

Mohammedan Twenty20 league champions

SPORTS REPORTER



Young openers Imtiaz Hossain and Zunaed Siddique ignited a chilly afternoon to help Mohammedan Sporting Club clinch the Kai-Altech Twenty20 Premier Cricket League title with a 24-run victory over Old DOHS in a high-scoring final at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

The stature of the tournament may not be very high but still, it was more than a win for Mohammedan who put an end to their five-year trophy drought in domestic circuit in front of a small but cheering crowd.

Akram Khan won the crucial toss and decided to field first on a sporting wicket but Imtiaz (82) and Zunaed (61) were at their belligerent best to prove the DOHS skipper's decision wrong with a 134-run stand in 12.3 overs that propelled Mohammedan to 184-5 in the stipulated 20 overs.

The 200-mark looked a reality after such a flying start but Mohammedan managed only 20 runs from the last four overs. The total, however, proved enough as DOHS completed their 20-over quota for 160-6.

Man-of-the series Zunaed, who hails from Rajshahi, had hogged the spotlight for his big-hitting talents after an explosive hundred against Sonargaon Cricketers in the last group match but a first-ball duck in the semifinal simply turned him on to contribute a 34-ball 61 that featured eight boundaries and two sixes.

But it was man-of-the final Imtiaz who overshadowed his partner during his 82-run innings off 50 balls with eight sweetly timed boundaries and four sixes. He also embarrassed Nazmul Hossain, smashing the fellow Sylhet pacer for 25 runs in two overs.

Dashing Aftab Ahmed got little time but cracked one boundary and decided to field first on a sporting wicket but Imtiaz (82) and Zunaed (61) were at their belligerent best to prove the DOHS skipper's decision wrong with a 134-run stand in 12.3 overs that propelled Mohammedan to 184-5 in the stipulated 20 overs.

DOHS looked in good shape to take the challenge when Tamim Iqbal, who survived an early lbw shout, and Mehrab Hossain launched a counterattack before the former was caught at cover by Faisal Hossain off left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny with the scoreboard reading 85 in 10 overs.

Tamim clobbered seven fours and a magnificent six over cover against pacer Hasibul Hossain to hit 46 off 36 deliveries.

The most successful Mohammedan bowler Sunny also bowled Mehrab, who played sensibly in a run-a-ball 33, before getting rid of danger man Nadif Chowdhury to kill all DOHS hopes.

Right-hander Nadif threatened his opponents hoisting two big sixes in the 13th over, bowled by spinner Rezaul Islam, before being caught for a blazing 10-ball 23 when Mohammedan skipper Bashar palmed the ball running back. After his departure, it seemed too difficult for Akram and Khaled Mahmud, both at the fag end of the careers, to pull off a miracle.

Bashar also admitted that the dismissal of Nadif was the turning point.

"No doubt our openers batted brilliantly to give us a defendable total but I must say Nadif looked dangerous after a good start. So his dismissal was the turning point in the match. But what I realise now that the first six overs are very important in the new version of the game," explained the Bangladesh captain smilingly adding that it had been a good toss to lose.

It was not only a successful year for the 33-year old as a captain in international circuit but also in the domestic arena as he had lifted the season's curtain raiser Corporate Cricket League trophy with Acme Laboratories.

"It is fantastic but I think he main challenge lies in the Premiership battle," responded Bashar.

On the other hand, Akram gave full credit to the opponents and said that Mohammedan deserved the title.

"Mohammedan played good cricket throughout the tournament that's why they deserve it. I am really impressed the way the young players took the opportunity to show their potential in the competition," observed the former national captain.

SCORES IN BRIEF

MOHAMMEDAN: 184-5 in 20 overs (Imtiaz 82, Zunaed 61, Aftab 25 not out, Faisal 3, Tapash 4, Bashar 0, Sahagir 1 not out, extras 8; Razzak 3-27).

OLD DOHS: 160-6 in 20 overs (Tamim 46, Mehrab 33, Nadif 23, Razzak 18, Akram 6, Mahmud 15, Dollar 5 not out, Ehsanul 1 not out, extras 13; Sunny 3-32, Aftab 2-11).

Result: Mohammedan won by 24 runs.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

TURNING POINT: Mohammedan's left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny (R) rejoices with skipper Habibul Bashar (top) after claiming Nadif Chowdhury's wicket in the final of the Kai-Altech Premier Division Twenty20 League against Old DOHS at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.



Did U Know?

Andrew Symonds of Australia scored 156 runs in the first innings of the fourth Ashes Test against England at the MCG on December 26. It was his maiden century.



ESPN

English Premier Football League

Charlton Athletic v Aston Villa

Live at 6:40 pm

Tottenham v Liverpool

Live at 8:55 pm

STAR Sports

India v South Africa

Second Test, Day 5

Live at 2:00 pm

English Premier Football League

Man United v Reading

Live at 9:30 pm

Sheffield United v Arsenal

Live at 11:10 pm

New Zealand v Sri Lanka

Second ODI

Live at 4:00 am (Sunday)

McMillan back after a year

CRICINFO, undated

Craig McMillan, the New Zealand middle-order batsman, has been recalled to the squad for the second one-day, as reported by AFP, against Sri Lanka at Queenstown on December 31 as it is doubtful that opener Nathan Astle will be fit to play.

Astle bruised his thigh after being hit at the same place thrice by Chaminda Vaas, the Sri Lanka left-arm fast-medium bowler, in the first one-day at Napier.

McMillan was dropped from the one-day squad around the same time last year for the four home ODIs against Sri Lanka after a poor performance in the Chappell-Hadlee Trophy against Australia.

In June 2006 McMillan lost out on the central contract when it came up for renewal. He was then excluded from the 30-man Champions Trophy squad because of fitness concerns.

In the 10 State Shield games, New Zealand's domestic one-day competition, McMillan played in 2005-06 he made 231 runs at 28.87. In the two he has played in 2006-07 he has scored 85 at 42.50.

Ross Taylor, whose unbeaten century in the first one-day failed to win New Zealand the match, is expected to play at Queenstown though he suffered dehydration during the Napier game.

Australia stay unchanged



AFP, Sydney

Sydney specialist Stuart MacGill will not get his chance to join Shane Warne in next week's final Ashes Test against England after being overlooked by selectors Friday.

Selectors showed faith in Australia's bowling attack by naming an unchanged twelve for the fifth Test where the Australians are vying for a 5-0 Ashes clean sweep at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG).

It will be the first time in seven years that leg-spinner MacGill has missed playing in the final Sydney Test.

MacGill has taken 53 of his 198 Test wickets at the SCG where he averages 24.47, below his Test bowling average of 27.21.

Selectors were expected to keep the same squad which pulverised the tourists by an innings and 99 runs in the fourth Melbourne Test on Thursday.

Fast bowler Mitchell Johnson is again expected to be 12th man in Sydney.

Selectors felt the attack of pacemen Glenn McGrath, Brett Lee and Stuart Clark, legspinner Shane Warne and fifth option Andrew Symonds had been instrumental in regaining the Ashes this summer and saw no reason for a change.

Chairman of selectors Andrew

Hilditch said the panel had considered drafting MacGill into the squad as a second spinner on a wicket that usually turns, although showers are forecast for the first three days of the match.

"Stuart MacGill was carefully considered for that position and remains very much in the thoughts of the national selection panel," Hilditch said Friday.

"However, to include two specialist spinners in Sydney would have meant changing the attack which has performed so well in the first four Ashes Tests and has been an integral part of Australia's successful regaining of the Ashes this year.

"Although Sydney will traditionally lend support for the spinners we consider a three-man pace bowling attack, with Shane Warne and Andrew Symonds to bowl spin, as a well-balanced attack and suited to the conditions we are likely to encounter in Sydney."

The last time MacGill was overlooked for a Test at his home ground was when India played there in the summer of 1999-2000.

Australia's front-line bowlers have all enjoyed good series. Clark has 21 wickets at 16.76, Warne 21 at 28.86, McGrath 15 at 26.47 and Lee 14 at 39.29, having taken six wickets in Melbourne after three lean Tests.

SQUAD

Ricky Ponting (captain), Justin

Langer, Matthew Hayden, Mike Hussey, Michael Clarke, Andrew Symonds, Adam Gilchrist, Shane Warne, Brett Lee, Stuart Clark, Glenn McGrath, Mitchell Johnson (12th man to be named).

'Twenty20 harmful for batters'

PTI, Mumbai

Former Cricket Board president Raj Singh Dungarpur on Friday sounded a warning that Twenty20 cricket will lead to further erosion of Indian batting which is already showing the ill-effects of an overdose of one-day cricket.

