

Mahmud Abahani's agony

SPORTS REPORTER



Experienced national all-rounder Khaled Mahmud sparked both with bat and ball as Bangladesh Biman conquered Abahani Krira Chakra in a crucial GrameenPhone Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

On the other hand, the league leaders Victoria Sporting Club continued their dream run recording a 63-run victory over Young Pegasus at the BKSP in Savar yesterday.

Brothers Union won the other match of the day against City Club by six wickets at the Fatullah Stadium to stay in the race for a place in the Super Six phase.

Co went to the undesired extent of verbally abusing Mahmud to distract him.

But a composed Mahmud overcame the sledging putting on 57 runs for the undefeated seventh wicket with wicketkeeper Sajjad Kadir, who played the perfect supporting role at the other end with 19.

While Abahani tumbled in the first big match of the League, Victoria recorded their eighth win from nine games, thanks to the guile of their young leg-spinner Alok Kapali.

Kapali captured three wickets for 35 runs as Pegasus, chasing an impressive Victoria total of 256, were bowled out for 193 in 49.4 overs.

Earlier, the Victoria total revolved round two brilliant half-centuries from Al-Shahriar and Pakistani Rashed Hanif.

BLAST FROM THE PAST



World Cup Final, 1954. Berne, Switzerland. 4th July, 1954. West Germany 3 v Hungary 2. West German captain Fritz Walter and coach Sepp Herberger are carried aloft after their victory.

WC celebration committee to meet today

SPORTS REPORTER

The celebration programme in connection with the arrival of the FIFA World Cup in Dhaka on April 27 will be finalised today by a 35-member organising committee headed by Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen Harun-Ar-Rashid, BP, at a meeting at the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) office.

This was disclosed by BFF president SA Sultan, MP, at a press briefing jointly organised by World Cup co-sponsors Gillette, who are bringing the Cup to Dhaka, and the BFF.

Although, it was earlier announced that the Cup would arrive in the city on the morning of April 27 and return to Kolkata in India on the same night, Ranu Kawatra, the area manager of Gillette for South Asia, revealed yesterday that the Cup will actually leave Dhaka on April 29.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman, BFF general secretary Harunur Rashid, Anis Ahmed, the MD of MGH Group, the distributors of Gillette in Bangladesh and Manishi Ghosh, the country manager of Gillette were also present on the occasion.

Ranu Kawatra also dismissed apprehensions by declaring that the original FIFA World Cup would come to Dhaka.

MSC take on Mohsin today

NITOL-TATA NAT'L FOOTBALL LEAGUE

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Mohammedan Sporting Club will be trying not to follow in the footsteps of their arch-rivals Abahani Krira Chakra when the black and whites take on Mohsin Club of Narayanganj in the second match of the Nitol-Tata National Football League at the MA Aziz Stadium here today.

Defending champions Abahani were held to a disappointing goalless draw by Chaturanga Jubo Sangha of Sylhet in the inaugural match on Tuesday.

Arriving in the port city on Tuesday night, Mohammedan had an intensive practice session in the afternoon yesterday. Their opponents, who landed here yesterday noon, took no time to get the feel of the venue.

Mohammedan coach Abul Hossain said that he wanted to start with a win despite the fact that he was not carrying a full strength side that lacked preparations. "We are expecting three foreign players to join the team soon. And once we get them our attack will be more penetrative."

Abul disclosed that Sangram Mukherjee of East Bengal, Mohan Bagan midfielder Basudeb Mondal and Nigerian defender Abdullah will fly in the city before the next round.

While Abul looked a bit relaxed, Mohsin Club's secretary Samrat Hossain Emily said his boys were determined to give their more illustrious opponents a good run for their money.

"We are not under any pressure since our target is neither to clinch the championship nor to reach the Super Four stage. We are here only to play good football," said the former national forward.

Emily's younger brother Swapan, who is coaching the 60-year old club, also echoed the similar sentiment.

"We have had an intensive one-month practice and the boys are ready to show their best against the top team", Swapan said.



Mohammedan players having some practice at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. Mohammedan face local side Mohsin Club in the Nitol-Tata National Football League at this ground today.

Youhana smites SL

Murali's Eng tour in doubt

AFP, Sharjah

Yousuf Youhana hit a glorious 129 off 131 balls as Pakistan took advantage of a shoulder injury to Sri Lanka's star bowler Muttiah Muralitharan to pile up 295-6 from 50 overs in the Sharjah Cup one-day final here on Wednesday.

Youhana celebrated his 100th one-day with eight boundaries and three sixes and opener Imran Nazir smashed 63 off 61 balls after captain Waqar Younis won the toss and elected to bat in the day-night international.

But it was Younis Khan's 66 off 71 balls and his 155-run stand for the fifth wicket with Youhana that enabled Pakistan build a huge score.

Muralitharan was rushed to hospital with torn ligaments in his left shoulder, raising doubts of his availability for next month's tour of England since the injury is serious enough to require surgery.

The off-spinner, celebrating his 30th birthday, tripped while fielding in the 11th over and hit the ground clutching his left shoulder.

Team physiotherapist Alex Kontouris, who accompanied Muralitharan to hospital, said the

shoulder was not dislocated, but he was consulting a doctor in Australia for immediate surgery on the torn ligaments.

"We want Muralitharan to have the surgery as quick as possible and may send him to Australia soon," said Sri Lankan cricket official Michael Tissera.

Officials, however, refused to say if Muralitharan would be available for the three-Test series against England starting on May 17 - exactly a month from now.

Pakistan, meanwhile, recovered from the loss of opener Shahid Afridi and Rashid Latif by the seventh over to set Sri Lanka a challenging target of almost six runs an over.

Youhana and Nazir put on 85 for the third wicket, before Pakistan slipped again when Nazir was bowled in leg-spinner Upul Chandana's first over and Inzamam-ul-Haq was run out for 12.

Younis and Youhana, however, flayed the depleted Sri Lankan attack as Muralitharan watched haplessly from the dressing room after returning from hospital.

Left-arm seamer Nuwan Zoysa, who removed both Youhana and Younis off consecutive balls in the final over, finished with three for 63.

But Abdul Razzaq prevented a hat-trick by smashing the last ball for

CUP CORNER



AFP, Rome

The world's top-rated referee Pierluigi Collina is set to pass on tips to the Italian national team on how to avoid conceding penalties in the 2002 World Cup, a report said Tuesday.

Italian Collina, four-times voted the best official on the planet, will meet the 'Azzurri' twice in meetings instigated by the Italian Football Federation (FIGC).

The first meeting will take place Wednesday at AC Milan's Milanello training camp where Italy are preparing for Wednesday's friendly with Uruguay and the second will be at the Covicione training camp near Florence where Italy will prepare for the World Cup from May 13.

Collina, famed for his bald head and the bookmakers' favourite to referee the final so long as Italy do not qualify, will tell the 'Azzurri' about the outcome of the recent meeting of top officials in Korea where new FIFA guidelines were laid down.

FIFA want whistleblowers to clamp down on violent conduct, diving and pulling jerseys in the penalty area.

Collina, from the Ligurian coastal town of Viareggio, is a celebrity in his own right in Italy and even has his own website.

Belgium captain and playmaker Marc Wilmots said Wednesday he will retire from international football after the World Cup finals in South Korea and Japan this summer.

"After the finals, I will stop. I am 33 years old and it's time to think a little of myself," he said.

"I have already given a lot and I don't want to risk further injuries and operations. My body is telling me it's time to take it easier."

Wilmots, who plays for German side Schalke 04 has undergone 11 operations during his career to mend injuries.

With one year remaining on his current contract, he said that he wanted to concentrate fully on his club performances.

"I think I can leave national duty with a clear conscience as there is new blood coming through," he said.

"Our group is young, there is great team spirit and they have talent. On top of that Gert Verheyen is perfect to replace me as captain."

Wilmots will win his 64th cap Wednesday in the friendly against Slovakia.

Belgium go up against Japan, Russia and Tunisia in group H at the World Cup finals.

WILMOTS TO END AFTER FINALS

Brussels

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HOOLIGAN GAME

Tokyo

Virtual hooliganism will hit Japan just before the World Cup finals next month as a Japanese firm plans to launch a computer game which puts players in charge of hooligan gangs, an official said Wednesday.

MicroMouse Co. Ltd., a Tokyo-based game software sales firm, will launch the Japanese-language version of "Hooligans Storm over Europe" made by DarXabre of the Netherlands in late May, the official said.

Japan and South Korea will jointly host the month-long World Cup finals from May 31.

The game, already released in Europe earlier this year, will be titled just "Hooligan" in Japanese, he said, adding the price would be 8,800 yen (67 dollars) each.

"Hooligans are generally fighting against other (groups of) hooligans, and the final objective of the game is to destroy enemy groups," he said.

"It is not a simple fighting game but a simulation game in which you have to come up with strategies to win," he argued, while admitting the player might ply group members with beer, beat security guards or throw stones.

The game was released in most of Europe in January. It only made its British debut in March after sales were restricted to adults in fear of a negative influence on soccer fans.

MicroMouse dismissed fears the game would fuel violence in and around stadiums.

"We believe it is wrong to believe the game would trigger crime as it is for use in computers and players will be adults... who know it is only in a virtual world," the official said.

"Things would be different if it was for Nintendo's Game Boy consoles, which many children play on," he added.

The National Police Agency declined to comment on the game.

