



A HERCULEAN EFFORT: Record-breakers Habibul Bashar and Rajin Saleh embrace each other in delight after the latter completed a century during the fourth and final ODI against Kenya at the Fatullah Stadium on Saturday.

## Rajshahi close in on title

ISPAHANI  
MIRZAPORE TEA  
7th National Cricket League

SPORTS REPORTER

Mushfiqur Rahman led the charge as Rajshahi dominated Dhaka, while title contender Chittagong slipped further in their contest against Barisal on the second day of the Ispahani Seven National four-day Cricket League. Rajshahi made Dhaka follow on in their first innings after Dhaka were bundled out for 286 runs. Barisal took a 115 runs lead after they scored 381 runs in their first innings against Chittagong.

Chittagong could have sealed the deal in the previous round but opted to play for a draw against Rajshahi. Now they are in danger of conceding the title to Rajshahi. Now, all eyes will be on the Dharmondi Cricket Stadium as Rajshahi look to finish off a lacklustre Dhaka while Chittagong must now make an improbable comeback against Barisal.

Golam Mabud held the innings together as Sylhet also took a 61 runs first innings lead over Khulna

by ending the day on 309 for 8.

RAJSHAHI V DHAKA  
Rajshahi added 43 more runs in the morning before being bowled out for 460 in their first innings. Rafiqul Islam was unbeaten on 111.

In reply, only Al Shahri's bat did the talking as he hit a rapid 60 off 62-balls, which included 13 boundaries. Dhaka were all out for 286 with Arafat Sunny stranded on 49. Mushfiqur Rahim picked up 4 wickets for 47, following his 61 in the first innings, while Shuvo chipped in with 2 wickets.

Following on, Dhaka suffered an early setback in their second innings as they lost opener Anwar Hossain in the penultimate over of the day with the score on 15.

**CHITTAGONG V BARISAL**

Hannan Sarker cracked a brilliant 121, as he shared a 178-run stand with Imran Ahmed. Hannan was the more aggressive partner as he struck 15 fours and a six in his 135 ball knock. Imran scored a patient 85 while Marshal Ayub also scored 73. Barisal now leads by 115 runs at the end of day two at the Barisal Divisional Stadium.

Saju Datta took four wickets for

Chittagong but his effort was not enough as Barisal scored at a rapid pace. Off-spinner Yasin Arafat and part-timer Dhiman Ghosh took 3 wickets each.

Chittagong in reply were 7 for no loss in their second innings, with Barisal still leading by 108 runs.

**KHULNA V SYLHET**

Golam Mowla hit a diligent century as Sylhet took a 61 run lead over Khulna at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium. Sylhet will begin day 3 on 309 for 8 as Rezaul Haque also struck a patient knock of 71.

Jamaluddin Babu, Sadik Khan and Ziaur Rahman picked up two wickets each for Khulna.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**

**RAJSHAHI:** First innings (overnight 417 for 7) 460 all out in 98.2 overs (Rafiqul 111\*, Mushfiqur 61, Naim 59, Talha 5/83, Sunny 2/58)

**DHAKA:** First innings 286 all out in 71 overs (Al Shahri 61, Sunny 49\*, Mushfiqur 4/47, Shuvo 2/53) and Second innings 15 for 1 in 8 overs (Uttam 12 batting, Shahzada 1/14).

**CHITTAGONG:** First innings 266 all out in 69.3 overs (Tamim 76, Masum 10, Salahuddin 17,

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**What to  
WATCH**

## Aussies grab initiative

**Cricket**

AFP, Durban

with Stuart Clark, who made 13 not out.

It took Hussey 135 balls to reach his fifty but he faced only 20 more deliveries in adding another 25 before he was last man out, leg before wicket to Jacques Kallis when he paddled up just outside his off stump.

Hussey hit ten fours and a six. He seldom looked like getting out, although his hooked six off Makhaya Ntini only just cleared Shaun Pollock on the fine leg boundary.

Ntini and Andre Nel took three wickets each, with Nel dismissing overnight batsman Andrew Symonds and Adam Gilchrist in successive overs. Symonds batted with four stitches in his upper lip after being hit by a bouncer from Ntini Friday.

The normally attack-minded Symonds took 83 minutes and 53 balls to make 13 before he was leg before wicket to Nel immediately after the morning drinks break. Only 25 runs had been added in an hour.

Gilchrist was dropped on nought at point by Ashwell Prince four balls later but the lapse was not costly, as Gilchrist flashed at a lifting ball from Nel in the next over.

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## Perseverance pays off

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Compared to his teammates, Rajin Saleh's batting average in the one-day game is quite decent. However, the stockily-built middle-order batsman's is still not a permanent fixture in the side.

After disappointing in the first two games against Sri Lanka at Bogra, the national selectors retained him in the squad but only gave him a chance in the fourth match of the series against Kenya when the home team had already confirmed series victory with an unassailable 3-0 lead.

