



PHOTO: STAR

GOT TO GO: Referee Tayab Hassan (C) giving Muktijodha's Hasan Al Mamun (R) his marching orders during the Reds' Premier Bank Premier Football League clash against Sheikh Russel at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Thursday.

Muktijodha survive Russel onslaught

SPORTS REPORTER

Premier Bank Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra strikers wasted half a dozen sitters to let Muktijodha Sangsad off the hook in yesterday's incident packed Premier Football League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

In an embarrassingly one-sided affair, last year's runners-up Russel — who reportedly put behind their internal politics that disrupted their performance earlier in the league — displayed a lively brand of football but had to remain satisfied with one point from the goalless draw.

After six matches, Russel stayed sixth in the ten-team table with eight points while Muktijodha shared the second place with Brothers Union on 13.

Muktijodha, who came to the sixth round clash with high hopes of taking lead in the table with a victory, did not threaten to score even for once before or after Hassan Al

Mamun's sending-off decision in the 34th minute.

The national defender received his marching orders after he assaulted referee Tayab Hassan who had just shown Nigerian forward Paul Nwakwuchu a yellow card. Paul was fortunate to receive only a caution instead of a red card after retaliating against rival defender Jahirul, kicking the Russel player in his face after a mid-pitch foul.

Down to ten men, the Reds opted to do what they are infamous for — defending doggedly despite having three foreigners and six national stars.

Russel could have gone ahead six minutes after start but Moroccan striker Majid mistimed a kick inside from the six-yard box after Tanvir did the spade work on the left wing. The skinny Moroccan then forced rival captain and national number one custodian Aminul to make two spectacular saves inside a minute.

First, Aminul went full-stretch to his right to keep out Majid's header on a long ball by Sharif in the 18th

minute before pulling off an absolute blinder from the line with one hand when Majid nodded Tanvir's cross from handshaking distance.

Eying their third win, Russel began the second half with a relentless assault but a diving Aminul denied Tanvir's powerful shot in the 53rd minute. Two minutes later, Majid placed his shot from two yards over the bar and a hapless Aminul.

Muktijodha survived a close call midway through the second half when Majid toe-poked a long ball by Maruf over Aminul's head but saw the drop-shot kiss the crossbar before going out. There was no respite and Majid provided his compatriot Rachid with the easiest chance but the striker drove the ball straight to Aminul in the 70th minute.

Having failed to convert a series of chances, coach Abu Yusuf should have tried some fresh legs in the last 20 minutes. But it was hard to understand why he did not bring in his

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Brazil in semis the hard way

REUTERS, Cologne

World champions Brazil thwarted a late Japan fightback to claim a nail-biting 2-2 draw on Wednesday and line up a Confederations Cup semi-final against Germany.

Brazil, leading 2-1 with goals from Robinho and Ronaldinho, were stunned when Masashi Oguro fired home a rebound with two minutes to go after Shunsuke Nakamura's free kick had hit the post.

Japan roared forward and Marcos had to make a point-blank save from Oguro in injury-time to secure the draw. Brazil needed to claim second place in Group B on goal difference, earning the semi-final against the hosts in Nuremberg on Saturday.

Group B winners Mexico will face Argentina in the second semi-final in Hanover on Sunday.

Japan, coached by former Brazil midfielder Zico and playing a style of football in keeping with his legacy, were fearless, even as the world champions attacked with pace and guile in the first half.

"We were playing to win," Zico said. "To nearly beat Brazil one year before the World Cup shows that

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Inzy against sending pacers to India

PTI, Islamabad

Captain Inzamamul Haq has disapproved Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) decision to send four upcoming fast bowlers to India for training under former Australian pace-bowling legend Dennis Lillee.

Inzamam instead wants the PCB to use the services of former fast bowlers Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis to train the bowlers.

"Pakistan has produced fast bowlers of the highest quality as compared to any other country and Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis were the best choice to give training to these bowlers," he said.

Inzamam said in his fifteen-year international career he had not seen any better fast bowler than Wasim and Waqar. He also said that Pakistan had its own cricket academy

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PEPSI V'BALL Army-Rifles final

Bangladesh Army set up a final clash with Bangladesh Rifles in the Pepsi National Volleyball Championships.

Army came from a set down to beat Bangladesh Air Force 22-25, 25-18, 25-17, 25-19 in the first semifinal at the Shaheed Suhrawardy National Indoor Stadium yesterday.

The BDR spikers, however, made it look easy when they ousted Bangladesh Police 25-19, 25-15, 25-18 in the second semis.

The men's final will begin at 4 pm today while the women's final between BJMC and Pabna is due to be held at 2.30 pm.

In the women's semifinals, favourites BJMC eliminated Rajshahi 25-20, 25-18, 25-15 while Pabna outplayed Rajbari 25-8, 25-13, 25-4.

Bashar's toss fear

Cricket

AL-AMIN from Manchester

Habibul Bashar is by far the most successful Bangladesh captain with seven wins in the last 15 months under his belt and the triumph against Australia at Sophia Gardens in Cardiff in the NatWest Series is the brightest jewel in his crown.

But the 32-year-old felt that the luck factor has done little in his success story since he took over from Khaled Mahmud.

Take for instance the last five tosses he was involved in — four with England captain Michael Vaughan including the two-Test series and the other one against Australian captain Ricky Ponting. He lost all of them.

"I feel more pressure when I walk into the middle for the toss than batting out there. I have already lost five out of five and most likely lose the last three and create a record of some sort," said a witty Bashar with a boyish smile on his face after the net session at Old Trafford.

"Although I have lost the tosses in the last two one-dayers, it eventually fulfilled my wish," said the

Bangladesh captain three days ahead of the repeat clash against Australia.

