



Arsenal perfect, City upset

AGENCIES

Manchester City suffered a major shock, losing 3-1 to Bodo/Glimt in freezing Norway. PSG also slipped on Tuesday, losing 2-1 to Sporting Lisbon despite a late equaliser. Arsenal stayed perfect, defeating Sassuolo, with Gabriel Jesus scoring twice, while Real Madrid rose to second after beating Levante 6-1, thanks to Kylian Mbappe's double and Vinicius Junior's goal. Tottenham beat Borussia Dortmund 2-0, Copenhagen drew 1-1 with Napoli, Olympiacos defeated Bayer Leverkusen 2-0, Ajax beat Villarreal 2-1, and Club Brugge thrashed Kairat Almaty 4-1.



Having struggled for rhythm since joining the Bangladesh Premier league, Jimmy Neesham stepped up with the bat (44 off 26 balls) to propel Rajshahi Warriors to a challenging total of 165 for nine in the second qualifier against Sylhet Titans at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

From chaos to the final

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Chattogram Royals will play the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) final in Mirpur tomorrow, capping a campaign shaped by upheaval both on and off the field. From last-minute ownership changes to instability, Chattogram's route to becoming the first team this season to qualify for the final was far from smooth.

The turmoil began just a day before the tournament when the franchise's original owners withdrew due to financial complications, prompting the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to take over. Habibul Bashar was appointed team director as part of swift changes that also saw Mizanur Rahman Babul named head coach

and Nafees Iqbal become team manager.

Players were uncertain about payments, local cricketers had lost confidence, the coaching structure kept changing, and overseas signings were initially hard to secure.

"We wanted to ensure our players didn't have to worry about their basic payments," Bashar said.

Stability soon translated into results. Chattogram finished second in the league stage with six wins

from 10 matches before defeating table-toppers Rajshahi Warriors in Qualifier 1 to seal a spot in the final.

They also had to cope with losing their most in-form batter, Adam Rossington, midway due to a finger injury. But the team responded through collective performances.

Now one win away from their maiden BPL title, Chattogram will hope a campaign that began in chaos ends in historic triumph.

**Read full story on The Daily Star website



Mirpur cricket 'completely different'

Despite being a highly productive cricketer, England wicketkeeper-batter Sam Billings could not enjoy a prolonged international career, largely due to the presence of two superstars -- Jonny Bairstow and Jos Buttler -- competing for the same role. Rather than chasing an uncertain place in England's playing eleven, Billings chose a different path, building a career across franchise leagues around the world. Now 34, he is representing Sylhet Titans in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20.



"Anytime you play in the subcontinent, the passion for the game is phenomenal," Billings told The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan in an interview.

"The support and love we get in Bangladesh is amazing -- you feel it as soon as you get off the plane and again at the stadium. I was saying to Moeen [Ali] and Woakesy [Chris Woakes] last night that when you come here, you realise how tough the conditions are.

"Yesterday's [Tuesday's] wicket was very difficult to bat on, and it's a completely different style of cricket compared to anywhere else.

"Even at 34, I'm still developing and learning, and I'm very grateful for the experience."

**Read full interview on The Daily Star website

Coach-cum-archer outshines regulars

On the opening day of the Teer 16th National Archery Championship yesterday, Aishwarzo Rahman equalled the national qualification record in the individual compound event, topping the field with a score of 708. What made the feat more remarkable was the context. Apart from competing, Aishwarzo was also overseeing his students, juggling dual responsibilities with quiet authority.

**Read full story on The Daily Star website

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