

## PSG rock City

**PSG produced a stunning second-half fightback as they recovered from two goals down to beat Manchester City 4-2 in a Champions League thriller on Wednesday. All the goals came in the second half, with Jack Grealish and Erling Haaland scoring to put City firmly in control before goals from Ousmane Dembele, Bradley Barcola, Joao Neves, and Goncalo Ramos helped PSG to a crucial win.**

- It is set to be an exciting final day in the inaugural league phase of the Champions League with 25 of the 36 teams still awaiting their fate.
- All 18 matches will be played at the same time -- on January 30 (Wednesday night at 2:00am in Bangladesh) -- with 16 matches having something on the line.
- Only two teams -- Liverpool and Barcelona -- have confirmed their top-eight spots, earning direct qualifications to the last 16.
- 11 teams -- from position eight to 18 in the standings -- only have a one-point difference, making it likely for Real Madrid, placed 16th, to leapfrog Leverkusen at eight and get into the spot to directly qualify for the last 16.
- Manchester City and PSG are in danger of elimination, with the former needing a win against Club Brugge to ensure a place in the play-offs.



PHOTO: AFP

## Quantum gymnasts chasing the Olympic dream

ANISUR RAHMAN

Chasing the seemingly impossible dream of winning gold in the Olympics, the young gymnasts of the Quantum Cosmo School and College in Lama, Bandarban have made a huge splash in the inaugural Youth Gymnastics Championship that concluded at the National Sports Council gymnasium yesterday.

Quantum Cosmo, an institute for underprivileged students which runs on donation, emerged champion in both men's and women's sections of the Youth Gymnastics Championship, where the top Under-18 level gymnasts from across the country competed.

This triumph came fresh on the back of their incredible medal haul in the 5th National Age-Group Gymnastics Championship last month, where they bagged 96 out of the 120 medals, which included 41 gold medals.

But gymnasts from the remote school are not satisfied by just establishing their superiority at the national level as they have set their sights at the grandest stage of them all.

"We were all set a target to win gold in the Olympic Games and we are chasing that dream by preparing ourselves in practice and by participating in the national championships," national gymnast and Quantum Cosmo's very own Menton Toni Mro, who bagged two gold medals in floor and pommel horse events and



two silver medals in parallel bar and ring, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Though Quantum Cosmo started its journey in 2001, gymnastics was introduced in the institute in 2012. Now it has around 100 gymnasts, however, it is running without a permanent coach.

"We don't have a permanent coach since Masud sir, who was appointed by the Bangladesh Gymnastic Federation, left the job in 2022. He had joined us in 2019," said Mong Ching Pro Tripura, another national gymnast from Quantum Cosmo, who grabbed four gold medals in parallel bar, high bar, ring and vault events as well as a won silver in pommel horse.

Rashedul Islam is now training the gymnasts after participating in a couple of workshops on gymnastic coaching while former students Remond Tripura and Kishor Kumar Khisa are also working to groom the young gymnasts in an indoor facility built by the institute using some old equipment provided by the gymnastics federation.

"The major reason behind our success is meditation, which helps the students realise their target. Our students are doing two meditation sessions per day along with training and studies. Besides, the students have been assigned the target of winning a gold medal in the Olympics," said Rashedul.

Asked how they could realise this dream without proper facilities and high profile coaches, Rashedul said, "We all carry the key inside us, which is visualisation. If one can truly visualise it, one day he would reach the destination and we believe Bangladesh will win its first gold medal from the Olympics through gymnastics."

## WC in sight for buoyant Tigresses

SPORTS REPORTER

History beckons the Bangladesh national women's team as they take on West Indies in the series deciding third and final ODI in St Kitts tonight in an attempt to not only clinch their maiden series win over the hosts but also to book a direct berth in this year's ICC Women's World Cup.

After suffering a crushing nine-wicket defeat in the series opener, the Tigresses' chances for a direct qualification in the World Cup looked very bleak. However, they bounced back strongly in the second game, winning the contest by 60 runs.

