Star
DHAKA THURSDAY AUGUST 6, 2026, SRABAN 22, 1433 BS

SPORT

What to WATCH

T SPORTS
Futsal League
Army SC (Women) VS Sports Field Logistics (Women)
Live from 2:30 pm
Army SC (Men) VS Sports Field Logistics (Men)
Live from 4:45 pm
Dhaka Athletic Club (Women) VS IM10 FC (Women)
Live from 7:00 pm
Dhaka Athletic Club (Men) VS IM10 FC (Men)
Live from 9:15 pm
TEN CRICKET
The Hundred
Live from 11:30 pm

Rishad snapped up by Eastern Cape

STAR SPORTS DESK

Bangladesh leg-spinner Rishad Hossain has earned his maiden SA20 call-up after defending champions Sunrisers Eastern Cape signed him ahead of the fifth edition of South Africa's franchise T20 league.

The three-time champions confirmed Rishad's signing on Wednesday as one of two overseas additions to their squad, alongside Australia all-rounder Mitchell Marsh, who will also make his first appearance in the tournament.

Rishad replaces Afghanistan spinner AM Ghazanfar in the Eastern Cape squad after establishing himself as one of Bangladesh's leading T20 bowlers over the past two years.

The 24-year-old enjoyed a breakthrough campaign at the 2024 T20 World Cup, finishing with 14 wickets, the joint-second highest tally in the tournament alongside Afghanistan star Rashid Khan. Since then, he has become a regular feature in Bangladesh's white-ball sides and has attracted growing interest from franchise leagues around the world.

The fifth SA20 season begins on January 17, with a mini-auction on October 7 to fill the remaining places across the six franchises.



PREPARATION HINGES ON PRACTICE MATCH

"I think the practice match we have is going to be very important in terms of our preparation before the match. It will also help us a great deal in adapting to the conditions and getting accustomed to the pitch."

HASAN MAHMUD

Hasan Mahmud bowls during Bangladesh's final training session ahead of their three-day practice match against Cricket Australia XI. While much of the pre-series conversation has centred on how Bangladesh batters will cope with Australia's formidable pace attack, the onus will be equally on the Tigers' own fast-bowling unit. Despite the absence of Nahid Rana and Shoriful Islam, the visitors' pace attack for the series, comprising Ebadot Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Hasan Mahmud, Khaled Ahmed and Mushfik Hasan, will be keen to prove they can make an impact in the series. PHOTO: BCB

Alcaraz's US Open defence in doubt

REUTERS

Carlos Alcaraz's preparations for the US Open have suffered another setback after the Spaniard withdrew from the Cincinnati Open because of a persistent wrist injury, raising fresh doubts over whether he will be fit to defend his title at Flushing Meadows later this month.

The seven-time Grand Slam champion has not played since retiring during his second-round match at the Barcelona Open in April. Although the world number two had been targeting a return at the ATP Masters 1000 event in Cincinnati, organisers confirmed on Tuesday that he will miss the tournament.

Alcaraz has already been forced to skip both the French Open and Wimbledon while recovering from the injury. Recent videos of him practising had fuelled hopes of an imminent comeback, but his latest withdrawal leaves him running out of opportunities to regain match sharpness before the year's final Grand Slam.

The Winston-Salem Open, which begins on August 23, is now the Spaniard's last realistic chance to play competitive tennis before the US Open starts on August 30.

Coach Sharmin's future under cloud despite results

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite guiding Bangladesh's top two shooters to career-best scores at the recent ISSF World Cups in Germany and China, former shooter-turned-coach Sharmin Akter allegedly fears losing her job with the Bangladesh Shooting Sports Federation (BSSF) over testimony she gave before an enquiry committee.

Sharmin, the country's fourth shooter to win international honours after Kazi Sahana, Lovely Chowdhury Akhi and Sabrina Sultana, took up coaching in 2023 after ending her 22-year playing career.

Under the 2004 South Asian Games gold medallist, Rabbi Hasan Munna recorded a career-best 630.3 at July's ISSF World Cup in China, missing the men's 10m air rifle final by just 0.6 points. Rabbi had earlier improved from 624.8 in Baku in 2022 to 628 at May's Munich World Cup, while Robiul Islam Tomas also posted a career-best 627.8 in Munich.

Despite the steady improvement under Sharmin -- something even foreign coaches failed to achieve -- she is allegedly facing dismissal not because of performance, but because of her past testimony.

The uncertainty emerged after a new ad-hoc committee took charge last month. Sharmin is allegedly being targeted for refusing to testify against the previous ad-hoc committee during the interim government's tenure.

2010 SA Games gold medallist Sharmin Akter Ratna, current national shooter Kamrun Nahar Koly and another shooter had brought several allegations, including sexual harassment, against former joint secretary Sajjad Hossain. After Ratna filed an FIR, the National Sports Council formed an enquiry committee before which Sharmin testified that she had not witnessed any such incident.

Allegations have since emerged that Ratna, now joint secretary of the new ad-hoc committee, is trying to remove Sharmin from her coaching role "in an act of retaliation".

"It has been a furious approach which will ultimately harm the country's shooting ahead of the Asian Games. The appointment or termination of a coach must be evaluated on the basis of performance, not fury or revenge. The BSSF officials must give up their occupancy approach for the betterment of shooting," a former national coach, requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star.

The former coach also alleged that a BSSF official compelled shooters to sign statements expressing a preference to train under foreign coaches instead of local coaches.

Another shooter, speaking on condition of anonymity, alleged that despite the Asian Games squad already being selected, special trials for the women's 10m air rifle and men's 10m air pistol were organised to make room for favoured shooters, although the originally selected athletes again finished on top.

Neither BSSF general secretary Shakif Shamim nor joint secretary Ratna responded to this correspondent's calls. It was learnt that State Minister for Youth and Sports Aminul Islam met federation officials yesterday to discuss several issues, including Sharmin's future.

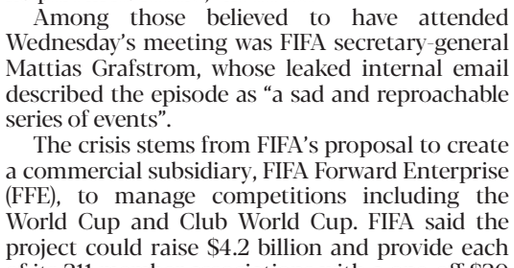


Sharmin Akter with Rabbi Hasan Munna and Robiul Islam Tomas.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

'Infantino must go'

Pressure mounts on FIFA boss



AFP, *Rabat*

FIFA president Gianni Infantino held emergency talks with senior FIFA officials in Morocco on Wednesday as pressure mounted over his abandoned plan to open the World Cup to private investment, with former Portugal captain Luis Figo becoming the latest high-profile figure to call for his resignation.

Infantino has faced growing criticism, including from within FIFA, since withdrawing the proposal last Saturday. Reports said he had sought backing from former players associated with FIFA's 'Legends' programme, but Figo instead delivered a scathing public rebuke.

"I could write 10,000 words on the problems at FIFA. But the solution needs only three: Infantino must go," Figo wrote in the Daily Mail.

"The man who would try to force through such major changes just to enrich himself and his friends is a relic of the game's past and should have no part in its future," he added.

Among those believed to have attended Wednesday's meeting was FIFA secretary-general Mattias Grafstrom, whose leaked internal email described the episode as "a sad and reproachable series of events".

The crisis stems from FIFA's proposal to create a commercial subsidiary, FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE), to manage competitions including the World Cup and Club World Cup. FIFA said the project could raise $4.2 billion and provide each of its 211 member associations with a one-off $20 million payment while increasing future funding.

Instead, the proposal triggered fierce opposition. UEFA threatened to boycott future World Cups before Infantino withdrew the plan, branding it "a shabby, back-room, opaque deal" and declaring that the FIFA leadership had lost its confidence.

