

Twenty20 Abahani's

Cricket
SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani outclassed City Club by six wickets yesterday to clinch the Premier League Twenty20 trophy at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

City Club were only able to muster 79 runs before man-of-the-match Arafat Sunny took the final wicket off the last ball of the innings and Abahani, chasing a meagre target for their first Twenty20 triumph, cruised to the target in 18.3 overs with opener Jahurul Islam unbeaten on 29. It was an anti-climatic final day as the third-place decider held in the morning between Surjo Tarun and Victoria Sporting Club was also a one-sided affair.

More accurately, it was the Mohammad Ashraful incident that hogged much of the limelight during the final.

Back to the match and Jahurul struck a beautiful straight six in his 45-ball knock that made sure Abahani never were in any trouble during their pursuit. But it was Mahubul Karim's 7-ball

blast that was the only entertainment of the day for the small crowd in Mirpur.

Karim went after left-arm pacesman Shafiqul Islam in the bowler's second over, smashing two consecutive boundaries and a flicked six but was out next ball, trying to repeat the dose. Rasel Al Mamun took the catch at mid-on to end Karim's innings at 20. City removed national colours Nazimuddin, Tushar Imran and Nadif Chowdhury but Rajshahi lad Jahurul anchored the innings and hit the winning runs in the 19th over.

Earlier, pacesman Ziaur Rahman delivered another big performance for Abahani, snaring three quick City Club wickets. Fans from the Pallabi area thronged one part of the ground and tried their best to inspire the City players but the batsmen simply crumbled.

Opens Rabiul Karim and captain Imran Ahmed skied short deliveries from Zia and Talha Jubair in consecutive overs and when man-of-the-tournament Zia removed Rasel and Golam Mabud, it was quite evident that

the underdogs were overawed by the occasion.

Spin came and while Mohammad Rafique was dealt with dexterity, the other left-arm spinner Sunny was City's prime target. And when that happens, the bowler thrives and so did Sunny. He outwitted wily Abul Bashar for 11 and then cleaned up the tail, picking up Sirajullah Khadem, Sumon Barua, Rashidul Islam and Shafiq to bowl out City for just 79 runs.

BRIEF SCORES

CITY CLUB: 79 all out in 20 overs (Karim 5, Imran 13, Rasel 1, Mabud 0, Abul 11, Arafat 13, Khadem 9, Barua 7, Islam 7, Shafiq 6, Atiqur 0*, extras 5; Ziaur 3-19, Talha 1-15, Nazmul 1-19, Rafique 0-12, Sunny 5-12).

ABAHANI: 80-4 in 18.3 overs (Jahurul 29*, Mahubul 20, Nazimuddin 6, Tushar 11, Nadif 11, Sahagir 1*, extras 2; Shafiq 1-23, Arafat 0-11, Khadem 0-11, Rashidul 2-14, Abul 0-11, Atiqur 1-8).

Result: Abahani won by six wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Arafat Sunny.
Man-of-the-tournament: Ziaur Rahman.

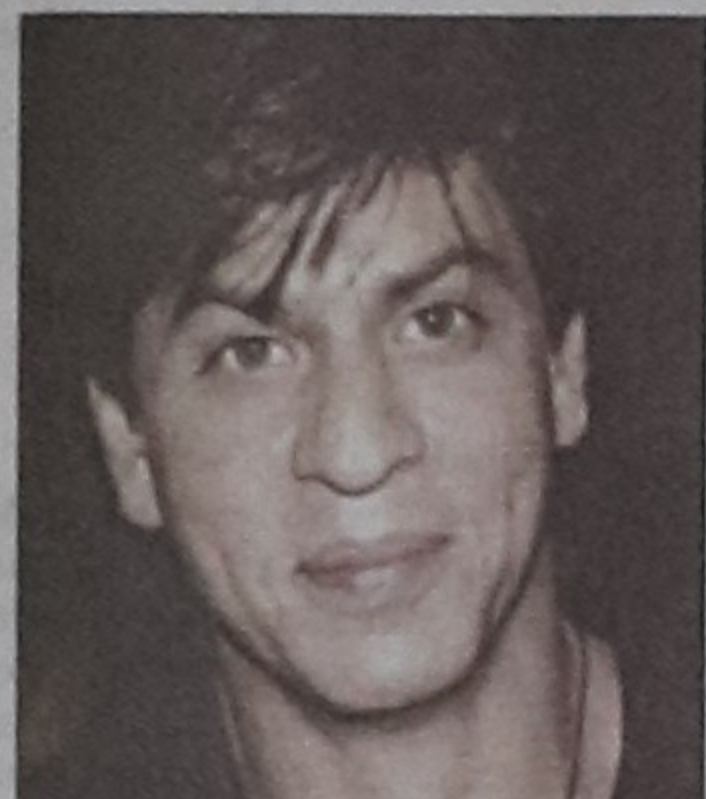


SMILES AFTER AN EASY RIDE: Abahani players celebrate their Premier League Twenty20 triumph at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.



Did U Know?

The first chessboard with alternating light and dark squares appeared in Europe way back in 1090.



Shahrukh Khan

(Indian movie superstar)
"The expenses involved are huge and I am not doing the figures. I will see what it is like at the end of the year and then, depending on the balance sheet, I will have to dance to a few more marriages."
While saying he is ready to go the distance to make his Indian Premier League franchise, the Kolkata Knight Riders, a success.



What to WATCH
SAB TV
New Zealand v England
Second Test, Day Five
Live from 3:30am
ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm
English Premier Football League
Birmingham City v Newcastle United
Live from 1:55am (Tuesday)

Death anniversary of Rana, Shetu observed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The first death anniversary of national cricketer Manzarul Islam Rana and Khulna divisional captain Sajjadul Hassan Shetu was observed here yesterday.

As part of the day's programmes, Khulna District Sports Association, Bangladesh Sports Writers Association and family members separately placed floral wreaths at graves of the two cricketers in the morning.

The Khulna DSA also held a discussion meeting followed by a milad mahfil in the afternoon.

Officials of the district unit of Sports World Readers' Forum at a press conference yesterday also demanded naming of galleries of the Khulna Divisional Stadium after Rana and Shetu. The organisation also announced to open the 'Rana Memorial Library' soon.

Meanwhile, Bengal Tigers -- fan club of the national cricket team -- organised a commemorative meeting and a doa mahfil at the

Torun take third place

SPORTS REPORTER

It took Surjo Torun only 8.5 overs to take third place of the Premier League Twenty20 tournament in the play-off match after their nine-wicket win over Victoria Sporting Club at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Surjo Torun had the upper hand from the very onset after they had won the toss and elected to field first. They restricted Victoria to 78-9 in 20 overs, and then right-handed batsman Shamsur Rahman smashed 42 off 20 balls to hand Surjo Torun the win.

Shamsur missed a couple of free hits early in the innings but bounced back to smash three sixes and five boundaries in his unbeaten effort. Torun lost only Utam Sarkar in the fourth over, for

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Ashraful blows his top

Cricket
SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh cricket team plunged into more trouble on Sunday when captain Mohammad Ashraful reportedly got involved in a scuffle during practice.

On his way to the indoor facilities of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Ashraful had to go through Gallery No 9 on the opposite side of the grand stand and during that long walk, a small group of fans booed the Bangladesh skipper who has been the prime subject of fan-wrath due to the Tigers' poor show in the just-concluded home series against South Africa.

As he entered the walkway of the gallery, two men abused him and out of frustration, the 23-year-old slapped him. A punch-up ensued and by the time the security personnel intervened, the situation turned into the latest sour episode connected with the national side that saw vice-captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and two other national players facing punishment following their French leave on Saturday.

Maj (ret'd) Imroze Ahmed, member of BCB grounds committee, admitted the breach but said that Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM) kept gate-9 open because of the free entrance of fans for watching yesterday's Premier Twenty20 final between Abahani and City Club.

