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NATIONAL CRICKET Khulna zonal champions

SPORTS REPORTER

Khulna rode on Mosaddek's century to become zonal champions of the 28th National Cricket League when they crushed Magura by 100 runs at the Jessore Stadium yesterday.

Batting first, Khulna reached 227-6 in 50 overs with Mosaddek scoring 101 off 123 balls that included eight boundaries and a six. He was aided by Ripon, who contributed 39. In reply, Magura were bowled out for exactly 127 in 41.1 overs, with Dipu picking up three wickets.

Away at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium, Rangpur (120-5) made their way into the zonal final with a convincing 5-wicket win over Pabna (119 all out) and down in Comilla, the hosts also reached the final of their zone, easily beating Chandpur by seven wickets.

Batting first, Chandpur only reached 149 in 48.3 overs before being bowled out. Pintu took four wickets while Nazrul picked up three.

Comilla cantered to their target in 27.1 overs, thanks to Nazrul's unbeaten 71.



Did U Know?

Women's hammer throw was first included at the 2000 Sydney Olympics, after having been included in the World Championships a year earlier.



Franck Ribery

(Bayern Munich's French midfielder)

"All my successes in Munich have given me confidence, I've progressed on the pitch as in daily life. I'm better than before with the French team, I'm now a leader."



What to Watch

SET Max

Indian Premier League
Kings XI Punjab v Royal Challengers Bangalore

Live from 7:30pm

ESPN

Azlan Shah Hockey
Belgium v India

Live from 2:00pm

Canada v Pakistan
Live from 4:00pm

Malaysia v Argentina
Live from 7:55pm

Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

STAR Sports

Hamburg Masters Tennis
First Round
Live from 5:00pm

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RED TAKES CENTRE STAGE: Cristiano Ronaldo (L) exchanges high-fives with Manchester United teammate Nemanja Vidic (C) after his triumphant penalty, his 31st goal of the Premier League, against Wigan Athletic at the JJB Stadium in Wigan yesterday.

Glory gets Red

INTERNET, undated

Manchester United sealed their 10th English Premier League title in 16 years with a 2-0 win against Wigan Athletic last night.

On the day he equalled Sir Bobby Charlton's record of 558 first-team appearances, Ryan Giggs scored the second goal to seal a nervous victory.

Cristiano Ronaldo gave United a first-half lead with a disputed penalty -- his 31st league goal of the season.

Bolton's injury-time equaliser against Chelsea meant United ended with a two-point cushion but the result at Stamford Bridge was rendered irrelevant thanks to the Reds' vastly superior goal difference.

United were the division's top scorers and finished with the best defensive record. Few neutrals would deny they merited their championship.

Ronaldo's 31 league goals equals the record for a 38-game domestic season, with Alan Shearer having set that mark for Blackburn in 1995-96.

Chelsea have proved no less efficient at achieving results, but their inability to produce the fantasy football demanded by Roman Abramovich eventually proved fatal to their title hopes -- and could also sound the death knell for Avram Grant's reign as manager.

Alex Ferguson had complained that United would already be champions but for bad luck with injuries and refereeing decisions -- particularly in the 2-1 defeat to Chelsea last month.

But the champions certainly got the better of Steve Bennett's decisions in a controversial first half.

On 22 minutes Rio Ferdinand blocked a Jason Koumas shot with his upper arm but Bennett said 'no penalty'.

Ten minutes later he had little hesitation in pointing to the spot when Emmerson Boyce brought

down Rooney as the ball pinballed around the Wigan box.

His challenge was more clumsy than malicious, but Ronaldo punished him with a cool spot-kick, sending Chris Kirkland the wrong way and slotting low into the right side of the net.

Bennett found himself in the thick of things on 36 minutes when Paul Scholes shoulder-barged Wilson Palacios.

The midfielder had already been booked for a tackle from behind on Palacios and had the game been less important or the player less illustrious, Bennett may well have flashed the red card. But he kept his cards in his pocket.

Any talk of a summer stroll in the park for United proved well wide of the mark. Inexperienced left-back Maynor Figueroa was the only non-regular in the first team while persistent drizzle gradually turned the pitch into a bog.

Wigan tore into their opponents, with strikers Emile Heskey

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Usha win 10-goal thriller

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite a second-half surge of their opponents Usha Krira Chakra maintained their winning run in the Premier Division Hockey League when they won the high-scoring encounter against Sonali Bank 6-4 at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

Usha, one of the local powerhouses, drew first blood through a field goal by Maksud Alam in the second minute and Zahidul Islam netted another field goal after seven minutes to double the margin.

With two early strikes, Usha had mounted pressure on the bankers and got a penalty corner in the 13th minute which was capitalised by Mustafizur Rahman to improve the lead to 3-0.

Sonali Bank however pulled back one before the breather when Rimon Kumar found the target with a field goal in the 23rd minute.

The match reached real excitement when the bankers regrouped after the break to score two goals in the span of five minutes to level the scoring. Sheikh Mohammad Nannu first struck in the second-half with a field goal and Asaduzzaman converted a penalty corner to threaten the giants.

Usha however bounced back strongly to take away Sonali's early second half initiatives as Maksud and Mustafizur scored their second field goals after Tariq Aziz again ensured the lead for the league leaders in the 55th minute.

Sonali reduced the margin through a goal from Enamul Kabir who successfully capitalised on a penalty corner but it was too late for them to create the upset as Usha were determined in the last five

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Balaji swings out 5

CRICINFO, undated

Amarnath on the square-leg boundary. Amarnath tightened the screws in the next over, having Yuvraj Singh caught by Stephen Fleming at point, and the match was almost over as a contest. Not as a spectacle, though.

The 15th over saw a mini-battle between Muttiah Muralitharan and his Sri Lanka teammate Mahela Jayawardene, who got down on his knees and dispatched him over deep midwicket. Two balls later, though, a repeat effort

resulted in a top edge to S Vidyut at short third man, and Jayawardene, normally accustomed to running to congratulate his leading bowler, had to head back to the dugout.

And then there was the hat-trick, in the last over of the match. There were four balls to go and 19 runs to get when Balaji bowled to Irfan Pathan, who'd already hit him for a six off the first ball. This time, he holed out to a slower ball to deep square leg. Next, Piyush Chawla

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

Women return from SL today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh women's cricket team are due to return home today from Sri Lanka after participating in the Women's Asia Cup.

They are expected to arrive at the Zia International Airport at 10:30pm by a Singapore Airlines flight.

During the tournament, the women national cricketers won one match against Pakistan but won many hearts by their fielding and bowling efforts. Their batting, although not firing everyday, impressed their opponents, including Indian captain Mithali Raj.

"Bangladesh, who are playing at this level for the first time, have a very disciplined bowling attack. They have to improve in a lot of areas but they are very good for a side playing at this level for the first time. Salma Khatun, the Bangladesh captain, is a very good batsman and bowler," wrote Mithali in her Cricinfo blog prior to their final against Sri Lanka yesterday.

Salma stood apart and in the return-leg fixture against India, she scored 90 and took two key wickets and also fielded brilliantly.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

A body blow to BCB

Poor response for tri-series sponsorship

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

It was expected that the triangular series involving India and Pakistan in June would be the much-needed financial boost for Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

But the board suffered a blow when it opened the tenders for the title sponsorship right as well as other two packages for the high-profile event at its management office in Gulshan yesterday.

It was learnt that three local and one Indian marketing company participated in the bid. But since their offers were well below the floor price, the disappointed BCB's marketing committee has decided to call for a re-bid for two packages with the same companies and

negotiate for title sponsorship in an effort to increase the amount.

It was gathered that BCB has fixed a floor price of 10,00,000 dollars (Tk 6.90 crore) for three packages, 5,00,000 dollars for the title sponsorship right, but the highest bids were well below the target.

BCB got only little better offer for one package, which covers the 26 perimeter boards, ground boards, mid wall and floodlight tower, when Bottom Line ad agency offered 270,000 dollars against the floor price of 250,000 dollars and the same agency was the highest bidder for another package by offering 95,000 dollars against the floor price of 250,000 dollars.

The most disappointing offer came in title sponsorship package as Atdouch became highest bidder with two hundred thousand dollars against the floor price of five hun-

dred thousand and their nearest rival Axiom Technologies has offered only one hundred thousand dollars.

Indus was the only Indian company took part in the bidding.

So far the board was offered by little more than half of their desired amount but BCB's media committee chairman Ahmed Sajjadul Alam said that they were hopeful about increase of the amount.

"Let's see what happens during the re-bidding and negotiation. We are hopeful," Sajjadul expressed his optimism.

