



9 Days to Go

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 a 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

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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."

What to WATCH

Channel i

B.League
Abahani v MuktiJiddha
Live at 5:50 pm

DAY'S EVENT

B League

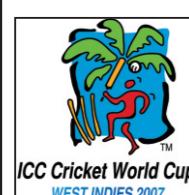
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
Bangladesh A v England A

Second Day, Second Four-Dayer

Venue: Shaheed Chandu Stadium, Bogra

Sublime Shakib

AFP, St John's



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

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
Skakib 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 Ashraful	100	Australia	Cardiff	2005



PHOTO: INTERNET

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

when opener Abdool Samad retired hurt with only one run on the board, then Ashish Bagai was dismissed for a duck to leave his side on one run for one wicket.

A stand of 178 between Ian Billcliffe, whose 93 off 114 balls including half-dozen fours and a pair of sixes was the top score, and Geoff Barnett, who made 77 off 123 balls which contained six fours and two sixes, put the Canadians on track.

The wickets of Barnett and Canadian captain John Davison to Skakib, as well as the dismissal of Billcliffe in the space of a few overs rocked Canada and set them back on 195 for five.

Though Asif Mulla scored 44 at better than a run-a-ball to give the Canadians hope, Abdur Razzaq snuffed the life out of their fight-back with three wickets for 51 runs off 10 overs to be the most successful Bangladeshi bowler.

Skakib completed a fine all-round performance with two wickets for 36 runs from his allotment of 10 overs.

Earlier, Bangladesh also endured a poor start, when they slipped to 30 for three, after Anderson Cummins, the former Barbados and West Indies medium-fast bowler, snared two wickets in the space of three balls.

Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar joined Skakib at the wicket and they consolidated their side's innings with a stand of 132 for the fourth wicket.

Bashar struck six fours in 57 from 75 balls, and when he was caught behind off Samad, Mohammad

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PHOTO: STAR

Country's number one goalkeeper Aminul (down), assisted by his MuktiJiddha 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 MuktiJiddha 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 MuktiJiddha, 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.

Foreigners uncertain

Sujan, Aminul to miss Mukti-Abahani opener



SPORTS REPORTER

In spite of spending over crores, neither Abahani nor MuktiJiddha 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 MuktiJiddha, and the younger ones joined Abahani.

And both the coaches, Diego Cruciani of Abahani and Abu Yusuf of MuktiJiddha 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."

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PHOTO: STAR

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

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.

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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."

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