

BFF decides on Dhaka!

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) top brass has decided to stage the whole final phase of the Nitol-Tata National Football League in Dhaka, to meet the demands of the sponsors.

The BFF will convey the message to the organisers of Khulna, Rangpur, Chandpur and Cox's Bazar after its executive committee meeting today, but the organisers have already protested the attitude.

"We have had another talk with the decision. All they want is to fulfil the contract by telecasting 20 matches live. They are not interested in knowing where we host the matches," BFF deputy-general secretary and tournament committee secretary Manzoor Hossain Malu said yesterday.

"We have had another talk with the DG of the BTV and he has agreed to show at least 20 matches from Dhaka," he added.

Many felt the BFF did not need to bring all the matches to the capital, thus denying the huge fans at the outside venues. They could have put off two out of four venues, or reduced the number of matches for the sake of live telecasts.

It is expected that having taken the preparation to arrange the matches, the organisers will be demanding that the BFF do not centralise the national league.

"We are not happy. We have taken all the preparation and there has been a lot of excitement in Khulna about seeing our home team play against top clubs of the country," said Monuzzaman Moni, a member of the Khulna organising committee.

Echoing the same sentiment, SEE PAGE 13 COL 5

Same old National League begins Saturday

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had promised to make the National

Cricket League (NCL) as the most competitive and lucrative among the domestic competitions. But with the seventh edition of the lone first-class event beginning on Saturday nothing seemed to have changed.

Like the previous occasions players are destined to get less money and enthusiasm appeared a far cry after the board's ambitious plan to attract more lucrative sponsors for the six divisional teams fell through. Not only that the board was at odds with regular sponsor MM Ispahani, who felt piqued after being initially ignored by BCB's new marketing committee chairman Ahmed Iqbal Hasan.

BCB vice-president Shah Nurul Kabir Shaheen, also chairman of the tournament committee, conceded the board's failure about the sponsorship issue which eventually earned them less money from their trusted partner in development.

"We should take the responsibility because cricket is now a hot commodity. But I think our new marketing committee chairman (Ahmed Iqbal Hasan), who is now abroad, can give you the exact explanation behind the failure," said Shaheen at a press conference. SEE PAGE 13 COL 1



PHOTO: STAR
National Cricket League tournament committee chairman Shah Nurul Kabir Shaheen (R) takes questions from reporters during a press briefing at a city hotel on Wednesday.

CCL will see new champions today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Corporate Cricket League (CCL) will crown a new champion when favourites Beximco face a high-flying Epyllion Group in today's final at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Epyllion have defied all the odds to reach the final, but Beximco -- undefeated in the 12-team fray -- have earned a deserved place in the last two spots. However, both the captains, complimenting each other's performances, refused to predict a winner.

"I admit that we are better on paper. But I believe only in a given day's performance," said seasoned Beximco captain Akram Khan yesterday.

"We have performed well in all departments, but have to repeat this in the final," said the former national captain, who smashed a match-winning unbeaten 59 in their four-wicket semifinal victory over Gazi Tanks.

Dismissive about Steve Tikolo's poor batting in the semis, Akram said

he has complete faith in the Kenyan batsman.

"He is a proven performer in Dhaka and we have no doubt he will shine in the nick of time. Still, I can totally rely on my local players."

"The key is to give our 100 per cent against a good opposition," he added.

A real match winner, Akram has been out of the national team for quite some time, but the legend's bat has been dominating whilst national team stars have failed to perform. When asked what keeps him going, the Chittagonian said that he still enjoys the game. "I will play as long as I enjoy cricket. And as long as I get paid for playing, I will try to give my best in return," he added.

Just like his rival, Epyllion captain Tushar Imran also believes that Beximco are the stronger team on paper.

"They have many stars, but we feel mentally strong. Tomorrow we just have to put in the same effort we had done at the earlier stage," said Tushar, who has regained his place in the national team due to consistency.

"We will not depend on any partic-

ular player, but will attempt to win it with team work. We all play with responsibilities."

He also claimed that Pakistani all-rounder Yasir Arafat's inclusion has strengthened the team. "He is the best foreign player so far and he has already performed in his very first match. However, our biggest loss is Nabil Samad, who was the best spinner in the league."

Left-arm spinner Nabil, who took 1-18 from ten overs in their thrilling one-wicket defeat of Acme in the semifinal, left Dhaka last night with the Bangladesh team, to play in the Afro-Asian Cup U-19 cricket tournament.

"We have also lost Mushfiqur Rahim who can be replaced. But Nabil was one of our star performers. Moreover, we don't have a specialist spinner in the side. I will have to bowl tomorrow," said the middle-order batsman who scored a hundred in the last group match.

"If Shahriar Nafees and I can get some runs in the top order, we will be able to put pressure on the opposition for sure," said a confident Tushar.



PHOTO: AFP
A DRAMATIC WIN: Pakistani fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar jumps for joy while his teammates rush towards him after they won the first Test against England at Multan on Wednesday.

HP-England U-19 series from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The visiting England under-19 team will play their first match against BCB High Performance Squad at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra today.

A 14-member English youth side arrived in the capital on Monday to play a five-match limited-overs series against the HP Squad, which will be followed by a tri-nation tournament involving Sri Lanka under-19s and the hosts.

The tourists' next matches are billed for November 18 in Bogra, 21 at BKSP and 24 and 25 in Khulna.

Cruciani's boys play MSC today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football team, preparing for next month's SAFF Football Championship in Pakistan, will play a warm-up match against Mohammedan Sporting Club today.

The match will kick-off at the Army Stadium at 3pm.

The 24-member squad, training at BKSP under Argentine coach Diego Cruciani, are expected to play three warm-up matches before flying to Karachi for the eight-team biennial meet.

Cruciani's boys, who finished runners-up in the four-nation Grand Royal Cup tournament in Myanmar earlier this month, will meet Mukhtijoddha Sangsad next week.

Meanwhile, the warm-up match for National League preparation between Brothers Union and Mukhtijoddha Sangsad ended in a 1-1 draw at the Brothers Union ground in Gopibagh yesterday.

Nigerian midfielder Adafa put Mukhtijoddha ahead in the first half but fullback Siraji levelled scores for National League holders Brothers after the break.

BU strengthen squad on final day of transfer

SPORTS REPORTER

Brothers Union signed up 17 out of 37 cricketers who changed their allegiance on the last day of the three-day inter-club players' transfers on Wednesday.

A total of 159 cricketers switched teams in the bourse that was held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The Brothers line-up featured three cricketers from the national pool -- Mohammedan's opening batsman Nafees Iqbal and left-arm spinner Enamul Haque Jr and paceman Nazmul Hossain from Old DOHS.

Other notable player with international exposures joining the Gopibagh outfit are Ehsanul Haque (Victoria), Gazi Salahuddin, Rashedul Haque, Arafat Sunny, Arafat Salahuddin, Yasin Arafat, Ashraf Khan and prolific Pakistani all-rounder Rashed Hanif from Orient SC.

Having played for Mohammedan for some seasons, Kenyan ace batsman Steve Tikolo joined defending champions Old DOHS. SEE PAGE 13 COL 5

Kaneria causes an upset Pakistan beat England by 22 runs

Cricket

AFP, Multan

Wily leg-spinner Danish Kaneria grabbed four crucial wickets to secure Pakistan an improbable 22-run victory over England in the first Test here on Wednesday.

England, fresh from their Ashes triumph over Australia, looked set to extend their impressive run before collapsing against Pakistan's spin-pace combination on the fifth and final day.

England, needing 198 to win, were comfortably placed at 64-1 after resuming at 24-1. But Kaneria turned the match upside-down when he dismissed Ian Bell (31), Andrew Strauss

(23) and Andrew Flintoff (11) in five probing overs.

Wicketkeeper Geraint Jones (33) and debutant Shaun Udal (18) offered resistance with a 49-run stand for the eighth wicket but their efforts came too late to stop Pakistan.

Paceman Shoaib Akhtar claimed three of the last four wickets, sparking celebrations when he had last-man Steve Harmison caught by Younis Khan in the slips with the tourists having made 175. Pakistan lead three-Test series 1-0.

Kaneria, who finished with 4-62, was brilliantly supported by fast bowlers Mohammad Sami (2-31) and Akhtar (3-49).

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq

described the victory as "one of the best" under his captaincy and lauded the leg-spinner.

"Kaneria set up the win with two crucial wickets," said Inzamam. "He has been bowling well for the last one-and-a-half years and we knew that on a fifth-day pitch he would spin the ball sharply."

"It is one of the best wins for Pakistan in the last two years. It is a fantastic win and to win the first Test is always important."

Inzamam also praised his young team's resolve.

"We knew that it wouldn't be easy for England to get the 174 runs on the fifth morning. It all went

SEE PAGE 13 COL 2

Australia end 32-year wait



AFP, Sydney

Australia Wednesday ended 32 years of disappointment with a dramatic victory on penalties over two-time champions Uruguay in their play-off for a place in the World Cup finals.

The Australians won 4-2 after goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer saved penalties from Dario Rodriguez and Marcelo Zalayeta in the shoot-out after the game was tied at 1-1 on aggregate after extra time.

