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BCB announces Indo-Bangla team

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board yesterday announced the Combined Divisional team that will participate in the Twenty20 tournament of the Indo-Bangla Bangladesh Games, which begins on February 22.

Mahmudullah Riyad and Nazimuddin are the only international players in the side that boasts entirely of National Cricket League performers.

22-year-old all-rounder Riyad played a solitary one-day international against Sri Lanka last year, scoring 28 off 30 balls.

Nazimuddin's international career has so far been limited to Twenty20 internationals. He played in the World Championships where he played six matches.

They will face Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) under-22 team in three one-day matches on February 23, 24 and 26.

TEAM

Imrul Kayes, Shamsur Rahman, Nazimuddin, Nayeem Islam, Nazmul Hossain Milon, Mahmudullah Riyad, Dhiman Ghosh (wicketkeeper), Tariqul Islam, Ziaur Rahman, Kamrul Islam, Delwar Hossain, Nazmus Sadat, Rabiul Islam, Rokibul Hasan, Nabil Samad.



Did U Know?

The world's biggest badminton shuttle is located at the Kansas City Museum. It is 18 feet tall and weighs 5,000 pounds. In comparison, a typical shuttle weighs between 4.74 and 5.50 grams.



Diego Maradona

(Argentine football legend)
"There would be no debate about who was the best footballer the world had ever seen... Everyone would say me."
While saying that he would have been better than Pele without his drug problems.



STAR Sports

- Australia v India
CB Series, First ODI
Live from 9:15am
- English Premier Football League
Newcastle v Middlesbrough
Live from 7:25pm
- Primera Liga
Getafe v Espanyol
Live from 1:55am (Monday)
- TEN Sports
South Africa v West Indies
Fifth ODI
Live from 2:00pm
- ESPN
English Premier Football League
Fulham v Aston Villa
Live from 9:55pm
- Primera Liga
Barcelona v Osasuna
Live from 12:00am (Monday)



V-Day Club Cup Football
Arambagh v Fakirpoci (3:00pm)
Mohammedan v Victoria (5:00pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium



Abahani forward Emily rounds off a hapless Dhaka Wanderers goalkeeper Jahangir Alam (grounded) for his second goal during their Protiti Pharma Victory Day football tournament clash at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Giants back on track

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani and Muktiyoddha Sangsad both won to bounce back into contention in the Protiti Pharma Victory Day Club Cup football tournament at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

After a 1-0 shock loss to Badda Jagarani, the B. League champions showed the gulf of difference between them and Dhaka Wanderers with a 3-1 win in the evening after Muktiyoddha gave a good account of themselves, beating Badda Jagarani 2-1 in the day's first match. Muktiyoddha played out a goalless draw with Wanderers on Friday.

First half goals from Alfaz Ahmed and Hasan Al Mamun gave Muktiyoddha the footing they required after their first match debacle. Alfaz's angular shot from a Parvez Babu left-side delivery gave Muktiyoddha their first goal in the 28th minute.

A minute later, wingback

Mamun tapped in a simple chance in the six-yard box after Arman Aziz's volley rebounded off a Badda defender and fell close to Mamun. The second half petered on but Badda, the Senior Division team, were threatening to score. In the 87th minute, Milon latched on to a long ball but the crossbar stood between his shot and a second goal in the competition.

Badda's aggression at that late stage paid off in the final minute of injury time when Rana headed in a low cross from Milon.

Abahani, warming up on the eastern side of the ground during the final 15 minutes of the Muktiyoddha-Badda match, knew they were in a must-win situation after Muktiyoddha's exploits.

It was captain Arif Khan Joy who broke the shackles after a cagey first 15 minutes. But the experienced midfielder's shot flew over the bar.

In the next ten minutes, Abahani showed intent and it transpired into a goal albeit a lucky one. Shahajuddin Tipu probed into Badda's defence but his aimed

cross towards Emily struck Anupam Barua's shoulder and went in, beating a wrong-footed goalkeeper Jahangir Alam.

Thirteen minutes later, Zahed Parvez's cross was meant for Tipu but that's when the beauty of the move unravelled. Tipu let it run and Emily slid the ball home from very close range.

Abahani went into cruise mode after Abul Hossain forced a good save from Jahangir. But the Sky Blues were jolted when Ashrafal Islam's low volley found the net, in the 50th minute.

Abahani again went on the offensive, and in the 67th minute, it was Emily again who scored. This time, the young striker rounded off two defenders and the goalkeeper to tap in after having collected a cross from Zahed.

Emily missed two more clear-cut opportunities, having taken late decisions to shoot at Badda's post.

It was indeed the trio of Zahed, Tipu and Emily who ruled the Big Bowl on a chilly evening.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Zunaed in the runs but A still lose

SPORTS REPORTER

Zunaed Siddiqui showed some sort of consistency when the left-handed opener smashed 92 at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

The lanky batsman from Rajshahi carried his good form after he made a bright international debut in New Zealand. In an otherwise disastrous tour to New Zealand, the batting of the young opener along with another southpaw Tamim Iqbal was the only solace for the Bangladesh team.

"What I believe is that a batsman should score runs no matter whether it is a practice match or an international. I want to make it a habit although it would not be an easy task," said Zunaed, who also smashed 82 in the first practice game at the same venue.

"My main objective is to capitalise on the opportunity as much as I can. I am now more confident and it will only come your way if you keep scoring consistently," he added.

Despite Zunaed's effort, Mohammad Ashrafal's Team A lost the match by six wickets as Shakib Al Hasan led the Team C from the front with an unbeaten 57 after Rajin Saleh's 51.

Young prospect Naeem Islam was the other notable scorer with an unbeaten 42 as Team C made 191 for four in 39.3 overs in reply to A's 190 all out in 44.4 overs.

U-19s go down to West Indies

SPORTS REPORTER

A poor batting show saw Bangladesh Under-19 team concede a heavy 73-run defeat against their visiting West Indies counterparts in the second game of the four-match series at the BKSP cricket ground yesterday.

The home team were bundled out for 112 in 31.5 overs in the curtailed-over match in reply to West Indies Under-19s' 185 all out in 42 overs.

Number six batsman Mahmudul Hasan made team highest 30 off 48 balls with the help of four boundaries while Shakil added an unbeaten 21.

J Dawes caused the damage by claiming four wickets for 25 runs while Brooks and Jacobs grabbed three wickets each for 9 and 28 runs respectively.

Earlier opener M Miller hit 66 off 103 balls that featured two fours and three sixes while D Bravo made 26 as the visitors put the decent total on the board.

Right-arm pacer Dollar Mahmud was the most successful bowler by taking four wickets for 26 runs in seven overs while Nasir Hossain took two wickets for 20 runs.

The third and fourth matches will be held at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium on Monday and Wednesday.

The result gave the visitors a 1-0 lead as the first one-day match was abandoned due to wet outfield at the BKSP on Thursday.

Biman land Mashrafe

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Country's leading paceman Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Bangladesh Biman are set to hog the spotlight when the inter-club players transfer for the Premier Division Cricket League gets underway at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

The three-day transfer will take place everyday from 4pm to 7pm.

There has been whisperings in the cricket arena for last few days about the two biggest fishes -- national skipper Mohammad Ashrafal and his deputy Mashrafe's, move to a popular club tent in Motijheel.

Biman however, pulled a proverbial cat out of the hat just a day before the bourse by confirming the signature of the "Narail Express".

Mohammedan though, all but ensured the service of ace batsman Ashrafal but the national flag carrier came up with the highest offer of this season to rope in the pace spearhead who had played the pivotal role in Abahani's championship triumph last season.

Biman also struck a deal with dashing left-handed opener Tamim Iqbal but the main talking point in the cricket circle yesterday

was whether the speedster was worth the 10 lakh taka splashed for him -- or even more.

"The only thing I can ensure you is that I will be playing for Biman this season," was the smiling reply of Mashrafe in response to the whispering about the likely amount.

Mashrafe and his skipper Ashrafal might be satisfied with their financial deals but it was not at all a pleasing experience for their other colleagues.

Rather than speculating on 'who will play for whom,' this year's discussion has centred on whether the national pool players would ultimately manage a club.

The good news is that almost all the 21 players have negotiated with specific clubs but their deals are reportedly almost half of the hefty amounts they have received in previous seasons.

It was believed that the financial crisis in emerging clubs like Old DOHS and Sonargaon Cricketers made things complicated this year although the former seem revitalised in the last moment managing to rope in Rajin Saleh, Mehrob Hossain Jr and all-rounder Forhad Reza to fill up the maximum pool quota.

Mohammedan are going for balance in their effort to regain the

championship as they have confirmed promising players like Zunaed Siddique, Imrul Kayes and Dhiman Ghosh besides their national pool players which include Aftab Ahmed.

On the other hand, defending champions Abahani were lukewarm as they lost their main weapon in Mashrafe.

They compromised by bringing in left-handed opener Shahrir Nafees and kept hold of Tushar Imran. Abahani are now looking for a national left-arm spinner.

