

Umps 'played foul'

Cricket

MOHAMMAD ISAM

Local umpiring sunk to a new low when Jahangir Alam and Mahbululah made a mockery of themselves during a decisive First Division Super League match between Gazi Tank and BKSP at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium on Saturday.

As both sides neared the culmination of a do-or-die battle for promotion with BKSP requiring 14 runs in four overs and Gazi Tank needing two wickets, the two men left the pitch on grounds of abuse from the crowd.

When quizzed by the match referee Hemayet Ahmed Siddiqui upon returning to the umpires' hut, they changed their version saying that the players carrying the drinks to the batsmen had abused them regarding some leg-before decisions. But it was evident that there was no dispute in the middle nor was there any abuse from the alleged players of BKSP, most of whom were aged between 17 and 20.

With just a small number of people present due to the Pohela Boishak holiday, there was evidently no noise towards the umpires from the BKSP viewing area where several club officials were also sitting nearby.

After the unnecessary 10-minute break, the umpires suddenly felt 'safe enough' to take to the pitch even after being unconfirmed on the phone of police protection by the CCDM member secretary Adnan Rahman Dipon.

Onlookers were frustrated by this act, as it was just another regular cricket match at the popular Dhanmondi cricket venue. But obviously, it had more strings as the winners would get up to the Premier League and in such a high-profile match, the devious umpires made sure that controversy would taint the game.

Whisperings were rife at the ground throughout the day that umpires were quite frustrated to see BKSP progress to the top division.

However, the game finished in a fascinating fashion. The two young batsmen at the crease -- Mohammad Forkan and Riaz Mahmud -- tried to regain their composure amidst all the chaos created by the umpires. But Forkan lost his castle to Shahriar Habib with nine runs to win. With two required off the last two balls, Mahmud hoisted Habib's off-break towards deep mid-wicket but saw his effort fall short of the fielder in the position, giving the two stubborn tail-enders the required runs for victory and a much-eluded promotion. BKSP, who were only promoted to the First Division this season, made their entry through an efficient display from mostly young players who represented Bangladesh at several age-level competitions recently.

For Gazi Tank it was yet another story of 'what might have been' as they missed another golden opportunity, as they were well-placed in this year's league. But believe it or not, the failed mission of Gazi Tank apparently brought a quiet smile in the faces of the players, as it would mean that at least one big-spending club would stay in

the First Division for one more year after Surjo Tarun's elevation to the Premier League. The players, according to sources, felt insecure about their financial future because it is quite common for clubs to completely overhaul their squad once they reach the premier league.

Visitors take charge

SPORTS REPORTER

Captain Mehrab Hossain and Rokibul Hasan hit half-centuries but it was not good enough for Bangladesh Cricket Academy to put up a good total on the board in the first day of the second and final four-dayer against their Pakistan counterparts at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Pakistan Academy consolidated their position when they finished the day on 82 without any loss.

Opener Nazmus Sadat returned to the pavilion quickly with the scoreboard reading 16 but Mehrab first repaired the early damage by associating in a 64-run stand with Nazimuddin (21) for the second wicket and then shared a 90-run partnership with Rokibul to lay the foundation for a big total.

Left-handed Mehrab top-scored with 71 off 176 balls that contained eight boundaries while

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Bangladesh paceman Shahadat Hossain (C) unsuccessfully appeals for an lbw against Ireland during the World Cup Super Eights match at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

SL to do the 'impossible'

AFP, St George's



Did U Know?

Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene says his side's self-belief means they can do what no other team has managed since the 1999 World Cup -- beat Australia.

The reigning champions, chasing an unprecedented third successive title, have gone 25 games unbeaten at the World Cup since losing to Pakistan at Headingley eight years ago, a sequence that includes their famous tied semifinal against South Africa in 1999.

Australia's nine-wicket thrashing of Ireland on Friday was their 19th straight World Cup win and meant they became the first team in the Caribbean to qualify for the semifinals.

New Zealand and Sri Lanka have also joined them in the last four courtesy of the Black Caps' win

over South Africa on Saturday. "I think we have a very good record against Australia," said Jayawardene. "Why? Because we play our brand of cricket and we are not afraid of doing that."

But Sri Lanka will still be without Lasith Malinga who has an ankle injury.

The 23-year-old, whose unorthodox action makes him difficult for batsmen to pick up, hasn't played against Australia and Jayawardene admitted there was a case for keeping him 'hidden' until a possible meeting with Ricky Ponting's side in either the semifinals or final.

"That's one way to look at it but there are so many other ways to look at it."

Jayawardene also said it was vital the likes of 1996 World Cup winning bowlers Chaminda Vaas and Muttiah Muralidaran maintained their recent form.

"Australia are getting good starts and there hasn't been that much emphasis on their middle order so that's one area we'll be

thinking about," he explained. "They've got a good balanced bowling attack as well."

Sri Lanka's last one-day win against Australia, in Adelaide in February 2006 saw Tillakaratne Dilshan involved in four run-outs of home batsmen.

And Jayawardene praised the off-spinning all-rounder as one of the "dirty work" players all successful sides needed.

"Most of the teams do have that all-rounder in their side who does all the dirty work for you, gets that 30 or 40 runs, bowls five or six overs, gets you one or two wickets and probably picks up a half-chance or a run-out."

Meanwhile, Australia quick Glenn McGrath said opener Sanath Jayasuriya, whose dynamic batting played a major role in Sri Lanka's World Cup triumph 11 years ago, was a key target.

"There is no doubt he is a great player and we'd like to get on top of him early and knock him over," said McGrath, on the losing side in the 1996 final.

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BKSP, Surjo earn promotion

SPORTS REPORTER

Country's lone sports institute BKSP emerged champions while Surjo Tarun finished on second spot in the Kai-Altech First Division Cricket League as they qualify for the Premier Division next season.

BKSP bagged 26 points while Surjo Tarun finished with 25 points after both sides won their last match of the season in contrasting fashion.

Surjo Tarun (160-5 in 37 overs) easily beat Agrani Bank (158-10 in 44.3 overs) by five wickets while BKSP (226-9 in 49.5 overs) snuck past Gazi Tank (225-9 in 50 overs) by one wicket.

LOCAL SNIPPI

SPORTS REPORTER

The visiting Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) Under-15 side secured a comfortable eight-wicket victory against Rajshahi Division North Under-14 team in the limited-over exhibition match at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra. Avishek Raman scored 52 off 64 balls with the help of ten boundaries as CAB posted 142-2 in 21.4 overs in reply to local side's 138 all out in 50 overs.

UNDER-18 BASKETBALL

BKSP became champions in the Afzal Khan International Under-18 Basketball competition in India.

They edged past New Public School by 83-82 in the final at Dehradun.

A total of 40 teams from India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh took part in the competition.

INTER-UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

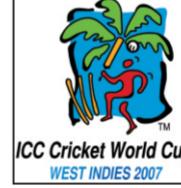
The 13th inter-university athletics competition began at the Jahangirnagar University (JU) campus today.

Athletes from Dhaka University,

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Bob murder still a mystery

AFP, Kingston



ICC Cricket World Cup
WEST INDIES 2007

Even without a motive or suspect, police have been hard-pressed to solve the mystery as to what happened inside room 374 on the 12th floor of the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel, the night after Pakistan crashed out of the World Cup.

There were no signs of forced entry nor was there evidence of robbery, factors which make the police feel Woolmer may have known his killers.

Shields, the lead investigator, has said that some 30 officers are working full-time on the case, for which over 100 witness statements have been gathered.

Many of these statements will be

put under the microscope from April 23 when the inquest into the death begins in Kingston.

Jamaica's Director of Public Prosecution (DPP), Kent Pantry, is expected to marshal evidence on behalf of the government.

Room 374 still remains a crime scene and has not yet been handed over to the hotel by the police.

Investigators are also still reviewing CCTV footage recovered from the hotel and Shields said there is some progress in the analysis of these materials, which were sent to Scotland Yard in the United Kingdom.

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ICC Cricket World Cup
WEST INDIES 2007

TODAY'S MATCH

Team

Time

Venue

Australia v Sri Lanka

7:30 pm

Grenada

Rakib completes GM formalities

SPORTS REPORTER

Abdullah Al Rakib is all set to become a Grand Master (GM) as he secured the third and final norm after clinching the Mercantile Bank 33rd National Chess Championship at the NSC hall yesterday.

The 26-year-old International Master Rakib, who for the first time achieved the national feat since starting his career in 1993, will be the fourth Bangladeshi Grand Master after Niaz Mursheed, Ziaur Rahaman and Reefat Bin Sattar.

After completion of three GM norms, he will now apply to the game's governing body FIDE, for an official declaration. Rakib also has the required ratings in his credit with 2518 points.

Rakib, who became International Master in 1998, secured his first GM norm from the 2001 Asian Championship in Kolkata and completed the second one during the 2004 Leonine Second Grand Master



PHOTO: STAR

A smiling Abdullah Al Rakib poses in front of a chessboard after completing the third GM norm in the 33rd National Chess Championship on Sunday.

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What to WATCH

BTV & SET Max

ICC World Cup 2007

(Super Eights)

Australia v Sri Lanka

Live at 7:30 pm

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