John Aloisi, who came on as a substitute in the first period of extra time, converted the winning penalty to send his teammates and the full house of 82,698 delirious with joy.

Australia levelled the tie with a 34th-minute strike from Marco Bresciano but they could not get the second goal they needed for the remaining 90 minutes. Uruguay won the first match 1-0 in Montevideo last Saturday.

It was another triumph for Dutch coach Guus Hiddink, who was only in charge of the Australian team for his fifth game since coming in for Frank Farina in July.

Hiddink will now take Australia to next year's World Cup finals in Germany after leading the Netherlands and South Korea to the semi-finals of the last two World Cups.

In a feisty match, Spanish referee Luis Medina Cantalejo handed out a total of nine yellow cards -- five to Uruguay and four to Australia.

Australia looked on course to win in normal time after controlling play early in the second half. But somehow the Uruguayans, playing without star playmaker Alvaro Recoba and skipper Paolo Montero from late in the s e c o n d SEE PAGE 13 COL 8

Kallis takes SA home

Cricket

REUTERS/AFP, Hyderabad

All-rounder Jacques Kallis anchored South Africa to a five-wicket victory in the first one-dayer against India on Wednesday.

Kallis top-scored 68 not out with typical patience to steer South Africa to 252 for five with seven balls left after Yuvraj Singh's valiant 103 had lifted India to 249 for nine.

The 30-year-old Kallis added 89 runs for the fourth wicket with left-hander Ashwell Prince (46) and 84 for the unbroken sixth with Justin Kemp (46 not out) after the loss of wickets at crucial stages.

Kallis struck just five fours facing 96 balls to ensure there would be no setback at the start of the five-match series.

The Proteas extended their unbeaten streak to 20 one-day games. The run is only behind world champions Australia's 21 victories on the trot achieved in 2003.

South African fast bowlers Shaun Pollock and Makhaya Ntini grabbed two wickets each in seam-friendly conditions to reduce India to 35 for five after captain Graeme Smith opted to bowl first.

Yuvraj, 23, struck 10 fours and three sixes facing 122 balls for his fifth one-day hundred and shared in a 75-run sixth wicket partnership with seamer Irfan Pathan, who made 46.

Harbhajan Singh lashed 37 not out from only 17 balls at the end after Yuvraj was run out in the 48th over, joining pace bowler Ajit Agarkar (21) to help add 83 runs in the final 10 overs.

Smith hammered a 36-ball 48 at the outset to give South Africa a solid start to their reply.

Agarkar struck twice to reduce the visitors to 76 for three, trapping opening batsman AB de Villiers leg before for seven and having one-drop Justin Ontong caught behind for 11.

Smith then dragged a ball from left-arm paceman Rudra Pratap Singh onto the stumps to leave the visitors in some worry.

Kallis and Prince (46) avoided risky shots to deny any success to off-spinner Harbhajan in his wicket-less but superb seven-over first spell.

India again fought back with two wickets off successive overs, Prince flicking Harbhajan to be caught at mid-on and Mark Boucher pulling Sachin Tendulkar's occasional spin to be caught at midwicket for two runs.

However, the big-hitting Justin Kemp curbed his natural instincts, hardly playing a shot in the air, to give

Kallis company until the end.

Although Harbhajan finished with 1-35 in his 10 overs, India sorely missed a fifth bowler after substituting left-arm spinner Murali Kartik while batting.

Kallis completed his 55th one-day fifty before pulling Agarkar for four to clinch victory in the penultimate over.

The second game will be played in Bangalore on Saturday.

SCOREBOARD

Full scoreboard of the first one-day international between India and South Africa. SEE PAGE 13 COL 6



PHOTO: AFP
CENTURY IN VAIN: Indian left-hander Yuvraj Singh acknowledges the crowd's applause on reaching his century in the first one-day international against South Africa in Hyderabad on Wednesday.



Did U Know?

The 1958 Cardiff (Wales) Commonwealth Games were South Africa's last until their post-apartheid return in 1994. Their team had been selected on the basis of race and colour rather than ability, which raised many objections from other nations.

What to WATCH

ESPN
Football Crazy
Live at 5:00 pm
Sportscentre
Live at 8:30 pm
STAR Sports
Australia vs West Indies
Second Test, Day One
Live at 5:00 pm
ATP Masters Series
Live at 5:00 pm

TALK TURKEY



Arjuna Ranatunga
(Former Sri Lanka cricket captain)
"India must learn to respect its heroes lest they look like pirates who can only destroy a legacy."
While standing by ex-skipper Sourav Ganguly.

DAY'S EVENT

GP Cricket Corporate League
FINAL
Beximco vs Epyllion
Venue: DCS