"I think the ongoing IPL (Indian Premier League) was one of the reasons behind the poor response and another thing is that the Asia Cup is also knocking at the door. Actually it is the reality," he explained the reason behind the poor response.

Jamie meets coaches

Super League resumes today

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

After a two-day break, the Premier Cricket Super League resumes at three different venues today.

Table toppers Bangladesh Biman face Surjo Torun at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur while second-placed Mohammedan Sporting Club takes on BKSP at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium and third-placed Abahani meet City Club at BKSP.

All the title contenders won their respective first round matches to maintain the one-point difference among them.

The focus was on the Tigers ahead of next month's triangular series involving India and Pakistan but apart from under fire skipper Mohammad Ashraful, none of the other players provided any encouraging signs in the first round matches held on May 9.

But everyone is looking forward in seeing whether Mohammedan skipper Ashraful can manage some sort of consistency to get back confidence ahead of the next international assignment or go back to his usual hibernation after one fine innings.

To make sure his boys are taking maximum preparations ahead of the tri-nation series, national coach Jamie Siddons met with the three top club coaches at the BCB's management office in Gulshan where officials Gazi Ashraf Hossain and Ahmed

Sajjadul Alam were also present.

"We actually exchanged views on ensuring maximum and proper practice for the national players as most of the current national players are now playing in three different clubs," said Abahani coach Aminul Islam after the meeting.

"He (Jamie) said about his planning regarding fitness and batting and bowling practice. I believe that nothing could have been better than the match practice and Jamie also agreed with this point," said Aminul.

"We offered him to visit the clubs to watch how we are running the practice sessions and he also invited us to see his national team's practice. I think this kind of sharing would be helpful for Bangladesh cricket," mentioned Aminul.

The former national skipper also said that the national players should play the domestic competitions seriously to rectify their mistakes.

"The real problem among the national players is their inconsistency and they can use this kind of

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



Usha players celebrate their 6-4 victory over Sonali Bank in the Green Delta Premier League at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Ganguly all around



CRICINFO, undated

After a torrid run through the first seven matches of the Indian Premier League, Sourav Ganguly the batsman finally made his presence felt in stunning style on Sunday at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad, carving a 57-ball 91 to fashion a convincing 23-run win for the Kolkata Knight Riders, their fourth of the tournament.

Ganguly's knock, coupled with a blinder from David Hussey, lifted Kolkata to an imposing 204, which was far too much for the hapless Deccan Chargers, who collapsed to their seventh defeat in nine games and are all but out of the competition.

Kolkata's batting display was the perfect example in pacing a 20-over innings. Through the first half,

Ganguly and Aakash Chopra batted steadily and built a platform: after ten overs, only 73 were on the board, but with nine wickets in hand, there was plenty of ammunition left. That was put to outstanding use later in the innings, as Hussey blitzed 57 off 29 balls in a 102-run partnership that came off a mere eight overs to set up a target which ensured Deccan have lost all four games at home.

Ganguly had shone with the ball in Kolkata's previous match, but he had struggled with the bat, unable to find the balance between defence and attack, often pottering around the crease and ultimately choosing the wrong ball to attack.

All that changed completely here -- the shot-selection was exemplary in the early part, and once he found his groove, he cut loose with such ferocity that none of the bowlers had any answers.

The key for him, though, was to survive the early exchanges and get a start. There was plenty of careful defending through the early part, but importantly, there were no half

measures on the attack, as he gave himself room, moved his front foot out of the way, and smeared lofted hits over mid-on and cover. Chaminda Vaas and Paidikavla Vijaykumar, the new-ball bowlers, were at the receiving end early, and when they shifted the line to leg stump, Ganguly cleverly shuffled across and pulled or flicked to the fine-leg boundary. In between these improvisations was one classical square drive, all timing and grace, when RP Singh strayed in line.

Having done the hard work, Ganguly then turned it on in style. Throughout his international career, he hasn't had much regard for left-arm spin, and here Pragyan Ojha was the chosen one, as Ganguly smacked two sixes and a four down the ground in the 14th over to signal the beginning of the onslaught. By now he was in supreme form, and it hardly mattered who the bowler was: Scott Styris was pulled and lofted for successive sixes, while the listless Vaas -- who struggled with his

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LAKSHMIPATHY BALAJI... first bowler to take a hat-trick in IPL.

PHOTO: INTERNET

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