"We provided police for the players when they move around the stadium and that we did. CCDM let people in through that gate because the match was CCDM's liability," said Imroze.

"During the South Africa tour, we kept that gate closed and it remains that way whenever a tour party is in the stadium. But yesterday's (Sunday) incident was isolated," he added.

He also informed that in light of

the latest incident, the national players have been advised to take safeguard from police wherever they are moving around and must inform the security committee about their whereabouts.

But it is apparent that Ashraful's batting slump and captaincy troubles have spilled on to his off-field demeanour and although upsetting, it doesn't surprise many.

He has been struggling for runs and his captaincy woes are a by-product of that, but this latest episode only confirms that Ashraful, one of the most popular faces in Bangladesh, is under tremendous pressure.

Besides his latest act supported the growing concern that the little right-hander is just not strong enough to tackle the intricacies of a post that requires a cool head.



PHOTO: STAR
THAT WATER SHOULD BE COLD: Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful walks into the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium from the indoors under police protection, half-an-hour after he was involved in a fracas with a fan yesterday.

4 wickets v 196 runs

Cricket
AFP, Wellington

England could scent victory over New Zealand after snapping a Brendon McCullum and Jacob Oram partnership with the penultimate ball on the fourth day of the second Test here on Sunday.

Oram's dismissal, when England took the new ball in fading light, left New Zealand struggling at 242 for six, needing a further 196 runs on the final day to save the Test.

Only one further delivery was allowed before the umpires called the players in for four overs early, leaving McCullum on 43 not out with Daniel Vettori, the last recognised New Zealand batsman, yet to score.

Vettori appeared dismayed that New Zealand were not offered the light when England took the new ball, given that the players had earlier been off the field for eight minutes when it was deemed too dark.

Set a world record fourth innings target of 438 to win, New Zealand struggled to 173 for five before Oram and McCullum began putting the innings back on track.

However, when Ryan Sidebottom broke their 69-run partnership, with Oram caught by Kevin Pietersen at

second gully, he put England back on course to level the series.

Although it could also be said New Zealand only progressed as far as they have thanks to below par fielding by England in which eight catches have been grounded so far.

The tourists resumed the day in cold blustery conditions on 277 for nine and added a further 16 runs before the innings ended with Monty Panesar caught by Ross Taylor at slip off Chris Martin for 10, leaving James Anderson 12 not out.

Anderson's fitness had been in question when he left the ground on crutches Saturday evening after twisting his ankle during a warm-down game of football.

A statement was issued saying a decision on his fitness would be made shortly before play began on Sunday.

However, the fast bowler who was the chief destroyer in New Zealand's first innings of 198, taking five for 73, showed no lasting discomfort and bowled impressively through the New Zealand second innings to have 1-54.

New Zealand reached 18 before Jamie How was the first to go, caught in close by Ian Bell off Sidebottom for eight.

Matthew Bell, who never looked comfortable, was dropped by Paul

Collingwood on 27 but added only two more runs before Tim Ambrose completed the job off the bowling of Stewart Broad.

Five balls later Broad claimed the prized scalp of New Zealand's senior batsman Stephen Fleming who shouldered arms to a ball which nipped back and clipped his off stump for 31. Fleming received a standing ovation as he left his home ground for the last time as a Test player.

Matthew Sinclair and Taylor put on 81 for the fourth wicket, which ended with Anderson's first delivery after tea when Sinclair pushed a wide delivery straight to Ian Bell at cover.

Taylor went on to score 55, following his first innings 53, to become the first New Zealand batsman in four years to post half centuries in both innings of a Test.

His stand came to an end when he was trapped in front by Sidebottom who ended the day with 3-72, while Broad has 2-38.

New Zealand won the first Test in Hamilton by 189 runs with the third and final Test due to start in Napier next Saturday.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close on the fourth day of the second Test between New Zealand and England at the

BCB to take report from Rumi

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has asked national team manager Omar Khalid Rumi to submit a report on whether three national cricketers breached the 'code of conduct' by playing in a tournament in Narail on Saturday.

Bangladesh vice-captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak and left-arm seamer Syed Rasel played in the Panna Smriti Cricket tournament a day after Bangladesh's third one-day international against South Africa without taking any permission from the board.

"We have to get the reports from team management to know what actually happened regarding these players. That's why we have asked our team manager to submit a report within a short time. We will definitely take action if they are found guilty," said Ahmed Sajjadul Alam Bobby, chairman of the BCB media committee, yesterday.

He also informed that Rumi has been retained as manager for the three-match one-day series against Ireland.

Call to end transfer deadlock

SPORTS REPORTER

Footballers yesterday appealed to the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) to take initiative to sit with the clubs in a bid to end the recent stalemate.

Irked the clubs' decision not to go into transfer for the second B. League under the incumbent executive committee, the top footballers met BFF acting general secretary Manzoor Hossain Malu last evening to make the request to the football's governing body in the country.

The transfer officially began on Saturday without any clubs even showing interest to participate.

The eight professional clubs of Dhaka, meanwhile, are expected to sit today to discuss the issue before their scheduled meeting with the BFF later on the day.

The BFF has requested the clubs to reconsider their decision and invited them for a talk.

"We know that the clubs are going through economic strains. But we have to run the game for the sake of the players and the game. If we fail to do that, football will suffer," said Malu.

The booters, who gathered at the BFF Bhaban, told every player has been suffering.

"It has been seven months since the B. League ended. The professional league was supposed to give us 11 months of football. But we have spent over half a year without playing any league," told former national footballer Jewel Rana.

"Due to uncertainty, many young players have decided to quit football. This thing can't go for long," said Jewel, who was accompanied by Arif Khan Joy, Alfaz Ahmed, Aminul Haque, Biplob Bhattacharyya, Arman Aziz and others.

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Irish promise good cricket

SPORTS REPORTER



The Ireland team promised to play good cricket during the three-match one-day series against

Bangladesh which will kick off tomorrow at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. The visitors came here on Saturday on the back of a mind-boggling success against the Tigers in their last appearance when the Irish pulled off a 74-run victory in the Super Eights of the World Cup in West Indies last year after beating Pakistan in the first round.

Coach Phil Simmons, the former West Indies all-rounder, however, was not ready to focus too much on the past success. He rather reminded the reporters during a practice session yesterday at the Mirpur indoors that they are going to play a series against a Test playing nation.

"Our main focus would be to play good, positive cricket. We are

very much aware with the fact that we are going to play against a Test playing nation. Bangladesh may have lost their last few series badly but against the top opponents like New Zealand and South Africa," observed Simmons, who expressed his disappointment over ICC's plan to put West Indies in the second tier Test competition along with Bangladesh and Zimbabwe.

"But in one-dayers, anybody can win a match on his day," he added. The 44-year Simmons, who played 26 Tests and 143 ODIs, was little bothered with the fact that his team will be tested by Bangladesh spin-attack on a slow and low wicket in Mirpur.

"I played in the subcontinent for West Indies that's why I am very much knowledgeable about the character of the pitches here. We are working on this issue but definitely it would be a challenge for us to cope with the condition and the quality spin bowlers," he said. Captain Trent Johnston was

also not too worried with the Bangladesh's plan to bamboozle them by spin in a very tricky wicket.

"There are eight players who have survived from the team that beat Bangladesh in the World Cup but still we have some quality players. We want to enjoy cricket here. We know the spinners will play a vital role but you know we have variation in our spin attack too with one leg-spinner, one off-spinner and a left-arter," said the 33-year old right-arm medium fast bowler, who played 20 ODIs.

"We never focus on any individual rather our main strength is our teamwork," he added.

Besides their two stunning victories, the ICC member country hogged the spotlight in the last World Cup for their typical celebration called 'Chicken Dance' but Johnston said that it was only for World Cup and they will celebrate any win here in a different way, which he did not disclose.



PHOTO: STAR
Ireland captain Trent Johnston is in conversation with coach and former West Indies player Phil Simmons during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Fm 89.6

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