

BUTTERFLY

In Full Flight



France's Maxime Grousset roars after winning the men's 100m butterfly at the 2025 World Aquatics Championships in Singapore yesterday. The 26-year-old edged Switzerland's Noe Ponti and Canada's Ilya Kharun in 49.62 seconds -- the third-fastest time in history and a new European record. It was his second gold of the meet after the 50m butterfly and his seventh individual Worlds medal across four events. Often overshadowed by compatriot Leon Marchand, Grousset reaffirmed his status as a sprint butterfly powerhouse.

PHOTO: AFP

“What did I just do? That’s crazy!”

Grousset said, clearly thrilled after the race.

India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal celebrates after reaching his sixth Test ton on Day 3 of their fifth and decisive Test against hosts England at The Oval on Saturday. Jaiswal's innings was not without fortune – he was dropped twice, on 20 and 40. England pacer Josh Tongue removed Jaiswal after a 164-ball 118, laced with 14 boundaries and two maximums. At Tea, the visitors were 304 for six in their second innings, leading by 281 runs, meaning England will have to record the highest chase at this venue. The standing record was made in 1902 by England when they chased 263 against Australia.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Carlsen breaks new ground

AGENCIES

Magnus Carlsen, the world's number one grandmaster, clinched the inaugural chess title at the Esports World Cup (EWC) in Riyadh, pocketing \$250,000 and redefining chess' place in modern competitive gaming.

The Norwegian star swept French rival Alireza Firouzja 2-0 in the final, reaffirming his dominance while embracing a futuristic stage for the ancient game.

The EWC, featuring 25 popular titles from Call of Duty to League of Legends, included chess for the first time this year, sparking debate over its esports credentials. But organisers' gamble paid off, with packed audiences, giant screens, and heart-rate monitors giving chess an electrifying new look.

Carlsen, also serving as an EWC ambassador, thrived in this high-octane environment, calling it "an amazing show, unlike anything I've seen." His win also propelled Team Liquid to the top of the EWC Club Championship standings, edging out 2024 winners Team Falcons.

Already having won the Norway Chess, Grenke Chess Freestyle, and the Chess.com Champions Tour in 2025, Carlsen's latest triumph cements his adaptability in both classical and digital arenas.

"New ground conquered," he posted on X, hailing chess' debut on the esports stage. "I hope this is a big part of the future for chess. Maybe next year, on an even bigger stage."

Carlsen's seamless leap into esports underscores his willingness to evolve with the game—whether campaigning for relaxed dress codes or embracing online formats. As he left the stage with trophy and triangular champion's key in hand, one thing was clear: Magnus Carlsen is rewriting how chess is played, watched, and imagined.



Taijul swings BEYOND SPIN

EKUSH TAPADER

Following back-to-back series against Sri Lanka and Pakistan last month, the national cricketers are currently enjoying a rare breather, having been granted a short break -- and they're making the most of it.

Bangladesh T20 captain Litton Das has taken a family trip abroad to celebrate his wedding anniversary, sharing wholesome moments with his wife and child. Meanwhile, Mustafizur Rahman, ever the quiet soul, is embracing his downtime with a relaxing holiday far from the cricket pitch.

For a group under constant spotlight and scrutiny, it's a rare chance to pause. But it's not all quiet at the home of cricket in Mirpur. While Litton and Mustafizur bask in family time and freedom, some of their teammates are staying close to the grind.

Take wicketkeeper-batter Jaker Ali Anik, for instance. On Saturday, he was spotted working up a sweat at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. Not far behind was flamboyant stroke-maker Soumya Sarkar, determined to push his way back into national contention.

Then there's Taijul Islam, Bangladesh's ever-reliable Test spinner. With no red-ball assignments until November, Taijul has turned his attention to the National League. Interestingly enough, he wasn't bowling the other day -- he was batting!

Guided by spin coach Sohel Islam at the BCB Academy ground, Taijul focused on sharpening his skills with the bat.



PHOTO: BCB

It might raise eyebrows, but the move makes sense. Expectations from tail-enders have grown, and Taijul is keen to add extra runs from the lower order. His highest Test score remains 47, with just two first-class fifties to his name. But his recent defensive solidity suggests that, with a bit of extra effort, he could become more than just a bowling asset.

Soon, the quiet will give way to intensity. The Bangladesh Cricket Board is planning a short T20 series against the Netherlands in Sylhet later this month to keep the team sharp before the Asia Cup in the UAE. A training camp begins on August 6, with power-hitting coach Julian Wood joining on August 10.

Selectors will also keep a close eye on the 'A' team versus 'HP' team series in Chattogram for potential late call-ups. To ensure mental readiness, psychologist David Scott will work with the squad ahead of their Asia Cup opener on September 9.

For now, though, it's a fleeting window of calm before a packed calendar: the Asia Cup, followed by relentless T20 cricket in the build-up to next year's World Cup.

Whether it's Litton's getaway, Mustafizur's escape, or Taijul sharpening the blade, each player is recharging in their own way before regrouping in Sylhet -- because come September, Tigers' rollercoaster resumes, making this their last relaxing breath of fresh air before the storm.

SHORT CORNER

Annie, Rafi fail to match personal best in 50m events

Bangladesh's swimmers Annie Akter and Samiul Islam Rafi failed to improve their personal bests in the 50m events at the ongoing World Aquatics Championships in Singapore yesterday. Annie clocked 31.39 seconds in the women's 50m freestyle event -- slightly off her previous best of 31.05. Rafi recorded a time of 27.21 seconds in the men's 50m backstroke, falling short of his personal best of 26.90.

'Abahani will always remain a cherished chapter in my life'

Captain of Abahani last season, Mohammad Ridoy, moved to Bashundhara Kings recently, but the midfielder stated that he shares a special connection with his former club. "Abahani will forever remain a cherished chapter in my life, etched in my heart," Ridoy wrote on Facebook.

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Bangladesh under-20 women's football team reached Vientiane yesterday to take part in the AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers. The SAFF U-20 Women's Championship winners, who have been placed in Group H, will play against hosts Laos on August 6, Timor Leste on August 8 and South Korea on August 10. Eight group winners along with best three second-place finishers will join hosts Thailand in the AFC Asian U-20 Women's Asian Cup, to be played in April next year.

PHOTO: BFF

Transfer window heats up as clubs go big

AGENCIES

The football summer transfer window is in full swing, with clubs across the Premier League, LaLiga, Bundesliga, Serie A, and Ligue 1 making significant moves to strengthen their squads for the 2025–26 season. High-profile transfers and intense speculation dominate the headlines as teams vie for top talent and address key areas, while several major sagas continue to unfold.

Here's a look at some of the most prominent confirmed deals and ongoing transfer battles:

Liverpool splash the cash

Arne Slot's Liverpool have been one of the most active clubs this window, bringing their total summer spend to approximately €284 million, making them Europe's biggest spenders.

Florian Wirtz headlines the arrivals, joining from Bayer Leverkusen for €136 million on a five-year contract.

French striker Hugo Ekitike arrives from Eintracht Frankfurt for a reported €75 million, potentially rising to €92 million with add-ons. The 23-year-old, who scored 22 goals and provided 12 assists last season, adds a physical presence and finishing ability up front.

Liverpool also strengthened their flanks with Jeremie Frimpong (Leverkusen, €34 million) and Milos Kerkez (Bournemouth,



€46 million), both expected to rejuvenate the full-back positions.

The Merseyside club is also pursuing Alexander Isak from Newcastle United. A reported £110 million bid was rejected, with the Magpies holding out for over £150 million. Talks are ongoing.

Luis Diaz to Bayern: A new chapter in Bavaria

Liverpool parted ways with winger Luis Diaz,

who joined Bayern Munich for a reported €75 million, including add-ons. The Colombian, who won a Premier League, two League Cups, and an FA Cup with the Reds, signed a four-year contract until 2029. At 28, Diaz adds explosive pace and direct attacking flair to Julian Nagelsmann's squad.

Manchester Utd reinforce with Cunha and Mbeumo

Matheus Cunha joined Manchester United

from Wolves for €73 million, signing a deal until 2030. A versatile forward who excels in pressing systems, Cunha brings movement and creativity across the front line. His ability to drop deep and link play suits Ruben Amorim's fluid attacking structure.

United also added Bryan Mbeumo from Brentford for £65 million, with another £6 million in potential add-ons. The Cameroon international scored 20 Premier League goals last season -- behind only Mohamed Salah, Isak, and Erling Haaland -- and is expected to provide consistent scoring and work rate from wide or central areas. Together with Cunha and Bruno Fernandes, Mbeumo will form a dynamic, mobile front three that could solve United's long-standing scoring problems.

Joao Pedro to Chelsea: Attack reinforced

Chelsea continued their recruitment drive by signing Joao Pedro from Brighton for €63.7 million. The 23-year-old signed a long-term deal through 2033. Pedro's ability to operate across the front line offers manager Enzo Maresca added flexibility in attack. Pedro has already shown his quality helping The Blues to a FIFA Club World Cup triumph in the USA with three goals.

Viktor Gyokeres joins Arsenal

Arsenal have addressed a long-standing need for a traditional centre-forward by signing Viktor Gyokeres from Sporting CP for €74 million. The Swedish striker is powerful, physically dominant, and offers excellent

hold-up play. His ability to bring others into play and finish in the box will provide Mikel Arteta's side with a consistent goal threat -- something that was missing in tight games last season. Gyokeres' aerial ability will also be useful in set-piece situations, an area Arsenal have mastered in recent seasons. This particular signing has been seen as a game-changer and might just be the missing key that will bring Mikel Arteta's Arsenal a Premier League title.

The ongoing sagas: Sesko, Simons, and Isak

Newcastle have submitted an €80 million bid for the 21-year-old striker. However, reports suggest the player prefers a move to Manchester United, who are also actively in talks. Sesko's mix of pace and finishing ability makes him one of the most sought-after young forwards in Europe.

Chelsea appear to be closing in on Xavi Simons. Reports indicate a deal worth €60 million, rising to €70 million with add-ons, is nearly complete. Simons has reportedly agreed personal terms, and his removal of Leipzig references from social media has fueled the speculation.

Meanwhile, Liverpool remain in pursuit of completing the hottest deal of the summer for Isak, despite their first offer being rejected by Newcastle. Fabrizio Romano reports that Isak is open to the move, with Liverpool continuing negotiations.