National all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who played for Mohammedan in the last season, compelled with the BKSP team as a student of the sports institute but everybody was looking forward to the fate of former Bangladesh skipper Habibul Bashar.

As of last night Bashar didn't confirm any team but last year's Mohammedan skipper may still pull a surprise at the last moment.

Although three clubs -- two traditional rivals Abahani, Mohammedan and Biman -- apparently looked set for a championship fight, Victoria Sporting Club and Surjo Tarun Club have also made competitive teams.

Surjo Tarun all but confirmed veteran wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud while Victoria tried their best to keep their old squad.

One last hurrah

Last tri-series down under begins today

Cricket

PETER ENGLISH, Gabba

Australian lounge rooms are about to lose a piece of furniture with the staging of the final tri-series which begins today. For 29 years the tournament has been central to the country's summer sport-watching, but over the past decade the concept faded, was patched up, and finally wore beyond repair. In 2008-09 the CB Series will be replaced by two head-to-head contests and Australia, India and Sri Lanka are the ideal teams to farewell the once revolutionary concept.

The world champions, the World Cup finalists and the side that pushed Australia over four Tests during the past month will all fight for the piece of history. This was how it was meant to be in the

beginning, when the big names dominated Kerry Packer's idea, but as the event evolved the contests became one-sided, the tournaments were more drawn out and the winners were usually Australia. Only three times since 1993-94 have Australia not been successful, including last year against England.

There may be danger lurking again. While India are fourth and Sri Lanka sixth on the ICC rankings, they are teams that have the star quality to threaten Australia. Sanath Jayasuriya often lifts mountains when Ricky Ponting's men are in the way -- although his tour has started in pain with a cut jaw against Tasmania -- and Kumar Sangakkara performed outstandingly during the Test tour here in November. Sachin Tendulkar and Virender Sehwag have similar successful attitudes when coming

up against men in green.

Both squads are also regenerating and the influx of youth will lift both the fielding and collective energy of the units, which are crucial aspects when trying to challenge Australia at home. The tournament opens with Australia facing India at the Gabba on Sunday in a re-match of Friday's one-sided Twenty20 affair in Melbourne. Australia took the game in the 12th over and they want to build on the win.

"At the Twenty20 it was a good start," Ponting, who missed the match, said. "We wanted to set the tone for the entire tour there."

Mahendra Singh Dhoni, the India leader, tried to show he was not bothered by the size of the defeat. "It should be taken as a practice game," he said. "If you think too much about the things

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6



Wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud stumps Shamsur Rahman during the practice match between Team A and Team C at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Akhtar refuses retainer

Cricket

AFP, Lahore

Fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar Friday refused to accept a special retainer from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), saying he played because he loved the game and his country, not the money.

"Central contracts are not an issue because I play for my country and not for money. I will not accept retainership," said Akhtar, who was last week excluded from a list of 15 contracted players by the PCB.

The 32-year-old paceman, placed in "A" category of the contracted list last year, was relegated to a special retainers' category by the PCB over lack of fitness and performance.

The demotion followed Pakistan's defeat against arch-rivals India last month where Akhtar fell ill during the second Test

at Calcutta and hurt his back in the third Test at Bangalore.

Pakistan lost the three-Test series 1-0 and went down 2-3 in the five-match one-day series.

Akhtar, also excluded from Pakistan's team for the ongoing one-day series against Zimbabwe, practised with the team on Friday and said he was disappointed on his exclusion from the team.

"I am fit and wanted to play," said Akhtar. "Had I played against Zimbabwe I would have got a better rhythm for the very important series against Australia which I desperately want to play."

Akhtar said money was never a motivation for him.

"I have always played the game for the love of it. I have never played the game for money so I don't need any fee to play for my country. To contribute in my team's wins are the greatest motivations for me."

"I played with high fever in Calcutta and that was only because

I wanted my team not to lose the series after we lost the first Test in New Delhi," said Akhtar.

The maverick paceman was also criticised after he showed interest in acting in Bollywood movies, an inclination which irked Pakistan cricket officials.

"There were no issues of discipline with me on the Indian tour and coach Geoff Lawson praised my attitude and concentration, so all those things were baseless that I fell short on discipline."

Akhtar said doing well against Australia will be a motivation.

"Australia is world number one team and the way Indians have done well against them, I am sure that we can also do well against them. I am gearing up for that challenge and want to achieve the best results against them."

Pakistan host Australia -- subject to security clearance -- for three Tests and five one-day internationals in March-April.



Pakistan cricket team celebrate with the series trophy after their 5-0 mauling of Zimbabwe at the Sheikhupura Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP