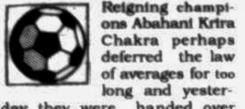


Sport

Brave BRTC hold Abahani 1-1

Sports Reporter



Reigning champions Abahani Krishna Chakra perhaps deferred the law of averages for too long and yesterday they were handed over the inevitable by unfancied Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) as the sky-blues came from behind for the first time this season to manage a one-all draw at the Dhaka Stadium.

The match of the day under the floodlights which witnessed the first loss of points by the powerful team was a rare display of gritty back-against-the-wall defiance by underdogs BRTC who suffered a five-nil drubbing at the hands of title-aspirants Mohammedans in their earlier match.

BRTC seemed to have remembered hardly any of their humiliating experiences against Mohammedans and in a way revived the already diminishing hopes of the runners-up who, after an initial indifferent run which cost them three invaluable points, have been showing fine form of late.

The end of Abahani's 14-match all-win streak means the gap between the two top contenders - Abahani and Mohammedans - has now been narrowed down to just two points, a fact that should inject fresh heart in the black-and-white players and supporters.

Abahani, who until last night looked almost invincible, have been denied the reassuring feeling of relative safety. They cannot afford to falter again in their remaining four matches, one of which, the very last, is against Mohammedans. On the other hand, Mohammedans have a game in hand and should they, too, maintain a winning streak going into the concluding showdown against their arch-rivals then indeed local soccer fans can look forward to a most gripping climax to this year's league. However, such a showing leading up to the last match of the league programme by the two protagonists will allow Abahani the luxury of affording a draw in the finale to renew their lease on the country's premier soccer honours.

Abahani's dominance in yesterday's match was never in

doubt with Polynkov, who had a thoroughly off day, repeatedly missing the mark to set the pattern of things in the womb of futurity. Skipper Monem Munna, who was Abahani's man



A BRTC defender thwarts Abahani's Russian striker Polynkov in yesterday evening's exciting match of the First Division football league at the Dhaka Stadium. —Star photo

of the match for the second successive day, attempted a long shot at the BRTC goal but the woodwork came to the rescue of the transport men. Tipu triggered twin reaction of shock and ecstasy in the galleries in the 15th minute when, cashing in on a defence lapse and a clever pass from teammate Raton, beat an advancing Mohsin (1-0). Shots rained in out as Abahani players went all out for the equaliser. BRTC custodian Moslem parried Swapan's shot and somebody had a shy on the rebounder but defender Shaheen deflected it to safety. Mamun Joarder, who replaced Sheikh Aslam, gave a fine ball to Munna twelve minutes into the second half but Moslem neatly collected it

from a melee caused by the customary long throw from Alamgir in the 60th minute (1-1). The goal did a world of good to the confidence of the trailing side and they virtually lay siege around the BRTC citadel, waiting in vain, for the much desired fissure. Abahani forced near about twenty flag kicks but the battering ram was not to be found or one can say that the Godot who could have ended their miseries never appeared. Arifiev took a spectacular shot at the far end of the match but Moslem again pulled off a fine save to ensure a vital point for his side. Disappointed Abahani supporters gave vent to their frustration by indulging in

scuffles and brickbat after the match. Abahani now have 29 points from 15 matches while BRTC raise their tally to ten from 15 outings.

Defending champs BKSP exit

Sports Reporter



A hat-trick, part of a five-wicket haul, by Shaon went in vain as reigning champions Bangladesh Krishna Shiksha Pratishthan (BKSP) bowed out of the Straj memorial national youth cricket competition while Barisal zone champions Jessore prised out Kushiya DSA in another low-scoring quarter-final yesterday.

Remote Rangpur created a sensation by tugging away a one-run victory against strong BKSP at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium after fine bowling by Shaon had restricted them to 144.

Skipper Phillip tried to vindicate his decision of batting first after winning the toss with a patient 32. Openers Zubayer and Shahadat, who put on 48 for the first wicket, were the other notable scorers with 20 and 19 respectively. Mithun and Faruq reached the double figures as Rangpur were all out in 41.1 overs for 144 only.

Shaon was responsible for the low score as he ripped through the Rangpur middle order with superb figures of five for 26 in his nine overs, including a hat-trick. He dismissed Zubayer, Tulu and Pallab with successive deliveries.

in his fourth over as Rangpur slumped from 115 for four to 115 for seven. Sujon also bowled well to capture two for 16 from his quota of nine overs. Bappi took two for 18.

Morshed, the BKSP opener who played a bright innings of 34 inclusive of four hits to the fence, led the charge ably as the side posted 59 within eleven overs. But just when it seemed that the opener had put BKSP on the path of victory the Rangpur duo of Faruq and Shahadat dealt deadly blows and BKSP never recovered from that.

Although Bappi played a defiant innings of 22 the rest of the batsmen surrendered tamely to the joint operation of the two bowlers who shared six wickets between them.

Shahadat was the destroyer in chief for Rangpur with figures of three for 20 from nine overs. Faruq was not very far behind with his three wickets that cost him nine runs more. When he dismissed the last BKSP batsman, Shaon, the champions were just one short of the Rangpur total.

JESSORE WIN

Jessore DSA advanced to the semifinals with a four wicket win over Kushiya at the

Dhaka Stadium in the other quarter final yesterday. In a low-scoring match Kushiya were bundled out for 90 in the face of some inspired bowling by Jessore skipper Timir who claimed four for 19. Azad was the highest scorer for Kushiya with 29 while extras proved to be the second highest contributor with 23, as the innings folded in 30.2 overs.

Jessore got off to a better start than their opponents with opener Rahim chipping in with a useful 25 but then they suffered a mid-innings collapse to raise the expectations of a nail-biting finish.

Kushiya bowler Sabuj bowled lion heartedly to claim three wickets for 16 runs from his quota of nine overs.

But Joy and Babu saw their side home and dry in 30.2 overs with four wickets to spare with some resolute batting. Joy remained not out on 14 while Babu remained at the kill with 12. Sohel was the other Jessore batsman to get into the double-figure with ten in the total of 91.

Rajshahi meet Mymensingh today at the Dhaka Stadium in the first semifinal.

In the other semifinal Tuesday, Jessore will take on Rangpur.

Hussein needs a win in Boston



BOSTON, Apr 19: Ibrahim Hussein's victory in last year's Boston marathon throned his athletics career back on track; now he wants another victory to keep his momentum going in the build-up to Barcelona, reports AFP.

"I needed that race so bad," the Kenyan said of last year's win. "It was very important. What helped is that I did not have any pressure. I had not competed in a year. Nobody knew what kind of training I was doing."

Hussein won in Boston in 1988, when he became the first African to win the oldest annual 26.2-mile race.

In 1990, however, he pushed a suicidal early pace that eventually brought down several front runners, including himself.

"I have matured as a marathon runner," the 33-year-old said. "There are some people who will go crazy. I will be watching for that. I don't want to burn myself out, especially if it is a hot day."

"My goal is to run a fast time. It is good going into the Olympics to run a fast time."

His winning time last year of 2 hr 11.06 min was slow, but with many countries using Boston as an Olympic qualifier, fast times are assured.

One man who won't have the pressure of Olympic qualification hanging over him is Juma Ikangaa, who is seeking to improve on his three second-place finishes in Boston in 1988-90.

Ikangaa, who lost to Hussein by one second in 1988, has already been selected to run for Tanzania in Barcelona, so all he has to worry about Monday is winning.

"It is difficult to explain how it hurts," he said of his trio of runner-up spots, followed by a withdrawal with injury last year. "I would like to win this race this year so I can say that somebody from Tanzania won this race, the second-oldest marathon except for the Olympics."

The modern Olympic marathon started just one year before Boston.

Ikaangaa has been training in Arusha, where he was studying to complete a military exam. He says the military requires qualities also useful in marathon running.

"If you want to be successful in the army, you have to be tough," he said. "You have to be perfect at what you are doing, you have to be serious, you have to be trusted."

The field also includes Ethiopian Abebe Mekonnen, the 1989 champion and 1991 runner-up, Briton Steve Jones, the former world record-holder, Tesfaye Tafa of Ethiopia, Toru Mimura of Japan, Manuel

Mattias and Joaquim Pinheiro of Portugal and Mexico's Alejandro Cruz, Martin Pitayo, Jesus Herrera and Andres Espinosa.

While the men's final times were slow last year, the women's field was the fastest overall in history, with the first six all under 2:30.00.

Poland's Wanda Panfil, who won in 2:24:18 will be back to defend her title against German Uta Pippig and Russian Olga Markova.

Other women contenders include Japan's Yoshiko Yamamoto and Ritva Lemtinen and Tuula Tolonen of Finland.

Jansher hopes to win World Open

KARACHI, Apr 19: Jansher Khan, new British Open squash champion, said on Saturday he wanted to crown this year by winning next September's World Open, reports Reuter.

"Now I have set my sights on winning the World Open in South Africa," Jansher said on arrival in Karachi from London where he won the British Open last Monday.

"I will retain the (World) number one slot for some time to come," predicted the Pakistani as fans lifted him shoulder high at the airport and covered him in garlands.

