

ABAHANI v MOHAMMEDAN

More than a matter of honour



SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan will look to put behind a poor start to the second leg and internal club crisis when they face archrivals Abahani in today's B. League match.

The crucial match between contenders for the top spot will kick off at 4.30pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Both teams are on 22 points but Abahani, who won the first leg clash 1-0 with goal by captain Arif Khan Joy, have played one match less.

They will miss their best performer of the first leg, Argentine centre-back Mariano Caporale while the black and whites will be without injured striker Emeka, the Nigerian who was sent off during their 1-1 draw against Muktijoddha last week.

Mohammedan, who raised from early season debacle to finish atop the table on conclusion of the first leg, have drawn both their second leg matches but the consolation for coach Shafiqul Islam Manik is that they came out with two points

against fellow title chasers Sheikh Russel and Muktijoddha.

It would be their third big match in a row and Manik believes that the match is not just a matter of honour but also would play a vital role in the championship.

With fund crisis forcing the players to go for a token strike on Wednesday when they refused to train, Manik must find some way to cheer his boys to go out and take revenge.

"The players are ready to do something positive in tomorrow's match after suffering blows early in the second leg. I feel that expectations got high after six successive wins in the first leg. We played up to our billing but did not get the result accordingly," said Manik after his side's light training at the tiny ground at the club tent in Motijheel.

"At the start of the season, we also did not get the desired result but they have showed that they have the will to do all the way.

"Now we just want to maintain the consistency," said Manik, who will rely on the Nigerian trio, especially captain Paul who is also the top scorer with 12 goals, in absence of Emeka.

"Emeka's absence is not crucial. It is a game for 11 men. I will decide who plays beside Paul in attack tomorrow morning. I have two choices in Farhad and Rony."

Manik also hinted at fielding Liberian goalkeeper Paul James in place of the nervy Himel.

Manik, who prefers a 5-3-2 formation, admitted that Abahani are the strongest team on paper but were lucky to win their earlier match.

"We played better. It can happen in football. So that result means nothing," added the former national fullback.

Abahani will have an all-local four-man backline as Pradip will fill in the blank of Caporale beside Nazrul. The sky-blues are also expected to keep Emily and Tipu at bench, going for an all-foreign attack with Ghanaian striker Ibrahim paired with new signing Souleyman Nchouwut.

It looks that only Joy's place is guaranteed in the midfield with plenty of players available for the attacking roles.

"It's good headache for any coach to have so many players. All are fit but we will field tough players in the end because the match will be tough," said manager Satyajit Das Rupu, who still repents their only loss in the competition to

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PHOTO: AFP

Umpires Aleem Dar (L) and Billy Bowden leave the damp ground after their final inspection on the first day of the fourth Test between England and West Indies at the Riverside Stadium in Durham on Friday.

Bayliss new SL coach



Cricket

AFP, Colombo

World Cup finalists Sri Lanka on Thursday named ambitious Australian Trevor Bayliss as their new coach on a two-year deal.

Bayliss, 44, who currently coaches New South Wales, replaces another Australian Tom Moody, who quit last month to work with Western Australia.

"Bayliss has been appointed for a two-year period starting on August 1," Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) spokesman Samantha Alagama told AFP.

Bayliss was picked over fellow Australian Terry Oliver, the Queensland coach, after being interviewed by SLC's selection panel here on Thursday.

The panel included SLC officials and former captains, including Aravinda de Silva, Ranjan Madugalle, Michael Tissera, Sidath Wettimunay and Bandula Warnapura.

Bayliss played 58 first-class matches for New South Wales as a middle-order batsman from 1985 to 1993 before making his mark as the state coach when he took over from Steve Rixon during the 2004-05 season.

Bayliss had told the Sydney Morning Herald last week he would take up the Sri Lanka job if it was offered to him after rejecting overtures from Bangladesh and

Australia's Centre of Excellence.

"It's a job with an international team, and one of the better international teams, so you'd be nuts not to hear them out," Bayliss was quoted as saying by the paper.

"And if something was offered, you'd be silly to knock it back. I spoke to Tom (Moody) about a week



TREVOR BAYLISS

ago just to find out what I can expect in the interview."

Sri Lanka made it to the final of the recent World Cup in the Caribbean where they lost to Australia.

