

Lacklustre champions lucky to win



Reigning champions Abahani got away with a lack lustre and rusty performance against newcomers Police Athletic Club in the curtain raising match of the 1992 Star First Division football league at Mirpur Stadium yesterday.

With the expected chief guest State Minister for Youth and Sports Sadeq Hossain not turning up to inaugurate the most vaunted and crowd-pulling sporting event the match when it began 10 minutes later than the scheduled time of 4:00 gave one an onomatopoeic sensation of the blunt sound of a damp cracker.

Although there was no dearth of colour with youngsters attired in yellow releasing motley coloured balloons with the Star insignia of the sponsors Bangladesh Tobacco Company, it was phlegm and a damp cracker signifying

nothing. Abahani drew the first blood in the sixth minute when Gaus, trying to force his way through a maze of Police defenders, was thwarted for a corner.

Two minutes later a fine lob from left-back Masud Rana caught the Police goalkeeper Imran napping but Saban cleared before Aslam and Rumi could cash in on it.

Abahani came in screaming in the 10th minute when Gaus' powerful shot hit the post and returned to play and an unmarked Rumi headed it wide off the mark with an open net before him.

Gaus was again in the action when his solo attempt was stymied by the Police custodian who gradually got over his early nervousness.

Masud Rana who, along with Gaus, the dark, fleet-footed, elusive winger stood out among the off-colour Abahani players, were in thick of the action in the 38th

minute with the latter failing to connect a square pass from the overlapping left back.

However, the best chance of the day was muffed by none other than the Abahani skipper Monem Munna in the 40th minute.

Alamgir's shot hit a Police defender and hung in the air in front of an empty police goal. Munna, lurking near, headed under instead of nodding it in with the forehead to throw away an absolute sitter.

Although the trend of Abahani's territorial supremacy continued in the second half their forwards lacked in imagination and pace. Gaus in the seventh minute cut in from the left to float a cross but neither Rumi nor Aslam was in position to utilise the chance.

Two minutes later Alamgir, known for his long tantalising throws, sailed in a throw from the right and Aslam nodded it for Gaus but the latter's head

from a close distance went over the bar.

Gaus again sent shivers down the Police bones when his stizzling right footer from the top of the box went over the bar. A few minutes later another Abahani foray went begging when Zakir blasted the outside net from a close distance after getting the possession of the ball from a melee.

Police, who quite expectedly, were busy in defending their citadel, launched a rare offensive in the 35th minute when left-winger Ramesh sneaked past the parallel Abahani stoppers but Selim, the Abahani custodian, rushed out in time to rescue his side.

Just when the partisan supporters were on their tethers and the pressmen getting ready for a report on the sterile beginning of this year's league, Gaus scored to save the bacon for Abahani. An unadressed cross from the right was headed in the wrong direction by a Police defender and Rumi laid it down on the path of a perfectly positioned Gaus who, with an angled grounder off his right foot, found the back of the net.

Shortly before the final whistle Police were awarded a free kick but Zakir's feeble shot went wide off the mark.

Zakir and Babar of Police were shown yellow cards for rough tackling.

Siddiqur Rahman, president of the Bangladesh Football Federation earlier inaugurated their local soccer league.



Abahani skipper Monem Munna is sandwiched between two Police players during the inaugural match of the 1992 Star First Division football league at the Mirpur Stadium yesterday.

Abahani: Selim, Alanigr, Munna, Rehan, Masud Rana, Shakil (Rubel), Rumi, Zakir, Mamun Joardar (Swapan), Aslam and Gaus.

Police AC: Imran, Monesh, Mohan, Shahjahan Ali, Rezaul Karim, Selim Reza, Khurshed Babu (Babar Ali), Ashutosh, Zakir Hossain, Masud Rana (Saiful) and Ramesh.

Referee: Badruddin

Linesmen: Rafiqul Islam & A Khaleque

Hattrick in Pioneer soccer

Sports Reporter

Badshah Smriti Sangsad caged Mukta Bihanga Tarun Sangha in the Group A match of West Zone in the 1991 Janata Bank Pioneer football league yesterday at Dhanmondi Club ground.

They beat Mukta Bihanga by seven goals to nil.

The highlight of the match was a brilliant hattrick by Shaheed Hossain, the striker of Badshah Sangsad. Shaheed scored four goals. Of the other three, two were scored by Harunur Rashid while Ruhul Amin netted the other one.

Following are the results of the other matches of the day played at the different venues around the city.

Outer Stadium (Group B, West Zone)

Nawab Katra Juba Sangha-1 (Shakhawat Hossain) Fire Service and Civil Defence (jr)-0.

Dhaka Dynamo Club-1 (Tito) Lalbagh Krira Chakra-0.

Mohakhali T & T ground (Group B, North Zone)

Khelaghar Samaj Kalyan Samity-3 (Akhter, Masud Rana, Khokon) Anwasha Samaj Kalyan Samity-0.

Govt. Printing Press R & SC-4 (Syed-2, Farhad-2) Berad XI-3 (Nahid-2, Tuhin-1).

Banani ground (North Zone, Group A)

Unique SC-1 (Asad) Tejaon Nabataranga Sangha-1 (Belaluddin).

Eastern SC-0 Kurmitola Appolo Club-0.

Jagannath University College ground (Group A, East)

Red Sun KC-3 (Ilanif, Faruk, Sajul) Eastern Football Club-0.

Shatadal Samajik-0.

Sangskritik Sangha-2 (Ilanif, Kajal) Nawabpur SC-0.

Dhoopkhola ground (Group B, East Zone)

Railway Blues-1 (Liton) Muradpur Ekota XI-0.

Mansur Sporting Club - 0 Anirban Pathagar-0

Khilgaon School ground (Group A, Central Zone)

Harijan Sebak Samity-2 (Ratan, Babul) Mir Kadim KC-1 (Amjad).

Gulbagh Krira Chakra-1 (Rashedur) Khilgaon Srijony Sangsad-0.

TT reception

Sports Reporter

The Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation will accord a reception today to the table tennis squad which participated in the recent fifth SAF Games in Colombo for its "encouraging performance" in the meet.

The reception, at five this afternoon, will be held at the conference room of the National Sports Council, says a BTF press release.

Real look to Sanchez for goals

LONDON, Jan 10: High-scoring Mexican veteran Hugo Sanchez, scheduled to turn out for Real Madrid this weekend, could not have timed his long-awaited return to Spanish soccer league action much better, reports-Reuter.

Real will be hoping Sanchez, four times top-scorer in the Spanish league, helps revive their league form at home against lowly Osasuna on Sunday.

Sanchez, out since March with a knee injury, helped Real regain some confidence in 4-0 Spanish Cup win over Real Burgos in his comeback game on Wednesday night.

Real Madrid have pricked up only two points and scored just once in their last three games after dropping only one point in their first 13 matches.

The previously unbeaten Real's 2-0 defeat at Atletico Madrid last weekend cut their lead over their second-placed city rivals to four points.

The return of 33-year-old Sanchez, who looked on the

way out after Real's unhappy 1990-91 season, fired up long-time attacking partner Emilio Butragueno, who scored twice against Burgos.

Sanchez himself was not so lucky, missing a penalty.

"My heart sank when I saw I'd missed it, but I'm grateful for the support of my teammates," Sanchez said.

"I managed the 90 minutes with no problems and I think I'll be fine for Sunday's game with Osasuna."

Atletico are away to Logrones, while champions Barcelona, a point further back, are at home to Real Valladolid.

PSV captain Gerald Vanenburg is sidelined with knee trouble.

Second-placed Feyenoord Rotterdam, two points behind the leaders, meet Den Haag on Sunday, while Ajax Amsterdam play at MVV Maastricht on Friday night.

In the Italian league, two more Brazilians will be missed by Napoli just when they are most needed as the southern club look to recover from a 5-0 drubbing by leaders AC Milan last Sunday.

Brazilian internationals Careca and Alemao are suspended and unavailable for third-placed Napoli's home game with Fiorentina.

AC Milan will be without four regular first choice players for the traditionally difficult away match with Verona.

Dutchman Ruud Gullit has influenza, while right back Mauro Tassotti, central defender Alessandro Costacurta and midfielder Demetrio Albertini are all suspended.

Gullit's place will be taken by Roberto Donadoni, scorer of a brilliant goal in the 5-0 win over Napoli. Tassotti will be replaced by Enzo Gambaro, Costacurta by Filippo Galli and Albertini by veteran Carlo Ancelotti.

"My numbers are down, it's true, but I'm not complaining because fortunately I can call on a very strong squad," Milan coach Fabio Capello said.

Second-placed Juventus, away to Cagliari, will be missing injured German defender Stefan Reuter from an otherwise full strength side.

Another German, Lothar Matthaus, on Wednesday confirmed he will shortly renew his contract with Internazionale until 1994.

Matthaus made his announcement two days after threatening to leave Inter because of uncertainty about his future.

"I'm happy at Inter and I never said that I wanted to leave. All I said was that if I wasn't wanted, I would have no problems packing my bags and leaving," Germany's captain said.

UEFA in a dilemma

COPENHAGEN, Jan 10: UEFA President Lennart Johansson believes the fighting in Yugoslavia will prevent a national team from competing in this year's European soccer championship finals in Sweden, reports-Reuter.

"On the basis of the Civil War there, and not least the shooting down of five EC peace monitors I find it very hard to see how Yugoslavia can be among the participants in the European finals this Summer," Johansson said in an interview in the Danish daily Berlingske Tidende.

"Who could represent the whole country? If it were Serbia, Croatia would protest, and so on."

If Yugoslavia do not compete in the finals starting on June 10, Denmark would take their place after finishing second in their qualifying group.

Johansson said he expected the crucial decision to be taken at a meeting in the southern Swedish City of Gothenburg on January 16, when UEFA officials will meet

leaders of the Yugoslav Football Federation. The draw for the finals is due to be made the next day.

"We can't put off a decision," he said. "If Denmark is to replace Yugoslavia the Danish Football Association must be told well in advance so that it can make preparations."

He added that UEFA would also consult the world football authority FIFA when making its decision.

But Johansson ruled out the possibility that Italy, second placed behind the former Soviet Union in their qualifying group, might reach the European finals in the same way.

"There is a new union there and the Football Federation has agreed to send a combined team to Sweden for the last time, just as it will send a combined team to this year's Olympic Games," Johansson said.

UEFA decided recently Denmark and Italy would automatically replace Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in Sweden if the latter were unable to send proper national teams.

New sports body

The Bangladesh Pharmacy Students' Association (BPSA) has founded its sports wing in the name and style of the Pharmacy Sports Council, says a BPSA press release.

Rahmatganj score freely

Sports Reporter

Rahmatganj Muslim Friends' Society gave a good start to their Senior Division football campaign yesterday, beating Sadharan Bima 4-0 in the second match of the opening day of the Star league at the Mirpur Stadium.

The winners led the first session of the flood-lit match 1-0.

Although Rahmatganj carried out repeated attacks into Bima's territory they had to wait until the 27th minute for their first goal when left-winger Mokbul got the better off Tota, Bima's custodian (1-0).

Mokbul scored his second to double the margin ten minutes into the second half. Getting a ball from the mid-field, Shah Alam Babu took a shot that hit the Bima cross-bar. But Mokbul was perfectly positioned to nod home the rebound (2-0).

Captain Sobel increased the Rahmatganj margin by netting the ball easily in the 75th minute 3-0.

Five minutes later the skipper slowed home another one to complete a good day's work by his teammates in their maiden outing of the season.

TEAMS:

Rahmatganj, MFS - Tarek, Badal, Sufian, Nabib, Rubel, Shah Alam Babu, Mushtaq (Selim), Nizamuddin (Alfaz), Sobel, Angoor and Mokbul.

Sadharan Bima - Tota, Jaahim, Nazrul (Laitu), Ayub, Mansoor, Rinku (Milon), Badal, Nasu, Swapan, Tipu (Labloo) and Mintu.

TODAYS MATCHES

Victoria SC vs Farashganj SC (3 pm)

Mohammedan SC vs Eskaton Sabuj Sangha (5 pm)

Gazza fan club closes shop

LONDON, Jan 10: England footballer Paul Gascoigne's loss of popularity has led his fan club to close its offices and move into his mother's front room, reports AFP.

The Spurs midfielder's mother Carol opened offices to handle a weekly mailbag of more than 8,000 letters after the World Cup campaign in 1990, but she has now moved it back to her bungalow in Dunston, type and wear.

Mel Stein, manager of the 25-year-old who is recovering from injury before heading for Lazio of Rome in the spring, admitted there had been a slight down turn in membership, but he refused to say how many had left.

BBC radio Newcastle listeners voted Gascoigne Britain's biggest pain in the next in a new year poll, just a year after they named him man-of-the-year.

Minister visits Rajshahi Stadium

RAJSHAH, Jan 10: State Minister for Youth and Sports Sadeq Hossain Khoka today visited the Rajshahi Stadium, reports BSS.

He went round the stadium to find out about the problems and gave an assurance to solve them.

He also exchanged views with the officials of the Rajshahi District Sports Association. He urged them to improve the standard of sports through their smooth conduct.

Mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation Mizanur Rahman Minu accompanied the State Minister during the visit.

New coach raises Fernandez's hopes

SYDNEY, Australia, Jan 10: American Mary Joe Fernandez hopes a recent coaching change will improve her aggressiveness and help her break through with a major tennis tournament victory, reports AP.

At 20, Fernandez already has some nice achievements. She advanced to the semifinals of two Grand Slam events last year - Wimbledon and the Australian Open - and reached as high as No 4 in the rankings.

But after appearing on the verge of moving even higher, she has settled in at No 8 heading into the Australian Open, which starts Monday in Melbourne. Although she reached at least the quarterfinals of 15 her 18 tournaments in 1991, including the finals twice, she came away without a victory.

Fernandez has been working out since last month with Harold Solomon, who was among the top 15 money-winners on the men's tour from 1974 to 1980.

"He's very tough, very intense. That's what I need," Fernandez said Friday after advancing to the semifinals of the New South Wales Open with a

Abahani off to a flying start

Sports Reporter

Reigning champions Abahani Krira Chakra gave an early, emphatic warning of their intention to retain their title by blanking newly-promoted Bangladesh Sporting Club 3-0 in the inaugural encounter of the Green Delta First Division hockey league at the Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The champions led by a goal, scored by their penalty corner expert Jumman Lussal, at half-time.

Earlier in the afternoon, the sixteen-team competition was declared open by Nasir Ahmed Chowdhury, Managing Director of Green Delta Insurance Company, sponsors of the league.

In a fast-paced match that saw as many as five Bangladesh Sporting players earning cautions from the umpires for boisterous play, Abahani domi-

nated the proceedings for most of the 70 minutes. They mounted series of attacks on their rivals' citadel, creating several fine scoring chances only to see many of them going begging for want of better marksmanship.

Abahani's domination was reflected in the three corners and four penalty corners they forced, successfully converting two of them. For their part, the league babies who earned promotion to the senior league following their annexation of the 1989-90 Second Division title, also managed to win five penalty corners but none of the bore any fruit.

After a few tentative forays and a bit of midfield maneuvering, Abahani surged ahead in the tenth minute of the game when Jumman Lussal banged the ball home from the very first penalty corner that came Abahani's way.

Within five minutes of the second session, Abahani dou-

bled their lead when Abdullah Piru made no mistake in converting a penalty stroke in the 40th minute (2-0).

Jumman got his second goal of the match five minutes later, completing the tally from yet another penalty corner (3-0).

Karim, Ronny and Mitu of Bangladesh Sporting, perhaps overwhelmed by the fact of their debut in the big league, allowed their enthusiasm to get the better of their game and as a consequence invited the green card caution from the umpire. Their teammates Mahub and Mahmud behaved worse, for which they received the sterner yellow card.

Starting today there will be two matches daily, at 1:45 and 3:15 pm.

In today's first encounter, Victoria Sporting Club take on Warl Club while Ajax Sports Club meet Dhaka Ansars in the second fixture.



DANGEROUS PLAY: Scene from yesterday's opening match of the Green Delta First Division league at the Hockey Stadium yesterday. Abahani beat Bangladesh Sporting 3-0 in the inaugural match.

Forget, Sanchez in final

SYDNEY, Australia, Jan 10: Defending champion Guy Forget of France used his devastating serve to blast American David Wheaton out of the New South Wales Open on Friday and advance to the finals of the \$1.36 million event, reports AP.

In Saturday's final, the third-seeded Forget will face No. 7 Emilio Sanchez of Spain, who beat unseeded Omar Camporese of Italy 6-4, 7-6, 8-6.

The No. 1 women's seed, Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina, moved into the semifinals with her third straight-set victory, but had her toughest match so far. She lost her serve three straight times in the second set before downing No. 15 Gigi Fernandez of the United States 6-2, 7-6 (9-7).

Sabatini, ranked third in the world, is paired against fourth-seeded American Mary Joe Fernandez, a 6-1, 6-2 winner over No. 9 Lella Meskhi of Georgia. It was Fernandez's third match in two days.

