

Brothers' comeback hopes dashed

SPORTS REPORTER

Four bottom-half teams in the B. League shared points on the second day of the second leg as both matches in Dhaka and Khulna ended in identical 1-1 draws yesterday.

Brothers Union's bid to return to the title race suffered another blow when they failed to beat Farashganj for the second time in the competition after a goalless draw in the first leg.

Nigerian striker Elijah Junior converted a 13-minute penalty after to give the Oranges lead after Farashganj centre-back and captain Faisal tripped Shakil inside the area.

Syed Nayeemuddin's side, however, failed to hold on to the early advantage as the riversiders levelled on the stroke of the half hour with debutant African striker Opara Luxson Puma scoring with a placing shot after a combined attack. Puma came close to score against seconds before half time but Nizam made a fine save at the Brothers goal.

Brothers had to remain satisfied with 16 points from 11 outings as a spectacular header by Junior, the second highest scorer with eight goals, was denied by substitute goalie Azam in the last minute.

Farashganj, third from bottom, now have 11 points after as many rounds.

In a battle of Abahani at the Khulna Stadium, the home side failed to take revenge of their first-leg loss in the Chittagong trip.

Tajul put Khulna Abahani ahead after 33 minutes but Liberian forward Dolly Abraham's 41-minute strike secured Chittagong Abahani's only draw in the league so far. The visitors had won 2-0 when they clashed in the port city.

On 11 points, Khulna Abahani edged Farashganj by virtue of a better goal difference while Chittagong Abahani remained just above the base of the table with ten points.



PHOTO: STAR

Action from yesterday's match of the B. League between Brothers Union and Farashganj at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

CCDM saving giants?

Cricket

MOHAMMAD ISAM

The Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) is unable to pull its weight when it comes to taking decisions that is unfavourable to powerful clubs.

Brothers Union, City Club and Indira Road were subjected to fight for the last position to stay in the Premier Cricket League but CCDM has again lacked the authority to enforce these three clubs, all of them powerful, in playing the relegation play-offs, which could have been completed in the latter part of February when the first leg ended.

The relaxed attitude shown by the CCDM that runs cricket in Dhaka just goes on to prove that it is unwilling to let any two of the three clubs go down. Influence as well as power, in the form of officialdom and political backing, is the reason for such leniency.

It can be mentioned that ignoring half of the six qualifying club's plea to delay the Super League, the same committee went on to end the championship part in May after a three-month gap between the two legs.

City Club, who won just two matches this season and are languishing in eleventh place, appear to be the most powerful among the three even though Indira Road and Brothers Union are not far behind in this regard. Over the last few years, the Mirpur-based club enjoyed the level of influence on CCDM and BCB as sudden giants Old DOHS had.

One club official is an important decision-maker of BCB and over the past five years, it was often mentioned in the cricketing circle that a season at City Club would be enough to win a place in the national setup, given the club's clout. But this season, even with the presence of national opener Shahriar Nafees, the club struggled badly and were on free fall.

Indira Road, a small club with limited budget, usually get away with

misdemeanours in the league because they have considerable influence also in the form of a top BCB official. But their negation of playing in the play-offs was quite incredible given as they were the best placed of the three teams. But once the other two denied to play, they were left without options it seems.

Both these clubs are part of the three-way nexus that have enjoyed tremendous freedom both on and off the field.

Brothers, at the bottom of the table, were at most risk of losing the coveted spot of playing in the top league for the first time. But now with the impending board decision that will go their way, the Gopibagh outfit are going to escape from the clasp of relegation. They have refrained from contacting players and have let two of their leading batsmen go to England to play club cricket because they must have had some assurance from the board that

the relegation has been called off.

Apart from paying the undue amounts to the players, clubs have the most reasons not to play these 'life and death' matches, as club officials say. But for the authority to show delight just because these three clubs are 'important' is quite ridiculous. Problem at CCDM is the presence of weak individuals who are prone to curb when pushed by higher power.

BCB is supposed to decide on the issue today and if the relegation league is cancelled, it will reflect nothing but the neglect they have for domestic cricket.

If BCB can tamper with their rule, stand by for some more incredible situations in the near future.

TV deal saves Ind-SA series

AFP, Mumbai

The India-South Africa one-day series will go ahead as scheduled next month after the Indian cricket board wriggled out of a broadcast wrangle Thursday.

The three-match series in Northern Ireland had been thrown into doubt Wednesday after rights holder Zee Television pulled out of a deal to broadcast matches involving India at neutral venues, citing differences with the board.

The series will now be broadcast by Mumbai-based Nimbus Sports, who already hold the rights to all international matches in India until 2010.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said Nimbus would pay 6.05 million dollars per match for the series to be played on June 29 and July 1 in Belfast.

"We have come to a solution and we are going forward with Nimbus," BCCI vice president Lalit Modi told a press conference.

The matches in Belfast are part of the BCCI's plan to play 25 one-day internationals at offshore venues over a five-year period, for which Zee had bought the rights for 219 million dollars.

The first event was held in September last year when India took on world champions Australia and the West Indies in Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur.

Zee said it had scrapped the entire five-year deal because the Indian board was not willing to negotiate a revised price after a government directive to share the TV feed for all India matches with state-run broadcaster Doordarshan.

Seven selected for Asian athletics

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh will take part in the 17th Asian Athletics Championships to be held in the Lebanese capital Beirut from July 28 to August 2.

Bangladesh Amateur Athletics Federation (BAAF) has so far selected seven athletes for the event.

It is confirmed that four male athletes -- fastest man of the country Mohammad Samsuddin, sprinters Masudul Karim and Afzal Hossain Surjo and South Asia's fastest hurdler Mahfuzur Rahman Mithu -- will visit Beirut while Nazmunnahar Beauty, Sumita Rani and Khurshid Begum Khushi are the three female athletes initially selected for the trip.

Men's top seed Roger Federer meanwhile had another stroll in the park as he outclassed Italian Potito Starace 6-2, 6-3, 6-0 to set up a last 16 clash with Russia's Mikhail Youzhny.

The 22-year Belgrade-born

Jankovic has been in impressive

form this year winning three titles in

Auckland, Charleston and most

Sultan and co gets surprising lifeline

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

World football governing body FIFA in a shocking decision extended the tenure of Bangladesh Football Federation's controversial executive committee for another year.

The BFF deputy general secretary Manzoor Hossain Malu confirmed this yesterday after having conversations with federation president SA Sultan and general secretary Anwarul Hoque Helal, who are in Zurich.

With the whole football fraternity eagerly waiting to bid goodbye to the Sultan-led committee, which expired last April, it would be a blow to the proposition of forming a

workable committee through the scheduled election for development of the game.

According to the BFF deputy general secretary, the FIFA dismissed the BFF's proposal to hold the polls according to its current statutes.

The FIFA barred the election as it felt that the governing body of the game in Bangladesh failed to amend the statutes according to FIFA's suggestions.

"FIFA has told our delegation in Zurich that it will give us a roadmap to amend the statutes in one year's time. The election will have to be held with the amended constitution," Malu told last night.

He added that FIFA and AFC officials including AFC chief Mohammad Bin Hammam talked

with the BFF representatives for three days before coming up with the decision yesterday.

"The FIFA wants the secretaries of the committee to be paid officials but we told that we would do that in the next tenure of the new elected body because it is not feasible in Bangladesh. They disagreed to this proposal and also asked us to form FA (Football Association) in every district.

"The FAs will elect councillors to the federation in democratic ways instead of sending nominated district sports association officials as councillors," told Malu conveying the message from Zurich.

"Our delegation even told that the concept would be difficult to

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To be or not to be...

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will decide on national captain and vice-captain for the forthcoming Sri Lanka tour in its important executive committee meeting at a local hotel today.

To have separate captains or not for the Tigers would be the main debate in the meeting, which also takes decision about temporary coach and team operations manager for the trip after Habibul Bashar had expressed his desire not to continue as one-day captain.

It was learnt that most of the board high-ups are in favour of one captain but the most influential member of the board wants to give the under-performing Bashar another chance to lead the side in

the three-match Test series against Sri Lanka in June-July.

It looks certain that ace batsman Mohammad Ashraful, who acted as Bashar's deputy in the recently concluded home series against India, will replace Bashar as skipper in the three-match one-day series against the Islanders but whether he will also given the job in the Tests, would be the main argument in the meeting.

The majority of the members believes that there is hardly any scope to show 'act of kindness' for Bashar's past contribution rather the time has come to prepare someone for the hot seat.

Sources said that former Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore also suggested the board to go for one skipper because Bangladesh can hardly afford the luxury of having separate captains. Many other countries had previously been

unsuccessful in experimenting in this area except Australia.

There are also opinions that it is too early not to consider the 34-year-old most successful Bangladesh captain Bashar in the Test side and if he is in the team, then no one can be better for the job.

On the other hand, pace spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is seriously being considered as vice-captain for both versions of the game.

The board will also decide on whether they appoint two coaches for the trip or not. BCB's national game development manager Shaun Williams, who coached Bangladesh A team on several occasions, is being considered but it was learnt that he has a personal problem and in that case, the board will

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PHOTO: AFP

Federer strolls on Jankovic overpowers Venus

AFP, Paris

Jelena Jankovic underlined her credentials to win the French Open on Friday by overpowering Venus Williams 6-4, 6-1 in a high-quality third round tie.

Men's top seed Roger Federer meanwhile had another stroll in the park as he outclassed Italian Potito Starace 6-2, 6-3, 6-0 to set up a last 16 clash with Russia's Mikhail Youzhny.

The 22-year Belgrade-born

Jankovic has been in impressive

form this year winning three titles in

Auckland, Charleston and most

recently in Rome and she had beaten Williams on the last two occasions they had met.

That broke Williams's resistance and two games later it was all over.

"I stayed mentally very strong in third set and I really went for my shots," Jankovic said.

"I was a little bit tired in the second set, but I just went for it in the third and it paid off."

"It was an amazing third round match and it was a shame that Venus had to go out so early. It's always good to beat one of the Williams sister."

"I got a little bit tired in the end. It's tough on clay," Williams said, adding that she would not play another tournament before Wimbledon.

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PHOTO: STAR

Dav Whatmore smiles as he leaves for Australia at the Zia International Airport on Friday afternoon, after a successful stint of four years as the coach of Bangladesh national cricket team.

What to WATCH

STAR Sports

French Open

Third Round

Live from 3:00 pm

Inzy days over?

PTI, Karachi

Former captain Inzamamul Haq's fate hangs in balance as the Pakistan Cricket Board has asked the national selection committee to submit a shortlist of 30 players, 20 of whom will get the new central contracts by July 1.

Chief operating officer of the board Shafiqat Naqvi said Inzamam would get a contract if picked by the selectors.

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B.League
Arambagh v Rahmatganj (4:30 pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium