

WOMEN'S CRICKET Dhaka reach semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Rajshahi ended their campaign of the first-ever Women's Cricket Championship on a high after they beat Bogra by eight wickets at the Kalabagan Krira Chakra ground yesterday.

Batting first, Bogra were restricted to 132 for eight in their stipulated 30 overs. Brishty Roy (26) and Rokeya (21) were the chief contributors but it was Nishu who turned on a good all-round performance for their northern rivals.

Rajshahi reached their target in 22.4 overs, losing only two wickets as Nishu cracked 45 off only 36 balls.

In a curtailed match at the Ansar and VDP ground, Dhaka warmed up well for their semifinal today with a 9-wicket thumping of Chittagong.

Batting first, Chittagong only mustered 64 for eight in 20 overs and Dhaka toppled the target in only 14 overs with Ayesha again doing the double-act. She took four wickets and then top-scored for Dhaka with 24 runs.

Khulna take on Jahangirnagar University at the Dhaka University ground while Bhola play Dhaka at the Ansar & VDP ground in the two semifinals today.



Did U Know?

Sachin Tendulkar of India scored unbeaten 100 in the fourth and final ODI against West Indies in Vadodara on January 31. It was his forty first century, fourth against the West Indies.



Danish Kaneria

(Pakistan leg-spinner)
"I am very much disappointed. I feel like the team management has let me down. I was expecting to be given a chance in this one-day series before the World Cup."

While criticising his omission for the South Africa one-day series.



ESPN

English Premier Football League
Liverpool v Everton
Live at 6:40 pm
Aston Villa v West Ham
Live at 8:55 pm

STAR Sports

English Premier Football League
Charlton Athletic v Chelsea
Live at 8:55 pm
Middlesbrough v Arsenal
Live at 11:10 pm
Primera Liga
Valencia v Atletico Madrid
Live at 2:55 am (Sunday)



Premier Division Cricket League

Old DOHS v Mohammedan
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium
Sonargaon Cricketers v Brothers Union
Venue: BKSP
Victoria SC v Biman
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium



Bangladesh U-23 goalkeeper Tariq (L) leaps in the air to punch the ball and deny Ulsan Hyundai forward Gu Hyun-seo (second from L) a header during their exhibition match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Ulsan edge U-23s



SPORTS REPORTER

Ulsan Hyundai Mipo Dockyard FC overcame a two-goal deficit to clinch a five-goal thriller against Bangladesh Olympic squad in a friendly at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The South Korean N-League side dominated the first 15 minutes but went 2-0 down inside one minute before schoolboy-like goalkeeping by Tariq allowed the visitors come back and secure a 3-2 win before halftime.

The home side, playing their last preparation match ahead of Wednesday's home Olympic pre-qualifier against Hong Kong, began cautiously but capitalised on a defensive error to take the lead in the 16th minute against run of play.

Ulsan right fullback Lee Dong-jun attempted a backpass towards their goalkeeper but Bangladesh international Zahid Hossain Emily intercepted the ball inside the area

and effortlessly toe-poked over the head of onrushing Yang Ji-won into the far post.

Abu Yusuf's boys enthralled the 4,000-strong crowd on a foggy evening when Emily sliced the rival defence with a neat through for Zahid Parvez who placed the ball past Yang for the their second goal in the very next minute.

The celebration of the national Under-23 team was short lived as Tariq's gaffe saw Korean striker Kim Young-hoo reduce the arrears in the 20th minute. Tariq chose not to handle a long pass but fumbled while trying to receive it with his feet. The ball ran out of the area and when the goaltender got it inside, he slipped to lose possession and Kim made no mistake to utilise the gift.

Four minutes later, Tariq left his post to intercept a long through by rival fullback Lee but neither used his hands nor the feet on the edge of the penalty area as midfielder Sung Seong-pyo latched the ball well before placing it home to make it 2-2.

The hosts could not put enough men into attack as the defence was

not very supportive apart from captain and left fullback Waly Faisal, who was impressive throughout. The lack of support forced the midfielders to play from a behindhand line, which also cut the pipeline to the forwards.

The local boys, however, created a golden chance to regain the lead just one minute before the short whistle but Emily, who found the ball in the rival box after a combined move, shot wide of the lone keeper much to the frustration of the fans.

The Koreans sealed the victory in the first-half injury time when midfielder Lee Hyun rose high above the opposition backline to nod home a right-flank corner by captain Jung Jae-suk, giving Tariq no chance to react to the powerful header.

Ulsan, who leave Dhaka tomorrow in the middle of their pre-season preparation tour, changed their entire eleven in the second half and it was hard to see any difference between the two set-ups.

Yusuf brought a few changes

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Tigers sans luggage!

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh cricket team faced inclement weather as they prepare for Sunday's first one-day international against hosts Zimbabwe with a training session at the Harare Sports Club ground yesterday, according to sources.

There were more misery for the visitors after they had their luggage missing upon arrival after a 36-hour trip via Doha.

Tigers coach Dave Whatmore said on arrival, "It was a long and tiring journey here and irritating to say the least with the loss of luggage.

"But it won't take long to get ourselves ready for the series. We need to consolidate our advantage," the Bangladesh coach told AFP.

When contacting the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) CEO Mahmudur Rahman over telephone in Dhaka yesterday evening, he informed The Daily Star that he was unaware of the happenings in Zimbabwe, as the team operations manager has not informed about the incident yet.

Meanwhile, Zimbabwe captain Prosper Utseya is confident that his young side has what it takes to upset Bangladesh's plans of continuing where they left off at the end of last year in the forthcoming one-day international series.

"Morale in camp is soaring. All the players are raring to go. We are out to do well, and if the sky holds we want to do just that. Our preparations have gone on pretty well and I am optimistic that the boys will deliver the goods. All it takes is for the top order to click like it did in the first game against South Africa A where Elton Chigumbura batted through our innings and senior players Brendan Taylor and Hamilton Masakadza chipped in with some worthwhile knocks.

"Also, the playing conditions are on our side so all we need to do is pull in one direction as a team, stick to the basics and take our chances when they come. The other thing that might just work in our favour is that we have retained the same team that beat Bangladesh 3-2 at the same venue last year," Utseya told a Zimbabwean website.

Flintoff relieved with win

REUTERS, Sydney

England captain Andrew Flintoff said his team's breakthrough win over Australia on Friday was a just result for all the hard work they had put in.

England ended a sequence of nine straight losses to the Australians with a 92-run win that gives them the chance of making the tri-series one-day finals.

"It's been a long time in coming," a relieved Flintoff told a news conference.

"We knew tonight was probably our last chance to beat Australia and we had to put in a good performance to stay in this competition."

He added: "We showed signs of improvement, we played great tonight but we have to continue it."

England's unlikely hero was opener Ed Joyce who made 107 to lay

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Forhad sinks DOHS

SPORTS REPORTER



Out-of-favour all-rounder Forhad Reza bowled Bangladesh Biman to an exciting four-run victory over his old club Old DOHS in a curtailed-over match of the Kai-Altech Premier Division Cricket League at BKSP yesterday.

With their third defeat in eight matches, defending champions DOHS not only suffered a big blow on their way to a hat-trick title but also slipped to third position along side Biman. They also face a tough challenge to bounce back in the title race as they meet a depleted Mohammedan Sporting Club today at Fatullah Cricket Stadium in the ninth round.

Like DOHS, last year's runners-up Sonargaon Cricketers will also try to bounce back from their eight-wicket defeat against Abahani when they take on pointless Brothers Union at BKSP today while the other ninth round match between Victoria and Biman will be held at the Dhanmondi Cricket

Stadium.

The match was rescheduled after being abandoned due to dense fog on Wednesday at the same venue but in the end, the two sides got to play a 25-over a-side game due to the same reason.

Man-of-the-match Forhad, who has been sidelined from the national team to make way for Mohammad Sharif for the four-match one-day series in Zimbabwe, returned with figures of 4-24 as Biman defended their 154-7 by wrapping up their opponents for 150 in exactly 25 overs.

The right-arm medium pacer picked up his first wicket by dismissing former national skipper Khaleel Mahmud, who looked dangerous coming at number three after his side lost the first wicket on seven. He then claimed the wickets of Akram Khan (3) and Enamul Haque (2) in the 22nd over to dash the holders' hopes. But three run outs including a senseless one of Nadif Chowdhury (17) also played a big part in favour of Biman.

Mahmud scored a breezy 25-ball 33 with five hits to the fence while opener Muhammad Farrukh

topscored with 44 off 61 balls.

DOHS needed seven runs from the final over with the last pair batting but Biman's veteran pace all-rounder Mushfiqur Rahman conceded only three runs to ensure his side's victory.

Earlier, Javed Omar (33 off 39 balls) and Nafis Iqbal (44 off 56 balls) associated in a 76-run stand for the opening wicket to give Biman a platform while wicketkeeper Sajjad Kadir came up with a cameo 13-ball 27 that featured three sixes and a four.

BRIEF SCORES

BIMAN: 154-7 in 25 overs (Javed 33, Nafis 44, Zahoor 14, Forhad 11, Mushfiqur 2, Sajjad 27, Sanwar 12 not out, Mosharraf 2, Rasel 1 n.o., extras 8, Nazmul 1-25, Nabil 2-26, Dollar 2-38, Farrukh 2-35).

DOHS: 150 all out in 25 overs (Farrukh 44, Shamsur 5, Mahmud 33, Ehsanul 9, Nadif 17, Akram 3, Shahin 0, Dollar 11, Enamul 2, Nazmul 9, Nabil 5 n.o., extras 12, Shafiq 1-36, Forhad 4-24, Murad 2-23).

Result: Biman won by four runs.

Joyce brings joy

England beat Australia after 17 months



AFP, Sydney

England spectacularly revived hopes of playing in the triangular one-day series finals by bouncing back for a breakthrough first tour win over Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground Friday.

The embattled tourists put aside unrelenting months of demoralising defeats in the five Ashes Tests, the Twenty20 international and the one-day series to crush the Australians by 92 runs and keep alive their chances of leapfrogging New Zealand into this month's best-of-three finals.

Led by a defiant maiden century from man-of-the-match Ed Joyce and inspired bowling from Liam Plunkett, England posted their highest total of the tri-series with 292 for seven off their 50 overs and claimed a vital bonus point after Australia finished on 200 for nine off 38.5 overs.

Andrew Symonds retired hurt with a strained bicep for 39 and was unable to bat again for Australia.

England joined New Zealand on nine points in the standings behind runaway leaders Australia and if they can beat the Kiwis in Brisbane next Tuesday they will defy the odds and take on the Australians in the finals, starting in Melbourne on February 9.

"It's taken a while to come, I thought we played great tonight," skipper Andrew Flintoff said.

"I thought Ed Joyce was fantastic and then we had a dream start first ball having Adam Gilchrist out and we got on a roll, we fielded tight and it's a great feeling."

It was a rousing return to form for Flintoff's beleaguered team, who faced the dreadful prospect of

going through their three-month tour without winning a game against Australian opposition.

"We had a point to prove, we wanted to win in Australia and if we

didn't win tonight it could have been our last chance to do so and we've been working hard towards this victory, it has taken a while but

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PHOTO: AFP

England batsman Ed Joyce hits a boundary during his match-winning century against Australia in the Commonwealth Bank series at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Friday.

SL out for revenge



AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka hope to avenge an embarrassing thrashing by India 15 months ago when they play a four-match series from next week in the build-up to the World Cup.

When Sri Lanka played in India in November 2005, they were routed 6-1 in the one-dayers and 2-0 in the three-Test series, an experience captain Mahela Jayawardene has not forgotten.

As Sri Lanka left for India on Friday, Jayawardene said the team regarded the short tour as vital since recent performances on Indian soil had been not been very good.

"We've got to beat India in India," Jayawardene told AFP. "It's been long overdue."

"Last time the end result was a big disappointment for all of us. But things have changed, personnel have changed, the way we play has changed too and the confidence is back."

"But despite all that India is still a tough place to go and play cricket in. Although we are not taking our full side, we believe this team can win matches for us."

"I am confident that the players we are taking to India will be able to do the job for us."

"One area this team has done really well in the recent past is to

compete well away from home. We did that in England and in New Zealand recently and this is a big series for us."

Sri Lanka also failed to make the semi-finals of the Champions Trophy in India last October despite being one of the favoured teams to win the 10-nation tournament.

Sri Lanka have rested star bowlers Chaminda Vaas and Muttiah Muralidaran for their last series before the World Cup, which starts in the Caribbean on March 13.

Both Sri Lanka and India will have the first two games in Kolkata on Feb 8 and Rajkot on Feb 11 to gauge current form before picking their squads by the Feb 13 deadline.

"We have more or less finalised the squad. There are one or two places that we need to confirm," said Jayawardene.

"I would say that we've got an idea of about 90 percent of people we want to take to the West Indies."

"We'll have to take into account things like form, experience, players who can handle pressure, players who can fit into the combinations that we want and who can contribute to the team," the 29-year-old said.

Two leg-spinners, Uplu Chandana and Malinga Bandara, will be looking to compete well in India since one of them could join Muralidaran for the World Cup

campaign.

SQUAD

Mahela Jayawardene (capt), Kumar Sangakkara, Uplu Chandana, Russel Arnold, Marvan Atapattu, Malinga Bandara, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Dilhara Fernando, Sanath Jayasuriya, Nuwan Kulasekara, Farveez Maharoof, Lasith Malinga, Chamara Silva, Uplu Tharanga and Nuwan Zoysa.

Akram warns Australia

PTI, Karachi

Former captain Wasim Akram believes Pakistan could be the team to surprise Australia and spice up the World Cup which has become a little boring with Ricky Ponting's men winning the title in the last two editions.

"Australia appears favourites to win the World Cup in the West Indies. They have been winning consistently and it is becoming rather boring," Akram said.

"But if any team can beat the Aussies in the Caribbeans, it is Pakistan. Wickets in the West Indies will be low, slow and dry and such pitches suit our players," he was quoted as saying in the 'Dawn'.

Akram, the only bowler to have

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PHOTO: AFP

Former Russian tennis star Anna Kournikova (R) and his long-time boyfriend, Spanish singer Enrique Iglesias enjoy an NBA match between Miami Heat and Cleveland Cavaliers at the American Airlines Arena in Miami on Thursday.