

Abahani overcome injury and Mohammedan

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Weakness can sometimes be a blessing. It has often been the case in an Abahani-Mohammedan match. And it was once again evidenced on Sunday when an understrength Abahani floored their bitter rivals Mohammedan by five wickets in a Premier Cricket League match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Abahani went into the Dhaka derby without five front-line bowlers. Their brave captain and country's number one pacer Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who was instructed not to bend his injured back, had to bowl off-spin, a rare sight for the Dhaka crowd. Still, they won against a better-health Mohammedan quite convincingly despite some degree of fireworks from Sanath Jayasuriya.

With this win Abahani overcame a major hurdle in their bid to retain the title as well as maintained their solo lead with 18 points from ten matches. The defeat on the other hand left Mohammedan glued to their previous collection of 11 points from ten games. They will now have to beat Mohammed Ashraf-ud-Din Tank at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium tomorrow to win a place in the six-team Super League.

On Sunday the platform however was perfect for Mohammedan and a non-performing Jayasuriya to end a dismal run in the league so far. The champion Sri Lankan left-hander, who scored two and nine in his previous two games, started in

style by sending the depleted Abahani attack to the ropes before Mashrafe's off-spin stopped him on 42 in front of a sparse crowd at the big bowl.

His departure saw Mohammedan collapse from a prosperous 144 for 4 to 198 all out in 47.4 overs. They lost their last six wickets for 54 runs.

Holders Abahani were understandably cautious in their chase of the moderate target and they were in pole position until excitement crept when they were left to score 21 runs from the last three overs.

But man-of-the-match Sahagir Hossain finished the chase in style by clubbing two consecutive boundaries after Mashrafe hit the first against pacer Tareq Aziz in the penultimate over as Abahani posted 201 for 5 with seven balls to spare.

The wicketkeeper-batsman, Sahagir was unbeaten on 41 and hit three fours and a six during his 52-ball knock but it was Abahani's new Indian recruit Ranjan PR Parida who shared a vital 74 runs with Imran Ahmed for the third wicket to steady the ship after the departure of two openers -- Tamim Iqbal (24) and Rony Talukdar (4) -- for 41 runs.

The right-hander from Orissa fell victim of an unfortunate run out for 46 that came from 64 deliveries with the help of five sweetly-timed boundaries.

But it could have been a different story had Rokibul, who was earlier run out for a duck for unnecessarily chasing a single, not dropped the Indian at extra cover off Sohrawardi Shuvo when he was on 20.

Imran made 38 off 80 balls with two fours before left-arm pacer Sajedul Islam bowled him.

Earlier, Jayasuriya and Nadimuddin gave Mohammedan a watchful start before the veteran Sri Lankan cut loose. The left-hander was particularly savage against Abahani's reserve pacer Shahadat Hossain during his 40-ball 42.

Jayasuriya smashed four boundaries and two big sixes -- one each against Shahadat and left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny -- before Mashrafe removed the dangerman in his very first over. Jayasuriya charged down the wicket, looking for another big six but was caught at midwicket by Rony much to the relief of the Abahani tent.

Mohammedan suddenly lost their way after two stupid run out dismissals of Farhad Hossain (47 off 81 balls) and Rokibul while Arafat Sunny caused the damage in the middle by taking three wickets, evaporating Mohammedan's chances of crossing the 200-mark as well as using their full quota of overs.

"I think boys showed great characters today. I told everybody to enjoy the game and forget about injury problems and they did exactly that. I think it's all about courage which helped us to win the game," said a delighted Mashrafe after the match.

BRIEF SCORES

MOHAMMEDAN: 198 all out in 47.4 overs (Nadimuddin 22, Jayasuriya 42, Farhad 47, Marshal 27, Faisal 27, extras 15; Nasir 1-22, Sunny 3-43, Mashrafe 2-35, Rezaul 1-33)

ABAHANI: 201-5 in 48.5 overs (Tamim 24, Rony 4, Imran 38, Ranjan 46, Sahagir 41 not out, Nasir 13, Mashrafe 11 not out, extras 24; Jayasuriya 1-33, Shuvo 1-28, Farhad 1-18, Sajedul 1-30)
Result: Abahani won by five wickets.



WE CAN CELEBRATE NOW! Abahani players rush to congratulate their captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (L) after he has just dismissed dangerman Sanath Jayasuriya (not in picture) during their Premier Cricket League match against Mohammedan at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Did U Know?