Tough hurdles for United



LONDON, Apr 19: Manchester United needs just eight league points from four games to add its first English league championship in 25 years to this season's League Cup. On recent form the points will be hard to get, reports AP.

United needed a dramatic save from Danish keeper Peter Schmeichel nine minutes from time against three-from-bottom Luton Saturday to salvage a 1-1 tie.

Manager Alex Ferguson's team only retained top spot on the First Division table thanks to Liverpool, which held championship contenders Leeds to a scoreless tie.

"We've still made a step forward. I wouldn't say I was relieved to get a draw - it's more that I'm disappointed we didn't win," Ferguson said Saturday.

Leeds, two points behind Manchester United, begins its final three games Monday by hosting four-from-bottom Coventry, travels to Sheffield United Saturday and hosts five-from-bottom Norwich May 2.

Manchester United has a tougher two weeks. It played three games last week, and faces a testing three-game schedule this week.

Asian youth soccer results

SINGAPORE, Apr 19: Chinese Taipei and Singapore played to a scoreless draw in the opening match of the 28th Asian youth football Group Four preliminary round tournament here Saturday, while Thailand beat Malaysia 1-0, reports AFP.

Chinese Taipei and Singapore both had lackluster performances and play was confined to midfield for most of the 90-minute match.

In the other match, Thailand won after a scoreless first half.

Five teams are playing in the round-robin tournament and the winner will qualify for the finals, to be played in the United Arab Emirates in October.

After a rest day today, Chinese Taipei will meet Thailand in Monday's first game, followed by Indonesia against Singapore.

A major tournament, the Group Four Asian Cup qualifying round, starts here today with four teams in contention for the sole berth for the finals, to be played in Hiroshima, Japan in October. In the opening match, host Singapore will take on Malaysia.

Monday, travels to bottom-place West Ham Wednesday and Liverpool Sunday. Its final match is at home against Tottenham May 2.

Ferguson, publicly critical of the team's recent performances, is also missing several important players through injury. England international Paul Parker suffered a repeat of an old hamstring injury Saturday and will miss the rest of the season, as will midfielder Paul Ince.

Striker Mark Hughes was booked Saturday for an on-field incident with Chris Kamara,

and faces suspension for the final matches. David Hirst's 70th minute winner at Southampton kept third-place Sheffield Wednesday in the title race Saturday. Wednesday are five points behind Manchester United with three games to play.

If both United and Leeds stumble in their final games, Wednesday could find itself league champions by default. More likely Wednesday will secure third spot and a place in Europe's UEFA Cup competition next season.

Courier lifts HK title



HONG KONG, Apr 19: Top-seeded Jim Courier beat fellow American Michael Chang 7-5, 6-3 Sunday and won the dlr 300,000 Hong Kong Salem Open Tennis tournament, reports AP.

Courier, the world's top ranked player, played two matches Sunday in the span of

and won the dlr 300,000 Hong Kong Salem Open Tennis tournament, reports AP.

Courier, the world's top ranked player, played two matches Sunday in the span of

and won the dlr 300,000 Hong Kong Salem Open Tennis tournament, reports AP.

Courier, the world's top ranked player, played two matches Sunday in the span of

and won the dlr 300,000 Hong Kong Salem Open Tennis tournament, reports AP.

Courier, the world's top ranked player, played two matches Sunday in the span of

and won the dlr 300,000 Hong Kong Salem Open Tennis tournament, reports AP.

Courier, the world's top ranked player, played two matches Sunday in the span of

and won the dlr 300,000 Hong Kong Salem Open Tennis tournament, reports AP.

in a semifinal match that was postponed from Saturday because of rain.

In the final, the 21-year-old Courier lost his serve in the first game but came back to break Chang in the fourth and 12th games.

Courier continued to pile on the pressure in the second set, scoring the decisive service break in the fourth game.

Chang, seeded third here and ranked sixth in the world, advanced to the final by beating Australian Todd Woodbridge 6-3, 6-7 (5-7), 6-1 in a semifinal match on Saturday that was spread over 10 hours because of rain.

Courier, who also won the Japan Open last Sunday, said it was always hard to play back-to-back matches.

"It is always tough to play Brad because he never beats himself and you have to beat him," Courier said.

"You have to come out knowing in the back of your mind that you have to play Michael, who is going to tire you out."

Courier collected dlr 38,800 for his victory and Chang received dlr 22,900.

Gilbert did not go away empty-handed after partnering American Jim Grabb to a 6-2, 6-1 victory over South African Byron Talbot and Byron Black of Zimbabwe in the doubles final.

The Americans won dlr 16,700 while Black and Talbot shared dlr 9,830.

