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All eyes on Tigers

Super League begins today

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The tussle of the top six clubs notwithstanding, all eyes will firmly be on the national cricketers when the Premier Super League begin in three different venues today.

League leaders Bangladesh Biman take on City Club at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium while Defending champions Abahani are up against slippery BKSP at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium. Second-placed Mohammedan Sporting Club are up against Surjo Torun in BKSP as all six teams have their pool players appearing for them uninterrupted.

The second and most crucial phase of the Premier League begins after a 35-day break during which the Tigers went on their fateful Pakistan tour, where they were whitewashed in the five-match ODI series. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) called upon the players to perform in these Super League matches to take some form into the June tri-series against India and Pakistan to be held in Dhaka.

Except Shakib Al Hasan and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, the rest of the Bangladesh team collapsed with both bat and ball. National

selectors have already mentioned of the Super League's importance and their participation will add some much-needed lustre to the domestic competition.

Biman will be favourites against City Club with their new Pakistani recruit, Nasir Jamshed, boosting their already strong batting line-up that includes Tamim Iqbal, his brother Nafis Iqbal, Alok Kapali among others. Biman will also enjoy the service of Bangladesh vice-captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, one of two performers from the Pakistan tour. City Club, the only side in the Super League without a pool player, have captain Imran Ahmed who poses the only threat with his volume of runs in the tournament so far. They are on 11 points, eight adrift of Biman. But the two sides' last meeting ended in an exciting tie after City batsman Abul Bashir scammed three runs off the last ball from paceman Alamgir Kabir.

Abahani will be without a foreign player and Nazimuddin (finger injury), but the likes of Mohammad Rafique, captain Tushar Imran and Shahriar Nafees will have to stand up against a BKSP side, bruised already by the absence of captain and in-form batsman Shakib Al Hasan. It must be noted that BKSP's exceptional fielding display has been one of the competition's highlights. Rain

played the major role in the two teams' last encounter and they had to share points.

Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful, dashing batsmen Aftab Ahmed and Zunaed Siddiqui and rookie Tigers batsman Rokibul Hasan will play major roles in Mohammedan's quest for the title. The popular 'black and white' outfit from Motijheel, who are on 18 points in second position, face Surjo Torun -- a team they beat by 35 runs in their last meeting. Surjo Torun will have the experienced duo of Khaled Mashud and Habibul Bashar in their line-up, complemented by their third Pakistani recruit Mohammad Afzal, a middle-order batsman who bowls medium-pace.

Meanwhile, all mobile phone subscribers in the country can receive latest updates of the Super League matches. One will have to type DPL and send the message to 2777 to get the live update. Scores will be updated after every over of a match. Standard SMS charges are applicable.

The Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM) and Wintel Limited have reached an understanding in this regard.

Today's matches: Abahani v BKSP (Fatullah), MSC v Surjo Torun (BKSP-2) and Biman v City (Mirpur)



Asgar Hossain (L) of Noakhali is perfectly balanced as he crosses a bar during the 110m hurdles in the 24th National Youth Championship at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

SA announce Bangladesh tour schedule

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will play two Tests and three one-day internationals on their tour of South Africa in November, Cricket South Africa announced on Thursday.

They will start with a Twenty20 International at the Wanderers in Johannesburg before playing three one-day internationals in Potchefstroom, Benoni and East London.

Bangladesh will then play a three-day match in Kimberley against South Africa A to warm up for the Test series.

The first Test will be in Bloemfontein from November 20, with the tour ending with the second Test in Centurion starting from November 28.

ITINERARY

Date	Match	Venue
Nov 5	Pro20	Johannesburg
Nov 7	1st ODI	Potchefstroom
Nov 9	2nd ODI	Benoni
Nov 12	3rd ODI	East London
Nov 15-17	3-day practice	Kimberley
Nov 20-24	1st Test	Bloemfontein
Nov 28-Dec 2	2nd Test	Centurion



David Gower
(English cricket great)

"What? Six weeks' razzle-dazzle, enough to consign over a hundred years of Test cricket to the dump. You must be off your rocker."