With 21 points, Bangladesh are seventh in the ICC Women's Championship standings -- a spot behind New Zealand, who are only ahead of the Tigresses due to a better net run rate.

A win for the Tigresses in tonight's contest against the Windies, with whom they are playing their first-ever bilateral series, would see them leapfrog New Zealand and become the sixth team along with hosts India, Australia, England, South Africa, and Sri Lanka to directly qualify for the World Cup in India later this year.

However, a defeat means Bangladesh will join West Indies, Ireland, Pakistan, Scotland, and Thailand in the World Cup qualifiers from which two top teams will book their places in the main event.

## 'BPL has to develop players for Bangladesh'

Rangpur Riders coach **Mickey Arthur** was all smiles during training sessions, inspiring his charges during the recent Chattogram phase of the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL). That he is leaving a trail could be surmised in training but also from results, with Rangpur leading the table on the back of eight wins on the trot, but there is a hard exterior beneath the laughter and soft words of the 56-year-old South African-Australian. In an exclusive interview with *The Daily Star's* **Abdullah Al Mehdi**, Mickey revisited their winning campaign in the recent Global Super League (GSL), how it helped transform the mentality of the likes of Soumya Sarkar, and more. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:

**The Daily Star (DS):** How much of a difference do you see this BPL from your previous stint?

**Mickey Arthur (MA):** It's my second BPL stint and I did [work for] Dhaka [Dynamites] in 2015. I love the tournament; very fortunate to be part of a very good franchise. I do think the talent pool has gotten bigger, which is great for Bangladesh cricket. Ultimately the BPL has to be good and it has to develop players for Bangladesh.

**DS:** How was winning the Global Super League with Rangpur?

**MA:** It was great. It allowed me to work with the players before the BPL so that when I arrived here, we kind of hit the ground running. Winning there meant we had confidence in our ability to win here. We found ways to win from difficult situations. Lot of the world took notice that our competition is good.

**DS:** You are always in great spirits and smiling during training sessions. But does Mickey get angry too?

**MA:** I've got to be. The one thing I know with players, if you give them a soft option, the players generally take it in international cricket and top-level cricket



doesn't allow you to be soft. I'm onto the players all the time. Everybody makes mistakes. But you learn from your mistake and don't let it happen two or three times. I have a level of tolerance and then no more. Sometimes that's [tolerance] disguised, because I just want the best for every team I coach.

**DS:** How are you seeing the development of younger stars such as Mahedi Hasan?

**MA:** It makes me really proud. Mahedi is a wonderful cricketer. What I like about the players in GSL like Mahedi or Soumya, I was constantly on at them and telling them 'When you go and join your national team, create impact. Take that form and confidence into the next assignment.'

Cricket's a funny thing and when you get confidence you overcome a lot of things. It made me very happy.

I think the game's getting better because it's getting more dynamic. Skills are interchangeable [from franchise to internationals] but what changes consistently is the belief in your ability. I don't believe a player's ever out of form. I believe a player's out of luck, or out of runs, or just out of wickets. What changes is your confidence barometer.

**DS:** How is Soumya's process now after having lacked that confidence factor?

**MA:** I'd followed him, I'd coached against him. I understand his game because I've analysed him. Soumya has all the attributes of a very fine international player... but I think what was missing was his confidence because he'd been in and out of the Bangladesh team.

**DS:** How do you see Bangladesh cricket ahead of Champions Trophy?

**MA:** I think it's an exciting time for Bangladesh cricket. Some very exciting players are coming through. Bangladesh cricket doesn't need to stand back for anybody, as long as they're confident and have belief in their own ability.

## Payments, boundary size, suspicions headline BPL's Ctg phase

SHABAB CHOWDHURY

"No more cricketing questions? Surely boys, there's like 17 of you in here," Durbar Rajshahi all-rounder Ryan Burl quipped at a post-match press conference in Chattogram yesterday after navigating through a barrage of questions about player payments.

Burl played a match-winning hand with the ball, with figures of 4-22, as Rajshahi managed to put a stop to Rangpur Riders' juggernaut-like run with a 24-run win at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium. However, the 30-year-old Zimbabwean was mostly asked about whether he alongside the rest of the Rajshahi squad had received their payments -- a major discrepancy that had headlined the Chattogram phase of the tournament, eclipsing almost every on-field display.