PUA'S ULTIMATE TEST

Milan

Uruguay coach Victor Pua said Tuesday he was looking forward to be biggest test of his career when he takes his side to Japan and South Korea for the 2002 World Cup.

But first on Wednesday Pua pits his young team against an Italy expected to be among the challengers for the World Cup this summer.

"This match is a real test for us ahead of the World Cup," said Pua at the San Siro Stadium after putting his players through their paces.

"Italy are one of the world's top sides and we will have to be concentrated if we are to get a result."

Looking forward to the World Cup Pua admitted a group featuring world champions France, Senegal and Denmark was not an ideal return for Uruguay who will be competing in the world's premier tournament after a 12-year gap.

"They will all be tough matches," said Pua. "Even though France are the champions I don't want to say which will be the toughest. Every game will have its own difficulties and each match will be highly competitive."

Greenpeace's nuclear caution

AFP, Tokyo

A planned shipment of plutonium-uranium mixed oxide (MOX) fuel from Japan to Britain in June poses a potential terrorist target and may endanger World Cup security, environmental group Greenpeace said Wednesday.

"The Japanese authorities have prioritised security for the World Cup, yet they are willing to play Russian roulette with the lives of millions of innocent people," said Shaun Burnie of Greenpeace International.

Security for the shipment, from the Kansai Electric Power Co. Inc. (KEPCO) to British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. (BNFL), was inadequate and would divert resources from the month-long soccer championships, which begin May 31, said the group.

"The nuclear industry's plans to load the ship in June will divert significant security resources from the World Cup, because the ship-

ments are themselves potential terrorist targets," Greenpeace said.

KEPCO has been in the process of trying to return the 255 kilograms (560 pounds) of fuel -- which Greenpeace says is enough for 50 nuclear weapons -- after BNFL admitted in late 1999 it falsified the shipment's safety data.

A KEPCO spokesman said a date had not been set, but it aimed to return the fuel this year.

But Greenpeace said local residents who attended a village assembly held by KEPCO officials in Takahama, some 400 kilometers (250 miles) west of Tokyo, were told the firm aimed to return the MOX fuel -- currently stored at a nuclear power plant in the village -- in June.

Preparations were also underway for two armed ships to depart from Britain to pick up the fuel in April, with arrival scheduled in June, according to Greenpeace.

On Monday, KEPCO said it had to make a change to its application to the Japanese government concerning the maximum radioactivity of its cargo, which Burnie called "a significant mistake," and further raised doubts over the safety of the transport.

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA JAPAN

4 3

days to go



Did U Know?

On 26 June 1954, the World Cup quarterfinal match in Lausanne produced more goals than any match before or since with Austria beating Switzerland 7-5.

What to WATCH

BTV

Nitol-Tata Nat'l Football League
Mohammedan vs Mohsin Club
Live at 5:30 pm

ESPN

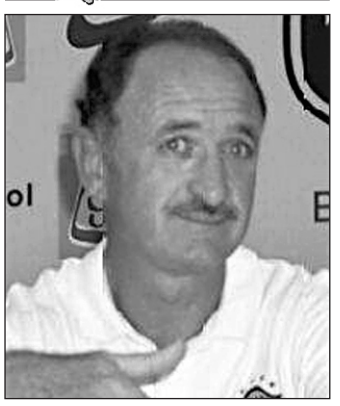
Sportscentre Hindi
Sport News
Repeat at 6:30 am

Sportscentre Hindi
Sport News
Live at 8:30 pm

World Cup Soccer Mix
Taped Version at 9:00 pm
English Premier Football League
Derby County vs Newcastle United
Repeat at 9:30 pm

STAR Sports
Harsha Online

TALK TURKEY



Luiz Felipe Scolari
(Brazil soccer coach)
"Don't you understand Portuguese? I'll only talk about players who are here."

When asked about the omission of prolific striker Mario Jardel from the squad for the friendly against Portugal.