In the other women's semifinal, No. 2 Arantxa Sanchez Vicario will meet 17-year-old Anke Huber of Germany, the No. 8 seed.

Huber ousted No. 3 Jana Novotna of Czechoslovakia, the defending champion, 6-3, 7-5. Sanchez Vicario, looking stronger every match, beat No.

5 Conchita Martinez 6-4, 6-2.

Martinez and Sanchez Vicario teamed to win the Federation Cup doubles for Spain last year but were facing each other in singles for the first time.

On a cool, breezy day, Forget had little trouble with the 22-year-old Wheaton, who played a tough three-set quarterfinal match that ended well after dark Thursday on the Rebound Ace courts at the White City complex in midtown Sydney.

In a pairing of tall, lanky power players, the eighth-seeded Wheaton's net game was no match for Forget's ripping serve and forhand passing shots.

Forget fired six aces and lost only six of 43 points on his serve. He never faced a break point. He broke Wheaton three times, including twice as he ran off the last four games of the second set.

Sanchez, who has not dropped a set in four matches, survived a mistake-plagued

battle against Camporese, who committed 20 unforced errors in the first set alone.

Sanchez won despite a fall over an empty linesman's chair while trying to track down a shot. He then laboriously moved three chairs over a barrier before continuing.

Forget is in fine form heading into the Australian Open, a two-week Grand Slam event that starts in Melbourne on Monday. But his first-round match there will pit him against Henri Leconte, who he called the man he would like to face early in the tournament.

The two men play doubles together and were the heroes of France's Davis Cup victory last month. The last time they faced each other was at Wimbledon last year, where Leconte won the first two sets but was forced to withdraw with an injury.

Sabatini had only dropped one game in each of her first two matches, but her serve and usually reliable baseline game deserted.

Huber shocks Novotna

SYDNEY, Jan 10: German Wunderkind Anke Huber displayed her rich potential in toppling defending champion Jana Novotna and become the youngest-ever New South Wales tennis Open semi-finalist here today, reports AFP.

The cherubic-checked Huber, who has been heralded as the new Steffi Graf, ended Novotna's back-to-back title hopes, 6-3, 7-5. Only last year Huber became the youngest quarter-finalist at the Australian Open in the Open era at 16 years, seven weeks.

Huber, who turned 17 last month and is just embarking on her third year as a touring professional, now meets Spaniard Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario, whom she has not beaten in three attempts.

The German teenager, who finished school last European summer, has been steadily climbing the world rankings and currently stands at 14, propelled by her title success over Martina Navratilova at Filderstadt, near Stuttgart, last October.

Huber, who lost to Novotna in three sets in their only previous meeting in the quarters at Leipzig last year, had the nervy NSW Open titleholder on the back foot in the opening set and was serving for the match at 5-2 in the second before the Czechoslovak broke back twice to level at 5-5.

Yet Huber hit back breaking Novotna's serve in the 11th game and holding three match points in her following service game to wrap up the quarterfinal.

"I was a little bit nervous because I was trying too much at 5-2 and everything was going too fast," Huber told her

post-match conference.

Of her semifinal with Sanchez, she said: "I made too many mistakes the last three times I played her... She's difficult to play, her backhand is very good and she moves around the court so fast."

Sanchez claimed she could beat anyone if she reproduced today's form in her 6-4, 6-2 win over Spanish doubles partner and fifth seed, Conchita Martinez.

With her older brother, Emilio, winning through to the men's final on Saturday against Frenchman Guy Forget, Arantxa hopes to play her part in a unique family title double.

The pair have played in finals on the same day, but in different countries - Arantxa lost to Steffi Graf in Berlin last May, while Emilio Downed Albert Mancini in the Rome final. It would be a family first to win titles at the same tournament this weekend.

Reds win TSS soccer

TSS Red XI lifted the Shaheed Anjo Mandal Smriti inter-division football title of the Telephone Shilpa Sangha defeating TSS Blue XI by four goals to three in the tie-breaker of the final played on Thursday at the TSS ground at Tongi.

Aftab, Alam, Yunus Ali, Alimuzzaman Khan and Mainuddin scored for Red XI while Rapon, Shamur Rahman and Ahsan scored for Blue XI.

M Azizul Hoque, Secretary, Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication, and Chairman, TSS Board of Directors, witnessed the final as chief guest and awarded the trophies.

AR Saber, Managing Director, TSS was also present on the occasion.