

# Dhaka regain title

SPORTS REPORTER



Dhaka Division regained the first-class cricket title after one season

when they recorded a three-wicket win over Khulna at home after a dramatic comeback in the tenth and final round match of the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea 8th National Cricket League yesterday.

The final day of the four-dayers belonged to tailenders who decided the fate of the championship: a 97-run stand for the unbroken eighth wicket between Rashedul Islam and Nazmul Hossain spearheading Dhaka while a 203-run partnership for the undefeated seventh wicket by Chittagong pair Ehsanul Haque and Nadim Uddin shattering hopes of outgoing champions Rajshahi.

Dhaka, having started level with their rivals, overtook Rajshahi with full six points as they finished on 42 points. Rajshahi, who led the 6-team table throughout the race, fell behind in the last round when they collected four points against Chittagong by virtue of a first-innings lead.

The last match of the league, which only has an academic interest, will start on March 17 with Barisal and Sylhet meeting at the Fatullah Stadium.

DHAKA-KHULNA



## Did U Know?

Bangladesh cricket coach Davenell Frederick Whatmore is turning 53 today. He was born on March 16 in 1954 in Colombo.



## Mahela Jayawardene

(Sri Lanka cricket captain)  
"Our prospects in the World Cup will depend on the team getting used to the conditions."

DAY'S EVENT

B. League  
Abahani v Chittagong MSC (4:45pm)  
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium  
Khulna Abahani v Farashganj (3:45 pm)  
Venue: Khulna Stadium

Dhaka proved their critics wrong when they successfully chased an uphill 370-run target in the fourth innings at the Fatullah Stadium after being shot out for just 87 in the first innings.

The match, however, gave berth to a lot of controversies after bottom-table Khulna had opted not to force a follow-on despite enjoying a 201-run lead in the first innings besides the use of a less experienced umpire in an important match.

Khulna's approach, especially a toothless attack and loose bowling against the lower-order also looked dubious as number nine Nazmul hammered an unbeaten 65 off 74 balls to guide the home side to 372-7 after resuming on 168-2. Four of the five Dhaka wickets to fall on the day went to Manzarul Islam, the left-arm spinner who conceded 113 runs.

In the morning, Dhaka added three runs before losing both the overnight batsmen -- skipper Al-Shahriar (59) and Sajjad Kadir (0) -- on their overnight scores but young guns Shamsur Rahman (50) and Marshal Ayub (49) set the tone for a victory before Rashedul (31 not out) and Nazmul, who cracked nine fours and one six, completed the job.

Pacer Mohammed Azim was adjudged man-of-the-match with a match haul of eight wickets for Dhaka.

## RAJSHAHI-CHITTAGONG

Desperate to win, Rajshahi rattled 109 runs in 13 overs in the morning after resuming on 211-6 and declared their second innings on 318-7 at the Chittagong Divisional

Stadium. It was Sohrawardy Shuvo who ignited Rajshahi's hopes during an explosive 45 not out off just 15 balls, featuring half-dozen sixes and a four.

The home side, chasing 356 to win from a minimum of 75 overs, slumped to 92-6 with Rajshahi seamer Farhad Reza initiating the collapse with the new ball, taking 4-46. But all the tourists' efforts went down the drains as Ehsanul stood tall to lead to a draw as they reached 295-6 at close.

Man-of-the-match Ehsanul cracked 110 not out off 159 balls laced with 18 boundaries during the magnificent three-hour stand with Nadim, who was unbeaten on 82 from 148 deliveries.

## SCORES IN BRIEF

**KHULNA:** 288 and 168.

**DHAKA:** 87 and 372-7 in 129.3 overs (Uttam 47, Anwar 55, Al-Shahriar 59, Sajjad 0, Shamsur 50, Marshal 49, Sharifullah 6, Rashedul 31 n.o., Nazmul 65 n.o., extras 10; Manzarul 4-113, Ziaur 2-73, Fahim 1-68).

