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Clubs accept relegation

SPORTS REPORTER

The professional league clubs finally accepted the proposal of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) for relegation in this year's B. League.

Although the clubs had threatened on Wednesday to boycott the league in protest of introducing relegation, they softened after a meeting with BFF's emergency committee yesterday.

In absence of president Kazi Salahuddin, who left for Malaysia on Wednesday, night along with BFF member Anwarul Haque Helal and is expected to have a meeting with AFC president Mohamed Bin Hammam today at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur, senior vice-president Abdus Salam Murshedi presided over the meeting.

"It was a very fruitful meeting. The clubs have agreed to the proposal of relegation and also proposed back to start a second tier competition in the professional league," said Salam after the meeting.

"Despite struggling due to financial constraints, the clubs said they want to remain in the professional structure and do not want to go back. It is a positive attitude and we are happy. I also thank the clubs," said the record-
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Raw deal for BCB

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has been finalised the in-stadia advertising rights packages for the next month's tri-nation series involving India and Pakistan.

After negotiation, Indian agency Indus increased the amount to 3,24,000 dollars for Package One which was better from the floor price (2,50,000 dollars).

"Indus also agreed to install a giant screen for which we have to pay 30,000 to 32,000 dollars," said Ahmed Sajjadul Alam, BCB's media committee chairman.

But their was no improvement for Package Two as Bottomline got
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David Hussey (Australian cricketer)

"Look, Twenty20 is such a fast game that one has to remain focussed all the time. We don't even have enough time for sledging." On one of the many consequences of the shortest form of the game.



Did U Know?

At the Wimbledon Tennis Championships, new balls are supplied after every 7 to 9 games. 1,250 dozen balls are used during the tournament.



SET MAX
Indian Premier League
Mumbai Indians v Kolkata Knight Riders
Live from 7:30 pm
STAR Cricket
England v New Zealand
First Test, Day Two
Live from 4:00pm
ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm



Abahani wicketkeeper Sahagir Hossain (R) is ecstatic after having Mohammedan captain Mohammad Ashraful (C) caught down the leg-side during their crucial Premier Division Super League match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Sahagir later scored an unbeaten 67 as Abahani thrashed their bitter rivals by nine
PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

3 cheers for Abahani Mohammedan out of title race

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani easily made it three wins in a row against their traditional rivals this season as Mohammedan's batting dipped from bad to worse in the crucial Premier Cricket Super League match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Tushar Imran's men maintained their hundred per cent success with an emphatic nine-wicket victory in the vastly one-sided affair that all but ensured their big-spending opponent's departure from the title race.

The fate of the match was decided when the Mohammedan innings was wrapped up for 133 runs in 47.2 overs after being sent into bat first on a lively pitch. Abahani overhauled the total in just 21.2 overs thanks to an unbeaten 129-run second wicket partnership between Sahagir Hossain and Shahriar Nafees.

It was the third defeat for Mohammedan against their archrivals after the Twenty20 and the first-leg match of the competition earlier this season.

Many at the ground were left wondering when was the last time such a ridiculously one-sided affair was played out between these two historic rivals and whatever went on at the home of cricket was nothing less than pathetic.

This generation however seems lucky enough that they don't have to face the supporters' wrath --

something synonymous with defeat for their predecessors. Only a few hundred turned up to watch the battle under immense heat to only jeer the national stars for a while.

It appeared however that the Motijheel outfit had lost the game even before it started when they tinkered with their batting line-up in a crucial match. That only reflected the lack of confidence in the team after their shocking four-wicket defeat against BKSP at Fatullah in the previous game.

Wicketkeeper Anwar Hossain was promoted to open the innings with out-of-form Zunaed Siddiqui while Aftab Ahmed came to bat at number seven which hardly worked for them to eliminate their wretched batting show.

Only rookie Tigers batsman Rokibul Hasan was dismissed with a gem of a delivery from paceman Ziaur Rahman, who exploited the conditions brilliantly, while the other top batsmen threw away their wickets.

Lanky Talha Jubair started the carnage by removing Zunaed after the left-hander tried to flick a leg stump delivery only to reach the safe gloves of Sahagir with the score on five.

Zia then deepened the crisis by taking the wickets of Pakistani Aqeel Arshad, who was caught at point by Nadif Chowdhury and Rokibul Hasan in consecutive deliveries which saw Mohammedan crash to 31-3.

Lot then depended on the two national stars but both Mohammad Ashraful and Aftab frustrated their

fans as usual. Bangladesh skipper Ashraful looked good to take the challenge but ultimately produced a 'same old story' by chasing a leg stump delivery from Nazmul Hossain to reach the gloves of Sahagir, who made a brilliantly dived on his left to send back the dangerman for 24 off 62 balls.

Aftab also raised hope to help post a reasonable total on the board but the right-hander fell victim of a run-out.

Anwar Hossain top scored with 34 off 84 balls before he was caught at point by Tushar off Mohammad Rafique who along with fellow left-armers Arafat Sunny, made it difficult for their opponents to gather runs.

Tapash Baisya gave an early breakthrough by trapping Mahbubul Karim leg-before in the first over but the subsequent batting from Sahagir and Nafees was easier on the eyes, something quite contradictory to what had happened earlier.

Sahagir smote nine fours and a six during his unbeaten 70-ball 67 while Nafees smashed 62 off 54 with the help of nine fours and a six.

There was hardly anything left for Mohammedan coach Minhajul Abedin to say after this kind of pathetic performance.

"It's better to ask our captain (Ashraful) because why they even failed to score 200 runs," said a frustrated Minhazul. "We made the change in the batting line-up as there were big problems in the opening slot in the last few matches while Aftab came at number seven as we felt that it would be
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JUSTINE HENIN

Henin shocks Federer

AFP, Hamburg

World number one Roger Federer admitted the tennis community were shocked to hear on Wednesday top-ranked female Justine Henin had announced her retirement with immediate effect.

Federer, who is in the third round of the Hamburg Masters Series here, said he was stunned to hear Henin, who has won seven Grand Slam titles and nearly 20 million dollars in prize-money, had announced her retirement in Belgium.

Henin, 25, withdrew from this week's WTA tournament in Rome, but Federer says her announcement has stunned the tennis world, especially as she has won at Roland Garros, which starts in less than a fortnight, for the last three years.

"I have only just heard, but it is a shock for the tennis world, especially as she is number one at the moment," said 26-year-old Federer.

"I am sure she has her reasons, but it's particularly surprising as it's only a few weeks before Roland
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Biman go higher

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Biman remained firm at the top of the Premier League with a clinical 69-run victory over BKSP while Surjo Torun posted their first win in the Super League yesterday.

Crucial knocks from Nafis Iqbal and Alok Kapali propelled Biman to 246-8 and despite BKSP skipper Mushfiqur Rahim's resistance, BKSP were never in the hunt as they were restricted to 177-8 in 50 overs at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium. The national airliner were elevated further in the points table with 25 points from 14 outings, two ahead

of second-placed Abahani.

Left-handed opening pair Tamim Iqbal and Pakistani Nasir Jamshed added 51 runs before the latter fell to one-change Latiful Azam, BKSP's marquee bowler for the day, in the 11th over. Although Tamim followed suit in the 22nd over after being set on 39 off 58 balls, the pair gave a solid base for the following Biman batsmen to build a big total.

Man-of-the-match Nafis took up the baton from his younger brother as the discarded national opener struck a typically patient 63 off 108 balls that was punctuated by six boundaries. He added 72 for the fourth wicket with stylish Kapali, who hammered away for a brilliant 45 that featured two sixes

and three boundaries.

What is fast becoming Kapali's trait in the shorter version of cricket, the Sylhet batsman has certainly mastered the art of finishing an innings after a good start had been provided.

Later, it was the Mosharraf Hossain show as the left-arm spinner snuff out three BKSP wickets after national vice-captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Mahbubul Alam provided early vigour.

Only Test wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur stood in the face of Biman for 109 minutes, hitting 50 off 70 balls. His innings ended when he edged Mashrafe to Biman keeper Sajjad Kadir in the 45th over.
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Sizzling Sanath

CRICINFO, undated



Sachin Tendulkar's return dominated most of the pre-match buzz but it was the eruption from Sanath Jayasuriya that Mumbai toasted at the end of a comfortable nine-wicket win, their fourth in a row in the Indian Premier League, at the Wankhede Stadium on Wednesday.

Chennai appeared to have cobbled together a fighting total, in conditions that assisted swing bowling, but Jayasuriya's sizzler, the second-fastest IPL hundred that was punctuated with 11 sixes,

put an emphatic end to the contest.

Mumbai's bowlers set-up this win with a fine new-ball exhibition that knocked off the top order. Shaun Pollock wasn't leading Mumbai today but his immaculate early spell (4-1-9-1) led an impressive effort that justified their decision to field first. Mahendra Singh Dhoni and S Badrinath stitched together a 95-run stand but 156 was never going to be challenging if even one batsman got going.

It was inevitable. Jayasuriya, who had made a short trip home during Mumbai's extended break, was yet to explode in the IPL and there was nothing Chennai could do once sixes began to drip off his bat. Nonchalant short-arm jabs sailed over the midwicket fence and a few

powerful slashes soared over third man. The bowlers were rattled -- they leaked wides and drifted on the pads too often -- and fed Jayasuriya in his favourite areas. The fact that 102 off his 114 runs came in boundaries, told a story.

It was an innings reminiscent of the mid-90s, a time when Jayasuriya filled bowlers with a sense of fear. In fact it was at the same ground when he hammered an unforgettable 151 not out in the Independence Cup in 1997, an innings that was appreciated in hushed silence. This, though, was a celebration in power-hitting, with the crowd getting fully behind Jayasuriya in his fiery mission. One can only imagine the possibilities if

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New Zealand in tatters

AFP, London

New Zealand, after losing the toss, were 109 for five at tea on the first day of the first Test against England at Lord's here Thursday.

