

Biman blow for holders

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Biman moved atop the GrameenPhone Premier Division Cricket League table with a comprehensive five-wicket win over defending champions Mohammedan Sporting Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

In the other match of the day, Brothers Union boosted their hopes for a 'Super League' berth with a seven-wicket cruise against Surjo Tarun Club at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

BIMAN v MOHAMMEDAN
Middle order Sajjad Kadir scored a fine half century as the national airliners, chasing a modest Mohammedan total of 198 in 50 overs, flew home in the 48th overs with five wickets to spare.

Sajjad, the right handed

wicketkeeper batsman, cracked 65 off just 71 balls with ten boundaries to take the pressure off after Biman had lost three early wickets for just 19 runs.

Together with experienced middle order Aminul Islam, Sajjad put on a valuable 86 runs 23 overs for the fourth wicket before he was caught behind of Steve Tikolo leaving Biman on 105 for 4.

The striking feature of the partnership was that Sajjad made all his runs during that time. His innings included a six and ten fours.

Mohammedan fielders didn't do any harm to Sajjad's cause by dropping him twice.

Sajjad was first muffed by Tikolo at slips when he was on 12 and then on 48, Sanwar Hossain failed to hold on to a chance at long on boundary and helped it over the rope for a six.

When Sajjad was out eventually, Hassanuzzaman and Aminul, shared 73-runs for the fifth wicket before Hasanuzzaman departed for 40.

It was Biman's eighth win in ten matches that helped them to join Victoria Sporting Club atop the table with each having 16 points. Victoria, however, have played nine matches so far.

Aminul and Khamled Mahmud then took Biman home without any further loss.

Veteran Aminul played a painstaking but responsible innings of 53(126).

Earlier, electing to bat first, Mohammedan struggled despite half centuries from the evergreen Minhazul Abedin and Sanwar Hossain.

Minhazul scored 75 off 80 balls with one six and nine boundaries while Sanwar added 56 off 86 balls with three fours.

Mohammedan's prolific Kenyan batsman Steve Tikolo failed for a change as he was unfortunately run out on 18 while responding to a single from Minhazul.

Biman's left arm seamer Anisur Rahman took three wickets for 32 runs.

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POINTS TABLE

Team	M	W	L	Pts
Victoria	9	8	1	16
Biman	10	8	2	16
Abahani	9	6	3	12
Mohammedan	10	7	3	14
Brothers Union	10	6	4	12
Y Pegasus	9	5	4	10
Kalabagan	10	5	5	10
Surjo Tarun	10	5	5	10
City Club	9	4	5	8
Uttara SC	10	3	7	6
Dhanmondi	10	1	9	2
Y Cricketers	10	-	10	0

On the other hand, it was Mohammedan's third defeat in ten outings that kept them third in the table with 14 points.

BROTHERS v SURJO TARUN

Former Bangladesh opener Athar Ali Khan and Mahbubur Rahman shared a 125-run third wicket stand as the Brothers, chasing Surjo Tarun's 202 in 50 overs, made it with nearly 16 overs with six wickets to spare.

Athar hit an unbeaten 77 off 98 balls with two sixes and ten fours while Mahbub, the right hander, smashed 72 off 67 balls with five sixes and three boundaries to help their side register their sixth win and secure the fifth spot.

Earlier, Surjo Tarun were all out for 202 in 47.2 overs with the talented middle order Mohammad Ashraful hammering highest 69 off 65 balls with two sixes and six fours.

Opener salauddin (39) was the other notable run getter.

SCOREBOARDS

Scoreboards of the two

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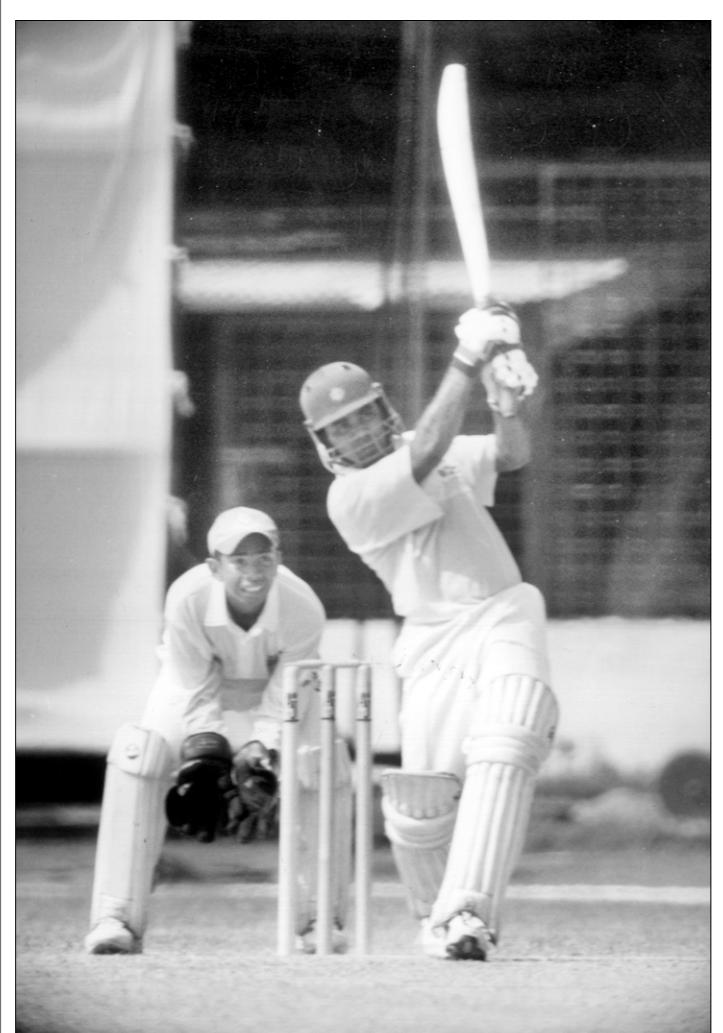


PHOTO: STAR

Biman's Sajjad on-drives during his match-winning innings against Mohammedan in the GrameenPhone Premier Division Cricket League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Army score and win

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Chittagong

NITOL-TATA NAT'L FOOTBALL LEAGUE

The Nitol-Tata National Football League saw the first scoring this season when Bangladesh Army beat Barisal T and T Club by a solitary goal at the MA Aziz Stadium here yesterday.

Midfielder Nasiruddin broke the deadlock 55 minutes into the third game of the meet after Abahani of Dhaka and Sylhet's Chaturanga Club played out the opening match on April 16 to a goalless draw. Two days later the game between Dhaka Mohammedan and Mohsin Club of Narayanganj also ended in the same manner.

In the day's Group A encounter, the physically and technically superior Armymen dominated the match for most of the time and won as the better side.

Nasir also came close to doubling the score-line in the 83rd minute. The strongly-built midfielder was stopped by an opposition defender in a way which many thought was illegal. However the umpire's decision not to hand over any punitive

action against the defender lifted some eyebrows.

The Army team, feeling at home with a large number of supporters, most of whom came from the Chittagong Cantonment, beating drums non-stop, had a good chance to score in the 36th minute. Faruk hit two powerful shots from 30 yards only to be fisted away by Pannu.

Later, Nasiruddin was adjudged man-of-the-match.

Rajshahi Abahani take on Mohsin Club of Narayanganj in today's fixture at the same venue.

Yellow Cards: Kamal (Army).

TEAMS
BANGLADESH ARMY: Bivash, Faruk, Kabir, Mojibur, Sona, Rezaul,

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PHOTO: STAR

Action from yesterday's Nitol-Tata National Football League encounter between Bangladesh Army and Barisal T and T Club at the MA Aziz Stadium.

BLAST FROM THE PAST



PHOTO: STAR FILE

THAT'S NOT FOOTBALL! World Cup Finals, 1962, Santiago, Chile. 2nd June, 1962. Italy 0 v Chile 2. English referee Ken Aston tries to bring order after fighting broke out between Italian and Chilean players during their group two match dubbed as "The Battle of Santiago". Chile's Sanchez (11) lies injured after being fouled by an Italian player

CUP CORNER



AFP, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger is set to use his experience of Japanese football to help England's World Cup campaign despite a clash of loyalties for the Frenchman.

Wenger, who spent four years coaching Japanese club Grampus Eight, made the offer to share his expertise with England coach Sven Goran Eriksson even though England could face France in the second round of the finals.

The Arsenal coach will meet Football Association chief executive Adam Crozier next week to help England's final preparations before they fly to the Far East next month.

Wenger said: "It does feel a bit strange, but I am happy to help the Football Association."

"I will meet with them next week. I know practical things that might help, like travelling, organising hotels, stadiums and adapting to the climate, the logistics of going to Japan."