While making his thoughts very clear in response to a journalist who asked if the Indian Premier League could help wipe out Test cricket.



SET MAX

Indian Premier League
Rajasthan Royals v Deccan Chargers
Live from 7:30 pm

ESPN

Sultan Azlan Shah Cup Hockey
Pakistan v New Zealand
Live at 4:00pm
Argentina v India
Live at 6:00pm

Chennai scrape through



CRICINFO, undated

Partisan fans at the Feroz Shah Kotla were treated to a cracker of a match as the Chennai Super Kings pulled off a dramatic last-ball win, sneaking past Delhi Daredevils' total of 187 for 5 by four wickets at Delhi on Thursday.

Chennai's chase veered from the authoritative to the bumbling but they kept their nerves and put an end to their three-game losing streak, thanks largely to some fearless hitting right through the order.

Chennai recovered somewhat to restrict the hosts to under 200 after Gautam Gambhir and Shikhar Dhawan added a record third-wicket partnership of 121 and that, in hindsight, proved critical before a thrilling chase helped them get back to their winning ways.

Chennai were given a 62-run start inside seven overs with S Vidyut, promoted to open in place of Parthiv Patel, batting purposefully. Both Glenn McGrath and Mohammad Asif were unusually off-key in their first overs and Vidyut handled the short and full deliveries admirably, stepping out to meet the ball. Asif's first over when for 15, with Vidyut taking two fours and Stephen Fleming playing a gorgeous cover drive, and the sixth over, bowled by Yo Mahesh, went for 20 with both openers clubbing the width.

Vidyut fell for 40 from 23 balls, attempting another pull but Fleming, finding rhythm after three poor innings, kept the momentum with Chennai. Initially

a watchful spectator with Vidyut cashing in on some short-pitched stuff, he played some eye-catching square-drives and cuts. Shoaib Malik bowled a poor line and Fleming kept McGrath busy at square leg with powerful sweeps.

Gambhir bottom-edged Muttiah Muralidaran's first delivery narrowly past off stump and between Dhoni's legs for four and was offered a freaky slice of luck a couple balls later when Murali's flick back onto the stumps dislodged the bails a fraction too late. Loosening his shoulders after that last reprieve, Gambhir nudged to fine leg, flicked over midwicket, and flat-batted through the covers.

A massive six over mid-on raised Gambhir's fourth IPL half-century from 35 balls and earned him back the orange cap from Sehwaig, and he proceeded to drill three consecutive fours in the 15th over to jack the run rate up near nine. He fell trying to steer one past backward point, for a 49-ball 80, and Dhawan fell shortly afterwards for a 46-ball 59 in the penultimate over. Delhi's decision to bring in Manoj Tiwary over Rajat Bhatia cost them a fifth bowler, and that hurt them plenty.

SCORES IN BRIEF

DELHI DAREDEVILS: 187 for 5 in 20 overs (Gambhir 80, Dhawan 59, Sehwaig 23, extras 12; Morkel 2-35, Balaji 2-35, Gony 1-36)

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS: 188 for 6 in 20 overs (Fleming 44, Vidyut 40, Dhoni 33, Morkel 30, Gony 13 not out, extras 11; Sangwan 2-29, Mahesh 2-40, Asif 1-33)

Result: Chennai Super Kings won by 4 wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

Toss: Chennai Super Kings.

Umpires: Aleem Dar and Russell Tiffin.

The afternoon began with two of Delhi's most reliable top-order batsmen welcoming Dhoni's decision to field first -- for the first time in the tournament -- with a record 121-run stand in 12.4 overs after early trouble. Sehwaig flicked with whips off the pads and a ramrod-straight drive before a

crushing yorker from Gony breached his defence. Morkel, sharing the new ball in Makhaya Ntini's absence, produced a pearl to clean up de Villiers first ball to make it 46 for 2 in the sixth over.