"I am a part of the Cricket Board and Sharad Pawar (BCCI chief) has done a lot for the game, but I am afraid that Twenty20 cricket will be the final nail on the coffin of Indian cricket," Dungarpur said at a book release function here.

"Because of the preponderance of one-day cricket today no Indian batsman looks capable of saving a Test match.

"There are a few who can win the matches but saving a match under intense pressure is even more difficult," said Dungarpur.

"Twenty20 cricket will lead to

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Pathan returns home

PTI, Mumbai

Paceman Irfan Pathan returned here early this morning from South Africa.

The left arm pace bowler was sent back by the Indian team management before the conclusion of the ongoing test series against the host to rediscover his bowling form in domestic cricket.

Pathan is scheduled to play in Baroda's remaining Group A Ranji trophy Elite division matches to be held from January 2 to 5 and January 10 to 13.

Mokabbar Smriti win first div kabaddi title

UNB, Dhaka

Shaheed Mokabbar Smriti Sangsad clinched the First Division Kabaddi League crown beating Moulvi Suruzzaman Smriti Sangsad 42-22 with at the Outer Stadium kabaddi court yesterday.

The winners, who led the first half 21-10, won three Ionas.

Ansar and VDP director general M Akbar Aktar distributed prizes among the winners.

The champions and runners-up have been promoted to the Premier League.

Bad light rules Durban Test



AFP, Durban

Makhaya Ntini struck twice before bad light took another huge chunk out of play on the fourth day of the second Test between South Africa and India at Kingsmead Friday.

India were 38 for two after being set to make 354 to win.

Ntini dismissed Virender Sehwag before tea and then claimed the key wicket of Indian captain Rahul Dravid after the interval, just eight balls before play was called off early for the fourth successive day, with 35 overs still due to be bowled.

David, the victim of a dubious lbw decision in the first innings, appeared to be unlucky again. He was drawn forward by Ntini and was given out by umpire Asad Rauf, although replays suggested his bat had made contact with his pad and not the ball.

South Africa's declaration left India, leading the three-match series 1-0, with a nominal 146 overs to make the runs or keep out the bowlers but given the weather pattern it seems unlikely that a full day's play will be possible on the final day Saturday, when 98 overs are scheduled to be bowled.

It was the fourth successive day on which bad light cut significantly into playing time. A total of 102 overs have already been lost -- more than have been required for any of the

three innings so far. More cloudy weather is predicted for Saturday with possible showers.

Needing a win to have a chance of taking the series, South Africa batted aggressively despite losing six wickets for 44 runs at one stage before lunch.

Shaun Pollock made a stroke-filled 63 not out to enable South Africa to declare their second innings at 265 for eight.

Pollock shared quick-scoring half-century stands with Andrew Hall and Morne Morkel as South Africa recovered from a top order collapse.

Shanthakumaran Sreesanth, India's exciting young fast bowler, took three of the wickets as South Africa collapsed from 99 for no wicket to 143 for six. Sreesanth finished with four for 79, taking his tally for the series to 16.

VRV Singh made the first breakthrough, dismissing AB de Villiers for 47, before Sreesanth, 23, took three

wickets in eight balls to plunge the home team into trouble.

One of Sreesanth's victims was South African captain Graeme Smith, who emerged from a batting slump to make 58. Smith made his runs off 81 balls and hit 11 fours before trying to whip a straight ball through the leg side and having his off stump knocked back.

But Pollock regained the initiative for South Africa in a 99-ball innings which included 10 fours. Hall (21) helped him put on 70 in 68 minutes for the seventh wicket before Morkel (27) shared in a 52-run stand in 50 minutes for the eighth wicket.

The floodlights were turned on soon after India started their second innings.

Both Sehwag and Wasim Jaffer edged balls which fell short of the slip cordon and Sehwag edged one for four at catchable height through a vacant fourth slip, only to

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PHOTO: STAR

FIRST BLOOD: Players of Mohammedan celebrate after clinching the Kai-Altech Premier Division Twenty20 League title after defeating Old DOHS by 24 runs at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.



PHOTO: AFP

Indian fast bowler S Sreesanth appeals successfully against South African batsman Hashim Amla on the fourth day of the second Test at the Kingsmead Stadium in Durban on Friday.

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