

Mohammedan T20 champs

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club might not have had the favourites tag at the start of the Premier Division Twenty20 Tournament, but the popular Motijheel outfit lived up to the weight of expectations of their strong fan following by lifting the first title of the season with a 20-run victory over star-studded Gazi Tank in the final at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Mohammedan's victory over Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful-led Gazi Tank looked a reality when they put on a commanding 171-4 in their share of 20 overs, thanks to a fine half-century by Rokibul Hassan.

Gazi, in their chase, put on a brave fight but eventually finished on 151-7 in front of a modest crowd in Mirpur.

Although a T20 tournament means more than just a ball-bashing competition with India perhaps setting a high standard of how it would attract more audience and money, the effort on the part of Bangladesh Cricket Board was uninspiring to say the least. After a mundane week the organisers tried to inject some flavour in the latest version of the game with music blaring from the in-field sound system during the break in the final. But it definitely did not match the standard set in the middle by the two fighting teams let alone the buzz of the IPL.

There were a few entertaining innings from both sides and Rokibul was pick of them and his

blistering knock eventually made the difference.

The national middle-order batsman milked the bowlers with singles and played some big shots during his unbeaten 40-ball 58 as Mohammedan piled up an impressive total after deciding to bat first.

The right-hander executed four beautiful boundaries and smashed two sixes but it was number six Dollar Mahmud who came up with a little whirlwind clobbering three towering sixes in his 15-ball 31 not out.

Nayeem Islam and captain Mohammad Ashraful were at the receiving end conceding 41 runs in four overs and 31 runs in three respectively.

Opener Nasiruddin Faruque however set the tone of the Mohammedan innings belting the first ball to the mid-wicket boundary. He made a brisk 29 off 16 balls that contained five fours and a six.

Mohammedan batsmen only showed respect to Gazi Tank right-arm paceman Rubel Hossain who conceded only eight runs in 3 overs.

Chasing a challenging total, Gazi desperately needed a similar act from their semifinal hero opener Imrul Kayes. But the left-hander got out for a duck edging the second delivery of the innings from Tareq Aziz Khan down the leg side to Nasiruddin Faruque.

Tareq struck again in his second over and the two quick blows left Gazi skipper Ashraful with a difficult task of winning the match. Mohammedan didn't have to wait long to see



IN FULL FLOW: Mohammedan's Rokibul Hassan follows through on an on-drive during his whirlwind 58 off 40 deliveries against Gazi Tank in the Premier Division Twenty20 Tournament final at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Razzak's video sent down under

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) sent the video footage of Abdur Razzak's action for independent assessment in Australia ahead of International Cricket Council's (ICC) fresh assessment.

"As per our bowling review committee's observation his action has been improved but we need to take suggestion from experts and that's why we sent the footage to Australia today for an independent assessment," informed Enayet Hossain Siraj, BCB's cricket operations committee chairman.

"It's actually a precautionary measure before sending him [Razzak] to ICC," he added.

Razzak, who has been suspended from bowling in international cricket pending fresh assessment of his action by the ICC, bowled in the just concluded Premier Division Twenty20 Tournament after working with the local experts for last few months.

The 26-year-old bowler was reported for illegal action, exceeding the permitted 15-degree elbow flexion range under ICC rules, by on-field umpires Daryl Harper and

PHOTO: STAR

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Thierry Henry

(Barcelona playmaker)

"I don't want to put pressure on (Lionel) Messi, but you have to say it, he is very similar to Diego Maradona, the best player I have ever seen. He enters the pitch and does things that only he knows how to do."



NEO Cricket

Sri Lanka v India

Fourth ODI

Live from 3:00pm

TEN Sports

West Indies v England

First Test, Day Two

Live from 9:00pm

ESPN

Sportscentre India

Sports News

Live at 8:30pm



Citycell B. League

Khulna Abahani v Arambagh

Venue: Divisional Stadium, Khulna

Time: 2:45pm

Abahani v Sheikh Russel

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka

Time: 4:30pm

Bishnu guides Junior SC

SPORTS REPORTER

Bishnu Das scored a second half brace to help Dhaka Junior SC collect full points in yesterday's Citycell 3rd Division Football League with a 2-0 win over City United at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

The other match of the day between Tongi KC and Mirpur Ekadash ended 2-2. Yasin and Sohel scored for Tongi but Mirpur, who had taken the lead through Ujjal, needed an equaliser from Mamun to snatch one point.

Amalesh wants it now

SPORTS REPORTER



Abahani coach Amalesh Sen said he would go for the kill against Sheikh Russel in today's B. League match to ensure that the professional league trophy stays in Dhamondi.

With the defending champions and the runaway league leaders, on 44 points from 18 games, needing just one point from the remaining two matches to seal the championship, the Abahani veteran added that he does not want to wait 12 more days to lay his hands on the silverware.

"I know we need just one point but we are eyeing the maximum from our remaining matches. Tomorrow is a big match and anything can happen. As our next game is far away, we don't want any waiting," said Amalesh yesterday.

Abahani, who rest next week, will meet Rahmatganj in their last match on February 17 but they would line up today for their fourth game inside 12 days.

Having won their last seven matches in a row, the Sky-Blues will definitely start as favourites to pick up at least one point if not more against

Wajed Gazi's men, who are now nine points adrift of the leaders with a game more to play.

"I know we beat them convincingly (3-0) in the first leg but Russel are desperate because if they can beat us, it would open up hopes for them to come back in the title race. They also have players like Alfaz, who has notched 14 goals this season.

"Their new foreign recruits are also playing well, so it would not be easy for us," said former Bangladesh international Amalesh, whose only worry was a half fit Mamunul Islam in the midfield.