Ivanisevic to miss Monte Carlo Open

NICE, France, Apr 19: Croatian Goran Ivanisevic is to miss next week's Monte Carlo Open because of heart problems, ATP tour officials said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

He suffers from irregular heart beats, an ATP spokeswoman said, without elaborating. The world number eight will undergo medical tests, she said.

Today's matches

Bima vs Arambagh (6 PM) Mohammedans vs Fakirpool (8 PM)

Booters to play '94 Cup qualifiers next Aug-Sept

Sports Reporter Bangladesh, placed in the Asian Group F of the 1994 World Cup soccer tournament, will play her matches starting either next August or September, says a Bangladesh Football Federation press release.

The other teams in the group are the United Arab Emirates, Japan, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Any of these countries may host the matches instead of the home-and-away fixtures followed by the FIFA, the governing body of world soccer.

The twenty-nine participating Asian nations have been split into six groups by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

Colo Colo win Cup Winners' Cup

KOBE, Japan, Apr 19: Colo Colo (Chile) Beat Cruzeiro (Brazil) in a penalty shootout today to win the south American Cup Winners' Cup soccer final, reports Reuter.

The teams were tied 0-0 after 30 minutes extra time. Attendance: 60,000.

Niro maintains his lead

Sports Reporter Neyamul Huq Niro of Bangladesh Ansars with six points maintained his lead in the preliminary qualifying competition of the 18th national chess championship at the National Sports Council chess room yesterday.

Niro drew with the fellow team man Kayes Hassan in their seventh round encounter. Kayes has collected five and a half points.

Others who have collected five and a half points each are Ziaur Rahman, Anisur Rahman, Jamilur Rahman, Rani Hamid, Kalam Nahid, Iqbal Rakib and Omar Khaled.

Tahmidur Rahman, Shahabuddin Ahmed, Rezaul Huq, Jahangir, Shahadat Hossain, Shipu, Abdul Khaled, Amir Hossain and Hafiz with five points each jointly held the third position.

One hundred and eight players are contesting for 14 spots of the national finals.

Annette Olsen becomes Mrs Edberg

STOCKHOLM, Apr 19: Three-time Wimbledon champion Stefan Edberg married his longtime girlfriend, Annette Olsen, at the Vaxjo Cathedral in the bride's hometown Saturday, reports AP.

Edberg, 26, and Olsen, 25, live in London.

Hotels filled up and extra taxis were called in as thousands of tennis fans and reporters converged on Vaxjo, 350 kilometers (217 miles) south of Stockholm.

Police were prepared to seal off parts of the city to make sure only 600 spectators and invited guests got into the Cathedral.

The Expressen daily newspaper said the couple, had not wanted the ceremony publicised. It quoted Olsen as saying, "We tried to keep it small and private."

A horse-drawn carriage was booked to take the newlyweds from the Cathedral to a private dinner at Telborg Castle.

Edberg, and Olsen, emerged from the Cathedral under an arch of tennis rackets held by attendants wearing Sweden's national colours of blue and yellow.

Edberg, who took a week off from tennis for the wedding, lost the number-one ranking to American Jim Courier in Tokyo a week ago.

Olsen is a part-time model.

Popov's treble

EDINBURGH, Apr 19: European champion Alexander Popov completed a treble at a three-day international swimming meeting when he won the 100 metres freestyle on Saturday, reports Reuter.

Popov, a member of an eight-strong Moscow squad, clocked 51.19 seconds—2.01 outside the European record he shares with Frenchman Stephan Caron—to win from Britain's Mike Fibbens (51.54) and fellow CIS swimmer Genady Prigoda (51.64).

Popov won Thursday's 50 metres freestyle (22.81) and Friday's 100 backstroke (57.07). Teammate Dmitri Kharitonov won Saturday's 200 backstroke (2:04.15).

Ellen Elzerman of the Netherlands, winner of the women's 50 freestyle and 100 backstroke on Thursday, prevailed again on Saturday in the 50 backstroke which she won in 30.01.

Compatriot Boukje Wiersma added the 400 metres freestyle (4:19.49) to Friday's 800 freestyle victory.

Britain's Olympic champion Adrian Moorhouse completed a break-stroke double, winning Saturday's 100 metres event in 1:03.64 following his victory in Friday's 50.

Terrific triumph for SA athletes



DAKAR, Apr 19: Forty-thousand Senegalese at the African Unity Games cheered on a South African track team Saturday that made its first appearance in black Africa since the end of colonization 30 years ago, reports AP.

