

Russel, Abahani retain TT titles

SPORTS REPORTER

Biman's bid to regain the men's and women's titles in the AB Bank Metropolis Table Tennis League failed as both their teams lost on the final day of the competition yesterday.

In the men's league finale, Sheikh Russel handed their rivals a 3-1 defeat at the Woodentop Gymnasium to retain the title as well as taking sweet revenge of their first leg defeat to Biman.

Both Russel and Biman ended level on 22 points after 12 matches but the champions had the edge by virtue of set difference.

Russel, who had lost 3-2 in the first leg, flew in Indian paddler Ranabir Das for the super league match and he won both of his games against Manash and Hamlet, 3-0 and 3-1, respectively.

Mahbub blanked Hamlet 3-0 while Mostafa lost Russel's only set, 3-1 to Pappu.

The Abahani eves, however, emerged unbeaten champions when they outplayed Biman in straight sets for their sixth win with Rumi, Saleha and Soma defeating Tumpa, Seema and Rahima respectively by identical 3-0 margins.

Sports Adviser Tapan Chowdhury distributed prizes as chief guest.

Promote Shiv, says Gayle

AFP, London

West Indies captain Chris Gayle revealed that Shivnarine Chanderpaul could move up the batting order in the wake of their defeat by England in the first one-day international at Lord's.

Chanderpaul went in at number five and ran out of partners finishing 53 not out as the West Indies went down by 79 runs, chasing England's 225.

Gayle said Chanderpaul's place at number five was part of a plan to have a left-hander in the middle order to counter the threat of Monty Panesar's left-arm spin.

But he admitted it had backfired and that he and the coaching team will be discussing the matter ahead of the second match of the series in Birmingham on Wednesday.

Gayle said: "The only batsman who got a start was Shivnarine and that's something we have to look into."

"Maybe we will have to put him in a bit earlier and it is something we will have discussions about. We will see if we can utilize him more. We thought we needed a left-hander in the middle for Monty Panesar - that's why we did it."

"But we are looking forward to Edgbaston and can beat England 2-0."

Meanwhile England captain Paul Collingwood has a selection headache of his own after the performance of his pace bowlers.

In the absence of virus-victim Ryan Sidebottom three young pace men - Jimmy Anderson, 24, Stuart Broad, 21, and Liam Plunkett, 22, - took eight of the ten wickets to fall with Broad putting in the impressive figures of three for 20 from nine overs.

Collingwood said: "Ryan would have been playing so we are going to have to see what happens. But there is a lot of competition for places and that is good for the English cricket team."

Mahela presses

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have been their batting on the third day, having said that the third day was probably the best to bat on that wicket. So they enjoyed the conditions," he remarked.

But the right-hander warned that the condition would not be same at P Sara, the home ground of spin wizard Muttiah Muralidaran, who as usual, was the wicket-keeper-in-chief with a match haul of nine wickets.

"It's Murali's home wicket and he had a brief chat to the groundsman this morning. I also had a look at the wicket. It looks a very hard and firm wicket and hopefully a good one as well. We haven't played much cricket there," he explained.

Gloves go

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"No doubt Pilot is very experienced as a keeper but Moshfiq showed even in the practice match that he has got the quality to become a good replacement. We have also considered Sharif (Mohammad) because he could be a useful batsman down the order in addition to his ability to swing the old ball," said Ashraful.

Money doesn't

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Such is her potential that Larri Passos, the man who took Gustavo Kuerten to three French Opens, agreed to be her coach after being approached by Paszek's father Arif Mohamed.

"He was one of the guys I was looking for, a coach with a big heart, big focus. We spend many hours on the court and he can push you to the limit," said Paszek who was a set down to Dementieva when play was halted on Saturday because of rain.



Women's champions Abahani (top) celebrate with the trophy while men's winners Sheikh Russel team members line up for a photograph at the Woodentop Gymnasium on the concluding day of the Metropolis Table Tennis League yesterday.

Youth pleases Kallis

Cricket

AFP, Belfast

South Africa stand-in skipper Jacques Kallis said the way in which younger players had made their mark eased some of the pain involved in a 2-1 one-day international series defeat against India.

Three close matches at Stormont ended on Sunday with India's second successive six-wicket win, this time with four balls to spare, in a fixture reduced by rain to 31 overs per side.

But on a short tour where future development was the priority for the Proteas, all-rounder Vernon Philander and off-spinner Thandi Tshabalala produced encouraging performances even if the 22-year-old duo were both omitted from the series finale in a conservative team selection.

South Africa, who had the worst of conditions, made 148 for seven after slumping to 28 for four thanks mainly to a fifth-wicket stand of 99 between Herschelle Gibbs (56) and Justin Kemp (61), fit again after a thigh problem.

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