Mamun appeared in the latter stage of their last match against Muktiyoddha but is still a doubtful starter while midfielder stalwart Joy, who was another second-half substitute, has recovered enough to get back in the starting eleven.

Russel coach Gazi, however, believed that Abahani are the only team in the title race.

"We went on the backfoot after the draws against Mohammedan and Brothers. In fact we are now fighting with Mohammedan for the second spot," said Gazi dismissing Russel's slim hopes of finishing atop the table.

Russel's failure to beat any of the remaining top three this season and recruiting an entirely

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Ricky claim stuns Kiwis

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The bails may have been dislodged five days ago, but the controversy continues to rage unabated. The New Zealand camp was left bemused on Wednesday when Ricky Ponting claimed Daniel Vettori had apologised to Brad Haddin via text message for his comments regarding the controversial dismissal of Neil Broom in the first one-day international on Sunday.

Replays suggested Haddin's gloves had broken the stumps, and Vettori made clear his displeasure after the game by stating the wicketkeeper "should have made some noise about it" before the umpire, Bruce Oxenford, ruled Broom bowled to Michael Clarke. Ponting attempted to down-

play the incident on Wednesday by telling reporters in Melbourne that Haddin "got an apology via text message



RICKY PONTING

from Daniel", but the captain may have succeeded only in fanning the flames.

Vettori and his teammates were stunned to learn of

Ponting's comments, adamant that no apology had been offered. "We've agreed both sides have a different version of events," the New Zealand team manager Lindsay Crocker told NZPA. "We should put the matter behind us and it was nothing personal."

Meanwhile, Brian McKechnie, the New Zealand No. 10 who was the recipient of Trevor Chappell's infamous underarm delivery in 1980-81, said Haddin's bullish stance had done little to quell the controversy. "I don't think that helped anyone," McKechnie said. "He would have been better off saying that, upon reflection, the replays were not so clear-cut and the whole thing would have ended there."

"The best thing here is that New Zealand won the game. If the result had gone the other way, I think this could have been a much bigger incident."



PHOTO: STAR

HIP HIP HOORAY: Triumphant Mohammedan players pose with the Premier Division Twenty20 Tournament trophy and cheques after the final at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Gazi questions revised fixture

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel coach Wajed Gazi has questioned the B. League committee's decision to allow the big names of domestic football -- Abahani and Mohammedan -- play their away matches at home.

"If big teams play their matches in Dhaka according to their wish, why call it professional league? What remains of the 'home and away' system?" the old hand asked.

Dhaka Mohammedan will play their away match against Chittagong Mohammedan in the capital tomorrow after a revised fixture allowed the match to be switched from Chittagong.

It was learned that the Dhaka giants appealed for a change of venue and the Chittagong Black and Whites, despite not agreeing at first, changed mind.

However, a league committee press release issued on Tuesday mentioned that the clash between the two Mohammedans has been switched to Dhaka due to 'temporary unplayable condition' of the MA Aziz Stadium.

"We have played our matches in Khulna and Chittagong but the federation is showing kindness to the big teams. It should be called the Premier League," opined former national winger Gazi.

"You have to think about the other teams too," Gazi reminded.

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Sheikh Russel retain TT title

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel retained the Senior Division Table Tennis League title when they came from behind to win a five-set thriller against Biman on the final day of the Super League yesterday.

Indian player Anirban won both the sets for Biman but the defending champions' local collection finally made the difference in a 3-2 victory at the Woodenfloor Gymnasium.

Anirban, who crushed local number one Mahub in straight sets (11-6, 11-3, 11-5) in the opener, brought Biman back winning the fourth set convincingly 11-9, 11-3, 11-9 against his compatriot Saugata.

In between, Russel's Indian import Saugata defeated Hamlet 3-1 and Mostafa beat Manash by an identical margin as the game went to the fifth set.

However, Hamlet proved no match for Mahub, who gunned down his opponent 11-9, 11-5 and 11-4 to clinch the show.

Russel ended on 25 points while Biman finished a point behind.

In another match of the league, sponsored by KDS Logistics, third-placed Palolic blanked Ajax 3-0.

GRAMEENPHONE WOMEN'S TRI-NATION SERIES

Bangladesh better now

Cricket

AMEERUDDIN ZAIN

Bangladesh women's cricket team captain Salma Khatun believes that her team has come a long way since the Asia Cup in Colombo last year.

"We have played two practice matches prior to the series and I think we are a much improved side now," said Salma during the trophy unveiling ceremony of the tri-nation women's cricket tournament at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The tournament involving Sri Lanka, Pakistan and hosts Bangladesh will commence in Bogra on Friday. It is also the first interna-

tional tournament for the women in the country after the visit of Hong Kong last year.

While the Bangladesh women cricketers will consider this tournament as an opportunity to make an impression as part of their effort to win the one-day international status, Sri Lanka and Pakistan will treat it as a build-up to the ICC Women's World Cup in Australia next month.

The Lankan skipper Sashikala Siriwardene said it is the only major competition her team will take part ahead of the World Cup. The Lankan ladies lost to neighbours India in May last year in the Asia Cup final but are confident to mark their supremacy in this meet.

Urooj Mumtaz Khan who leads the Pakistani outfit admitted that it is difficult to play cricket in Pakistan being a woman; but things are

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh's women cricket captain Salma Khatun (L), Sri Lanka skipper Sashikala Siriwardene (2nd from L) and their Pakistan opposite number Urooj Mumtaz Khan (R) hold the Grameenphone Women's Tri-Nation Cricket trophy along with Grameenphone's chief communications officer Rubaba Dowla during the unveiling ceremony at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

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