

SPORT



AN AERIAL CELEBRATION: Chattogram Challengers pacer Rubel Hossain jumps into the air while celebrating the dismissal of opener Tamim Iqbal with wicketkeeper Nurul Hasan during the eliminator of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) that Chattogram won by seven wickets against Dhaka Platoon in Mirpur yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Dhaka Platoon sent packing

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Platoon could not avoid being knocked out of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League as the side succumbed to a seven-wicket defeat against Chattogram Challengers in the eliminator match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Chattogram faced little to no resistance as they cruised to the modest 145-run target set by Dhaka with forty balls to spare.

With Chris Gayle and Ziaur Rahman opening the innings, Chattogram made a solid start. Ziaur, who was promoted to the opener in this match, paired up with big-hitter Gayle to add 42 runs for the first wicket before he was eventually dismissed on a 12-ball 25.

Imrul Kayes then combined with Gayle to put Chattogram within touching distance of the target before both batsmen departed with 30-plus scored. Mahmudullah was the one to finish the job with a six while remaining unbeaten

with 34 runs off 14 balls.

With this win, Chattogram kept their hopes for a place in the final alive as they will now take on Rajshahi Royals, who lost the first qualifier against Khulna Tigers in the day's second match, in the second qualifier tomorrow.

Earlier, Dhaka were asked to bat first after skipper Mashrafe surprisingly came for the toss despite his injury, which was sustained while fielding against Khulna on Saturday. The inspirational skipper played

with 14 stitches in his left hand.

However, Dhaka were dealt a huge blow when Rubel Hossain bowled the experienced Tamim Iqbal for three to start the proceedings. Things went from bad to worse for Dhaka after that as they lost a number of wickets in no time and were reeling on 43 for five inside nine overs.

It was opener Mominul Haque who held his ground though but he too departed after scoring 31 while Asif Ali also departed cheaply (five) as Dhaka seemingly found it difficult to even pass the hundred-run mark at one stage.

Shadab Khan and Thisara Perera made amend though, adding 44 runs for the eight wicket before the latter departed on 25 runs off 13 balls.

Shadab remained unbeaten on 64-runs off 41 balls, featuring five fours and three sixes, as Dhaka put on 51 runs in the last three overs to post 144 for eight.

West Indian seamer Rayad Emrit picked up three wickets while Rubel and left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed bagged two wickets each for Chattogram.

SCORES IN BRIEF

DHAKA PLATOON: 144 for 8 in 20 overs (Mominul 31, Shadab 64 not out, Perera 25; Rubel 2-33, Nasum 2-11, Emrit 3-23)

CHATTOTGRAM CHALLENGERS: 147 for 3 in 17.4 overs (Gayle 38, Ziaur 25, Imrul 32, Mahmudullah 34 not out; Shadab 2-32)

Result: Chattogram won by 7 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Rayad Emrit.

SHORT CORNER

U-19s tie with Aussie counterparts

Bangladesh shared the honours with their Australian counterparts in their first official warm-up match ahead of the ICC U19 World Cup at the LC de Villiers Oval in Pretoria yesterday.

The match ended in a draw as Bangladesh scored 250 for three in 43 overs while in reply, Australia were all out for 250 in their allotted 43 overs.

Opener Sam Fanning (46), Lachlan Hearne (41) and Corey Kelly (44) scored notably for Australia.

Earlier, Bangladesh's innings was built around three fifties from Parvez Hossain, Towhid Hridoy and Shamim Hossain. Tanzid Hasan and Parvez Hossain made a good start after electing to bat, adding 70 runs for the opening stand in a 43-over-a-side game.

Tanzid scored 32 runs off 38 balls, featuring five fours, while Parvez retired hurt after making an 82-ball 52. Towhid contributed 53 runs off 57 balls and it was Shamim who helped his side post a respectable total with an unbeaten 59 from 33 deliveries. Shamim smote three fours and as many sixes during his knock.

Bangladesh will play their last official warm-up match against New Zealand tomorrow before their first Group C encounter of the tournament proper on January 18 at the JB Marks Oval in Potchefstroom.

--SPORTS REPORTER

Women cricketers to leave for India today

The Bangladesh national women's cricket team will leave for India today to participate in the Women's T20 Quadrangular Series in Patna, Bihar.

