



Russel KC finish 5th

SPORTS REPORTER

Last year's runners-up Sheikh Russel Kriya Chakra finished fifth in the Premier Bank Premier Division Football League with a 3-2 victory over relegated Dipali Juba Sangha in their last match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Sheikh Russel earned 27 points from 18 matches with seven victories and six draws against five losses.

Dipali, who conceded their ninth straight defeat in the second-leg, remained at the bottom with only two draws and 16 defeats.

Rubel put Dipali ahead in the seventh minute with a right-footer off a Chanchal right-flag corner.

Six minutes later Bulbul restored parity for Russel with a placing shot utilising on a left-side minus from Tanvir while Nayan gave Russel a lead again with a re-bouncer in the 29th minute.

After the breather, Bulbul widened the margin scoring in the 58th minute with an angular shot after dancing past three Dipali players.

Ugandan striker Mutabe Idris reduced the gap for Dipali in the 74th minute when he rebounded a freekick by Japanese winger Ihara that came his way.

Nehra out of Zim Tests

REUTERS, New Delhi

Fast bowler Ashish Nehra, suffering from a back injury, has been ruled out of India's two-Test series with Zimbabwe, an Indian cricket official said on Thursday.

Fellow paceman Ajit Agarkar, who was in the one-day squad which lost to New Zealand in Tuesday's tri-series final, will stay back for the tests, the board joint secretary Goutam Das Gupta said.

Nehra's problem flared up during the one-day final, he said. The first Test starts on September 13.

Nehra, 26, has a history of breaking down ever since he made his Test debut in 1999. Agarkar has also had his share of fitness problems.

Brothers, MSC face off in Premier Friday finale

SPORTS REPORTER

The on-going war of words between Mohammedan and Brothers Union will take the back seat when the two giants of Dhaka football lock horns in the virtual final of the Premier Bank Premier Football League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

While Mohammedan will take to the field to make sure that there will be no friends around for Brothers, the Gopibagh-based club will consider the final as an opportunity to rebuke the allegations of fixing matches brought against them by their Motijheel rivals.

The grudge match will kick off at 5pm with the promise of a full-house holiday crowd at the 35,000 capacity stadium.

But it is a shame that the face-off between the Black and Whites and the men in Orange will not be covered live either by the state-owned Bangladesh Television or the Bangladesh Betar.

Both teams will start the final league match on equal 38 points, meaning that only a victory will confirm new champions. A draw will force a play-off for the coveted title.

Mohammedan will go into the match fresh after an inspiring 2-0 victory over Muktiyoddha. Holders Brothers also warmed up well for the showdown with a 7-0 thrashing of Dipali Juba Sangha in their penultimate game.

The good news for Mohammedan is that their midfielder Matiuur Munna hit back to form with a double strike against the Reds. Brothers also saw their Russian striker Victor Edwards pumping in four goals just to reassure his scoring prowess.

Mohammedan coach Kazi Zasiuddin believes that he has got better individual players in all departments than that of Brothers.

"All I need is that my senior players produce their best on Friday. Alfaz is the key man. If he plays well I'm confident to come out winners," said the former national midfielder.

His Brothers counterpart Wajed Gazi however used the match-fixing allegation as a weapon to motivate his players.

"My boys are really excited about

School soccer

SPORTS REPORTER

Emarat Hossain High and Kamarpar High moved into the final round of the Pran-Cola School Football Tournament yesterday.

Both the matches were held at the Uttara Armed Police Battalion Ground.

Emarat Hossain trounced Scolastica 10-0 and Kamarpar High defeated Badda Alatumna High 3-1 in tiebreaker after the match ended 1-1 in the stipulated time.

A total of eight teams moved into the final round which begins on September 15.

6 selected for FIFA refs test

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) selected three referees and six assistant referees for a two-day test for FIFA referees which begins on Monday.

The officials are: Ram Krishna Ghosh, Taiyab Hasan Samsuzzaman and Abdul Hannan Hiron and the assistant referees are Shaheedul Islam Bachchu, Mahabubur Rahman, Nripen Roy Chowdhury, Shaheedul Islam Lala, Abdul Munnaf Sarkar and Amanat Ali Haldar.

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England 288-5

STAR SPORT MONITOR

Andrew Strauss raced to his seventh hundred as England reached 288 for five an hour before schedule close of play on the first day of the deciding Ashes Test at The Oval on Thursday.

Opener Strauss was batting on 126 and number seven Paul Collingwood was on 7 with 16 overs' play left for the day.

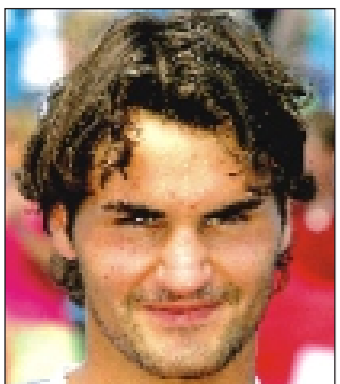
It was because of a 143-run partnership between Strauss and Andrew Flintoff that England were heading for a substantial first innings total after Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne had reduced them to 131-4 half an hour after lunch break. Flintoff made 72.

PHOTO: STAR
THINKING OF NARAIL! Bangladesh fast bowler Mashrafe Bin Mortuza sitting dejectedly in front of the players' room while watching the second day's proceedings of the practice match at Colts Cricket Club on Thursday.



Did U Know?

The great Indian left-arm spinner Bishen Singh Bedi who was not too flashy with the bat achieved the dubious distinction of being the first Indian player to score a duck in one-day internationals. He achieved this unique but unwarranted distinction against England at Headingley, Leeds in 1974.



Roger Federer
(World No 1 tennis player)
"This was the first time I've lost a set here and it is always a strange feeling. But my reaction was good."
After the Swiss was taken to four sets in a US Open match.

Injured Mashrafe sent home

Cricket

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

Bangladesh suffered a major setback with only three days to go before the first Test against Sri Lanka when their strike bowler Mashrafe bin Mortuza had to be sent home after failing to recover from a persistent back injury.

Hopes were high that he would recover before the Test series but the Bangladesh team -- already down in morale -- now realise that they will have to go into the two Tests with a depleted attack in absence of their best bowler.

Although bone scan confirmed that Mashrafe had no fracture but the results indicated an early stage of stress reaction process on the right side of the fifth lumbar vertebrae.

But even before the results were available, the team management had decided to let him go. Talha Jubair will replace Mashrafe, who is expected to fly home on Friday.

"When I was departing Dhaka airport, my intuition was telling me that I would not be playing in Sri Lanka this time. I even told that to my mother over the phone," said Mashrafe here on Thursday after his flight home was confirmed.

The Narail quick has bowled only one over on the tour, in the one-day practice match, when he felt pain and has been sidelined ever since.

"The injury has been detected early. Therefore, the rehabilitation for his injury is expected to take

between six and twelve weeks," team physio Paul Close told reporters.

"There are three or four stages to a fracture and 'stress reaction' is the first stage. So, we are confident of his full recovery over this timeframe," the Australian added.

In a career dogged by injuries, Mashrafe suffered two major blows, in New Zealand in 2001 and against England at home in 2003.

Mashrafe, who turns 22 next month, was out of the game for one and a half years after tearing a ligament against England in Chittagong. He went through surgery in Australia before coming back, but had to compromise with speed.

"This is the sixth time I'll have to leave the team in the middle of a series," said a tear-filled Mashrafe at the Colts Cricket Club lobby.

"Still, I am happy that there is no fracture. It is disappointing to leave my teammates when they needed me.

"At first, I thought something really bad happened this time. But I am relieved now. If there was a fracture, coming back would have needed much time. I have missed this series, but it's good to know that I won't miss something big in future," said the man who is dubbed Narail Express.

With a proposed series against Zimbabwe in November yet to be finalised, he will be ready to roll in the Tigers' next assignment, the Asia Cup in Pakistan early next year.

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Howard orders 'holiday' for cricket fans!

AFP, Sydney

Australian Prime Minister John Howard, a self-confessed "cricket tragic", has called on bosses to cut their workers some slack so they can follow the crucial final Ashes Test against England through the night.

Live television coverage of the five-day Test starting Thursday at The Oval in London will run from 7:00 pm local time each night into the early hours of the next morning, leaving thousands of fans bleary-eyed at the office.

Told that the leader of Britain's trade unions had asked bosses to allow workers to follow the progress of the Test, Howard called for local employers to be flexible.

Betting set for records

AFP, London

One of Britain's leading bookmakers has said that for the first time in the country over one million pounds will be gambled on a single cricket match in a single day when the fifth Ashes Test between England and Australia begins at The Oval here Thursday.

"This is already the biggest betting Test series ever, with up to a record 50 million pounds riding on the outcome of the five-match series, and with the unprecedented

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A tough second day

Cricket

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

Bangladesh would hope that they did not get a taste of things to come when a third string Sri Lankan side forced them to stay on the field for almost the entire second day of the three-day match at the Colts Cricket Club ground on Thursday.

Overnight 109-2, the Sri Lanka Development Squad amassed 412 in their first innings with patient knocks from Jeewan Mendis (95) and Gihan de Silva (74) providing food for thought to the Bangladeshis who face the senior Lankan cricketers in less than four days.

The Tigers managed to bat eight overs before the close and were 31-1 in their second innings and still 186 runs behind.

