from the tournament will earn a spot in the Bangladesh women's national team till next year. Four players -- WFM Noshin Anjum, WCM Ishrat Jahan Diba, Neelava Choudhury, WFM Wadifa Ahmed -- were leading the table with one point each at the close of the first-round matches.

#### HP training camp begins today

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB)'s High Performance (HP) department's training camp will begin today in Dhaka where members of the HP squad will be trained on language (English) skills, food and nutrition, and interactions with the media on top of cricket training. The training camp in Dhaka will come to a conclusion on June 14.

#### High-priced Cummins, Starc face off as IPL enters playoffs

The two highest-priced players in the IPL -- Australia teammates Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc -- will go head-to-head Tuesday for a place in the final as the cash-rich Twenty20 league enters the playoffs.

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### WHO SCORED 4 AGAINST REAL SINCE 2000

- Diego Milito (Real Zaragoza), Copa del Rey, 2006
- Robert Lewandowski (Borussia Dortmund), Champions League, 2013
- Taty Castellanos (Girona), LaLiga, 2023
- Alexander Sorloth (Villarreal), LaLiga, 2024

PHOTO: AFP

Villarreal forward Alexander Sorloth wrote his name into the history books as he tore past a sleepy Real Madrid defence, scoring four times in just 17 minutes to help his side fight back and snatch a 4-4 home draw against LaLiga champions Real Madrid on Sunday. Sorloth, who now leads the LaLiga top-scorers chart with 23 strikes in 33 matches, became only the 11th player to hit a quadruple against Los Blancos.

### BANGABANDHU CUP INTERNATIONAL KABADDI

## Bangladesh brace for stiff challenge

SPORTS REPORTER

Three-time champions Bangladesh are expecting stiff competition in their title defence in the Bangabandhu Cup International Kabaddi tournament, set to begin its fourth edition on May 26 at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur.

A total of 12 nations – Bangladesh, Poland, Kenya, Uganda, Indonesia, Malaysia, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Korea, Japan and Thailand will take part in the 12-day long competition in which last edition's World Cup semifinalists – Korea and Thailand – and 2007 editions' semifinalist Japan are taking part for the first time.

The participating teams are scheduled to start arriving from May 23 and the tournament draw will be held on May 25.

Bangladesh finished as the top team in the last three editions of the tournament, clinching their third successive title in 2023, beating Chinese Taipei in the final.

However, Bangladesh lost to the same opponents in the Hangzhou Asian Games last year, squandering an opportunity to win bronze, extending their medal drought in Asian



Games to 17 years.

Chinese Taipei are not participating this time but the inclusion of strong teams like South Korea, Thailand and Japan is expected to increase the standard of the tournament and give hosts Bangladesh a tough time, who are going in with an inexperienced team this time around.

Bangladesh have been preparing with a new-look team under local coaches Subimal Chandra Das and Abdul Jalil for the last three months after the federation suspended some

experienced players on disciplinary grounds. A few days ago, however, the federation lifted the bans on three of those players.

“We have been training with some promising players for the last three months as most of the senior players were suspended on disciplinary grounds since the completion of the Asian Games last year,” head coach Subimal told The Daily Star.

“We are not expecting too much from these new players but they are talented and have the potential to perform in future.”

The veteran coach also informed the squad included only five experienced players – Sabuj Mia, Razib Ahmed, Al Amin, Rasel and Mizanur Rahman – who played in last year's Asian Games in China.

Asked who are going to be the tough competitors for Bangladesh, Subimal said, “We never underestimate the opponents. We will take the field to win and try our level best to be champions.”

“However, Korea, Sri Lanka and Kenya are the strongest opponents for us. We have won against them before. We will try to play as per our game plan against each of them and give them a tough fight.”

Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation (BKF) president and IGP Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun briefed the media about the 4th Bangabandhu Cup International Kabaddi at an official press conference at the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) auditorium yesterday.

Former Bangladesh cricket team captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza MP and BKF general secretary and Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) commissioner Habibur Rahman were also present on the occasion.