



Cup format & regulations

REUTERS, undated

Format and regulations of the cricket World Cup starting in the West Indies on March 13.

FIRST ROUND

The ninth edition of the World Cup will be contested by 16 teams, the most ever. In the first round they are divided into four groups of four teams and play each other once. The top two from each group qualify for the super eight.

SUPER EIGHT

The winners and runners-up from the four groups will play each of the other teams except the team which advanced from their own group. The top four qualify for the semifinals.

SEMIFINALS AND FINAL

The second and third place finishers will contest the first semifinal while the teams placed first and fourth will meet in the second. The winners meet in the final in Barbados on April 28.

POINTS

Two for a win, one for a tie or a game without result in the preliminary and super eight stages. Teams qualifying for the super eight carry forward only the points gained in the group stage against the other qualifier.

KEY RULES

If the scores are equal, the match is
SEE PAGE 22 COL 1



Did U Know?

John MacBryan of England in his only Test appearance at Old Trafford neither batted, bowled nor took a catch.



Chris Gayle

(West Indies all-rounder)
"The World Cup is a big occasion as we all know and it is a big occasion not only for the players, but for the entire Caribbean. We want to win, it would be nice for us to be the first team to host World Cup and win it."



Channel i
B.League
Abahani v MuktiJoddha
Live at 5:50 pm



B.League
Abahani v MuktiJoddha
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
Bangladesh A v England A
Second Day, Second Four-Dayer
Venue: Shaheed Chandu Stadium, Bogra

Sublime Shakib

AFP, St John's



the Tigers prevailed over Canada by 13 runs in a compelling final match of the pre-World Cup three-nation series on Wednesday at the Antigua Recreation Ground.

Hasan struck 14 boundaries in an undefeated 134 off 152 balls to

Skakib Al Hasan hit the highest one-day international score by a Bangladeshi and took two important wickets, as

help Bangladesh post a competitive 278 for five from their allocation of 50 overs.

Canada, who famously beat Bangladesh at the 2003 World Cup,

fought hard but were restricted to 265 for seven from their 50 overs to as Bangladesh won the series, which also included Bermuda.

Canada made a shaky start,

BANGLADESH CENTURIONS

Name	Runs	Against	Venue	Year
Shakib Al Hasan	134*	Canada	Antigua	2007
Shahriar Nafees	123*	Zimbabwe	Jaipur	2006
Shahriar Nafees	118*	Zimbabwe	Harare	2006
Rajin Saleh	108*	Kenya	Fatullah	2006
Shahriar Nafees	105*	Zimbabwe	Khulna	2006
Shahriar Nafees	104*	Bermuda	Antigua	2007
Mehrab Hossain	101	Zimbabwe	Dhaka	1999
Mohammad Ashraf	100	Australia	Cardiff	2005



PHOTO: INTERNET

Bangladesh middle-order batsman Shakib Al Hasan flays one on the on-side during his magnificent unbeaten 134 against Canada at the Antigua Recreation Ground on Wednesday.

Foreigners uncertain

Sujan, Aminul to miss Mukti-Abahani opener



SPORTS REPORTER

In spite of spending over crores, neither Abahani nor MuktiJoddha go into today's B. League opener with their confidence sky-high.

The draw has put their fate to meet in the opening match although the local heavyweights are used to get enough time by playing small timers to prepare for the big matches towards the end of a tournament.

Playing a big match as their first match of the season, however, does not bother mentors of the two title contenders.

What pricks them most is the uncertainty over picking their starting line-up.

A few warm-up matches were not enough for measuring the strength of the squad, yet, or even making up the mind for a format or planning for the opposition although the biggest

names of local football flock for the two teams.

The national footballers have virtually chosen the two camps this season, the seniors showed their loyalty to MuktiJoddha, and the younger ones joined Abahani.

And both the coaches, Diego Cruciani of Abahani and Abu Yusuf of MuktiJoddha know the secrets of all the players.

Argentine coach Cruciani handled most of them as Bangladesh national coach while Yusuf's local knowledge also counts for the Reds.

Cruciani, who arrived in Dhaka last month with three Argentine booters, faces the biggest problem as the ITCs (International Transfer Certificate) of the sky-blues' foreign recruits have yet to reach the Bangladesh Football Federation.

"If the clearance are here in time, all three will play. Otherwise, I am ready to take the field with the local collection," Cruciani told The Daily Star on the eve of the match.

"It's better to start the league with a big match because even if we lose, we will have enough time to recover in a long tournament. It will also help us correct mistakes quickly."

Cruciani, who has run a fitness test, said that his players' have only reached 50 per cent of the desired fitness. "Their game is also yet to reach the peak. We need much improvement.

"MuktiJoddha have more experienced players and if we have to play with all locals, we might switch our format to 4-4-2," said Cruciani, who favours a more attacking 4-3-1-2 formation.

"Actually, we are teams of same level. So it would be an exciting and fighting game," the Argentine added.

Abahani will miss central defender Sujan, who has been nursing a thigh injury for long. Still, they would be able to pick up an eleven from a rich squad featuring goalkeeper Biplab, defenders Nazrul, Pradeep, Siraji and Waly, midfielders Joy, Pranotosh, Abul, Zahed Parvez and Abdullah Parvez and strikers: Emily, Ujjal and Tipu.

Skipper Arif Khan Joy told that a winning start would be an inspiration for the sky-blues, who have been without any major silverware for five seasons.

SEE PAGE 22 COL 6



PHOTO: STAR

Abahani's Argentine coach Diego Cruciani briefs the players in their last training session at the club ground in Dhanmondi on the eve of their today's B. League opener against MuktiJoddha.



PHOTO: STAR

Country's number one goalkeeper Aminul (down), assisted by his MuktiJoddha teammate and second-choice custodian Titumeer during yesterday's training session at the Sangsad Plaza ground, will miss the opening match of the B. League.

Football's new beginning



SPORTS REPORTER

Football goes professional in the country today with Abahani and MuktiJoddha all set to make history as opponents of the B. League's opening match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Traditionally, openers are mismatched with a local giant facing the newcomers but nothing could have been better than the two biggest budgeted sides being pitted against each other on the historic moment.

Sports Adviser Tapan Chowdhury will grace the august occasion as chief guest.

In a message to the Bangladesh

Football Federation (BFF), Asian Football Confederation (AFC) president Mohamed Bin Hammam Bin Hammam said: "The potential for football development in Bangladesh is enormous, but this has yet to be fully realised. Vision Bangladesh is designed to provide a framework that with concentrated effort and hard work can enhance the profile and standard of football in your country."

"The Bangladesh Professional Football League is an important element and key focus of Vision Bangladesh which will provide a higher platform for the Bangladeshi players, clubs, coaches, referees and officials. I am confident that the Bangladesh League will be the beginning of a new era in the history of Bangladeshi football."

He said the development of football in Asia was of crucial importance to AFC and that its revolutionary Vision Asia programme held the key to unleashing the potential of

football across the vast continent.

The event, which ultimately kicks off with 11 teams, have gone through all the pains of creation but it will be welcomed by the millions of football fans who have been waiting eagerly to see the 'dying game' in the country back on the big stage.

Delayed for umpteenth time, many doubted whether the league would see light of day at all but as the first transfer window closed on a hectic final day last night, the Godo has finally arrived.

After a gala half-an-hour opening ceremony, the match will kick off at 5.50pm at the renovated and spectacular national stadium No. 1.

Channel i will telecast the ceremony and the match live.

The satellite TV channel, which holds the TV rights, will broadcast at least 40 matches live.

The matchdays are Friday, Saturday, Tuesday and Wednesday. The venues outside Dhaka are Chittagong -- home of local Abahani

and Mohammedan -- and Khulna for their own Abahani.

The Dhaka clubs are MuktiJoddha, Abahani, Mohammedan, Brothers, Arambagh, Sheikh Russel, Farashganj and Rahmatganj.

The B. League will also mark domestic football's return to field after more-than-a-year's absence and the Bangladesh Football Federation has taken a precaution to lure the crowd. If not football, they will certainly turn out to watch Ayub Bachchu, country's one of the leading singers, in concert after the match.

Gallery tickets will cost Tk 30 while VIP tickets will be sold for Tk 100 (Gate 3), Tk 60 (Gate 2) and women's gallery (Gate 10) for Tk 50.

Women's tickets will be available at the entry while other tickets will be available at the stadium counters from 12 noon.

Ad

First day's play washed out

SPORTS REPORTER

The first day of the second four-day Test between Bangladesh A and visiting England A was washed out due to rain without a ball being bowled at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday.

England A lead the series 1-0.

A caution for BFF

SPORTS REPORTER

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) general secretary Dato Paul Mony yesterday urged the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) to show professional attitude towards the game or lose the assistance of the Asian football's governing body.

Mony, who replaced the long serving Peter Velappan as the AFC executive this January, is here as the head of a three-member delegation to attend the opening ceremony of the B. League.

"The AFC will enhance and continue to support the BFF for the development of the game but if they don't act according to prescription, the AFC may pull out," he told at a press conference at the BFF Bhaban.

When asked whether starting the Professional League now with poor infrastructure was a correct decision, he said it was positive.

"If you start ten years later, the same problems will be there. To start is most important. Then you can proceed according to your conditions."

"The launch of the first professional league in Bangladesh is a moment of pride for BFF and other stakeholders, whom I congratulate for their tireless and unstinting efforts. The league will witness the best 11 clubs in the country competing over a two-leg format, coached by qualified coaches and officiated by the best referees in the country, which are the key ingredients for any successful football league."

SEE PAGE 22 COL 7