But the 24-year old Sylhet right-hander, who has an average of 21.90 in his previous 33 encounters, grabbed the opportunity with both hands and became only the third batsman in the country after Mehrab Hossain and Mohammad Ashraful to make a one-day hundred with a scintillating unbeaten 108-run knock. It is also the highest individual score in the shorter-version for Bangladesh.

The day belonged to Saleh as he pulled off almost everything that he attempted. With the scoreboard reading 62 for 3 the opener, who replaced Javed Omar in the match, not only kept his nerve to finish the game but also produced some quality shots which is not a common feature of his batting.

"No doubt it is my best innings because the first century is always special. I was included in the playing side after a five-match gap, that's why I tried my best and thankfully I was successful," said the soft-spoken Rajin.

"I never wasted time when I was out of action. I always believe that only hard work can help me to get back my place," explained Rajin about his strategy towards success.

He was excited with his comeback hundred but he was especially happy because his efforts had helped Bangladesh to an emphatic victory. "The hundred was never in mind during my stay at the middle because my main concern was to help my team. It was especially satisfactory for me that I was able to finish the game by batting through," he added.

Rajin agreed that luck also favoured him to make his maiden one-day hundred. "It is not unlikely to see one or two chances in a big knock and it was also the case for me. I thoroughly enjoyed the day in the middle," he said adding that his mid-wicket boundary against paceman Tony Suri on his way to hundred was his best shot in the 113-ball 108 unbeaten innings.

## End of the rivalry

SPORTS REPORTER



aging the biggest ever margin of victory.

In the second game they had another achievement, a nine-wicket success, which was their biggest victory in terms of wickets, but they fell short of their own lofty goals in the third game as they got a narrow 20-run victory.

And yesterday, even after an early hiccup, Rajin Saleh and Habibul Bashar got together to post an unbroken fourth wicket stand to complete the 232-run chase in style and in the process also set the highest ever partnership for any wicket for Bangladesh.

Rajin Saleh staged a brilliant

comeback, as he became only the third batsman from the country to reach the magical three-figure mark (108 not out). Bashar too, kept his word that they will come down hard on their opponents in the last game, with a well-made 64.

Although Bangladesh completed a series whitewash for the first time in their history there was no feeling of complacency amongst the players as everyone seemed focused on achieving far loftier goals in the near future.

"It would be really great if we can carry the tempo into our next home assignment against Australia next month. We know how tough it would

be against the World champions but if we can carry the good work to the next series, I think it will be a real success for us," said Bashar.

The 33-year old Bangladeshi captain, who made his tenth fifty after a 20 match hiatus and executed a straight six against Tanmay Mishra to finish the game in style, said that it was not easy for them to pull off a clean sweep against their rivals.

"We came into this series right after the one against Sri Lanka, so it was not easy for the guys and you are all aware about the prevalent hot and humid conditions. I think that the Kenyan bowling was also good. If we take all the matters into account you must say that we have played a very good series," explained Bashar.

"We have lot of positive things in the series but at the end what made me most happy that at least one player carried his knock through the innings. Rajin played brilliantly to achieve it. We have a problem in that some of our top order batsmen got a handsome score but fail to finish the game," said a delighted Bashar.

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## TOP FIVE PARTNERSHIPS

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The 175-run unbroken stand between Rajin Saleh and skipper Habibul Bashar became the highest ODI partnership for any wicket. Following is the list of the top five ODI partnerships for Bangladesh:

Runs	Players	Against	Wicket	Venue	Year
175*	Saleh & Bashar	Kenya	4th wicket	Fatullah	2005/06
170	Shahriar & Mehrab	Zimbabwe	1st wicket	Dhaka	1998/99
150	Rafique & Afzal	Zimbabwe	2nd wicket	Dhaka	2004/05
130	Bashar & Ashraful	Australia	4th wicket	Cardiff	2005
128	Saleh & Kapali	Pakistan	3rd wicket	Karachi	2003



TEAM BANGLADESH: The victorious Bangladesh team pose for a group photo after completing a 4-0 series whitewash against Kenya at the Fatullah Stadium on Saturday.

TEN Sports

Sri Lanka vs Pakistan  
First Test, Day One  
Live at 10:30 am

ESPN

New Zealand vs West Indies  
3rd Test, Day Two  
Live at 4:30 am

South Africa vs Australia  
2nd Test, Day Three  
Live at 2:00 pm

STAR Sports

English Premier Football League  
Charlton Athletic vs Newcastle United  
Live at 7:00 pm

Man United vs Birmingham City  
Live at 9:00 pm



7th National Cricket League

Four-Day Matches (Day Three)

Rajshahi vs Dhaka

Venue: Dhamondi Cricket Stadium

Sylhet vs Khulna

Venue: Rajshahi Divisional Stadium

Barisal vs Chittagong

Venue: Barisal Divisional Stadium