Star WHIZZ KID
COMPETITION 169

Tick the correct answers, post to

The Daily Star
Win attractive prizes

Competition closes at 8 pm April 26, 2002 and draw shortly afterwards

1. Who clinched the Indian Wells Masters Series tennis title?
Hewitt Henman Agassi

2. Who won the Bangladesh Games hockey title?
Dhaka BDR BJMC

3. How many balls did Nathan Astle face to score Test cricket's fastest double century?
1532 0 0

4. Who lifted the Bangladesh 'Games football' title?
Chittagong Dhaka Army

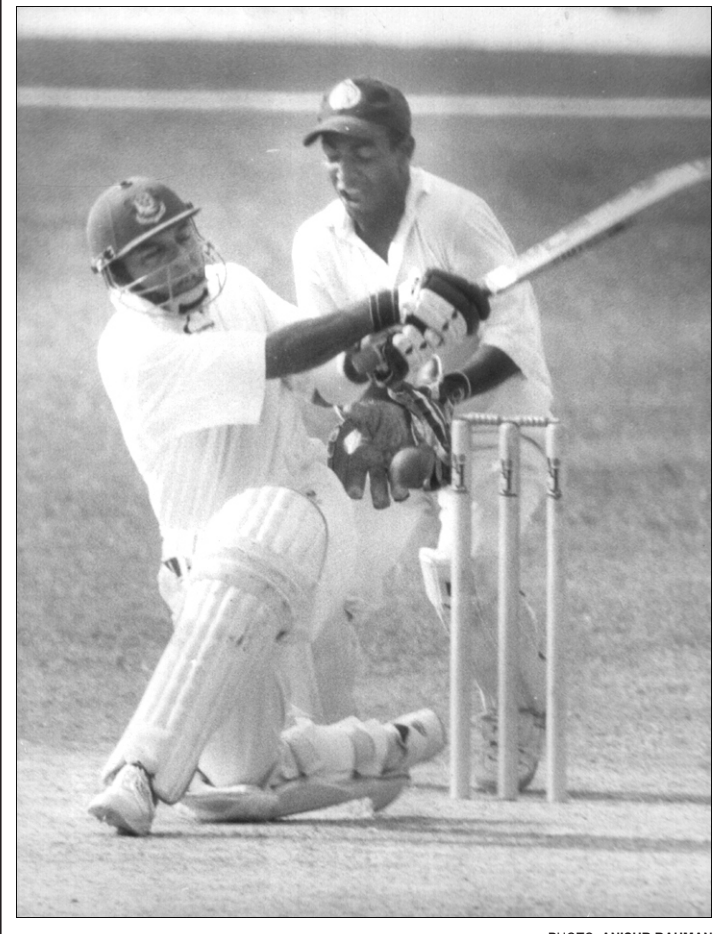
5. How many gold medals did Doly Akhter win in Bangladesh Games?
Nine Seven Ten

Name:

Class: Roll No.

School Address:

Phone: (If any)



Khaled Mahmud of Bangladesh Biman sweeps Naimur Rahman (not in picture) during their GrameenPhone Premier Division Cricket League encounter against Abahani at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The four-wicket victory took Biman to the second position with holders Mohammedan Sporting Club. Abahani, with two more games to play in the first round, slipped to the third position.

However, it was a remarkable comeback for Biman following their stinging two-run defeat against promotees Young Pegasus in their previous game on Monday.

Mahmud mixed his military medium pace in great dexterity to finish with four for 35 as Abahani, sent into bat under overcast condition, were bowled out for 231 in 49.5 overs.

The gutsy right-hander then struck an unbeaten 56 to throttle the national airliners outfit to 232 for six with two overs to spare.

He finished the chase in style hitting a four, six and a single in successive deliveries of off-spinner Naimur Rahman in the 48th over.

Mahmud struck four more boundaries in his enterprising 54-ball knock that was however soured a little following a verbal exchange with Abahani captain Akram Khan.

Sensing Mahmud as the last remaining threat at the fall of Aminul Islam and Shahed Mehmud in one eventful over off left-arm spinner Mohammad Hossain, Akram and

Back-in-form national opener Al Shahriar followed up his 87 in the previous match with a fluent 60 off 78 balls. The right-hander clubbed half a dozen fours.

Rashed scored a breezy 57 off 59 balls that included five fours and a six.

An exciting half-century by Mahabubur guided Brothers Union to a six-wicket win against City Club.

The former national middle-order batsman scored a cracking 78 off 77 balls as Brothers topped a fighting City Club total of 221 for the loss of four wickets and with more than five overs to spare.

Mahmud shared 64 runs for the third wicket with his captain Athar Ali Khan, who chipped in with 44.

He then put on 77 runs for the fourth wicket with former Pakistani captain Moni Khan before being dismissed in the 39th over, leaving Brothers 21 runs short of victory.

Moin, who scored only six in his first match, then took Brothers to coast hammering a 29-ball 35.

SCOREBOARDS

Scoreboards of the three GrameenPhone Premier Division Cricket League matches at different

Round Eight
Venue: NSC Chess Room.

DAY'S EVENT

GrameenPhone Premier Cricket League

Dhanmondi Club v Uttara SC
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Kalabagan KC v Young Cricketers
Venue: KOACS, Fatullah

Nitol-Tata Nat'l Football League

Mohammedan vs Mohsin Club
Venue: MA Aziz Stadium

Green Delta Premier Hockey League

Ushna KC v Farashganj SC (4 pm)
Venue: Maulana Bhasani Stadium

United Insurance IM Chess Tournament

Round Eight
Venue: NSC Chess Room.

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