"You need to adapt, prepare and recover properly and you need nine or 10 days to acclimatise to the Japanese environment," he told The Mirror newspaper.

"Living in Japan is unique in terms of climate and temperature. It can be very hot in June and you must be well prepared."

FA spokesman Paul Newman said: "We are always willing to talk to people who are experts in any relevant field and we welcome the fact that Arsene Wenger has made this offer."

"We have been trying to meet up with him for quite a while now but the meeting should take place next week."

Wenger believes England stand a chance of winning the World Cup although he said France were the favourites.

"Everybody in England laughs when I say they can win it, which says a lot about the mentality in this country," Wenger added.

"But it's true - they can do it."

POLICE CHIEFS MEET ON SECURITY

Seoul

South Korean and Japanese police chiefs held landmark talks Friday on security for the World Cup finals to be jointly hosted this summer by their two countries, the state police said.

National police agency head Lee Pal-Ho met his Japanese counterpart Setsuo Tanaka, who became the first Japanese police chief to visit South Korea.

South Korea and Japan are set to co-host the World Cup finals, the world's biggest sporting event, from May 31 to June 30.

The security heads of the two countries discussed countermeasures against terrorism, hooliganism and the forgery of passports or tickets, officials said.

SVEN IN LOVE!

London

He may be responsible for England's hopes at this year's football World Cup

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BAT OF THE CHAMPIONS: Two young ladies guard a cricket bat signed by the World Champion Australian team. This bat was sold for Taka 150,000 at an auction yesterday organised by the Daily Prothom Alo and Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. The entire proceeds from the auction will be donated to a fund for the victims of acid attacks.

It's over for Pessotto

AFP, Turin

Juventus utility man Gianluca Pessotto will miss the World Cup finals after suffering knee ligament damage during Italy's friendly with Uruguay, his club said on Thursday.

Pessotto pulled up with the injury after just five minutes of Wednesday's 1-1 draw at the San Siro.

A Juventus spokesman said an examination on Thursday had shown the 31-year-old had severely damaged the cruciate ligament in his right knee and would be out for up to six months, ruling him out of the World Cup finals which start on May 31.

The absence of Pessotto, who had only been called into the Italian lineup at short notice because Francesco Coco of Barcelona sustained a knock in training, presents Italy coach Giovanni Trapattoni with a new selection



GIANLUCA PESSOTTO

problem after he lost AC Milan's central defender Demetrio Albertini to an Achilles tendon problem.

60,000 Sino guests!

AFP, Beijing

World Cup organisers have boosted China's ticket allotment for the upcoming soccer finals, with up to 60,000 Chinese fans clamouring to witness the nation's first-ever appearance first-hand, travel operators said Friday.

FIFA has already almost doubled China's allotment from 10,700 tickets after their Group C rivals failed to sell their share, and South Korean organisers will be in Beijing on April 22 to discuss diverting as yet undesignated tickets to a Chinese public that has suddenly gone football mad.

Unconfirmed press reports say an incredible 20,000 Chinese are preparing to travel to the friendly with South Korea on April 27, with perhaps three times that number set to visit the finals themselves.

"From the information that we have at present, we believe that between 40,000 and 60,000 Chinese fans will be going," said Huang Yi, a director of the China International Sports Travel Company (CISTC), the country's official World Cup ticket broker.

"So far FIFA has given us 18,900 or so tickets."

These tickets have already been fully booked by Chinese fans on two- or three-day package tours that include one match per tour.

The massive expense does not seem to have put anyone off. The package tours cost between 4,500 yuan to 7,200 yuan (540 dollars to 870 dollars) -- more than the average urban household's disposable income for a year.

The allotted tickets are for China's first-round Group C matches in South Korea, but more will be available if China goes through to the knock-out stages, Huang said.

"Most of the people buying the tickets come from either Beijing, Shanghai or Guangzhou, China's richer cities," said Jin Ping, also of CISTC.

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DAY'S EVENT

GrameenPhone Premier Cricket League
Abahani KC v Young Pegasus
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
Nitol-Tata National Football League
Mohsin Club v Rajshahi Abahani (5:30 pm)
Venue: MA Aziz Stadium, Chittagong
Green Delta Premier Hockey League
Abahani KC v Ajax SC (4 pm)
Venue: Maulana Bhasani Stadium
United Insurance IM Chess Tournament
Round Ten
Venue: NSC Chess Room