Barcelona's Hristo Stoichkov was banned for six months in 1990 for stamping on the referee's foot after being sent off in a Cup tie against Real Madrid.



What to Watch

BTV
Super Cup Football
Mohammedan v Brothers Union
Live from 5:30pm

ESPN
English Premier League
West Ham v West Bromwich
Live from 1:45am (Tuesday)



Premier Div Cricket League
Old DOHS v Victoria
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Mirpur
City Club v Partex
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium
Surjo Torun v Young Pegasus
Venue: BKSP

Super Cup Football
Farashganj v Ctg Abahani
Time: 3:30pm
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka
Mohammedan v Brothers Union
Time: 5:30pm
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka



Talk Turkey



Lalit Modi
(IPL chairman)
"We are a very safe country. You are sitting here, I am sitting here, we all are sitting here... we are not Pakistan."

Sky Blues, Ctg MSC in semifinals

SPORTS REPORTER



Citycell SUPER CUP

Chittagong Mohammedan confirmed the other semifinal berth from Group A after their 2-0 win against Rahmatganj in the first match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium with Raphael Sagno's brace.

Russel, who needed a 3-0 win to move into the semis and elbow out Amalesh Sen's B. League champions, never looked like the team to beat after conceding an early lead.

Zahid Hasan Emily, who set up Awudu Ibrahim's opening goal in the sixth minute, added the second midway through the second half while tournament's top scorer Emeka

Christian sealed the victory on the brink of the final whistle with his fifth goal.

Abahani finished group champions with maximum nine points and Chittagong Mohammedan with six as Russel (three points) and pointless Rahmatganj enter the consolation Plate stage.

Emily gave Abahani a flying start when the national striker sped down the left, drew defenders Aminul and Zahurul on way to the penalty box, cut the ball back from the line to beat Russel goalkeeper Azam for Ghanaian striker Ibrahim to tap into the open goal from two yards out.

With four foreigners, Russel tried to hit back but the cautious Sky Blues, who did not need to waste any energy ahead of the two-legged semifinals, kept cool.

After a rather quiet first half, Abahani came alive after the resumption when Ibrahim, their inspiration with his indefatigable runs, sent an overhead pass into the rival area. Nigerian goal

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PHOTO: STAR

Abahani striker Emily, who set one goal for Ibrahim and scored the second for the team, slices through Russel defenders Prashanta (L) and Hassan during their Citycell Super Cup match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

SL seniors' demand

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's new cricket captain Kumar Sangakkara and star spinner Muttiah Muralidaran say they want security guarantees on future tours after their team survived an attack in Pakistan.

The Sri Lankan team bus was ambushed by armed militants in Lahore on March 3 as it drove towards the Gaddafi stadium during the second Test, killing eight people and leaving seven players and the British assistant coach injured.

Sangakkara, 31, was one of those injured, and doctors in Colombo had to remove shards of metal and shrapnel from his arm after the team flew home last week.

"Players are concerned about their safety now, perhaps more than earlier," the left-hand batsman and wicketkeeper told AFP.

"But I don't think there is a reluctance to play the game anywhere. That's our living, we enjoy doing it."

Muralidaran, the world's leading Test and one-day wicket-taker, who escaped unhurt from the attack, said he would want more assur-

ances on safety from the host cricket board.

"I think every cricket playing country will have to take security much more seriously than before," the off-spinner told AFP.

Muralidaran, 36, said the security provided to the Sri Lankan team in Lahore was the "worst" he had seen.

"We were just sitting ducks... there was nobody to advise us, to fire back at them (terrorists)."

"It won't happen here," he said, referring to the Sri Lankan military's experience of nearly four decades of war

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Uncertainty over Razzak

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) rejected the second appeal by Biman to allow left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak play for them in the ongoing Premier Cricket League.

"Biman's second appeal was also rejected, so Razzak is now free to play for any team who have not completed the number of players they can take from the national pool," informed Mostafa Kabir, member secretary of Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM).

Razzak has been treated as a pool player after the Tigers left-arm spinner's action was cleared by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Thursday.

Mohammedan have been showing interest in Razzak to complete their quota of the national pool but Biman refused to release the spinner, who had been paid to sign for the national airlines despite being suspended at the time of the transfers for illegal action.

Razzak, permitted to bowl in the Twenty20 League, was later brought under the pool as Biman had four pool players instead of the maximum three. Other clubs had opposed Razzak's playing for the national flag carrier.

"I am looking forward to play in the league but I am yet to hear anything from the board," commented Razzak yesterday.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

The Independence Cup Handball Competition, organised by the Bangladesh Handball Federation, begins today at the handball court with two matches billed for the opening day.

Four teams are taking part in the tournament to be played on league basis first round. The final will be held on March 26.

Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) vice-president Mizanur Rahman Manu will formally inaugurate the meet as chief guest.

METROPOLITAN CHESS

Sirajul Kabir of Tangail Chess Power leads the points table with 6.5 points after the seventh round of the Metropolitan Selection Chess Tournament at the federation hall room.

Shamim Khan of Pradeep Sangha and Ibrahim Hossain of Faith Chess Club are in the second position with 6 points each.

Sheikh Anwar Hossain of Dhaka University Chess Club, Obaidul Islam Shahin of Jobs Vander, Habibur Rahman Sohel of Pritam Prism Chess

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Zahid pilots Biman

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

BKSP shock Gazi Tank

Zahid Niaz slammed a hundred to win a high-scoring last-over drama for Biman against Cricket Coaching School (CCS) in the Premier Cricket League at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

The Pakistani right-hander clobbered nine fours and two sixes during his 130-ball 117 as Biman posted 280 for six in reply to CCS's 276-7.

Biman improved their tally to 16 points from ten games, two points shy of leaders Abahani while the defeat all but evaporated CCS's chances to make the Super League.

At BKSP, a six-wicket haul by leg-spinner Tanvir Haider powered BKSP to upset Mohammad Ashraf-ud-Din Gazi Tank with a nine-wicket victory.

It was star-studded Gazi's fourth defeat in ten matches while BKSP improved their tally to eight points from same number of outings.

Shuvagoto Hom who hit 75 off 63 balls that contained seven fours and two sixes and the

young batsman added 103 runs with Nazmul Hossain, who scored 58 off 63 balls with four boundaries and a six.

Pakistani Shahbaz Butt (43) and Elias Sunny (44) were the other notable scorers.

In reply, Biman made a poor start by losing both openers Nazmus Sadat (2) and Zahurul Islam (22) for 36 runs but a 105-run third wicket stand between Javed Omar and Zahid consolidated their position.

Javed made 50 off 69 balls with five fours while a cameo 17-ball 28 not out came from Sajjad Kadir.

BKSP-GAZI
Anwar Hossain anchored at one end while wickets stumbled like ninepins in the other as the star-studded Gazi were shot out for 134.

The right-handed opener scored 75 runs off 139 balls with seven fours while captain Ashraf-ud-Din was the other batsman to reach double digit with 11.

Young leggie Tanvir was the wrecker-in-chief with 6-26 from his ten overs and Saikat Ali took two wickets.

In reply, BKSP rode on a 119-run opening stand between Saikat Ali and Shoumya Sarkar to register a massive win as they reached the target in 24.1 overs.

Saikat made 64 off 78 balls that saw five fours

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Essien the difference

AFP, London



Michael Essien confirmed his return could have a major influence on

Chelsea's triple bid for honours by striking the winning goal in Chelsea's comfortable 1-0 victory over Manchester City to keep Guus Hiddink's side in second place in the Premier League.

Essien has now scored in each of his two starts after coming back into the Blues side following the serious knee injury that kept him out since last August.

And after helping Chelsea ease their way past Juventus and into the last eight of the Champions League last week, the Ghanaian's winner against City moved his side to within four points of Premier League leaders Manchester United.

Hiddink had maintained in the build-up to this weekend's round of matches that a Liverpool victory over United at Old Trafford on Saturday was crucial to maintaining any semblance of a contest in the title race.

And with Rafael Benitez's side having pulled off an improbable 4-1 victory 24 hours before this game, the prospect of closing the gap on the leaders clearly provided Hiddink's side with all the motivation they needed to easily dismiss City's flimsy challenge and continue their impressive revival under the Dutch manager.

Last week's 2-2 draw

against Juventus in Turin remains the only blemish on Hiddink's record since taking over from Luiz Felipe Scolari last month, and the only surprise about the outcome of this game was that the home side hadn't put the game beyond City's reach long before half-time.

Chelsea's strength, pace and power was simply too much for their frail opponents who barely produced an attacking move of note throughout the ninety minutes

Once again Robinho was virtually anonymous away

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PHOTO: AFP

Chelsea midfielder Michael Essien (R) celebrates with teammate Didier Drogba after scoring the all-important goal against Manchester City during their Premier League match at Stamford Bridge on Sunday.