

Star SPORT

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Henry apologises for swearing

Thierry Henry has apologised for swearing at an Arsenal fan following his side's 3-2 Premier League defeat at Swansea City on Sunday. Henry, playing in his second match since rejoining Arsenal on loan earlier this month, admitted losing his temper when an Arsenal supporter insulted him at Liberty Stadium. "I was really shocked and disappointed on Sunday, and not just at the result," Henry told Britain's Sun newspaper. "After the final whistle of a very tricky game, I insisted the whole team go and applaud the Arsenal supporters."

REUTERS



Sheikh Jamal's two-goal scorer Assogba Allen (R) leads the sprint of elation just after Meshu (not in picture) converted the winning spot-kick in tiebreaker in their Federation Cup quarterfinal at the BNS yesterday. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Sk Jamal oust Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club ousted holders Abahani to move into the semifinals of the Grameenphone Federation Cup with a 4-3 win in sudden death tiebreaker in the third quarterfinal at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The regulation and extra time of the pulsating quarterfinal produced a 2-2 draw after Abahani came from behind twice to level the margin but the Sky Blues failed to hold their nerve in the dramatic shootout where both sides converted their first three shots before the last two shots failed to find the destination.

The match rolled into sudden death where Abahani captain Samad Yussif's feeble attempt was easily stopped by Sheikh Jamal keeper Aminul Haque before Atiqur Rahman Meshu converted his shot to send the Sheikh Jamal players in rapture. Abahani's departure means the Federation Cup final will feature neither Abahani nor Mohammedan for the third time since its inception in 1980. The finals of the 2001 edition (Muktijoddha vs Arambagh KS) and the 2005 edition (Brothers Union vs Muktijoddha Sangsad) also missed the two most-supported clubs.

Abahani fielded their best possible side with the return of Nigerian striker Lucky Paul, left-back Wali Faisal, right-back Nasirul Islam and midfielder Arman Aziz to the fold while Zahid Hossain added strength to the right flank with his speedy run after making return to the playing eleven following a three-match suspension.

However, Abahani initially struggled to find their feet, but gradually took control of the midfield to launch few unfruitful attacks. However, against the run of play, Sheikh Jamal took the lead on the half-hour mark through Nigerian hitman Assogba Allen, courtesy of a deflected shot as he nodded in a Femi Orunimi cross from the left.

Abahani hit back in the 40th minute when Zahid drove home from close range after Twum Frank's header came off the crossbar. But Sheikh Jamal again restored the lead four minutes later through Allen from a goal-mouth meleé.

After the breather, Abahani pressed hard for an equaliser and again levelled the margin through Awudu Ibrahim in the 51st minute. The source of the goal was Frank who danced past two Sheikh Jamal defenders to cut the ball back for unmarked Ibrahim who had all the time in the world to place the ball at the back of the net.

Afterwards, it was Abahani who found more opportunities to score but their forwards -- Lucky Paul, Zahid and Frank -- squandered three chances to snatch the winner. There were no remarkable attacks in the extra time as both teams looked tired and the game rolled into tiebreaker where Meshu's spot-kick ensured victory for Sheikh Jamal.

Last year's Federation Cup runners-up Sheikh Jamal will take on the winners between Sheikh Russel KC and Arambagh KS in the second semifinal on Saturday.



FED CUP QTR Arambagh up against Russel

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel KC are upbeat before facing Arambagh KS in the last quarterfinal of the Grameenphone Federation Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

Sheikh Russel are the only team to have qualified for the knock-out rounds with three straight victories and are clear favourites against Arambagh who came into the last eight courtesy of a superior goal difference over Feni Soccer.

"We are not thinking of the opponents as every match in the knock-out phase is tough. Our team is motivated to produce another good show to make it to the semifinals," said Sheikh Russel coach Maruful Haque.

Maruf's counterpart Kazi Jolly is also confident of pull off a victory against their superior opponents.

"Obviously we will be there for a victory," said Jolly adding that he would be

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BCB sleeping on players' deals

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is yet to finalise the new contracts for the national cricketers.

It was supposed to announce the new lists soon after the expiry of the previous contracts on November 30 last year but according to sources the cricket operations committee is yet to make the proposal for the board's approval.

Many felt that the board has hardly been paying due attention to serious issues like players' contracts and arranging new team sponsors for the Tigers as they are busy with the new money-spinning venture, the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL). The BCB media committee chairman Jalal Yunus said that they will settle the issue of players' contracts at the next board meeting, the date for which has not yet been specified.

"Actually our late CEO Manzur Ahmed had looked after the issue. I hope the cricket operations committee prepares everything before the next board meeting," said Yunus when asked about the delay with the new contracts.

The board is going to modify the national cricketers' contracts, the latest of which will

be effective from December 1, which will make sure that a player who is in the national team will get his due salary. It will be based on performance and appearances for the team rather than experience, which had been the norm up until the end of the last contract year.

BCB is also planning to introduce short-term contracts because of inconsistent performance of some contracted players. It had previously been seen that some players who were not selected in the national setup had contracts while players like Nasir Hossain did not receive a salary despite playing consistently, the only source of earning being match fees and awards. Therefore, the cricket committee is planning to introduce a six-month contract to avoid these anomalies.