New South Wales chief executive Dave Gilbert had told the same paper that Bayliss will not be stopped from taking up the Sri Lanka job.

"We won't be standing in the way

Tigers to fly to Colombo today

SPORTS REPORTER

A 15-member Bangladesh cricket team will leave Dhaka this evening to play a three-match Test series in Sri Lanka.

The Tigers are going to play their third full series in the island under a new team management as Mohammad Ashraful will lead the team in the Test and one-day series and Australian Shaun Williams will act as interim coach.

This is the second time that Bangladesh are involved in a three-match Test series since they played in Pakistan back in 2003.

Bangladesh, expected to reach Colombo on Sunday morning, will launch their campaign with a three-day practice match at the Colombo Colts ground from June 20.

The first Test will begin on June 25 at the Premadasa Stadium while the second is scheduled from July 3-7 at the P. Sara Stadium. Then Bangladesh will go to Kandy to play the third and final match on July 11.

After the Test series, Ashraful's men will play a limited-over warm-up match before they play the three-match one-day series on July 20, 22 and 24 respectively.

Five players - Aftab Ahmed, Tamim Iqbal, Tushar Imran, Forhad Reza and uncapped

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Marshall snubs country



Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Hamish Marshall has dropped a bombshell on New Zealand, refusing a national contract for 2007-08 so he can play county cricket as a Kolpak player. The decision means Marshall's international career is on hold indefinitely, as he cannot represent New Zealand while he is classified as a local player in England.

However, he has not ruled out a return to New Zealand in the coming years. Marshall said his decision was based on securing his financial future. "This has been the most difficult decision of my life," he said. "I have been extremely proud to represent my country during the last six years and have thoroughly enjoyed every moment of my time in the Blackcaps."

Marshall, 28, is currently registered as an overseas player with Gloucestershire but he carries an Irish passport, meaning he can remain as a local player. He has not played Test cricket since the tour of South Africa last April and was a late addition to New Zealand's World Cup squad, where he featured in three matches and scored one half-century.

Mathew Sinclair could be reinstated after losing his contract and considering a move overseas. The team's general manager, Lindsay Crocker, said Marshall's replacement would be announced next week.

"I spoke to Hamish about the decision earlier on Friday," Crocker said. "I believe he likely had a

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Day One washed out

AFP, Chester-Le-Street

The fourth and final Test between England and West Indies was abandoned without a ball being bowled because of rain at the Riverside here Friday.

Umpires Billy Bowden of New Zealand and Aleem Dar of Pakistan called the game off for the day following an inspection at 1130 GMT.

Heavy rain Friday morning meant the pitch and square were all fully covered, with the toss not

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Trio keep top position

SPORTS REPORTER

GM Ziaur Rahman, IM Enamul Hossain and FM Nasir Ahmed kept the lead in the premier group of the Destiny International Rating Chess tournament after the sixth round at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hallroom yesterday.

Zia drew with Enamul while Nasir drew with second placed IM Abdullah Al Rakib. The leading trio have 4.5 points.

In the primary group as well, three players Hasan Imam, Taherul Islam and Aminul Islam are in lead with 5.5 points.

Did U Know?

Guillermo Stabile of Argentina scored the first hatrick in the FIFA World Cup history against Mexico in 1930.

TALK TURKEY

Brian Lara (West Indies cricket legend)
"I think I am going to play cricket again. If I go six or eight months without cricket I would lose it and I don't want to lose it yet."

What to WATCH

STAR Sports
England v West Indies
Fourth Test, Day Two
Live from 3:58 pm

DAY'S EVENT

B.League
Abahani v Mohammedan
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
Time: 4:30 pm

Vermeulen trial delayed

AFP, Harare

The trial of former Zimbabwean Test batsman Mark Vermeulen, charged with arson attacks on the country's cricket association's boardroom and training academy, was postponed to July.

Prosecutor Tawanda Zvukare

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(L-R): Abahani captain Arif Khan Joy stretches his leg with Cameroonian striker Souleyman Nchouwut assisting him at their club ground in Dhanmondi while a club boy (R) clears mud at Mohammedan's club ground in Arambagh as the players (background) are being briefed yesterday on the eve of their crucial B. League clash at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.



PHOTOS: ANISUR RAHMAN