

Beximco corporate kings

SPORTS REPORTER

Beximco used all their firepower to down Epyllion Group by 50 runs in the final, clinching the GrameenPhone Corporate Cricket League title yesterday.

Beximco's 276 for nine in 50 overs, in an exciting match watched by a large crowd at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium proved too good for Epyllion, who were all out for 226 despite a skipper's knock by Tushar Imran.

Man-of-the-match Mohammed Shahjada, who wrapped up the show in the first ball of the 45th over, yorked Epyllion's Pakistani recruit Yasir Arafat and bagged five wickets to destroy the last half of the rival innings for just 28 runs.

Chasing an uphill target, Epyllion got off to a fine start when super-sub Sajjadur Rahman (40 off 74 balls) and national opener Shahrir Nafees (33 off 40 balls) put on 68 runs in 12 overs.

However, Beximco's Kenyan batsman Steve Tikolo, having contributed a master 53 off 57 balls, gave the side a breakthrough when he removed Nafees in his second over. Left-handed Nafees, who played some exquisite shots including a hooked six off Mahbubul Alam, dragged a delivery onto his stumps.

Epyllion lost wickets at regular intervals before number four Tushar came together with hard-hitting Arafat, to raise hopes of an improbable victory, even though they were facing an asking

run-rate of seven from the last 20 overs.

Tushar, who was particularly harsh on short deliveries, smashed four boundaries and lofted left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak out of the ground for a six over midwicket, just after he was let off the hook by Beximco wicketkeeper Moha-mmed Shahin.

The wasted stumping chance on 54, however, did not prove costly as Tushar

was run out for a 56-ball 60. The right-hander swept Tikolo and decided to respond to a call for a single by Arafat, but he was late to beat a throw by Razzak to Tikolo at the non-striking end.

Arafat, who stormed Epyllion into the final with a match-winning knock in the semis, hit a few lusty blows including a huge six that landed over the roof of the gym at the northern side. But his run-a-

ball 46 was not enough to inspire the tail that was blown off -- they lost the last four wickets in the space of 12 deliveries -- by Shahjada.

Earlier, Akram Khan elected to bat after winning the toss and the Beximco captain could not have asked for more from his star-studded line-up, after the early loss

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BORN TO WIN: Beximco captain Akram Khan (L) receives the champions trophy from State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman after the Corporate Cricket League final at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium on Thursday.

PHOTO: STAR

Sweet and sour for Akram

SPORTS REPORTER

Beximco captain Akram Khan's evening, after winning the Corporate Cricket League title, was spoilt when he was fined Tk 2,500 for showing dissent over an umpire's decision in yesterday's final.

Match referee Belayet Hossain met the Beximco captain after the match and handed him the punishment.

The brave Akram, however, smiled and praised the contribution of all his teammates for their success in the tournament after yesterday's victory over Epyllion Group.

"This was a reward for team work. From the start of the season I was serious about my intent to give the Beximco Group a strong result, as the officials had placed a lot of money behind my demands of building a strong team. They always back cricketers but despite spending big money, they did not get anything in the first two Corporate Leagues. We are happy and relieved to give them something in return," said Akram after the final at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

"The toss was vital and our top order batted sensibly. I was a bit worried after losing Ashrafal and Tikolo in quick succession, but we recovered well. After scoring 276, I was never in doubt about a win despite Tushar's magnificent

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A night of ecstasy and anguish



AP, London

Trinidad and Tobago and the Czech Republic advanced to the World Cup for the first time Wednesday, the final day of qualifying that began 26 months ago.

Spain qualified for its eighth straight tournament as the final five berths in the 32-nation field were filled, while Switzerland ousted Turkey, a 2002 semifinalist, and Australia beat Uruguay to advance for the first time since 1974 and become the first nation to qualify for a World Cup in a penalty-kick shootout.

Trinidad and Tobago won 1-0 at Bahrain to win the home-and-home, total-goals series 2-1 and become the fourth team in the tournament from North and Central America and the Caribbean.

"When we started in May after three matches the team only had one point and nobody gave us a chance," coach Leo Beenhakker said on FIFAWorldCup.com.

"In the qualifying matches it went better and better, and this, of course,

is the result."

The qualifiers will be drawn into eight four-team groups on Dec. 9 at Leipzig, Germany. Next year's tournament runs from June 9 to July 9.

Although Czechoslovakia, which split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993, played in the World Cup several times, the Czech Republic had never qualified. It's 1-0 home win over Norway, combined with a 1-0 away victory in the first game, pushed the Czechs forward.

"It's the peak of my career," said coach Karel Bruckner, who led the Czechs to the semifinals at the 2004 European Championship.

Already leading 5-1 from the home leg in Madrid, Spain tied 1-1 at Slovakia to advance. The Spanish extended their unbeaten streak under coach Luis Aragones to 18 games.

"Getting to the finals is a big thing. We'll go to the finals with humility, but we have enough quality to do something big. We hope we'll all be at our best." Spain midfielder Xavi Hernandez said.

The Swiss, leading 2-0 from the first leg in Berne, had a scare in Istanbul, where Turkey won 4-2, powered by a hat-trick by Tuncay Sanli.

The teams wound up tied 4-4 on in

total goals, but Switzerland advanced having scored more away goals.

TRINIDAD-BAHRAIN

Held to a 1-1 tie at home in the first leg, Trinidad got its winning goal from defender Dennis Lawrence in the 49th minute. The 6-foot-6 player headed in a corner kick from Dwight Yorke for the only goal in Manama.

The playoff ended with the home side furious with the referee for disallowing what would have been a late tying goal and with the visitors' time-wasting tactics.

Previously, the closest Trinidad came to qualifying was for the 1990 tournament. Needing a tie at home in its final game, the Soca Warriors lost 1-0 to the United States, which thus qualified for the event for the first time since 1950. The only other Caribbean teams to make the tournament were Cuba in 1938, Haiti in 1974 and Jamaica in 1998.

CZECH REPUBLIC-NORWAY

Any hope Norway had of a turnaround in Prague ended when Tomas Rosicky put the Czechs ahead after 35 minutes.

Milan Baros' pass to Pavel Nedved was deflected in the penalty area to the unmarked Rosicky.

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20 NFL games in Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has decided to exclude Chandpur as a venue of the final phase of the National Football League.

To meet the demand of the sponsors, the BFF will host 20 matches in Dhaka for live telecast. Khulna, Rangpur and Chandpur

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Woeful West Indies



AFP, Hobart

Trinidad and Tobago are celebrating reaching their first-ever World Cup football finals but there was little for the West Indies to cheer about in the second cricket Test against Australia here Thursday.

Thousands danced in the streets and brought traffic to a standstill in Port-of-Spain on Wednesday.

But the West Indies' Australian tour lurched to a new low at Bellerive Oval when they were rolled out for 149 off 68.3 overs after winning the toss -- losing their last seven wickets for 30 off 18.5 overs.

It was the lowest innings total scored in a Bellerive Test, undercutting New Zealand's 161 here in 1993.

The tourists also suffered innings collapses in the first Test in Brisbane -- 8-76 in the first innings and 8-44 in the

second. That match only lasted four days after the Australians shot the Windies out for 129 off 49 overs on their way to a crushing 379-run victory.

And given the plummeting morale in the tourists' ranks, another lopsided result is on the cards. The Australians made a bright and confident start and were 60 without loss at the close, with Matthew Hayden not out 31 and Mike Hussey on 26.

Glenn McGrath captured 4-31 off 23 overs and leg-spinner Stuart MacGill and speedster Brett Lee took three wickets each as the Windies capitulated.

"Their strength definitely lies with their top-order batting, they need to score runs for the West Indies to really have a chance to allow their bowlers to bowl at something, and so far it really hasn't happened," McGrath said.

"I felt good this morning, especially in that first spell and I hit my rhythm in the fifth or sixth over and then I was on

my way, but I just tried to remain a bit more patient and tried to get the ball in the right areas."

McGrath removed Ramnaresh Sarwan (2), Chris Gayle (56), Marlon Samuels (5) and Fidel Edwards (0) to take his career Test tally to 529 wickets, with world record holder Shane Warne going wicketless to stay on top with 634 wickets.

MacGill, preferred to left-arm seamer Nathan Bracken in the team, yet again justified his selection with 3-18 off 11 overs and now has 172 Test wickets. Lee chipped in with 3-32, including the prized wicket of Brian Lara and under-fire captain Shivnarine Chanderpaul for 39 in his second over.

Lara's dismissal looked a touch dubious when Lee, bowling around the wicket, hit his back ankle for a lbw shout. Replays suggested the ball might have missed leg-stump.

Gayle returned to the crease

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REUTERS, London

With the completion of the World Cup qualifying competition on Wednesday, the following 32 countries have qualified for the World Cup finals which are being held in Germany from June 9 to July 9 next year.

The draw for the finals is being held in Leipzig on December 9 (1915 GMT).

EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS
Germany (hosts), Croatia, Czech Republic, England, France, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Serbia & Montenegro, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Ukraine

SOUTH AMERICAN QUALIFIERS
Argentina, Brazil (champions), Ecuador and Paraguay

AFRICAN QUALIFIERS
Angola, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Togo and Tunisia

ASIAN QUALIFIERS
Iran, Japan, Saudi Arabia and South Korea

CONCACAF QUALIFIERS
Costa Rica, Mexico, Trinidad & Tobago and United States

OCEANIA
Australia



PHOTO: AFP

REAL TURKEY: Turkish and Swiss players and officials engage in fistfights as they approach the tunnel after the final whistle of their World Cup playoff at the Sukru Saracoglu stadium in Istanbul on Wednesday.

AOL