**RAJSHAHI:** 347 and 318-7 declared in 76 overs (Rabiul 64, Junaid 27, Farhad 8, Naeem 27, Anisur 20, Mushfiq 69 n.o., Farhad Reza 10, Hasanuzzaman 43, Shuvo 45 n.o., extras 5, Sunny 1-64, Saju 2-76, Sabbir 4-150).

**CHITTAGONG:** 310 and 295-6 in 75 overs (Salahuddin 15, Nafees 4, Faisal 0, Sunny 26, Mithu 27, Dhiman 13, Ehsanul 110 n.o., Nadim 82 n.o., extras 18, Sumon 1-62, Farhad Reza 4-46).



Bermuda seamer Saleem Mukuddem (2nd L) is the toast of his team after he took the wicket of Sri Lanka opener Sanath Jayasuriya during their Group B World Cup match at the Queen's Park Oval in Port of Spain on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Smith thinks of Dutch

AFP, St Kitts



focus is on playing the Netherlands and Scotland before facing the world champions.

"Our key focus has been on getting all the areas of our game right. We have two games to go before taking on Australia," said Smith ahead of his team's opening Group A clash against the Dutch here on Friday.

Australian paceman Glenn McGrath claimed on Wednesday that South Africa, who deposed defending champions Australia from the world top ranking spot recently, can't handle pressure.

The two sides meet here on March 24 in what will be a highly-charged game with the winner taking two extra points with them into the second round Super Eights.

Smith said he was surprised at the timing of McGrath's outburst.

"We were surprised nothing came from Glenn earlier. From our point of view it really means nothing. We've handled pressure better than Australia of late in big games, so I guess it's just another drop in the ocean," said the captain.

South Africa were out of sorts in their warm-up matches, losing to Pakistan by seven wickets after struggling to a narrow win over outsiders Ireland.

However, Smith felt his side has the quality to bounce back.

"We know if we perform we have got the players and the team and the passion to perform well over here. That's our focus at the moment. We haven't really taken too much notice of what's been going on around us.

"We will see when we get to Australia -- we've got two games before that."

Paceman Makhaya Ntini joined the team late Wednesday after attending the birth of his daughter back home.

"I think we will play with the best eleven. Of course, Ntini needs time to find his feet and will play the second match against Scotland before the match against Australia," said Smith.

The South African skipper criticised the facilities during the warm-up matches at Port of Spain where his team's top-order struggled.

"The facilities in Trinidad were poor but here the pitch looks pretty good. I watched the last 12 overs of the Australian innings (against Scotland on Wednesday) and it looks pretty good.

"The straight boundaries look

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PHOTO: AFP

South Africa captain Graeme Smith shares a joke with pressmen during a press conference at Warner Park in St. Kitts and Nevis on Thursday.

## 70-foot bat & 1m signs

AFP, Dhaka

A Bangladeshi firm has sent what they say is the world's biggest cricket bat on a signature tour to drum up support for the national team at the Caribbean World Cup, a company official said Thursday.

The 70-foot (22-metre) long and eight-foot wide bat has been signed by thousands since it began its nationwide journey from the northern city of Rangpur on Wednesday, said Tariq bin Azam, public relations manager of Akiz Group.

"It's the world's biggest bat and we hope to gather at least one million signatures wishing good luck to the Bangladesh cricket team here at Beausejour on Friday.

Holmes' creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, was an avid cricketer and was part of the first team to

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## It's elementary for the Dutch

AFP, St Kitts

Not many World Cup teams can boast a link to Sherlock Holmes.

The Dutch can and they'll need all the sleuth's deductive skills if they are to successfully unravel the talents of world number one South Africa in their opening World Cup clash here on Friday.

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# Argentines set for debut



SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani will bring Argentine flavour to the B. League when this season's top-budgeted side host an impressive Chittagong Mohammedan at the

start of the third week at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

Abahani were without any foreign collection in the opening league of the inaugural professional transfer certificate was yet to arrive till filing of this report last night.

