

SPORT



After failing to get going in his first four Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) matches, Rangpur Rangers skipper Shane Watson gave a glimpse of his prowess with a 36-ball 68 at the Sylhet International Stadium yesterday as Rangpur piled on 199 for five. The former Australian all-rounder's innings was ended by an inch-perfect yorker from Sylhet Thunder fast bowler (bottom R) Ebadot Hossain, who bowled Watson for the second time in identical fashion. Rangpur won by 38 runs.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Hasan sparkles as Dhaka go top

ABDULLAH AL MEHEDI from Sylhet



Dhaka Platoon upstaged Khulna Tigers in a close Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) match at the Sylhet International Stadium yesterday even as Khulna skipper Mushfiqur Rahim played an exceptional innings under pressure to take his side close. It turned out to be Platoon's teenage paceman Hasan Mahmud's day as he thwarted Mushfiqur to hand Dhaka their sixth win of the tournament, which took them to the top of the BBPL standings after nine matches.

Khulna sent in the unlikely opening pair of Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Aminul Islam after Platoon had posted 172 for four, courtesy of Asif Ali's late cameo of 39 from 13 balls. Mashrafe Bin Mortaza started the rot at the top, bowling a fine line and length and scalping Aminul before Hasan started his super spell with the ball.

He removed Mehedi in his first over but it was the first delivery of his second over that should be credited as the ball of the match. The batsman on strike was Rilee Rossouw, one of the top batsmen in the BPL over the years. The ball pitched on a good length just outside the left-hander's leg stump, took off and jagged away towards off stump to catch the edge through to the keeper. Khulna were then staring down the barrel, four down for 44 runs.

With the match slipping away, Mushfiqur played the kind of innings that usually takes teams over the line in difficult situations. His 33-ball 64, featuring some remarkable shots, gave Khulna a chance with two overs remaining. Hasan foiled the party, showing great steel in a pressure cooker situation and bagging Mushfiqur's scalp in the penultimate over as

deliveries.

"He got out to a low full-toss, I was trying something different," the 20-year-old added.

He agreed that the gem that dispatched Rossouw 'needed to be' his best delivery of the match. "I wouldn't have got Rossouw's wicket without it being my best delivery. The plan was to bowl stump to stump against him as he plays wider deliveries well. It bounced from a very good area after hitting a good length and that's what I like about the delivery. It is important to have pace but also [to have] swing. I try to follow pacers who bowl at pace like Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Mitchell Johnson," Hasan said.

Still learning his trade, Hasan has been taken for a few runs at the start of the tournament and remained wicketless in a few, but picking up the four key wickets -- Mehedi, Rossouw, the demolisher Robbie Frylinck and Mushfiqur -- he showed he has the mettle and his team has been supporting him even when he was having a hard time.

"Things are going well and I am excited to be part of this team with so many national team players. They told me to have confidence, not be nervous and to bowl in the right areas. BPL is a big stage and I am trying to do well," said Hasan, who appears to be heeding the good advice.

SCORES IN BRIEF

DHAKA PLATOON: 172 for 4 in 20 overs (Tamim 25, Mominul 38, Ariful 37 not out, Asif 39 not out; Amir 2-27)

KHULNA TIGERS: 160 for 8 in 20 overs (Rossouw 18, Mushfiqur 64, Najibullah 31; Mahmud 4-32)

Result: Dhaka won by 12 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Hasan Mahmud.

Khulna stopped at 160 for eight.

"It's really tough bowling to Mushfiqur bhai. He can almost play 360 degrees around the ground. The plan for him was to bowl wide yorkers and have three fielders on the off side," Hasan said at the post-match press conference about getting the wide yorker right after Mushy had taken him for sixteen runs in three previous

SICS undergoing overhaul

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

The vicinity of the picturesque Sylhet International Cricket Stadium is currently undergoing an overhaul to add more lustrous facilities to the present venue, which is one of the best in Bangladesh.

