

DAY'S EVENT

Dhaka Premier League
Prime Bank v Gazi Group
Time: 9:00 am
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National

Stadium, Mirpur
Shekh Jamal v Khelaghar
Time: 9:00 am
Venue: BKSP-4

Mohammedan v Shinepukur
Time: 9:00 am
Venue: Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium, Fatullah

Kings stunned in 7-goal thriller

Sunday's four in Mukhtijoddha demolition

SPORTS REPORTER

BPL Chattogram Abahani mounted a stunning comeback from three goals behind to hand a 4-3 defeat to holders Bashundhara Kings in a thrilling Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Sheikh Kamal Stadium in Nilphamari yesterday.

A fourth victory put Chattogram Abahani on top of the 13-team table with 13 points from six matches, but their points tally was later equaled by six-time champions Abahani, who thrashed Mukhtijoddha Sangsad 4-1 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium with four goals, including the league's first hat-trick, from Nigerian striker Sunday Chizoba.

Bashundhara Kings, on the back of two consecutive defeats, slipped to sixth place with 10 points from six outings while Mukhtijoddha Sangsad remain glued to the bottom along with Uttar Baridhara. They both have one point each from five matches.

In Nilphamari, Bashundhara were virtually flying after notching up a clinical 5-1 win over Maldives' TC Sports Club in the AFC Cup thanks to a remarkable four-goal performance by Argentinian striker

Bashundhara Nazarov 43; Delmonte 45+2; Colindres 59	3	-	4	Ctg Abahani Didier 64; Nixon 67, 88; Matthew 90+5
Abahani Sunday 18, 30, 49, 85	4	-	1	Mukhtijoddha Silva 63

Hernan Barcos.

However, without Barcos, who is ineligible to play in the domestic league, the big spenders could not match the pace of their frantic start against the port city side, who staged a strong comeback by scoring four goals in the final half-hour despite going 3-0 down in the first hour.

Despite Barcos's absence, the Federation Cup champions looked well on course to return to winning ways after a 0-1 defeat to Mohammedan in their last outing. They took a comfortable 3-0 lead within the first hour, thanks to an inspiring performance by Costa Rican World-Cupper Daniel Colindres, who scored one and had a hand in the other two.

But Bashundhara Kings, who lost only once last season to Sheikh Russel in Sylhet, were sunk by their vulnerable backline,

which agonisingly surrendered the healthy lead.

Chattogram Abahani held their superior opponents till the 43rd minute, when Rokibul Islam brought down Colindres inside the box. The spot-kick was easily converted by Tajik defender Aktam Nazarov, before Argentinian defender Nicolas Delmonte nodded home a Colindres free-kick in the second minute of added time.

After resumption, Colindres capitalised on a pass from Kyrgyzstan's Baktyr Duishobekov and placed the ball to the far post in the 59th minute, leaving Chattogram Abahani looking dead and buried. But the port-city side amazingly arose from the ashes and left the field with another big victory after previously thrashing former champions Sheikh Jamal, Sheikh Russel and Abahani.

Former national team right-back Nasirul Islam ran down from the right flank and released a nice cross for Ivory Coast forward Charles Didier, whose glancing header went past Bashundhara Kings goalkeeper Anisur Rahman in the 64th minute. Brazilian Nixon Brizolara then converted a penalty to make it 3-2 in the 67th minute after he was brought down by centre-back Tapu Barman.

Bashundhara were still on the top and the clock was running down but Maruful Haque's charges stunned Bashundhara by equalising in the 88th minute when Nixon flicked a Mannaf Rabbi cross home from inside the box.

Nigeria's Chenedu Mathew then delivered the killing blow, driving home another perfect cross from the right by substitute Rabbi five minutes into the stoppage time of the second half.

In Dhaka, Sunday put Abahani ahead in the 18th minute with a header off a Raihan Hasan long-throw before doubling their lead on the half-hour mark by breaking the off-side trap.

The Nigerian marksman completed his hat-trick by heading home a deflected Raihan Hasan throw-in in the 49th minute before Mukhtijoddha pulled one back in the 63rd minute with a close-range shot from Brazilian Albert Silva.

Five minutes from time, Sunday wrapped up the victory with a left-footed strike from inside the box to return Abahani to winning ways following a 0-2 defeat to Chattogram Abahani.



Sunday Chizoba (R) lets out a shriek in joy as his four goals powered Abahani to a 4-1 thrashing of Mukhtijoddha Sangsad in their Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'Players treated like guinea pigs'

AFP, London

Premier League Former Manchester United star Wayne Rooney claims the British government and football authorities have treated players like "guinea pigs" during the coronavirus crisis.

While the rest of European football was shutting down due to the growing threat of the global pandemic, Rooney is angry it took several days for the Premier League and Football League to postpone their matches until April 3.

It was only when Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta and Chelsea winger Callum Hudson-Odoi tested positive for the virus on Friday that football's UK governing bodies called a temporary halt to the season.

Rooney, currently playing for second tier Derby, felt they should have acted quicker and the former England captain said he would "never forgive" the authorities if his family fell ill as a result.

"Why did we wait until Friday? Why did it take Mikel Arteta to get ill for the game in England to do the right thing?" Rooney wrote in the Sunday Times.



A player elbow bumps with the referee after an amateur football match in London yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

guinea pigs.

"I know how I feel. If any of my family get infected through me because I've had to play when it's not safe, and they get seriously ill, I'd have to think hard about ever playing again. I would never forgive the authorities."

Many matches at non-league level were going ahead as scheduled in Britain this weekend and Rooney believes Prime Minister Boris Johnson "dodged" the issue by letting football make its own decision about playing on.

The 34-year-old claimed money was key to the authorities' reluctance to cancel games.

"The rest of sport -- tennis, Formula One, rugby, golf, football in other countries -- was closing down and we were being told to carry on," Rooney said.

"I think a lot of footballers were wondering, 'Is it something to do with money being involved in this?'"

Once the virus is under control, Rooney wants a radical schedule shake-up which could see the current season being concluded as late as September, and the next two kicking off in winter-time as a result.

Atletico de Kolkata win third ISL title

AFP, New Delhi

The Indian Super League remained one of the few sporting events to go ahead Saturday with Atletico de Kolkata winning a record third title in front of an empty stadium in Goa.

ATK, which won the popular franchise-based football competition in 2014 and 2016, beat Chennaiyin FC 3-1 in the final to become the first team with three titles.

With more than 80 confirmed cases of coronavirus and two deaths reported in India, all sporting activities have been suspended.

India stopped all domestic soccer and cricket events and postponed the cash-rich Indian Premier League Twenty20 tournament Friday after the government ordered measures against travel and public gatherings.

But the ISL final went ahead with fans kept out of the 19,000 capacity stadium as Spanish international Javier Hernandez scored two goals in each half.

The ISL, which has now grown to 10 teams, has in six years outstripped the older I-League as the country's premier football club competition. ISL league leaders FC Goa had become the first-ever Indian club to secure a point in the AFC Champions League group stage last month.

The pandemic has led officials to cancel, postpone or shutter a long list of top sporting events worldwide, including Premier League football, NBA basketball, Formula One racing and the Giro d'Italia.

Keramatia do the trick

SPORTS REPORTER



Unheralded Keramatia High School of Rangpur emerged champions in the First Security Islami Bank National School Hockey Championship following a 2-0 win over Armanitola Govt High School in the final at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Nur Hossain Bishal put Keramatia High School ahead in the third minute before Rezaul Islam wrapped up the victory in the 53rd minute to deliver the first trophy at national level to the school from Rangpur. The school's previous best success was winning a summer school and madrasa sports carnival at district level.

Keramatia were better in every aspect of the game on the artificial blue turf compared to last edition's runners-up Armanitola, a school which had previously produced hockey stars such as Abdus Sadek, Sabbir Yousuf, Hossain Iman Chowdhury Santa, Jamal Haider, Rafiqul Islam Kamal, Rasel Mahmud Jimmy and Maksudul Alam Habul.

The boys of Keramatia High School took up sticks only a year ago ahead of the Inter-School Hockey tournament in Rangpur. They won five matches, losing once and drawing twice on their way to winning the national school championship, which had got underway on January 25 at nine different venues

with participation of 79 schools.

"Winning the title was beyond our imagination as we were really very satisfied with qualifying for the six-team second-phase of the final round. We were a bit nervous in the final as many of our players were playing on the artificial turf for the first time whereas Armanitola School practice here regularly," Class-10 student Bishal said after the match.

"The wooden sticks which the federation provided us were very poor and we borrowed fibre-made sticks from Bangladesh Police. It was really tough for the players to adjust with the new sticks but they showed their skill to win the match against Armanitola, who seemed over-confident," said Keramatia High School coach Abu Sayeed, who twice played in the Dhaka Premier Division League.

Sayeed informed that this group of boys started playing hockey last year and that they would not give up on playing hockey.

"We won't encourage them to play hockey by foregoing studies as there is no hockey fixtures upcoming. Besides, there is no future for hockey players as the school hockey took place after five years and there is no domestic league in Dhaka and Rangpur," said Sayeed.

However, players like Bishal, Rezaul, Al Amin, Nazim Rahman are determined to continue playing hockey if they get any platform to showcase their talent.



PHOTO: BHF

Players of the Keramatia High School of Rangpur celebrate their win against Armanitola Govt High School in the final of the First Security Islami Bank National School Hockey Championship at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

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