Gambhir bottom-edged Muttiah Muralidaran's first delivery narrowly past off stump and between Dhoni's legs for four and was offered a freaky slice of luck a couple balls later when Murali's flick back onto the stumps dislodged the bails a fraction too late. Loosening his shoulders after that last reprieve, Gambhir nudged to fine leg, flicked over midwicket, and flat-batted through the covers.

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BKSP reign supreme

SPORTS REPORTER

BKSP emerged champions in the 24th National Junior Athletics Championships that concluded at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The Savar sports institute bagged 24 gold, 18 silver and four bronze medals to establish their supremacy by far as runners-up Noakhali DSA won only a haul of 3-0-3.

Kishoreganj and Bagerhat won two gold medals each while the six remaining gold medals were shared by six teams.

BKSP's Golam Mortuza Ali was the star performer with eight gold medals in the boys' section while his teammates Taslima Akhter and Papia Rani, also the fastest woman, claimed six and five gold medals respectively in the two-day meet.

Jersey farce irks BFF boss

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Kazi Salahuddin promised that he would never let the national team face embarrassment during his tenure.

Talking to The Daily Star last evening, the celebrated former national footballer said he was not sure why Bangladesh had to play their AFC Challenge Cup qualifying rounds opener against Afghanistan in Kyrgyzstan without proper jersey.

"I have heard here that some luggage went missing. But I will get the true picture once I will talk with manager and coach (Abu) Yusuf," Salahuddin told.

"We will find out what really happened and make sure it does

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Afghans or Bangladeshis?

SPORTS REPORTER

With surprise Pakistan Afghanistan sitting on the top of Group C qualifiers of the AFC Challenge Cup, it is confirmed that another South Asian nation will join the tournament proper, the 8-team finals to be held in south Indian city Hyderabad from July 30-August 10.

Whether it would be the rank-outsiders Afghans or Bangladesh will only be known after today's last group game between Bangladesh and Kyrgyzstan.

Bangladesh will be put to the test against a team that would be desperate to salvage some pride. Hosts Kyrgyzstan, shocked 0-1 by Afghanistan on Wednesday, are already out of contention after their first game but will look to find a consolation win at the Spartak Stadium in Bishkek.

Although the home side will have only academic interest in the match that kicks off at 5.30 pm local and Bangladesh time, the South Asians must win at least 2-1 to topple Afghanistan -- on four points compared to Bangladesh's one -- and qualify for the finals.

In case Bangladesh win 1-0, a toss will decide the group winners.

Although coach Abu Yusuf and his boys were blasted following a goalless draw with 'lowly' Afghanistan in the three-team group opener, it now seems a satisfactory result considering the Central Asians' defeat in their own backyard.

Kyrgyzstan, however, reportedly looked shattered after their loss despite dominating the whole show and Bangladesh must bank on that weakness if the hosts show any in the group finale.

Yusuf, being a good match reader, must have chalked out a

plan that could be effective as it had been against Afghanistan, in the sense that Bangladesh escaped with a draw against a very combative and improving side than the war-torn nation we knew previously.

"The Afghans' tactics was to disrupt our game, so we were not very tidy in the field," Yusuf told over telephone yesterday.

"I have seen their game against Kyrgyzstan and the hosts rush to fast and also use the long-ball strategy. If we can recover the first blast and play our natural game, we would be able to beat Kyrgyzstan," added Yusuf.

Bangladesh will be without defender Saikat, who was sent off seconds before the final whistle against Afghanistan and centre-back Ariful Islam is expected to take his place. The other change Yusuf is likely to bring in an otherwise unchanged side is Mamun in

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Gavaskar quits ICC post

Cricket

AFP, Dubai

Sunil Gavaskar on Wednesday announced he was standing down as chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC) Cricket Committee.

ICC's acting chief executive officer David Richards said: "We are indebted to the work Sunil has put into his role as Chairman of the ICC Cricket Committee."

"He has brought his vast experience of the game to bear, not only over the eight years of his chairmanship but also the six years prior

to that, when he was a delegate on the same committee.

"Having someone of Sunil's stature involved has to be of benefit to the game and given the ICC's lengthy relationship with him we hope we can still utilise his knowledge in some other capacity in the future."

Gavaskar, in an ICC statement, said: "I have thoroughly enjoyed the eight years I have held the role which is an honorary position, and it has been extremely fulfilling to be able to give back to the game through that role."

"However, with more and more cricket being played it has become clear that it is not possible for me to

do justice to two jobs, the chairmanship of the ICC Cricket Committee and my media commitments.

"As an example of that, I had to leave my professional commitments as a commentator on the Indian Premier League matches in order to come and chair this year's meeting in Dubai."

"I envisaged the potential for this sort of issue two years ago and intimated then that I was not able to continue in the role but when I was asked to do so I was honoured to be re-elected."

"Now, however, it is clear I cannot combine both roles and therefore I am relinquishing the chair of

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

WOMEN'S ASIA CUP Pakistan square it

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Javeria Khan's six-wicket burst scripted Bangladesh women's cricket team's 38-run defeat against Pakistan in their second leg Asia Cup match at the Dambulla International Stadium yesterday.

Off-spinner Javeria, the last bowler used by Pakistan captain Urooj Mumtaz, finished with incredible bowing figures of six wickets in 8.1 overs that yielded only 8 runs as the country's women were bowled out for only 72 runs in 33.1 overs, in reply to Pakistan's paltry 110 made in 44.4 overs.

But Pakistan's target turned out to be too big for Bangladesh as eight batswomen, including inspirational captain Salma Khatun, failed to reach double figures. Salma who started with the bat and ball in the last match against India, was trapped leg-before by Javeria for only 2. Opener Shathira Jakir top-scored with 19 off 49 balls including two boundaries. Ayesha

Akhtar (12) and Tithy Sarkar (11) were the other notable scorers. Javeria and leg-spinner Mumtaz shared nine wickets between them for Pakistan.

Earlier, the Bangladesh bowlers gave their side a very good chance of beating Pakistan for the second time in the tournament as they restricted them to only 110. Off-spinner Tithy Sarkar, who is Bangladesh's leading wicket-taker in the tournament with eight wickets, picked up 3 wickets for 29 while new-ball bowler Panna Ghosh also finished with three victims. Skipper Salma continued her good show with the ball, taking two for 8 while Shathira took one wicket.

Sana Javed was promoted up the order to open along with Bismah Maroof but the two only added four runs before Javed was caught behind off Panna Ghosh in the first over. She came back to remove Maroof and captain Urooj Mumtaz in her third and fourth overs and reduced Pakistan to 20 for 3. Things didn't improve for Pakistan and they kept losing wickets at regular

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



Abahani centre-half Musa Mia (R) tries to get past an Azad Sporting player during their Green Delta Premier Hockey League match at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Usha, Abahani's goal-fest

Hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Joint-champions Abahani and Usha Kriha Chakra both crushed their opposition in contrasting styles yesterday in the Green Delta Insurance Premier Hockey League.

Usha had more defensive solidity than their title rivals on way to a 7-1 defeat of Sadharan Bima in the day's second match at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium which saw Rahul Kanti Roy slot the third hattrick of the fray.

Abahani, on the other hand, were almost equally combative but showed many holes in their defence to come from a goal down and beat Azad Sporting Club 6-3.

Mamunur Rahman Chayan was the star of the sky-blues as he converted four from Abahani's six penalty corners while Russel Mahmud Jimmy and Musa Mia

added field goals to tame a stubborn Azad.

Penalty corner specialist Chayan, who joined Abahani from the rival tent of Mohammedan, now leads the scorers' list with nine goals.

Azad took the lead through Saddam Hossain from the first penalty corner of the match in the third minute but they were beyond contention falling 4-1 down at the break.

Ajit Ghosh and Belal Hossain scored in the second half for the losers.

It was the fourth win in a row for Abahani who are now level with Usha, who opened the floodgate after 11 minutes through Mostafizur Rahman Dinar.

Maksud Alam Habul and Akhter Ali scored one each before Rahul began his hattrick campaign before the break and added two more in the second half. Tarik Aziz sealed the victory for the joint league leaders.