Construction of a new outer stadium adjacent to the main building, based in the middle of the Lakkatura tea garden, is nearing completion and given the current rate of progress, the ground is expected to be ready within the next four months.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) began work on the outer ground in 2018 with the expected date of completion being June 2020.

The venue will host National Cricket League and Bangladesh Cricket League matches in addition to first, second and third division matches. Age-level international fixtures could also possibly be played there.

The BCB will also construct an academy in the area for budding cricketers and meanwhile, the game's local governing body and the Sylhet city corporation have already set in motion their plans to build a school. On top of that, the board is set to afford housing to academy players through a dormitory which could house up to 30 students. A Tk 26 crore budget was allocated for this project. However, perhaps the most striking

aspect of the outer grounds could be lush green galleries on two sides of the venue, where there are no concrete works planned. Other than that, the ground will of course feature the usual amenities such as a media box, dressing rooms a President's Box and a Hospitality Box.

BCB director Shafiqul Alam Chowdhury Nadel is overseeing the construction.

"We always planned to build an outer stadium after the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium," Shafiqul said. "When we entered one of the stadiums in India, we saw that there were two grounds on two sides with the media box in the middle. "So, we borrowed the design idea from there and linked the media boxes with a bridge so that media personnel can go from one building to another without having to go down."

"The connecting bridge has seating areas on the side of the outer grounds so that journalists can watch a match or a team practicing just by moving to the bridge area," Shafiqul informed.

The outer stadium is set to be a proper ground where budding players can hopefully hone their trade and one day make a mark in Bangladesh cricket.



PHOTO: STAR



Dhaka Platoon fast bowler Hasan Mahmud impressed yesterday, taking four for 32 in the BBPL match against Khulna Tigers. (Inset) Unlike the previous day, the Sylhet International Stadium was abuzz with fans who arrived before the day's first match started.

PHOTO: STAR

Pope lifts Eng to 262 for 9

AFP, Cape Town

Ollie Pope hit a half-century to give England a late boost after they struggled against a disciplined South African bowling attack on the first day of the second Test against South Africa at Newlands on Friday.

Pope made 56 not out as England struggled to 262 for nine on a day when the tourists, 1-0 down in the four-match series, failed to take advantage of what looked like a good batting pitch.

Before Pope prospered in an unbeaten last wicket stand of 28 with James Anderson after six England batsmen perished for scores between 29 and 47.

England's problems were a tribute to the pressure exerted by the South African bowlers, who shared the wickets. Vernon Philander, Kagiso Rabada, Anrich Nortje and Dwaine Pretorius took two each, while left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj kept a tight rein on the batsmen while sending down 27 overs and taking one for 68.

South Africa thought they had completed a highly satisfactory day when Pope was caught by Philander off Rabada shortly before the close with the total on 261 - but a review by the umpires showed that Rabada had sent down a no-ball.

The day after his 22nd birthday, Pope, who missed England's 107-run defeat in the first Test in Centurion because of illness, played a composed innings and shared a 58-run fifth wicket partnership with Ben Stokes which threatened to break the South African stranglehold.

Stokes reached 47 on the ground where he made a career-best 258 four years ago and was striking the ball crisply before he hit an awkward drive against the pace of Nortje and was caught at cover.

The innings then changed dramatically as Jos Buttler and Sam Curran fell before the second new ball was taken - and Dom Bess and Stuart Broad were dismissed in the first two overs with the new ball. From 185 for four England were 234 for nine.

But Pope was able to keep most of the strike, while Anderson was able to keep out the deliveries which he had to face.

England's struggles were epitomised by captain Root. He had an escape on 31 when a flying edge off Nortje burst through first slip Rassie van der Dussen's hands and went for four runs.

But two balls later Root ducked into a fast bouncer from Nortje and gloved the ball to wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 262 for 9 (Sibley 34, Denly 38, Root 35, Stokes 47, Pope 56 not out, Buttler 29; Philander 2-46, Rabada 2-63, Nortje 2-54, Pretorius 2-26)

Labuschagne leads Aus charge

AFP, Sydney



Marnus Labuschagne hit his fourth century in just 14 Tests to guide Australia into a commanding position against virus-hit New Zealand on the opening day of the third Test in Sydney on Friday.

