

YAMAL

The jewel in Barca's Liga

CROWN



Barcelona scored at least four goals in 23 matches across all competitions this season, including in three Clasicos against Madrid.

It was the first time Barcelona won every Clasico in a season that had at least three matches between the rivals.

“In January, some people were saying we would fight to be third [in LaLiga]. We had confidence in ourselves. That’s the key.”

Barcelona forward Raphinha.

AFP, Barcelona

At just 17 years old, Lamine Yamal now has two LaLiga titles to his name -- the same as Cristiano Ronaldo managed in nine years at Real Madrid.

While his participation in the first was limited to a single brief cameo as a record-breaking 15-year-old debutant, the winger has been a chief architect of Barcelona's success this season.

It was fitting he should make the

breakthrough against Espanyol on Thursday with a sensational curling effort as Barca clinched the title.

Yamal's breathtaking displays have brought a vibrancy and life back to Barcelona that had been lacking since the club's biggest icon, Lionel Messi, departed in 2021.

Former Barca coach Xavi Hernandez brought Yamal on for the final seven minutes of a win over Real Betis in April 2023 at the Camp Nou, as the Catalans went on to win the league for the first time since 2019.

But Barca could not win any trophy that year, precipitating Xavi's exit, and Real Madrid's LaLiga and Champions League double left Barcelona soul-searching, with Yamal's growth the only bright spot.

By early 2024, the fast dribbling, immensely skillful winger had emerged as the team's key attacker -- albeit one still lacking in consistency.

A good omen then for incoming Barca coach Hansi Flick, whose free-flowing attacking style clicked with Yamal, as well as veteran striker Robert Lewandowski and Raphinha on the left flank.

With 13 assists, Yamal has the most in LaLiga, and is the top dribbler, with nearly double the amount of his closest contender, Sevilla's Dodi Lukebakio.

Yamal's irrepressible teen spirit is a big factor, with the youngster undaunted when Barcelona fall behind.

He thrived in all four Clasicos this season, as Barca triumphed each time.

They won the Copa del Rey and Spanish Super Cup by beating Real in finals earlier in 2025, before completing a domestic treble with LaLiga.

IPL, PSL resume today

STAR SPORTS DESK

The Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket tournament, suspended for a week amid fighting between India and Pakistan, will resume today, with some new foreign stars joining while some others staying away.

The IPL governing council took the decision to suspend the tournament on May 9 after consulting franchises and players as India and Pakistan extended their worst fighting in nearly three decades.

The IPL still has 12 group matches left, which will be played in the cities of Bengaluru, Jaipur, Delhi, Lucknow, Mumbai and Ahmedabad.

“A total of 17 matches will be played across 6 venues, starting May 17, 2025, and culminating in the final on June 3, 2025. The revised schedule includes two double-headers, which will be played on two Sundays,” India's cricket board (BCCI) said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Super League, too, will resume today. The May 8 match between Peshawar Zalmi and Karachi Kings was postponed after a drone attack hit a street adjacent to Rawalpindi Stadium.

The final of the tournament will take place on May 25. The four remaining group games will take place at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, with the playoffs and final in Lahore.

Mohammedan one win away from maiden BPL title

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan SC are just one win away from the coveted title of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), as the popular Black and Whites handed an emphatic 4-1 defeat to bottom-placed Chittagong Abahani at Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday.

Since the professional football league in Bangladesh was introduced back in 2007, Mohammedan have never won the top-tier title.

With their 12th win in 15 matches, Mohammedan are now very close to tasting their maiden professional football league title, requiring only one win from their remaining three matches.

The Motijheel-based outfit secured 38 points from 15 matches -- 10 points more than second-placed Abahani, who have played one match fewer than Mohammedan.

However, Mohammedan could celebrate their maiden title triumph today, subject to Abahani's defeat to Fortis FC in today's match.

In Cumilla, although hosts Mohammedan came into the match on the back of a hard-

Tigers begin T20 tune-up under Liton in Sharjah

SPORTS REPORTER

Five months following a three-match T20I series clean sweep win in the West Indies, Bangladesh are back in the shortest format as they take on hosts UAE in the first of two T20Is at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium today.

While the series may appear to be just a warm-up ahead of a packed T20 calendar -- featuring bilateral series with Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India, and major tournaments like the Asia Cup and T20 World Cup -- it holds real value.

With a five-T20I tour of Pakistan to follow, and the Asia Cup likely to be staged in the UAE, these games offer a timely opportunity to assess conditions and sharpen plans.

This series also marks a new chapter for Bangladesh, as Liton Das begins his tenure as full-time captain in the shortest format. Though he previously led the team on an interim basis, this is his first full-time appointment in the format, lasting through to the next year's T20 World Cup. The team will be hoping Liton can inspire a more aggressive and exciting style of cricket.

Liton has led Bangladesh to some notable results across formats, including a home ODI series win over India and a T20 series victory in the West Indies. But with the captaincy now confirmed, there's also hope that he can regain form with the bat. In 2024, he managed only one fifty in 20 T20I innings, averaging just 16.26.

Beyond Liton, the focus will also be on Bangladesh's ability to get their



team balance right -- a necessity ahead of tougher assignments. Tactical calls may be required, such as whether to accommodate former captain Najmul Hossain Shanto, and if so, how to structure the starting line-up without compromising bowling options.

