

Navy-Rifles final on card

Sports Reporter

Holders Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Rifles moved into the final of the Pepsi 17th national basketball championship when they surged off a tough resistance from Bangladesh Army and Dhaka respectively at the NSC wooden-floor gymnasium yesterday.

The eight times champions Navy will take on Rifles in the final scheduled for a 5:00 pm, start today.

Navy, a technically superior side, displayed a touch of class in the second half to win the first session, trailing 29-33.

Army, opting for man to man marking, contained both physically and tactically superior navymen during the first session, trailing 29-33.

However, things took a dramatic turn after the breaker as the Navy eagles came out strong and simply ran all over Army, scoring as many as 48 points against 27 managed by the eventual losers.

In the second semifinal, Dhaka couldn't get over the loss of their key rearguard Dulal, who was penalised for committing five fouls, 14 minutes into the second session, and despite producing some gritty performances in the first half had to capitulate by nine points.

Rifles, who had a somewhat squeaky 39-38 lead before the recess by virtue of a last minute three-pointer, rounded off the match 78-69.

Against favourites Bangladesh Navy, Rifles' hopes of winning the final will possibly lie in their driving urge to clinch a trophy they have never been able to lay their hands on before.

Rochi, Linu Shaon clinch double crowns

PABNA, July 27: Mosaddiq Haq Rochi of Bangladesh Biman and Zobaria Rahman Linu of Bangladesh Ansars and Shaon of Madaripur DSA won double crowns in the Meril 19th national table tennis championships that concluded today at the Pabna district gymnasium, reports UNB.

Nine times national champion Rochi retained his men's singles title, beating his compatriot Nasimul Hassan Kochi by 3-2 sets.

Rochi also clinched the doubles crown pairing with Linu of Ansars to defeat Linu (Ansars) and Kisibo (Narail) 15-21, 18-21, 21-16, 21-16 and 21-16 points.

Linu later took the women's singles title, beating her teammate Julekha Akhter by 3-2 sets. She earlier lifted the women's doubles with the vanguard.

In the boy's singles, Shaon of Madaripur became champion, beating Mona of Ansars.

In the boy's doubles, Shaon and Mona of Madaripur outplayed Goutam and Papu of Narail to clinch the top slot.

In the men's doubles, Saadi and Hamlet of Biman became champions, defeating Rochi and Mostafa of Narail by 3-2 sets.

Besides, Bangladesh Biman won the men's team title while Bangladesh Ansars took the women's. Madaripur DSA clinched the boy's team title.

State Minister for Finance Mojibur Rahman was present as chief guest at the closing ceremony of the six-day meet and distributed prizes among the winners.

Lolling Lallas

PADUA, Italy, July 27: American World Cup star Alexi Lallas arrived in Italy on Tuesday but failed to sign with Padova as expected, a spokesman for the First Division club said, reports Reuter.

The spokesman said Lallas, 24, had promised to sign with the club, newly promoted to Serie A, after meeting club officials, who presented the player to hundreds of screaming fans.

But Lallas first wanted his lawyer in New York to review the faxed copy of the contract.

"Lallas promised us he will send back a signed copy of the contract by midnight local time on Wednesday," spokesman Gildo Fattori said. "We don't think Lallas is pulling our leg."

Lallas has also been linked with English Premier league club Coventry and VFL Bochum in Germany.

He is now due to return to the northern Italian city on Monday when, for the second time, he is expected to sign for Padova to become the first American to play in the Italian league.

Lallas left for the United States via Luxembourg on Tuesday, Fattori said.

The transfer of a player who has never played club soccer, has been marred by mystery and Coventry and Bochum may well be wondering if the red-haired goatee-bearded defender will yet return to visit them, or not, in the next few days.

American World Cup star Alexi Lallas waits to sign a contract to play for Italian First Division side Padova at a ceremony in Padova on July 26. — AFP photo

Senior Division leagues kick off today

Onus heavy on champions

Sports Reporter

Smarting under the terrible pressure of their twin debacle, defending champions Mohammedi Sporting Club begin what seems to be a redemption act when the black and whites take on new kids on the block Bangladesh Boys in the inaugural match of this year's Star Premier Division football league at the Dhaka Stadium today.

The match kicks off at 5pm. Mohammedians, who probably have been going through one of the darkest patches of the club annals after successive failures in the DMFA and Federation Cups, will clearly be burdened with the pressure of coming up with some sort of assurance for their fans, who are, if not impatient, definitely disappointed with the club's dismal run in the domestic season so far.

Not only have they failed to make it to the final of any of the two tournaments, Mohammedians have exposed lack of coordination among the players on the field. The officials are in even more of a wretched situation following the apparently indiscreet act of four Russian booters, one of whom has already been sent home after faring miserably in the DMFA Cup. They are surely keeping their fingers crossed for some sort of a reprieve.

Bangladesh Boys, champions of last year's Star First Division league, on the other hand, have very little to lose, against and opponent, who are tipped to demolish them.

Boys, neighbours of Brothers Union would certainly be happy if they could in some way contain the Mohammedians.

A draw for them would be equal to a win while a victory would surely be the sweetest dream of their life.

The second match of the day also a Star premier tie will be played between Arambagh Krira Sangstha and Agrani Bank at the same venue with the match programmed for a 7pm kick-off.

Season tickets for Gate 1, 2 and 3B have been fixed at Taka 800, 500 and 400 each for club officials respectively, while for the galleries it would be Taka 500 per head.

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