



(L-R) Kamrul Islam's last-over hat-trick dented Minister Rajshahi's confidence in the final over of the first innings after they had made a Bangabandhu T20 Cup-high total of 220 on the back of Najmul Hossain Shanto's century, a tournament first. That shift in momentum was seized by 18-year-old Parvez Hossain Emon, who recorded the fastest T20 century by a Bangladesh as he hit a 42-ball 100 to lead Fortune Barishal to a thrilling win.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Parvez announces himself

SPORTS REPORTER



What is a safe, defendable T20 score? Many people like to say 180 is a good total to defend. But Parvez Hossain, an 18-year-old left-handed batsman from Chattogram, proved yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur that it is the most difficult question to answer in the shortest version of the game.

It seemed like an impossible task for Fortune Barishal after Minister Group Rajshahi captain Najmul Hossain Shanto scored a blazing hundred (55-ball 109), the first three figure-mark of the tournament, to put 220 runs on the board in the day's first game of the Bangabandhu T20 Cup.

But a nonchalant Parvez took the opportunity with both hands and prove his big-hitting ability, turning the contest into a blockbuster one on way to keeping his side's hopes alive in the competition. Barishal captain Tamim Iqbal could only say that he enjoyed watching the youngster's innings.

The risks involved with going all-out are too big when chasing such a big target, but the former Bangladesh under-19 batsman looked self-assured all through his unbeaten 42-ball 100, an innings featured seven sixes and nine fours and guided his side to an eight-wicket win with 11 balls to spare.



After Gemcon Khuina won the lottery for his services, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza returned to cricket for the first time since a Dhaka Premier League on March 16 this year. The former captain gave away 28 in his four overs and scalped one wicket in yet another thrilling Bangabandhu T20 Cup game. But Chattogram's Shamsur Rahman stole the show with a 30-ball 45. With one needed from the final delivery, Shamsur hit Mustafizur Rahman for six to clinch a three-wicket win in style.

PHOTO: STAR

HIGHLIGHTS

- Rajshahi posted the first 200-plus total of the tournament as they reached 220 for 7. Barishal, in reply, chased it down with eleven balls and eight wickets to spare.
- It was the highest successful chase in T20s at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. The previous highest was when Khuina Tigers chased down the 206 runs posted by Dhaka Platoon in the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League in 2019.
- It was the first time on the Mirpur surface that players from both sides had scored centuries in T20 cricket. Najmul Hossain's 109 for Rajshahi was the first century of the tournament while Barishal's Parvez Hossain scored his maiden in the second innings.
- Najmul Hossain struck eleven sixes in his innings, equalling Tamim Iqbal's record for most sixes in a T20 innings by a Bangladeshi.

Najmul, the first centurion of the day, has been in the national set-up for some time, but young Parvez was like a bolt out of the blue yesterday.

Many might have been surprised watching him bat with the prowess and the courage of taking the challenge on but it was no surprise for those who knew him closely from his early age. The former student of Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP) had developed the reputation of being a big-hitter right from age-level cricket.

"He has always been an attacking cricketer who wants to hit right from the word go. He has been doing this since the under-15 days when we first spotted him. He was keen on going out in the middle and taking the challenge and we found some similarities between him and Tamim Iqbal, who was like this too in his early

days. He is a special talent who has born in the T20 culture and he wants to express himself which makes him a fearless cricketer," Hannan Sarkar, the age-level selector, told The Daily Star.

Much like Tamim, who was known for hitting big sixes during his teenage years, this young Chittagonian batsman always wants to express himself.

Whether it was his straight-batted six over long-on to a pacer or a slap back past cover region, Parvez was in his own zone yesterday.

The left-hander showed glimpses of his talent striking a fifty in the first match of the tournament, but it was indeed refreshing to witness him express himself under the huge pressure in yesterday's match. And it certainly gives hope to everyone that new star for the Tigers might be in the making.

Maradona joked with the football, says Cafu

AGENCIES

Watching Diego Maradona play was "the best thing in the world" for Cafu, who has described the late Argentina great as a genius.

Cafu may have represented Brazil - Argentina's rivals - but is full of admiration for Maradona, whom he says sits on the same level as Pele when it comes to discussing the greatest of all time.

"He was one of the best ever, without any doubt," Cafu told Stats Perform News courtesy of Nissan. "There are only two best ever: Dieguito, as I called him, and Pele."

"Football lost the magic of touching the ball. Dieguito cared for the football like you care for a child. He really joked with the football and the sport."

"For us, fans and players, to watch him play was unbelievable, the best thing in the world. I remember a set-piece he took inside the box [against Juventus], he just

caressed the ball and laid it in the goal. "Now our world is mourning not because we lost a player, but because we lost a football genius."

Pele himself described Maradona as a "true legend" in a heartfelt Instagram post following the news of his friend's passing last month.

"Many people loved to compare us all their lives. You were a genius that enchanted the world. A magician with the ball at his feet. A true legend. But above all that, for me, you will always be a great friend, with an even bigger heart," Pele wrote to accompany a picture of the pair.

"Today, I know that the world would be much better if we could compare each other less and start admiring each other more. So, I want to say that you are incomparable."

Napoli, meanwhile, now play at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona, the name of the ground having been changed in honour of their former player.



Napoli striker Lorenzo Insigne has paid a lasting tribute to club hero Diego Maradona by getting a tattoo of the late Argentina icon on his left leg. The Serie A club had renamed their stadium in the 1986 World Cup winner's honour after his death last month. Insigne paid his own tribute during the league clash with Roma on November 30, celebrating with a Napoli top with the name Maradona on the back in his famous No 10. And now he has added to that homage with a more personal touch, getting a huge portrait of the former world star inked on his leg. PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Zidane 'not thinking' about sack ahead of crunch showdown

REUTERS, Madrid



Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane insisted he is not contemplating losing his job if his side fail to progress from the Champions League group stage.

The 13-time European champions, who have never failed to make it out of the groups, host Group B leaders Borussia Monchengladbach on Wednesday needing to better Shakhtar Donetsk's result against Inter Milan in order to progress.

Local media reports suggest that Zidane will be sacked should Real not go through to the last 16, however the Frenchman insisted his only focus is on getting the three points, rather than his future.

"The club will do what they have to do (in the event of not qualifying), as they always do, but I'm only thinking about the game," Zidane told a news conference.

"I'm not thinking about anything else other than

winning. I'm focused on tomorrow's game and we know what we have to do. It'll be tough, but we need to be able to walk off the pitch satisfied with our work."

"We know there's another game going on (Inter versus Shakhtar), but we're only thinking about our game. We're up against a tough side who will make life difficult for us."

"We know exactly what the situation is. We want to get the three points and finish top of the group; that's what we're all thinking about. All matches are important but this is a great chance to show what we are as a team."

Zidane will welcome back captain Sergio Ramos to the side after the defender missed the last six games through injury.

Full back Dani Carvajal also took a full part in training on Tuesday, having been absent for the side's last four matches. However, forward Luka Jovic will miss out after suffering an adductor problem.



Zinedine Zidane will be able to call upon fit-again captain Sergio Ramos as Real Madrid prepare for their final Champions League group-stage game, a must win encounter against Borussia Monchengladbach tonight.

PHOTO: REAL MADRID

FEDERATION CUP

Walton

remain

title sponsors

SPORTS REPORTER

Walton, one of country's leading conglomerates, retained the title sponsorship for the upcoming Federation Cup starting from December 22 at Bangabandhu National Stadium with the participation of 13 Bangladesh Premier League clubs.

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has also roped in two private banks -- Premier Bank Ltd and IFIC Bank -- as co-sponsors for the season's curtain-raising tournament amidst the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the signing ceremony at the BFF House yesterday, BFF senior vice president and professional league committee chairman Abdus Salam Murshedy thanked the sponsors for extending their support to football.

"You all know that the second wave of coronavirus has started across globe and infection rates have also risen significantly. Despite the pandemic, sports are being held across the world and also have to keep rolling all types of competitions by maintaining health guidelines prepared by the health and sports ministry. We are close to holding the Federation Cup, which will get underway on December 22," said Murshedy.

The BFF did not disclose the amount three companies are giving them away but the each of participating clubs will receive Tk 2 lakh as participation money while the champions and runners-up will be given Tk 5 lakh and Tk 2 lakh respectively.

SHORT CORNER

POGBA COULD RETURN TO JUVE, SAYS AGENT

Agent Mino Raiola has admitted Paul Pogba is 'unhappy' at Manchester United. The former Bianconero has a contract until June 2022 at Old Trafford, but Raiola hinted he could be on his way already in January. "It's useless to go around it, he's unhappy in Manchester," Raiola told Tuttosport. "He can no longer express himself as one would expect from him and how he wants to. "He would like to. He has to change team, change the air. He has a contract that will expire in a year and a half, but I think the best solution for the parties is to sell in the next transfer market. If not, Manchester would risk losing him on a free transfer, given that he's not intending to extend his contract." Pogba has been linked with a return to Juventus in recent years and Raiola said the Old Lady 'could be' an option. "Maybe Juventus could be his next destination," Raiola continued. "Why not? Among other things, the relationship with the club and his former teammates is excellent. At the

time of COVID, not many can afford Paul. The important thing is to want him."

I'M A TOP FIVE STRIKER, SAYS LUKAKU

Inter forward Romelu Lukaku has claimed he's 'one of the top five strikers in the world' and said the Nerazzurri 'must fight to win the Scudetto'. "I'm one of the top five strikers in the world," Lukaku told France Football. "I can't do anything wrong from a tactical point of view or even the movements. If Cristiano Ronaldo, [Lionel] Messi or [Robert] Lewandowski have exceeded their limits, why can't I do it too?" Lukaku said it's 'a bit early' for the comparisons with former Nerazzurri forward and Brazil international Ronaldo. "He scored more than 100 goals for the national team, it's a bit early to make comparisons," Lukaku added. "In Milan everyone was talking to me about Ronaldo's 34 goals in his first season. I'm glad I matched it, yes. But he won the UEFA Cup, and I lost the final. Now, I work to win trophies."