The squad is scheduled to depart from Dhaka at 3:30pm. India Women's A, India Women's B and Thailand national women's team are the other sides in the series.

SQUAD: Salma Khatun (C), Ayasha Rahman, Murshida Khatun, Sanjida Islam, Nigar Sultana, Fargana Hoque, Lata Mondol, Ritu Moni, Shailla Sharmin, Shamima Sultana, Fahima Khatun, Jahanara Alam, Nahida Akter, Khadiza-Tul Kubra, Panna Ghosh, Suraya Azmim, Rabeya, Sobhana Mostary.

--SPORTS REPORTER

Sharma, Shami recalled

Senior batsman Rohit Sharma and fast bowler Mohammed Shami were recalled to India's Twenty20 squad for the tour of New Zealand after they were rested for the home series against Sri Lanka.

Sharma and Shami come into the 16-man squad for the five T20 internationals starting on January 24 in Auckland. India will also play three ODIs and two Tests in New Zealand.

--AFP

Bravo back after 3 years

Dwayne Bravo was recalled to the West Indies squad on Sunday, more than three years after his last appearance as the Caribbean side build up to the defence of their World Twenty20 title.

The 36-year-old all-rounder, a two-time World T20 winner, was named in a 13-man squad for a three-match series against Ireland later this month.

--AFP

Amir dismantles Rajshahi

SPORTS REPORTER

Najmul Hossain Shanto's brilliant unbeaten 78, complemented well by a deadly Mohammad Amir spell, helped Khulna Tigers to become the first team to confirm their spot in the final of the ongoing Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL), beating Rajshahi Royals by 27 runs despite Shoaib Malik's gritty 50-ball 80 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Rajshahi will however get another chance to make it to the final when Andre Russell's men play Chattogram Challengers in the second qualifier tomorrow in Mirpur.

Amir, who bagged six for 17 the best-ever figure in BPL history, removed Rajshahi opener Liton Das in the very first over. A typical delivery from the left-hander had nipped back just a wee bit to outsmart the in-form Liton before casting him. Next

over, Amir picked up Afif Hossain and Alok Kapali to leave Rajshahi reeling at 23 for three after 4 overs.

Ravi Bopara soon fell and then Amir removed skipper Andre Russell in the sixth over. Malik produced an astounding 74-run partnership with Taijul Islam for the seventh wicket but Amir thwarted any chance of a comeback, removing both in the 18th over as Rajshahi were bowled out for 131.

Earlier, Najmul, who became the first Bangladeshi batsman to have scored a century in the ongoing BBPL, smashing an unbeaten 115 to orchestrate the highest-ever chase in BPL history against Dhaka Platoon on Saturday, shone once again in yesterday's qualifier.

Although the 21-year-old youngster, hit a 57-ball 78 to help Khulna post a modest 158 for three, he could consider himself lucky.

Najmul, who was on nine off 10 deliveries, was deceived and saw his stumps rattled off a Shoaib Malik delivery in the sixth over. To his relief, replays showed that Malik overstepped and the left-hander survived. He was then dropped on 57 with Afif Hossain the culprit, off a Ravi Bopara delivery in the 15th over.

But despite riding on his luck a couple of times, a confident Najmul looked exquisite for the rest of his innings that was laced with seven fours and four maximums. Khulna's

SCORES IN BRIEF

KHULNA TIGERS: 158 for 3 in 20 overs (Najmul 78 not out, Shamsur 32, Mushfiqur 21; Irfan 2-13)

RAJSHAH ROYALS: 131 all out in 20 overs (Shoaib 80, Taijul 12; Amir 6-17, Mehedi 2-6)

Result: Khulna won by 27 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Mohammad Amir.



Mashrafe found wanting in BBPL too

MAZHAR UDDIN

A dark chapter in the 2019 World Cup was the dismal returns for ODI skipper Mashrafe, who looked a shadow of his former self as he went limping through the campaign with persistent hamstring problems before eventually leading the Tigers to an eighth-place finish.

His performances fuelled questions regarding the ODI captain's retirement, and with no ODIs till the home series against Zimbabwe in February, it propagated a hangover that began in 2019 and one that Bangladesh cricket is still suffering from in 2020.