Ponting surprised everybody by electing to bat at Sophia Gardens, where the team batted first in the last four games ended up a loser.

"We also had a plan to bowl first at Trent Bridge against England and I'm relieved that I called the coin correctly. The information we gathered is that at Trent Bridge the ball does a bit in the first hour. But we bowled badly in the first 15 overs," Bashar said.

England went to score 391-5, the second biggest innings total in one-day history, but Mohammad Ashraful with a blazing 94 saved the blushes of the visitors.

Bashar however disagreed that the 168-run defeat against England at Trent Bridge was a blow to the morale of the team after the famous five-wicket win against Australia. "Everyone in the team looks very positive. We might have lost against England by a big margin but we could have easily posted a big total against them after Ashraful was out in the 26th over," he said.

Bashar's men enjoyed a two-hour training under brilliant sunshine at Old Trafford, which is the home of English county Lancashire and where great left-arm paceman

Wasim Akram played for more than ten years.

Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore also enjoyed a brief stint with them after his days with Sri Lanka were over.

"Whatmore coached the Lancashire team here before joining Bangladesh. So, his experience will be a great help for us before the next game against Australia," said Bashar.

But the Bangladesh captain said that he was not thinking about repeating the same feat against the Australians.

"Our target is to play positive cricket no matter we win or lose. We have beaten Australia but at the same time we also know that victory will not come quite often for us. What we can do is play positive and fight till the end," Bashar said.

The number of Bangladeshi expatriates in Manchester, the third most important commercial city in England after London and Birmingham, is quite noticeable. They are very excited at the prospect of watching a good contest in the city that has produced England's most recognisable footballer David Beckham and all-rounder Andrew Flintoff.

Leading the way

WIMBLEDON

AFP, London

Sania Mirza may have suffered a heartbreaking end to her Wimbledon dream but she believes her battling Centre Court appearance can strike a blow for the sporting aspirations of other Muslim women in India.

The 18-year-old is a devout Muslim and she stands defiantly against those who question her commitment to her religion on the basis of her participation in a sport which relies so heavily on femininity and sex appeal.

"Some people have some problems with the dress code. Maybe I wear short skirts but I pray five times a day and do the things that other Muslims do," said Mirza after her 6-4, 6-7, 6-4 defeat to Russian fifth seed Svetlana Kuznetsova.

"Some men keep a beard and don't do the things they are supposed to.

"It's between me and my God and it's between me and my parents. Who cares what people say? I just hope I will encourage more Muslim women to come out and play.

"You don't care what people think or what people expect or what people want. I know I'm playing for myself, my country, and I'm winning. I'm representing my country. You know, that's all that matters for me."

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PHOTO: AFP

OH NO! Indian tennis sensation Sania Mirza in agony on losing a point during her Wimbledon second round loss to Russian Svetlana Kuznetsova on Wednesday.

Rugby boss seeks Whatmore's help

INTERNET, undated

Ian Millward is ready to call on Bangladesh cricket coach Dav Whatmore to inspire Wigan to a shock win in Sunday's Powergen Challenge Cup rugby quarterfinal at St Helens.

Warriors boss Millward returns to Knowlesley Road for the first time since being sacked by holders Saints last month for gross misconduct.

But Wigan have lost three of their four matches in his charge and were thrashed 70-0 at Leeds on Saturday — the club's heaviest-ever defeat.

Millward, who led Saints to Challenge Cup final glory over Wigan last season, admitted: "I rate St Helens a better side than Leeds and we will be huge underdogs."

"I've tried to get the Bangladesh cricket coach on the phone to talk to us. He must have a voodoo doll after their win over Australia."

Wigan will still be without injured Sean O'Loughlin, Gaz Hock, Danny Orr, David Vaealiki and Kris Radlinski although Brett Dallas is set to return after hamstring trouble.

Kiwi prop Jerry Seuseu has been cleared to play for Wigan after avoiding a ban despite being found guilty of an off-the-ball challenge on Jamie Jones-Buchanan in Saturday's defeat at Leeds.

St Helens are missing only Maurice Fa'asavalu who has suffered a bout of shingles.

New Zealand may ban Zimbabwe cricketers

AFP, Wellington

New Zealand may ban a planned tour by the Zimbabwe cricket team scheduled for December because of "appalling abuses of human rights" under President Robert Mugabe's government, Foreign Minister Phil Goff said Thursday.

"The Zimbabwe cricket team should not anticipate that it will be granted entry into New Zealand," Goff said in a statement.

"The imposition of a ban on the team would send a strong message to the Mugabe regime that New Zealanders and their government abhor the actions it is taking against its people."

Mugabe's government has been pulling down thousands of homes and businesses, leaving hundreds of thousands homeless in winter, according to the United Nations. The destruction targeting mostly poor areas has been condemned worldwide and follows March elections described as a sham by foreign governments.

Goff said he had been advised Thursday of the planned tour by

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DIV I SOCCER Victoria climb

SPORTS REPORTER

Victoria Sporting Club kept their hopes alive to return to the Premier League when they climbed to third place in the First Division Football League standings with a 1-0 win over Agrani Bank yesterday.

Mithu scored the lone goal on the stroke of halftime at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

Victoria, who also defeated Agrani by the same margin in the first leg, raised their tally to 14 points after eight rounds while Agrani were stuck on their previous collection of six points.



PHOTO: AFP

Brazilian sensation Robinho (L) putting the ball into the net through the legs of Japanese goalkeeper Yoshikatsu at the Rhein-Energie Stadion in Cologne on Wednesday.

What to WATCH

ESPN Sportscentre Live at 8 pm
STAR Sports Wimbledon Championships Third Round Live at 5 pm Sportsline Live at 12 am (Saturday)

DAY'S EVENT

Premier Football League Arambagh v Farashganj (5 pm) Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium