

# India defend SAFF U-19 Championship crown

The India U-19s showed nerves of steel to outlast Bangladesh 4-3 on penalties, after it ended 1-1 post regulation time

Team Herald  
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**YUPIA (Arunachal Pradesh):** It was a final that had everything! Early drama, missed chances, a fierce fightback, and a heart-stopping finish! Eventually, the India U-19s showed nerves of steel to outlast Bangladesh 4-3 on penalties, after it ended 1-1 post regulation time.

The Blue Colts successfully defend their SAFF U-19 Championship crown at the Golden Jubilee Stadium, on Sunday.

The match had ended 1-1 after regulation time, forcing a nervy penalty shootout. Buoyed by a raucous crowd, India had taken the lead in the second minute through captain Singamayum Shami before Bangladesh equalised in the 61st minute through Md Joy Ahamed.

The shootout was not for the faint-hearted. Rothen Singh's limp second penalty gave Bangladesh the upper hand as keeper Md Ismail Hossain Mahin saved the spot-kick; the stadium fell

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silent.

But Bibiano Fernandes' boys refused to buckle. When Bangladesh skipper Nazmul Huda Faysal blazed his effort over the crossbar, the game swung back India's way. With renewed belief, India converted their remaining kicks, and goalkeeper Suraj Singh Aheibam delivered when it mattered the most. He dived low to his left to deny Salahuddin Sahed.

Captain Singamayum Shami, who had started the evening with a stunning goal, stepped up for the final kick. Calm, composed, and full of conviction, he slotted it in to crown India champions once again. A fitting end to a tense and fiercely fought contest.

India had come flying out of the blocks. Within two minutes, they were ahead. Awarded a free-kick from over 30 yards out, Shami

spotted the Bangladesh keeper slightly out of position and went for goal. His curling strike was pinpoint, and even though Mahin got a hand to it, the power behind the effort carried it into the net.

India rode the momentum, dominating possession and pushing Bangladesh on the back foot. Their passing was crisp, their movement sharp, and their wings once again proved

their most potent weapon. In the 16th minute, Omang Dodum sliced through the defence with a solo run and was nearly in for a second, but Mahin made a vital save to keep Bangladesh in the contest.

Those missed chances would come back to haunt India. Bangladesh, rattled at first, grew into the game. They closed down spaces, cut off India's passing chan-

nels, and slowly turned the tide. By half-time, they had begun to threaten with set-pieces, but India's backline stood firm.

The breakthrough came in the 61st minute. A chaotic corner sparked a scramble in the box, and Md Joy Ahamed pounced on the loose ball, firing it past Suraj Singh to level the match. It was the first goal India had conceded in the tournament, and it came at the worst possible moment.

From there, both teams pressed for a winner, but the game turned cagey and physical. The final third became a battlefield, and clear-cut chances were few and far between.

With the whistle blowing for full time, it all came down to the tie-breaker. And India captain Shami rose to the occasion a second time to bury the final penalty into the net and send his team and the crowd into delirium.

**RESULT**

**India 1 (4) (Singamayum Shami 2') Bangladesh 1 (3) (Md Joy Ahamed 61')**

**sportspopup**

**Alcaraz downs Sinner to win Italian Open in Roland Garros warning**

**ROME:** Carlos Alcaraz won the Italian Open on Sunday after beating rival Jannik Sinner 7-6 (7/5), 6-1 in the final and firing a warning shot for Roland Garros. Alcaraz, who will climb to world number two behind Sinner on Monday, won his third title of the season ahead of the French Open which starts next weekend. The Spaniard claimed victory in his fourth final of the season and sent a message to the rest of the men's tour for Roland Garros where he will defend the title. Sinner tops the world rankings but his 26-match winning streak was ended by Alcaraz, also the man who had last beat him in last year's China Open final. Alcaraz is the only man to beat Sinner in a tour final since the start of 2024, when his Italian rival began his rise to the top of men's tennis and three Grand Slam titles.



**Paolini makes history seeing off Gauff to win Italian Open**

**ROME:** Jasmine Paolini made Italian tennis history on Saturday by winning the Italian Open, convincingly beating Coco Gauff 6-4, 6-2 to claim her second 1000 series title ahead of Roland Garros later this month. Late bloomer Paolini, who also won in Dubai last year, is the first Italian woman to win the Rome event since Raffaella Reggi in 1985 after overcoming former US Open champion Gauff in straight sets. The hugely popular 29-year-old delighted the packed centre court at the Foro Italico by winning the first of a potential three titles for local players at this year's event in the Italian capital. And after reaching two Grand Slam finals last year Paolini, who will be world number four on Monday, will be gunning to go one better in Paris after a brilliant home tournament. "Every time I go out onto the court I try to do so with joy, with passion and with a certain amount of calm," Paolini told reporters.



# Crystal Palace stun Man City to win FA Cup for first time

**AFP, LONDON:** Crystal Palace stunned Manchester City on Saturday to win the FA Cup for the first time as Eberechi Eze sealed a 1-0 victory that piled on the misery for Pep Guardiola's troubled side.

Eze's early strike rocked City before Palace goalkeeper Dean Henderson saved Omar Marmoush's penalty late in the first half of a dramatic final at Wembley. While Eze's clinical finish was the culmination of his remarkable rise from rejection by Arsenal, Fulham and Millwall as a youngster, it was Henderson who emerged as Palace's hero with a series of superb saves.

City will protest that Henderson should have been sent off for

a first-half handball outside his penalty area.

But Henderson made the most of that controversial moment to ensure Palace clinched the first major trophy in their 120-year history and a place in next season's Europa League.

"To be honest I can't really believe it. I think when you play this game 10 times, you win it once, and this happened today," Palace boss Oliver Glasner said. "The goal was the first time we were in their half and then we just defended with every single part of the body."

Beaten by Manchester United in their previous FA Cup final appearances in 1990 and 2016, Pal-



Crystal Palace players celebrate with the trophy after the FA Cup final between Manchester City and Crystal Palace at the Wembley Stadium in London

ace's shock win was no more than they deserved as City once again imploded in a dismal season that

will be their first without major silverware since 2016-17. "We did everything but if you're

not going to score goals, you're not going to win," Guardiola said.

"We performed really well. Football is like this sometimes."

On the Henderson controversy, Guardiola would only add: "Ask the referee."

After winning the Premier League in the previous four seasons, City have endured a turbulent campaign that ranks among the worst in Guardiola's storied managerial career.

Currently sixth in the Premier League, City host Bournemouth on Tuesday and travel to Fulham on May 25 as they try to salvage their wretched year by at least qualifying for the Champions League.

MARUTI SUZUKI
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