Mashrafe not just failed as a captain but also as a pacer as he managed to pick up just one wicket in eight World Cup games. The Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League provided the long-awaited return for Mashrafe to competitive cricket, but the inspirational cricketer once again faced harsh reality.

After not being picked initially by any team during the players draft of the BBPL, Mashrafe was eventually roped in by Dhaka Platoon during the seventh call of the draft. The main reason for the lack of interest from the teams towards Mashrafe was his performance as he was returning after a long break following the injury he suffered before the ODI series against Sri Lanka.

Much like his performance in the World Cup, Mashrafe was unable to make an impact in the BBPL, picking up eight wickets in 13 games at an economy of 7.62 as Dhaka Platoon were ousted following a seven-wicket defeat against Chattogram Challengers in the first eliminator yesterday.

A key aspect in any sports around the world is fitness of a player, and Mashrafe's match fitness was found wanting in the BBPL.

It was rather unusual when Mashrafe, who had to take 14 stitches on his left hand during the previous game, decided to play in the all-important eliminator.

It begged the question on why an unfit player with 14 stitches in his hand would play a competitive game, that too in such a crucial encounter? His discomfort was apparent all throughout the game. It is not difficult to guess that it was solely Mashrafe's call to take part in the game, which raises the question whether his personal decision to play despite being injured had hampered composition of the Dhaka team.

Despite his brave decision to play with 14 stitches, the pacer ended the game without a

wicket, conceding 33 runs in four overs.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board, however, gave Mashrafe the liberty to make the call on his own retirement and even offered him a grand farewell.

Interestingly, Mashrafe himself was realistic over the issue of retirement, asking whether he should be selected for the national team considering his



performances at the World Cup.

"No, I don't think the selectors will first select the captain and then the team as I have already given a clear message that the selectors can do whatever they dim fit. As you know everything happens in Bangladesh, so the selectors would do what they think. If the BCB asks me to quit then I will quit captaincy right now, I have no problem. Leave my decision to me," Mashrafe said yesterday when asked whether he would quit ODI captaincy.

It appears the stance from the board and the selectors on Mashrafe is confusing too. Chief selector Minhajul Abedin said, "We are not thinking of him at the moment as we have Tests and T20s to deal with. Mashrafe is one of the biggest players we have got, so we can think about him when we have ODIs."

The stance from both BCB and Mashrafe over his future and how both parties are dealing with this is a ridiculous circumstance that the cricket world very rarely experiences.



Khulna Tigers pacer Mohammad Amir celebrates one of his six wickets against Rajshahi Royals in the first qualifier of the BBPL at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

total might have been a bit different if skipper Mushfiqur Rahim continued till the end. Mushfiqur, who scored a 16-ball 21, was forced to leave the field clutching his leg after suffering a cramp in the

penultimate over, but the skipper returned to his wicketkeeping duties after the exchange. For Rajshahi, Mohammad Irfan remained the most impressive bowler, returning figures of two for 13.



India players led by skipper Virat Kohli (C) run holding hands during a training session ahead of the first ODI against Australia in Mumbai yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

India to face stiff challenge

First ODI against Australia today

AGENCIES, Mumbai

After a scintillating T20I series win over Sri Lanka, a Virat Kohli-led India will face a stiff challenge against Aaron Finch-led Australia in the first ODI of a three-match series here on Tuesday.

Australia are entering the contest after series wins over Pakistan and South Africa, and will be riding high on confidence.

Kohli's men will be eager to avenge the home series defeat which they suffered at the hands of Australia last year in January. With India set to travel to New Zealand later this month, it will be important for Kohli to win the series and keep the morale high before the away tour.

"It is always 3-2, 2-1 kind of series,"

Kohli said on the eve of the opening game. "Having played a lot against each other, we know the strengths and weaknesses of either side. So it's always good and a tough challenge playing Australia purely because of the skill set and mindset they bring on to the field."

Kohli said India will need a top performance in every game.

"As players we are excited to play a full strength Australia in our conditions, also to test ourselves against the best," said Kohli.

"In the year of the World Cup as many games as we play together as a team, it's going to benefit us, especially the white-ball cricket."

The high-voltage rivalries that fans enjoy will be back as Rohit Sharma's elegance will be pitted against enforcer David Warner while the Virat Kohli vs Steve Smith duel will resume in earnest.