"It's great. They were cheering so loud I couldn't even hear my lap times," said Elana Meyer, who outclassed a 3,000-meter field that included teammate Zola Budd-Pieterse and Kenyan Susan Sirma, third-place finisher in the world championships last year in Tokyo.

Myrtle Bothma raced into history on Saturday—the first competitor to represent South Africa in international athletics after 16 years of isolation.

The achievement was all the sweeter for Bothma as she won, beating rivals from Morocco, Senegal and Ivory Coast in the 400 metres hurdles, opening event of the symbolic Unity Games.

"I regard this as an honour," she said after taking her first victory salute before a foreign crowd.

"It's a whole new feeling and I must say I'm really enjoying it."

But moments later her compatriot Dries Vorster, captain of the South African men's team, was paying the price that comes with real competition, losing his first 400 metres hurdles in half a decade to Zambian Samuel Matete.

Vorster, who had confessed to being particularly nervous before the race, swallowed his pride and put his arm around the Zambian for a rare camera-shot—South African and African athletes embracing on a track.

"I thought I could beat him but I knocked the third hurdle and then it was over," said Vorster.

It marked the end of South Africa's last major hurdle to break out of its isolation from international sports. President F W de Klerk's dismantling of

apartheid has cleared the way for an end of the international isolation of his country, and it will send a team to the summer Olympics.

"We have arrived at the end of this tragedy," said Primo Nebiolo, head of the International Amateur Athletic Federation. His organisation gave its blessing to the meet as a step towards South Africa's formal readmission to the IAAF next month during the organisation's meeting in Toronto.

For 20 years South African athletes have been barred from competing abroad, and no team had competed in a black

and the cheering. I hope it's going to be this much fun when we get to South Africa next week."

Many of the South African athletes competing abroad for the first time confessed to being rattled by the unfamiliar conditions in the Friendship Stadium, a 60,000-capacity giant bowl set in a sea of red dust.

Officials repeatedly had to ask a band in the public stands, beating out a jungle rhythm, to stop and allow the races to start.

A South African athlete carried the Olympic flag in



ELANA MEYER

Africa nation since their European colonizers gave them independence in the early 1960s.

Senegalese, like other Africans, have been taught that South Africa's apartheid policy was evil, and there could be no contact with Pretoria until it accepted black majority rule.

But from the moment the meet began, the crowd waved, cheered and whistled when the South African team won an event. And they won the very first one, going on to take 23 of the 42 medals.

"It was very special for me," said Meyer, considered a candidate for a gold medal at the Barcelona Games in July.

Nigerian sprinter Mary Onyal, African champion in the 200-meters, said the atmosphere was unusual. "I was surprised by the crowd's size



ZOLA PIETERSE

stead of the controversial Springbok emblem during the pre-meeting parade of teams.

After some last-minute adjustments to the programme, the most eagerly anticipated race was the women's 3,000 metres but Elana Meyer completely dominated proceedings against fellow South African Zola Pieterse (formerly Budd) and Kenya's Susan Sirma.

Meyer led from the start and her punishing pace soon exhausted World Championship bronze medalist Sirma. It also proved too much for Pieterse, who raced for Britain as a teenager in the 1984 Olympics.

Cheered on by an all-black crowd which ruthlessly booed trailing African Runners, Meyer beat second-placed Pieterse home by over 20 seconds, winning in eight minutes

41.07 seconds. "They were clapping me all the way and it really helped a lot. I was feeling very relaxed so I just went out from the start. It seemed to get looser as it went on," said Meyer, an Olympic medal prospect if the South Africans compete on the track in Barcelona.

Pieterse clocked 9:05.49, well short of the Olympic qualifying time. "But I'm disappointed with my time," she said.

Other South African winners were Marcel Winkler in the women's 100 metres and Luzaan Du Preez in the women's long jump.

The 39 strong South African team came to the meeting in good shape, with their national championships only just behind them.

Their rivals from 10 black African nations by contrast are just getting into their stride.

The South African sponsors of the event have scheduled a second round of the African Unity Games for Germiston, a suburb of Johannesburg. One source familiar with the organisation of the event said some of the top athletes from other countries had been paid from dlr 8,000-14,000 to come to Dakar.

No records were broken, and no one considered it a true test of South Africa's standing against black Africa. Seventeen other countries participated, including Kenya and Nigeria, but most had only begun their track season while the South Africans just held their national championships.

Senegal's government urged people to attend the games in "Friendship Stadium," and no admission fee was charged. But there were no anti-apartheid signs, and the mood was friendly. Spectators mobbed some of the South African athletes after the meet seeking autographs.

In a gesture symbolising that the event meant more than simply a return to sport, flags from all 51 members of the Organisation of African Unity were set up on the field.