CONCACAF also criticised Infantino's leadership and called for "a comprehensive reckoning with this presidency".



PHOTO: AC MILAN INSTAGRAM

A minute's silence was observed before kickoff of the pre-season friendly between AC Milan and Inter Milan at San Siro yesterday in memory of club and Italy great Franco Baresi. Baresi, who spent his entire 20-year playing career with Milan, died last week at the age of 66. The match ended in a 1-1 draw.



Former Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah waves to jubilant Trabzonspor fans after arriving in Istanbul on Wednesday ahead of completing his move to the Turkish club. The 34-year-old Egyptian is expected to undergo a medical before signing a two-year contract, with an option for a third season. Salah left Liverpool after nine trophy-laden years, having scored 257 goals in 442 appearances to become the third-highest scorer in the club's history. PHOTO: REUTERS

Qualities that make Guimaraes a perfect fit for Arsenal

STAR SPORTS DESK

After weeks of speculation, Arsenal yesterday have finally completed one of the standout signings of the summer, swooping for Newcastle United captain Bruno Guimaraes in a reported £75 million deal.

It is a statement signing. Having ended their 22-year wait for the Premier League title, Mikel Arteta made it clear Arsenal could not afford to stand still. Defending a championship is often harder than winning one, and if the Gunners are to establish themselves as England's dominant force, they needed players capable of immediately improving the starting XI.

Arteta has long favoured players already proven in the Premier League and few midfielders fit that profile better than Guimaraes. At 28, the Brazilian arrives at arguably the peak of his career, bringing a rare blend of technical quality, physicality and leadership.

Among midfielders across Europe's top five leagues, he ranks in the top 10 percent for deep progressions, progressive passes and through balls, while also sitting in the 94th percentile for ground duels won per 90 minutes.

There remains a tendency to view Guimaraes primarily as a combative midfielder, but that no longer tells the full story. He has evolved into Newcastle's complete midfielder, their all-in-one man.

Last season was the most productive of his career. He finished as Newcastle's leading Premier League scorer and assist provider with nine goals and five assists.

Under Eddie Howe, Guimaraes was increasingly deployed higher up the pitch, particularly in the inside-right channel, where his vision and willingness to play forward became one of Newcastle's main creative weapons. His influence extended to the international stage as well. Although Brazil



exited the 2026 World Cup in the last 16 against Norway, Guimaraes recorded four assists in five matches, bettered only by Michael Olise's seven.

That evolution makes him an ideal fit as one of Arsenal's advanced No. 8s. While Arsenal won the title, they occasionally struggled to break down organised low blocks from open play, relying instead on moments of brilliance and their outstanding threat from set-pieces.

Guimaraes offers exactly the qualities they sometimes lacked. He combines the passing range of a deep-lying playmaker with the imagination of a No. 10 and the energy of a box-to-box midfielder. Rather than simply recycling possession, he constantly looks to play forward, break defensive lines and accelerate attacks.

Despite missing six matches with a hamstring injury late last season, he still ranked among the Premier League's top five players for defensive line-breaking passes (46) and through balls (21). He also completed 998 passes under high-intensity pressure, more than any Newcastle player.

His work without the ball is equally impressive. Across each of his four full seasons at Newcastle, he finished either first or second for total duels won. Last season, his 6.1 successful duels per 90 minutes exceeded every Arsenal central midfielder, while his 1.6 tackles per 90 also ranked highest. Only Declan Rice narrowly bettered him for recoveries (5.2 to 5.0).

The Gunners played 63 matches in all competitions last season and injuries repeatedly stretched Arteta's squad. Since joining Newcastle in January 2022, Guimaraes has missed just 16 league games. His absence also exposed just how important he was to Howe's side. Newcastle won only two of the 16 league matches he missed. With Guimaraes, they won 52.3 percent of 153 matches and averaged 1.8 points per game. Without him, those numbers dropped to a 12.5 percent win rate and just 0.7 points per match, with the Magpies scoring fewer goals and conceding more.