The rock-solid number three, last year's leading Test scorer with 1,104 runs at 64.94, again proved the Black Caps' nemesis with his second ton of the series to continue his remarkable scoring sequence.

Supported by Steve Smith's 28th Test half-century, Australia reached stumps at 283 for three with Labuschagne unbeaten on 130 and Matthew Wade a breezy 22 not out.

The South African-born Labuschagne has now scored four centuries in seven Test innings this southern summer against Pakistan

and New Zealand.

"Terrific day," he said. "When you bat on day one you know it can be a real prosperous day but if you get off to a shaky start it can be tough work."

Smith, who took 39 balls to get off the mark, shared in a 156-run stand with Labuschagne before he again missed out after a lengthy stay and was caught at slip off Colin de Grandhomme for 63 off 182 balls.

David Warner fell again to the leg-side trap on the third ball after lunch when he was caught by de Grandhomme at leg gully off Neil Wagner for 45.

It was the fourth time in the series left-armed Wagner has snared Warner, who has yet to reach a half-century against New Zealand this summer after scoring an unbeaten 335 and 154 against Pakistan last November.

Opener Joe Burns was dismissed in the 15th over, squared up by de

Grandhomme and caught by Taylor at first slip for 18.

De Grandhomme opened the bowling with Matt Henry after senior paceman Tim Southee was surprisingly left out of the attack.

Australia won the toss and chose to bat against the visitors, who made five changes to the team that lost the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne by 247 runs.

The Black Caps went into the Sydney Test without skipper and star batsman Kane Williamson, who has been ill in the lead-up.

Batsman Henry Nicholls and spinner Mitchell Santner were other illness withdrawals while Southee lost his place to leg-spinner Todd Astle.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: First innings 283 for 3 (Warner 45, Labuschagne 130 not out, Smith 63, Wade 22 not out; de Grandhomme 2-63)



Australia's Marnus Labuschagne lifts his bat in celebration after scoring an unbeaten 210-ball 130, laced with 12 fours and one six, on the first day of the third Test against New Zealand at the Sydney Cricket Ground yesterday.

PHOTO: ICC

SHORT CORNER

PCB to deduct salary if players fail fitness test

Pakistan's cricket board Friday warned the national players to meet fitness standards or lose up to 15 percent of their salary, as officials seek to address the team's fall in the international rankings.

Pakistan failed to reach the semifinals of the World Cup in England last year, and won only one of their six Test matches.

They also fared badly in one-day internationals, winning just nine of their 25 and just one of their ten Twenty20 internationals, leaving the team as low as seventh in Tests and sixth in ODIs.

"All the available centrally contracted players will attend the two-day testing on January 6 and 7 in Lahore and any player failing to meet the minimum fitness requirements will be fined 15 percent of his monthly retainer," said a Pakistan Cricket Board release Friday.

-- AFP

England ban football as warm-up activity

England have decided to do away with playing football to warm-up before a training session after they lost opener Rory Burns to it for the remainder of the ongoing four-match Test series against South Africa.

Burns, who was England's top scorer in the first Test, injured his left ankle while playing a football match during the warm-up prior to the Cape Town Test and scans revealed that he sustained ligament damage.

In the aftermath of the Burns' injury, Ashley Giles, England cricket director and head coach Chris Silverwood have decided to ban football as a warm-up activity in training sessions.

-- AGENCIES

Steyn set for int'l return

Dale Steyn is set to return to international cricket, confirming he's part of South Africa's limited-overs plans for their upcoming series against England.

Currently representing Melbourne Stars in the Big Bash League, Steyn told cricket.com.au on Friday: "I know I'll be part of (the T20 series against England), that was the last conversation I've had. I get a nice two-week break, then straight into it again."

"I'll be around for the ODIs - to be honest, I don't know how much I'll play (the ODIs) ... I'll be there for that and then definitely the T20s." -- ICC