Non-payment of players -- a very common problem throughout the history of the tournament -- doubled up on the intense rumours of spot-fixing, prevalent throughout the ongoing edition, and combined with the widespread scrutiny behind the disregard for having standardized boundaries.

At the end of the day, it was a significant win for the Taskin Ahmed-led side, who had boycotted a practice



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

session in Chattogram over payment issues; adding insult to injury following a string of losses. It put an end to Rangpur's eight-match winning streak and steered Rajshahi towards a top-four finish.

Burl expressed his delight at seeing his side emerge superior in a "do-or-die

scenario".

"It's a really happy feeling to be winning. It probably means much more to win against the number one team in the tournament so far.

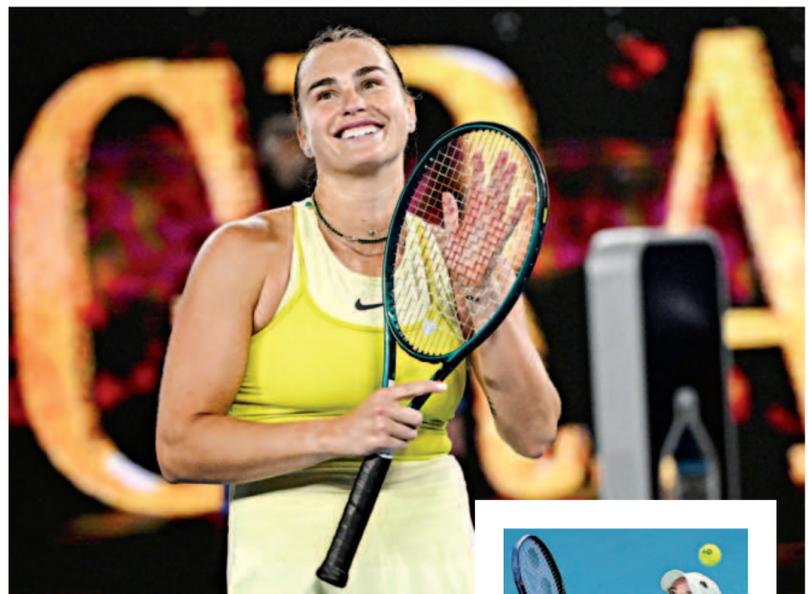
"Especially for us as we are in a bit of a do-or-die scenario where we need to win games to try and get to the qualifiers."

Having posted 170 for nine, Rajshahi managed to bundle out Rangpur for 146. Yasir Ali's 31-ball 60, laced with two fours and six sixes, laid the groundwork for the win for Rajshahi who, at one stage, were eyeing the 200-run mark.

Sabbir Hossain's 19-ball 39 at the top of the order gave Rajshahi impetus before Yasir took command of the innings. But a flurry of wickets in the middle saw them lose steam.

Taskin and SM Meherob provided early breakthroughs for Rajshahi as Rangpur slumped to three for 15 in the fourth over. Saif Hassan and Khushdil Shah patched together a 40-run stand but after the former got dismissed for a 29-ball 43, Rangpur lost the plot.

A 26-ball 41 from skipper Nurul Hasan Sohan raised hopes but Burl, on his return from an injury, spun the Rangpur batters to a dizzy. Meanwhile, Taskin -- this edition's highest wicket-taker so far -- finished with two four 20, extending his tally to 22 scalps.



**Aryna Sabalenka is overjoyed after the double defending champion overwhelmed Paula Badosa 6-4, 6-2 with sheer raw power in the first women's singles semifinals of the Australian Open yesterday. The world No. 1 -- bidding to become the first woman to win three Australian Open titles in succession since Martina Hingis (1997-99) -- is set to face stiff resistance from [inset] Madison Keys, who stunned second-seed Iga Swiatek 5-7, 6-1, 7-6 (10-8) in a cagey affair at the Rod Laver Arena.**

PHOTO: AFP