Test opener Nafees Iqbal, who was out for a duck in the first innings, continued his lean patch and was trapped lbw on five by left-arm seamer Gayan Wijekoon. Javed Omar on 12 and nightwatchman Manjural Islam (2) were at the crease.

On an otherwise ordinary day in the field for the Tigers, left-arm pacer Syed Rasel staked a claim for a Test debut by taking four wickets for 85 while Enamul Haque (Jr) had to remain satisfied with two despite bowling superbly.

The left-arm spinner, who missed both the Tests in the England tour, took the prized scalp of rival skipper and Test star Thilan Samaraweera who mistimed a sweep and was adjudged lbw on 48.

Kazi Shahadat Hossain bowled with his usual energy, aggression and pace but the speedster was unfortunate not to take the wicket of Mendis who survived two strong caught behind appeals in the same over when on 31.

The first one brushed the left-hander's pad but the second went into stand-in captain Khaled Mashud's gloves from an obvious outside edge. Mendis, who struck 14 boundaries and a six in his 143-ball vigil, was trapped lbw by Rasel just five runs short of the three-figure mark.

Wicketkeeper Gihan de Silva, who shared 110 runs with Mendis for the seventh wicket, put on a further 54 with Gihan Rupasinghe (32 off 37 balls) to take the total beyond 400 and put pressure on the visitors on the final day. His 104-ball knock featured seven fours.

Due to injuries to Mashrafe bin-Mortuza, Javed and Mohammad Rafique, Bangladesh team's trainer Stuart Karpinnen and captain

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Strauss, Warne acts

Cricket

AFP, London

Andrew Strauss's unbeaten 92 helped England recover from a superb spell of bowling from Shane Warne to 213 for four at tea on the first day of the fifth and final Ashes Test at The Oval here Thursday.

England, 2-1 up in the series and needing to avoid defeat to win their first Ashes series in 18 years, had been 115 for three at lunch on a good batting pitch after captain Michael Vaughan won the toss.

But in the second session they lost just one wicket, Kevin Pietersen, with left-hander Strauss, in sight of his seventh Test hundred and second of the series, and all-rounder Andrew Flintoff, reining in his game a touch with an unbeaten 39 off 69 balls that still featured six fours, putting on 82.

Strauss, who'd batted for four hours, had faced 143 balls with 11 fours, the match evenly poised.

Master leg-spinner Warne, the only man to have taken 600 Test wickets and in his last Test in England, captured all the wickets to fall.

In an 18-over spell, broken by the lunch interval, Warne took four for 55.

At lunch Strauss was 42 not out and Pietersen unbeaten on 10. But none of the hard-hitting Pietersen's runs had come off Warne and that was still the case when, to his 13th ball from his Hampshire captain, he was bowled for 14, after aiming through mid-wicket at a full, straight delivery.

Pietersen stared at the pitch as if the ball had turned square but he was as much responsible for his exit as Warne and England were now 131 for four after a spell of four wickets for 16 runs in 38 balls from the Australian champion.

Warne, who had often seemed to be involved in a lone bid to retain the Ashes, had his 32nd wicket of the campaign -- the most by any Australian bowler in a five-match series in England.

Ever the showman, Warne responded to a slow handclap from some sections of the 23,000 capacity crowd, unhappy at the time he was taking to bowl his overs, by cupping his hand to his ear.

England, were 61 without loss when Warne came on in the 14th over and had advanced to 82 when the Victorian struck with his 15th ball.

Warne had Marcus Trescothick, still searching for his first Test hundred against Australia, brilliantly caught by Matthew Hayden, going low to his left at first slip, for 43 off a firm push outside off-stump.

He then captured the prize wicket of Vaughan for 11 although the Yorkshireman contributed to his own downfall by chipping a short ball straight to Michael Clarke at mid-wicket.

England then saw 102 for two become 103 for four when Ian Bell, pushing down the line of leg-stump, was lbw for nought.

Warne had derailed England on an ideal batting surface where a total of 400 appeared to be the absolute bare minimum.

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PHOTO: AFP
ONE MAN SHOW: Australia spin wizard Shane Warne (R), who took all four England wickets until tea, shouts for joy after he bowled Kevin Pietersen on the first day of the final Ashes Test at The Oval on Thursday.



PHOTOS: STAR
IT TAKES A LOT OF PREPS FOR THE BIG MATCH: (L) Mohammedan coach Zasiuddin Joshi (3rd from L) talks to his charges in front of the club building while Brothers coach Wajed Gazi (R) watch his boys queue up at the club ground before their respective training sessions on Thursday. The two giants clash in the virtual Premier League title decider today.

What to WATCH

ESPN
England vs Australia
Fifth Test, Day Two
Live at 3:30 pm

TEN Sports
US Open
Live at 5:00 am & 9:00 pm

DAY'S EVENT

Premier Football League
Brothers Union v Mohammedan (5.00pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium