

Russel host Arambagh today

SPORTS REPORTER

As the B League gets into a crucial stage, Sheikh Russel will make a bid to return to winning ways after two successive draws when the title aspirants meet Arambagh at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today at the start of the 18th week.

Dropping valuable points against Khulna Abahani and Brothers Union in the previous matches cost Russel heavy as they are now four points behind leaders Abahani, who have a match in hand and complete the round with the match of the week against Brothers on Tuesday.

There will be no matches in Dhaka tomorrow and the day after but Chittagong Mohammmedan host Farashganj on Saturday.

Other contenders Muktiuddha and Mohammmedan are pitted against Abahani from Khulna and Chittagong respectively on Sunday and Monday.

SLC change imminent

AFP, Colombo

The interim committee running Sri Lankan cricket is likely to see a shake-up, the country's sports minister said on Wednesday.

"We are having a look at the present composition of the Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) interim committee", sports minister Gamini Lokuge told AFP.

The minister said it was too early to say if the present committee, comprising five persons, will be reduced or if any change would

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY: The photos show Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara (L) and Bangladesh's Mohammad Ashraful play shots of different kinds during the second day's play of the second Test at the P Sara Stadium in Colombo yesterday. Many of these controlled-shots accumulated the Lankan a double century while Ashraful's aggression showed he must be in a hurry to pile up his own double. Actually the Bangladesh captain was at that point batting on 3.

A lesson never learned

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY from Colombo

The debate was over at the P Sara press box whether Sri Lanka could have wrapped up the match inside two days. Home skipper Mahela Jayawardene however deserved thanks from the Bangladeshi team management for not trying something like that and save the Tigers' blushes.

But the Bangladesh batsmen at the end of the second day's play provided the evidence that it would not be a tough job at all for the home team to do the exceptional thing in Test cricket as they lost four wickets in the final hour for 69 runs: one might say that it was much better than the first-innings total of 62.

Jayawardene was however more interested to allow his vice-captain Kumar Sangakkara to complete his fifth double hundred before declaring the innings for 451-6 as the classy left-hander looked too determined in the middle to make up for his first Test disappointment.

After the match, the genial Sangakkara tried to get some words through to the Bangladeshi batsmen, who only know how to promise for a better performance in future after every debacle.

"I was quite disappointed after the first Test dismissal. I was determined to make a big one in this match. I was not fluent enough in my batting today (Wednesday) but I worked hard to occupy the crease. Spending enough time was my main intention," said the left-hander, who made exactly 200 runs during his eight-hour stay that

featured twenty boundaries and two sixes.

"Bangladesh have the talent but they have to know how to occupy the crease for long periods. There is no shortcut in international cricket. You get something only if you work hard. To score a hundred is quite normal in modern cricket," he said.

Sangakkara also said that what happened in Bangladesh second innings was something they expected.

"We are now in the driving seat. We were looking forward to pick up some wickets and we could manage four which is fantastic. Actually we have a very balanced bowling attack," he added.

Pace bowler Shahadat Hossain came to attend the official briefing although the Bangladeshi journalists demanded for Shahriar Nafees, who was the culprit of spoiling a good start in the second innings.

The out-of-form Nafees and, believe it or not, even Javed Omar, who hardly had any reputation as a stroke-maker, countered the Sri Lanka attack but simply forgot that there was a need to check the shots. Nafees went for a wild drive against Chaminda Vaas which only took a thick edge to end in keeper Prasanna Jayawardene's gloves.

Then it was a matter of time that Omar (28), Rajin Saleh (0) and debutant Mehrab Hossain (8) followed him to shatter the hopes in the late afternoon.

"What can I say? If we bat throughout the third day, it would be an achievement for us," was the simple reaction of paceman Shahadat.

But he was fired up when asked about his ongoing battle with

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Faruque down but not out

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

As Bangladesh stared at yet another huge defeat in the tour of Sri Lanka at stumps on second day of the second Test yesterday, the Tigers' vulnerable batting took centre-stage of all criticisms.

Scores of 89 and 62, in the first innings of both the Tests in Colombo, can hardly be explained but chairman of selection committee Faruque Ahmed thinks Bangladesh will find their way out in time.

"It's shocking apparently," admitted Faruque while talking to The Daily Star yesterday.

"We are not playing well at all but I think it is happening because the batsmen are trying to change approach. One thing has been evident that they are trying to

occupy the crease and not throwing their wickets by playing too many shots like the past," the former national captain opined.

"Sometimes in transition periods, the players become confused. Although this may sound like an excuse, but I am certain it is one of the reasons behind the failure.

"We also have to consider that we are playing against a quality team who are almost invincible on home soil.

"It's one of the worst phases but I have seen the players concentrating on getting better. They are training harder. Just a knock of 60 or 70 in the middle would have made these scorecards look better."

When asked whether the batsmen suffered due to lack of technique, Faruque defended the boys saying that these players have come this far by scoring regularly.

"Nothing wrong with the basics

but during lean patches, a player tends to show temporary lack of technique. When one is not getting runs at a particular time, his head tends to move, the feet go across; these are finer details where they miss," the chief selector explained.

"I would say I am unsatisfied with the Test performance during my tenure as a selector but not ready to give up hope yet."

He was also not ready to accept the thought that Bangladesh have too young a Test team.

"In this Test, we have one debutant and just another player with little experience. (Shahriar) Nafees is young but he was our best performer in the last season.

Otherwise, the core of our batting is made up of seasoned players.

When you have five experienced batsmen, you can easily draft in one youngster. The same goes for the bowling too."

us again tomorrow and it could be Tushar or any one among Aftab, Tamim, Riyad and Forhad who will join the one-day team," the chief selector told.

Many think that the problem began with some of the under-19 cricketers getting one-day success playing for the national team, a fact that perhaps misled the selectors to ignore the A team -- the link between the seniors and the juniors.

Moreover, the selectors seemed to have no standard policy about the Test side and hardly planned anything during a 14-month break from the five-day game.

On condition of anonymity, many players told that it would have been better if Kapali, who was not only the second highest scorer in the domestic first-class cricket but also claimed 24 wickets, was in the squad as the current team look too young to cope with pressure. However, the seniors have also failed to deliver the goods so far.

If the selectors firmly believe that these young guys are the future, then they should stick to their policy but unfortunately they have been always in love with the 'cut and chop' policy with Shakib Al Hasan being the latest example.

It is not fair to realise something in the middle of a series and forget it afterwards.

The big question

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY from Colombo

Who are more fickle-minded, the Bangladeshi players or selectors? The question has been raised after the dismal batting performance of the Tigers in the ongoing series against Sri Lanka.

It might sound a bit harsh but it has definitely come down on the selectors, better to say on chief selector Faruque Ahmed.

The selection panel has suddenly felt that it made a mistake not to consider players like in-form Tushar Imran or Alok Kapali, the most talked about names in the local media people for a tough tour to the island.

It was learnt here that Faruque has been taking into consideration to send Tushar to Sri Lanka to strengthen the helpless batting before the third and final Test to be held at Kandy from July 11, which came as a surprise.

"Nothing is finalised. I talked with Faruque bhai and he told me that he is just thinking about it," said selector Akram Khan, who is accompanying the team, without elaborating as the whole team management is very concerned over the 'code of conduct' after assistant coach Sarwar Imran got unkind treatment after his remarks to the press a few days earlier.

The most important part of this

episode is the idea came from home, not from the management on tour. It seemed from the very beginning of the trip that everything has been managed by a remote control from Dhaka. It is natural that only the tour management can understand what is happening here and what they require, but apparently, it looks like the authority could not keep faith on it.

Under these circumstances, it is difficult for the members of the management to motivate the boys to fight against such a formidable opposition.

And just think that the same selectors who had ignored Tushar, who deserved a spot in the Test side after his impressive performance in domestic circuit and with the A team, are now considering the right-hander to perform a rescue act.

The selectors had explained before the tour that they picked up the best possible side when Tushar's omission was questioned and now after only three innings, they are in a confusing state.

However, when contacted, Faruque told The Daily Star last night that he has talked with the management in Sri Lanka about strengthening the middle order batting.

"If the management in Sri Lanka feels that they need an additional player, we will provide it. The decision is theirs. They will contact

NZC finalise BD tour dates

CRICINFO, undated

New Zealand will host five Tests and ten limited-overs matches when Bangladesh and England tour in 2007-08. England will arrive in January for a visit including three Tests, two Twenty20s and five ODIs while Bangladesh's serious duties begin on Boxing Day.