BCB had eighteen contracted players previously and the number will be more or less the same in the new contract year, but the contracts will be categorised according to a new formula. To decide the gradation, the cricket operations committee has set some new criteria in which a player's participation in the last four years, performance in the last one year and the evaluation marks from head coach and chief selector will be major factors.

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Ajmal puts Eng in a spin

Cricket

AFP, Dubai

Pakistan off-spinner Saeed Ajmal took a career-best seven wicket haul to destroy England's much vaunted batting line-up on the opening day of the first Test here on Tuesday.

The 34-year-old, whose claims of a mystery delivery surrounded the lead-up to the three-Test series, had figures of 7-55 which wrecked England to 192 all out on a slow turning pitch at the Dubai Stadium.

In reply Pakistan finished on 42-0, with openers Mohammad Hafeez (22) and Taufiq Umar (18) unbeaten. They trail by 150 runs with all ten wickets intact.

Ajmal, whose previous best of 6-42 came against the West Indies at Guyana last year, bowled with variety, unleashing a straight delivery bowled with a round-arm action which kept low, seemingly his mystery one he named 'teesra' (the third one).

His superb bowling kept rival batsmen guessing and destroyed England's hopes of a sound start, watched by a pawltry crowd of 1500.

Only wicketkeeper batsman Matt Prior batted with defiance, scoring a brilliant 70 not out for his 19th half-



PHOTO: REUTERS

Pakistan off-spinner Saeed Ajmal appeals for the wicket of Stuart Broad on the first day of the first Test against England at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

England went to lunch at a precarious 52-5.

Prior then added 39 for the sixth wicket with Eoin Morgan (24) before Ajmal struck again, dismissing Morgan and then Broad (eight) -- both leg-before off misused sweeps.

Prior then ensured England reached 130 -- their lowest in a Test against Pakistan on two occasions -- by adding a fighting 57 for the eighth wicket with Graeme Swann (34) before Ajmal took the last two of the three wickets.

Pakistan played two frontline spinners in Ajmal and left-artermer Abdul Rehman, with Hafeez giving them an extra option of spin.

England may be regretting their decision to leave out the in-form Monty Panesar and play three seamers alongside off-spinner Graeme Swann.

Pakistan introduced spin as early as the sixth over through Hafeez, who was rewarded when England opener Alastair Cook edged his third delivery to wicket-keeper Adnan Akmal for just three.

Paceman Aizaz Cheema then dismissed Jonathan Trott (17), caught behind by a diving Adnan off a leg-side edge to leave England at 31-2.

Ajmal then bowled Strauss who went for a pull but missed the ball and lost his off-stump.

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh golf sensation Siddikur Rahman tees off during the first round of the American Express Bangladesh Open at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

Siddikur, Feroz hold joint lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's number one golfer Siddikur Rahman was on top of the leaderboard along with India's Feroz Ali Mollah after the first round of the American Express Bangladesh Open 2012 yesterday. Siddikur and Feroz shot six-under-par 66 on the opening day at the Kurmitola Golf Club while Vijay Kumar of India shot four-under-par 68 to stay in third.

Siddikur picked up his first birdie of the day on the third hole where he made a tricky chip-putt from the left of the green. He then played an extraordinary bunker shot to earn a birdie on the fifth. After collecting another birdie on the seventh, the 27-year-old made eagle-birdie on the 10th and 11th to take his score to six under for the day.

Siddikur hit a near-perfect second shot from 120 yards to make eagle on the par-4 10th. The only blemish on his card was the bogey on the 12th. Siddikur, the 2010 Bangladesh Open champion, hit an excellent drive on the 14th to set up his final birdie of the day.

"My driving and hitting were excellent today. I also hit some great chip shots, especially on the third, fifth and 14th. My best shot of the day was the second shot on the 10th that led to an eagle. I holed my pitching wedge shot from 120 yards on the 10th," said Siddikur, who claimed eighth place on the 2011 Asian Tour Order of Merit.

Feroz Ali Mollah, a former Indian Open champion, sank six birdies and made a couple of fantastic up and downs from

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Pont, Rafique team up for Gladiators

SPORTS REPORTER



Former national cricketer Mohammad Rafique will be among a strong six-member coaching staff of the Dhaka Gladiators for the first season of the Bangladesh Premier League.

Rafique will be the bowling coach and is set to work under Ian Pont, who

was the Bangladesh bowling coach till the 2011 Cricket World Cup. The other members are Shafiqul Haque (former Tigers' team operations manager), physio Vibabh Singh and trainer Grant Luden. Habibul Bashar, one of the three national selectors, will act as the team's consultant.

All this was revealed during a ceremony held at a local hotel yesterday, where the Gladiators' logo was also

unveiled.

The team's icon cricketer Mohammad Ashraf, the former national captain, was present at the occasion alongside Europa Group managing director Salim Chowdhury and team owners Shihab Chowdhury and Tisham Chowdhury.

To add a bit of glamour to the team, actress Afsan Ara Bindu was also introduced as the team ambassador.



Dhaka Gladiators' icon player Mohammad Ashraf (L) poses with the coaching staff and the owners during the launching ceremony at a local hotel yesterday. PHOTO: STAR