Spin remains a strength, led by Mahedi Hasan and Rishad Hossain, while the pace arsenal -- featuring Hasan Mahmud, Nahid Rana, Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam and Tanzim Hasan Sakib -- offers the kind of variety that can trouble even elite batting line-ups.

Meanwhile, the UAE have left out many of their top cricketers for the series against Bangladesh and named a relatively inexperienced side, led by opening batter Muhammad Waseem -- the highest run-getter in T20Is in the world since his debut in 2021.

Regarding the head-to-head results, the Tigers are still unbeaten against the UAE in this format, having won all three games. But in 2022, when both sides last played in Dubai during a two-match series, the hosts gave the Tigers decent challenges in both losing affairs.

As the sun sets over Sharjah, Bangladesh embark on more than just another T20 assignment. This is a moment of recalibration -- a chance to not only tune up combinations and strategies, but to redefine how they approach this format under a fresh leader.

Will Liton's leadership spark a shift in the Tigers' T20 identity? Can the team find fluency, intent and balance before the heavyweight challenges ahead?

The answers may begin to unfold tonight -- under lights, under scrutiny, and under new leadership.

Captain Nazmul inspires U-19s to SAFF final

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh overcame a nervy first half to earn a gritty 2-1 victory over Nepal in a semifinal fixture of SAFF U-19 Championship in India's Arunachal Pradesh yesterday.

Captain Nazmul Huda Faisal led from the front after assisting the first goal for Ashikur Rahman before tapping in the second within a span of seven minutes in the second half to ensure Bangladesh's final berth, though Nepal tried to bite back with a late goal from Sujan Dangol.

Bangladesh, who became champions in the SAFF U-20 Championship last year, will now take on the winners of yesterday's second semifinal between Maldives and India.

At Golden Jubilee Stadium, both teams fought equally, as expected. Bangladesh enjoyed a lion's share of possession and created more chances, but it was Nepal who came close to breaking the deadlock after 15 minutes. However, goalkeeper Ismail Hossain Mahin denied the Nepalese forwards, while Nepal were also thwarted by the woodwork on the half-hour mark.

Bangladesh squandered two chances afterwards before Nepal defender Madan



Paudel made a goalline save, thwarting a goal-bound header 10 minutes into the second half.

After surviving a fumble from goalkeeper Mahin, Bangladesh broke the deadlock in the 74th minute, with Ashikur nodding in a well-judged corner from Nazmul, who then doubled the lead with a tap-in after substitute Mohammad Manik brilliantly snatched the ball from a Nepalese defender and squared it for Nazmul inside the box in the 81th minute.

Nepal bit back to pull one back in the 87th minute, with Sujan side-volleying a low cut-back into the net, giving goalkeeper Mahin no chance to react.

SHORT CORNER

Rakibul, Mahfuzur shine in Emerging Team's series win over SA

Rakibul Hasan and Mahfuzur Rahman Rabby's all-round brilliance helped Bangladesh Emerging Team clinch a 3-4-run win in the series-deciding third and final one-dayer to complete a 2-1 series victory over their South African counterparts in Rajshahi on Friday.

BFF slaps six-month ban on Saad

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) disciplinary committee has handed down a series of sanctions to Bashundhara Kings and their personnel following incidents of misconduct during a recent Bangladesh Premier League fixture against Abahani. Kings defender Saad Uddin has been banned for six months and fined Tk 50,000 for physically assaulting match commissioner Sujit Banerjee.

CR7 tops Forbes' list of highest-paid athletes for third year in a row

Cristiano Ronaldo topped Forbes' list of the world's highest-paid athletes for the third consecutive year and the fifth time in his career. Following his move to Saudi Arabian club Al-Nassr, Ronaldo's estimated total earnings are around \$275 million.

**Read full stories on The Daily Star website.

Palace eye FA Cup glory as City seek salvation

AFP, London

History beckons for Crystal Palace at Wembley in Saturday's FA Cup final as Manchester City have one final shot at avoiding a rare trophyless season under Pep Guardiola.

Twice FA Cup runners-up, Palace have never won a major trophy in their 119-year history. The Eagles sense this may finally be their time up against a City side far from their former glories of Guardiola's trophy-laden reign.

Palace warmed up for the Wembley showpiece by cruising to a 2-0 win at Tottenham last weekend to equal their record of 49 Premier League points with two games of the season to spare.

Victory would secure entry to one of Europe's major club competitions for the first time in Palace's history with a place in the Europa League at stake.

City's laboured display in drawing a blank at bottom-of-the-table Southampton last weekend gave Palace even more reason to believe.

However, Guardiola's men are unbeaten in 10 games, including a 5-2 demolition of Palace in the Premier League last month despite falling 2-0 behind.

City's fightback at the Etihad Stadium that day was sparked by Kevin De Bruyne rolling back the years.

The Belgian has just three games left as a City player after a glorious decade in Manchester and will be aiming to add one more to his 14 major honours with the club.

After an unprecedented four consecutive English top-flight titles, City find themselves battling just to secure a top-five Premier League finish and a place in next season's Champions League. Anything other than victory would cap what Haaland described as a "horrendous" campaign for a squad of serial winners.