Bangladesh will appear in three one-day internationals and two Tests on their first trip to New Zealand since 2001-02, when they lost both Tests. The opening Test starts on January 4 at Dunedin, which has not been used in this format since 1996-97, and the second match will be at Wellington's Basin Reserve from January 12.

"Bangladesh showed at the World Cup that they are a steadily improving side who can be dangerous if underestimated," New Zealand Cricket's chief executive Justin Vaughan said. "With matches at key locations during the holiday period we expect the Bangladesh tour to be well supported."

New Zealand and England will be familiar opponents in 2008, with this series followed almost immediately by the return leg. "This is a comprehensive tour by England and we are expecting a large number of English fans," Vaughan said. "The series will build on our traditional rivalry with them ahead of the tour there in May next year."

Twenty20 games will be held at Christchurch and Auckland before the one-day internationals start. The Test series begins at Hamilton on March 5 and the remaining two matches will be at Wellington and Napier.

Bangladesh tour of New Zealand
December 26, 1st ODI, Auckland
December 28, 2nd ODI, Napier
December 31, 3rd ODI, Queenstown
January 4-8, 1st Test, Dunedin
January 12-16, 2nd Test, Wellington

Dhaka set final clash with Faridpur

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka and Faridpur will clash in today's final of the 27th National Hockey Championship after the two sides failed to break the deadlock in the last super league match yesterday.

Both the unbeaten sides ended level on eight points after the goalless draw at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium, which hosts the final at 4pm, to make the final pairing at cost

Chanderpaul slams 116

Cricket

AFP, Birmingham

Shivnarine Chanderpaul moved up the order in style with an unbeaten century against England in the second one-day international at Edgbaston here Wednesday.

Chanderpaul, batting at No 3, made 116 not out in a total of 278 for five after West Indies lost the 13th over.

The doughty left-hander moved up from No 5 after top scoring for the West Indies with 53 not out during their 79-run defeat in Sunday's series opener at Lord's.

Together with Marlon Samuels, dropped on 14 by England captain Paul Collingwood off his own bowling on his way to 77, Chanderpaul put on 175 for the third wicket in 34 overs.

This was Chanderpaul's seventh hundred in 219th one-day international as West Indies looked to level the three-match series at 1-1.

The 32-year-old had been a

thorn in England's side during the hosts' 3-0 Test series success, averaging 148.66, and this was another example of his ability to pace an innings after he took 10 balls to get off the mark.

In all Chanderpaul faced 122 balls with three sixes and 10 fours.

The third-wicket duo came together when Chanderpaul was on one, their side 67 for two in the 13th over.

West Indies captain Chris Gayle got the innings off to a brisk start with some powerful sixes, the best a straight hit over the pavilion sightscreen off first change Stuart Broad.

Such was the damage, the ball was replaced with West Indies on 48 in the eighth over.

James Anderson ended the first-wicket stand two runs later when Devon Smith, on 17, edged a cut to wicketkeeper Matt Prior.

Gayle, having lofted Ryan Sidebottom, in for Liam Plunkett, over long-off for six was out next ball when a delivery that 'stopped' saw him chip a simple catch to

Anderson at mid-on.

The run-rate slowed, the second fifty up in 16 overs but West Indies were keeping wickets in hand, aided by Collingwood's miss.

Chanderpaul, upping the tempo, lofted Collingwood over long-on for four and six off successive deliveries in the bowler's next over as he took advantage of the shortened boundaries.

England gave Michael Yardy, in for frontline left-arm spinner Monty Panesar, just six overs during which he conceded 29 runs.

Medium-pacer Dimitri Mascarenhas was England's most economical bowler with none for 31 in 10 overs.

But England's quicks suffered as West Indies scored 102 in the last 10 overs.

After a brief rain break, Chanderpaul, on 43, faced Mascarenhas to backward point where Ian Bell couldn't hold a tough, one-handed, diving chance.

Chanderpaul completed his fifty in 85 balls with one six and four

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THE WORTHY MOVE: West Indies' Shivnarine Chanderpaul is about to play a late-cut against England in the second one-day international at Edgbaston in Birmingham yesterday. Chanderpaul was moved up the batting order and scored a century.