"If all four foreigners are available, I might adopt a more attacking 4-3-3 formation. But if Ibrahim's clearance does not land in time, I'll have to go with what we have," told Cruciani, a former Bangladesh national coach.

Abahani rested in the second week and the gap has been helpful for the squad in gaining fitness, thinks Cruciani. "We are better than last match but the fitness level is about 70 percent. We need to improve in our game.

"I haven't seen the Chittagong side play but a team who can beat Muktiyoddha are certainly a good side. It would not be an easy match. But if my boys concentrate hard and do not relax on the pitch, we should beat them."

Abahani failed to convert their chances in the opener and Cruciani believes that Parodi would be able to meet the demand of a genuine striker. "He is an out

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# Kiwis seek revenge

AFP, Gros Islet



World Cup campaign against England here at Beausejour on Friday.

Both teams were involved in the triangular series in Australia last month where England, after crushing defeats against both opponents, came from behind to defeat the hosts and reigning world champions 2-0 in the final.

With the Test sides odds-on favourites to qualify from a Group C also featuring Canada and Kenya, Friday's match has added significance.

Assuming they each do make it to the second phase, the winners of this match will carry two points forward into the Super Eights.

"We're smarting over England knocking us out in Australia and to get a good start to this tournament we have to win it, and win it well," Fleming said.

"Looking at the Super Eights you've probably got to beat every side to win this tournament at some stage and if we beat England now it may help in the long run."

England captain Michael Vaughan said recent form would count for little.

"New Zealand are a good team and are full of experience of playing in these kinds of tournaments," said the skipper.

"They are always there or thereabouts come semi-final time. We know it's a tough game for us on Friday but, as we showed in Australia, if we turn up and play we can certainly beat them."

The opening batsman, confident his hamstring will stand up to the stresses and strains of fielding for 50 overs, added: "We beat them in two different environments, in Brisbane where the ball bounced and swung a bit and in Hobart where it was a slow, Caribbean style wicket.

"We also know we lost in Adelaide."

England fell at the first hurdle during the last World Cup in South Africa four years ago but Vaughan said they were now a stronger side.

"We've got some real match-winners in this team -- Andrew Flintoff,

Kevin Pietersen and Paul Collingwood. These guys on any given day can win you games on their own.

"At the last World Cup, we might have had one or two match-winners. I think we've got as many as five in this team."

England's preparations suffered a set-back when fast bowler James Anderson fractured the little finger of his right bowling hand during catching practice Wednesday.

Anderson was due to have the injury re-assessed Thursday. If he isn't fit, the pace attack is likely to consist of all-rounder Andrew Flintoff, Liam Plunkett and Jon Lewis, with spin from Monty Panesar and Jamie Dalrymple.

New Zealand have injury concerns as well.

Pace bowler Mark Gillespie, who has a shoulder problem brought on by a virus, is set to miss out and opening batsman Peter Fulton is battling a finger injury.

However, big-hitting all-rounder Jacob Oram is fit after a finger problem of his own.

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TODAY'S MATCHES

Team	Time	Venue
South Africa v Netherlands	7:30 pm	St Kitts
England v New Zealand	7:30 pm	St Lucia

## Gul & Naved picked for dope tests

CRICINFO, undated

The International Cricket Council (ICC) picked Pakistan fast bowlers Umar Gul and Navedul Hasan for random dope tests after the opening match of the World Cup against West Indies at Sabina Park on Tuesday.

PJ Mir, Pakistan's media manager, said that Pakistan were informed that Gul and Naved would be tested for banned drugs

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## ROUND 3 FIXTURES

March 16: Abahani v Chittagong Mohammedan (BNS)  
March 16: Khulna Abahani v Farashganj (Khulna Stadium)  
March 17: Muktiyoddha v Dhaka Mohammedan  
March 20: Arambagh v Chittagong Abahani (BNS)  
March 21: Sheikh Russel v Rahmatganj (BNS)