Brendon McCullum was 36 not out and Jacob Oram nought not out after rain meant there was no play before lunch.

This match was the first of a three-Test series.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at tea on the first day of the first Test between England and New Zealand at Lord's in London on Thursday:

NEW ZEALAND: First innings	7
How c Ambrose b Anderson	0
Redmond c Cook b Anderson	0
J Marshall c Strauss b Broad	24
Taylor c Collingwood b Broad	19
McCullum not out	36
Flynn b Anderson	9
Oram not out	0

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Reefat at 2nd place

SPORTS REPORTER

Reefat Bin Sattar shared the second place with four players in the Mayors Cup 1st International Open Chess tournament in Mumbai, India yesterday.

The Bangladeshi Grandmaster defeated Indian International Master Himanshu Sharma in the sixth round.

Reefat, who was pitted against Polish GM Michael Krasenkov in the seventh round also yesterday, has 5.5 points after six games.
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Zenit outclass Rangers

AFP, Manchester



Rangers' quest for a first European trophy in 36 years ended in heartbreak as Zenit St Petersburg claimed Russia's second UEFA Cup in the space of four years with a 2-0 win in Wednesday's final.

The match was effectively settled 18 minutes from time, when midfielder Igor Denisov combined smoothly with playmaker Andrei Arshavin before slotting home the recently crowned Russian champions Zenit's opening goal.

Konstantin Zyryanov added a second in stoppage time to make sure Zenit - giving former Rangers coach Dick Advocaat a famous win - emulated the achievement of 2005 winners CSKA Moscow and condemned the tens of thousands of Rangers supporters who had descended on Manchester to a miserable journey back to Scotland.

Rangers manager Walter Smith claimed that the match had been closer than it appeared to the neutral eye.

"We had one or two chances of our own," he said.

"There wasn't much in it although Zenit appeared to have more of the possession.

"We're disappointed we lost but overall it's been a great tournament for us.

"However it doesn't diminish the disappointment of losing as it is not often you get the chance of
PHOTO: AFP

being in a European final," added Smith, whose side remain on course for a domestic treble of the League Cup, Scottish Cup and title.

Smith's pre-match hint at a more adventurous approach from a side that scored just five goals in eight games on their way to the final was belied by the team-sheets, the now familiar five-man midfield aligned behind lone striker Jean-

Claude Darcheville.

Zenit, forced to make do without the competition's joint top scorer, the suspended Pavel Pogrebnyak, drafted experienced Turkey striker Fatih Tekke in to spearhead an attack just ahead of Arshavin.

The threat posed by the Russia playmaker was underlined as early as the fourth minute, when
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AT THE ZENITH: Russia's Zenit St Petersburg players celebrate with the UEFA Cup after their 2-0 win over Glasgow Rangers of Scotland in the final at the City of Manchester Stadium on Wednesday.

His best day

CRICINFO, undated



Sachin Tendulkar's return from injury was the biggest draw in the build-up to the clash between Mumbai and Chennai. He was expected to bring further luck to a team that had strung together a hat-trick of wins after enduring four straight losses and his partnership with Sanath Jayasuriya at the top of the Mumbai Indians' batting line-up was a much awaited spectacle. However, he was completely overshadowed by his partner Jayasuriya, whose scything blade cut Chennai down swiftly.

Jayasuriya has had a quiet tournament, getting off to starts but failing to carry on. His seven innings preceding the blitz against Mumbai read 29, 20, 1, 18, 18, 34 and 18. The 34 against Delhi's Glenn McGrath and Mohammad Asif was filled with intent but he was disappointed. You could see him walking back each time with discontent writ large across his face because he knew he hadn't even

got started yet.

Perhaps the presence of Tendulkar at the other end gave him comfort for Jayasuriya expressed himself fully against Chennai. "It's the best day of my life to open with Sachin," Jayasuriya said after the game. "The advantage he lends is that he lets me play my own game." In previous matches, Jayasuriya had paired up with the Australian Luke Ronchi and the local man Yogesh Takawale. The partnership with Ronchi was unsuccessful and although Takawale managed to provide a couple of decent starts, the responsibility fell on Jayasuriya for he was the senior player and perhaps that had an impact on his stroke-play.

Today Jayasuriya cut loose and the effect of his approach was devastating. Mahendra Singh Dhoni strove to curtail his progress but he might as well have just admired the spectacle unfolding in front of him.

Jayasuriya had already shut Chennai out by the end of the Powerplays for Mumbai had scored 78 after six overs. He caused severe damage with the short-arm jab,
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The crown of Indian Premier League finally gets its jewel back as Sachin Tendulkar (L), who is seen having a word with Mahendra Singh Dhoni, makes his first appearance in the million-dollar competition for his home side Mumbai against Chennai at the Wankhede Stadium on Wednesday. The picture on the right shows Sanath Jayasuriya enjoying his 'best day' with Tendulkar as his opening partner. Jayasuriya hammered an imperious 114 off 48 balls.