

Abahani start favourites Sky Blues meet SL Army today

SPORTS REPORTER

Current B. League champions Abahani will play the Sri Lanka Army team in the opening game of the AFC President's Cup Group-B Qualifiers today at the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS).

The game starts at 6 pm local time and will be broadcasted live by the state-owned Bangladesh Television (BTV). Ashgabat Football Club from Turkmenistan is the other participating team in this tournament.

Abahani team manager Satyajit Das Rupu and head coach Amalesh Sen is confident that their side will do well as they had a preparation time of nearly two months.

"We have prepared well for this meet and expect our boys to do well. When preparing for this challenge we took all aspects into consideration, which included acquiring videotapes of our opposition and assessing their strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, AFC gave us the wrong videotape for the Sri Lanka Army team but we have had a fairly good look at Ashgabat," said Rupu.

Coach Amalesh has not been keeping well off late as he recently had an eye surgery and

was suffering from jaundice but asserted that it will not have a bearing on the team's performance.

"The team has been in training for the last few weeks and there has not been any interruptions, although I was unwell for a while the assistant coach and Rupu has filled in the role and made sure the practice went well. Our main striker Zahid Hossain Emily is fully fit and available to play. Yesterday he got hit on the ankle but it's a minor concern and that shouldn't prevent him from playing," informed Amalesh.

Kazi Nazrul Islam who will be leading the sky blues in this prestigious meet is hopeful of repeating their B. League magic and winning the two matches viewing them as a semifinal and a final.

Abahani will be fielding two foreign players; Samad and Ibrahim from Ghana.

Opponents Sri Lanka Army seemed excited to be participating in this contest and are optimistic of their chances while stating their belief that Abahani were still the favourites. "We are excited to be playing alongside two quality clubs and believe that we can become the champions and qualify for the final round. Our team won the championships back home in 2008 and we have a three-month preparation behind us so I am optimistic about our

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR

Abahani players stretch during their practice session at the club premises yesterday. They will meet Sri Lanka Army in the AFC President's Cup qualifier today.



Chris Gayle
(West Indies cricket captain)
"We've had a bit of Onion, and it's burned us in the eye."
Reflecting on his side's ten-wicket defeat in the first Test against England on Friday in which Graham Onions took seven wickets on debut.



BTV
AFC President's Cup Qualifiers
Abahani v Sri Lanka Army
Live from 6:00pm

SET Max
Indian Premier League
Royal Challengers Bangalore v
Kolkata Knight Riders
Live from 4:30pm

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm



AFC President's Cup Qualifiers
Abahani v Sri Lanka Army
Time: 6:00pm
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Varsity cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

A 104-run fourth wicket partnership between Asaduzzaman and Alamgir Sarwar guided Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University to a six-wicket victory over Islamic University in the Public Universities and Services Cricket Tournament yesterday.

At the Jahangirnagar University ground, Islamic University rode on Habib's run-a-ball 61 to make 217 before being bundled out in 47.2 overs. Tomal added 30 off 35 balls.

In reply, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University overhauled the target, making 221 for four in 43.3 overs. Asaduzzaman hit 68 off 70 balls that contained eight boundaries while Alamgir remained not out on 72 off 69 balls with four boundaries and three sixes.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

BFF bids for SAFF meet

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has submitted a bid to host the 2010 SAFF Championship along with Nepal and initial hosts India in the recently concluded AFC (Asian Football Confederation) Congress in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

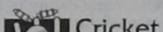
BFF president Kazi Salahuddin on his return from the AFC Congress informed that although India were still retaining their status as hosts of the championship, Bangladesh and Nepal had turned in fresh bids in anticipation of staging this prestigious eight nation meet.

The bidding opportunity emerged after India's reluctance to hold the tournament in January next year. A decision about it will be taken at the FIFA Congress in Bahamas in the first week of June.

"Because all the respective federations including ours will be present at the FIFA Congress, we have decided not to fix a new venue and will

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4

Mohammedan lift Women's Club Cup



SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan added yet another feather in their cap when the popular club clinched the first-ever Women's Club Cup cricket title at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The Motijheel outfit kept their cool in the battle of nerves to record a five-wicket win over pre-tournament favourites Bangladesh Ansar and VDP.

Mohammedan posted 127 for five in 34 overs in reply to Ansar and VDP's 123 in the allotted 35 overs.

Ansar made a poor start after deciding to bat as Mohammedan claimed their first wicket in the fifth over when Ayesha Akhtar fell to Tahin Tahera while the other opener Shahhaj Akter was run out in the 11th over.

Little resistance came from captain Panna Ghosh, who made 44 off 50 balls that featured five fours and a six, and Reshma Akter, who added 23 off 32 balls with three fours.

Shuktara caused huge trouble with her flighted off-breaks and took four of 29 from her quota of seven overs, but captain Salma Akhter however was probably the most decisive bowler with fantastic figures of 7-4-6-1.

In reply to the small target, Mohammedan started their innings very slowly and reached 52 for 2 in 20 overs. Salma made 28 off 46 balls with two fours and Shaila contributed 24 off 67 balls that contained three boundaries.

Ansar and VDP didn't help their cause either with some poor fielding.

Ansar's Shohely Akter captured two wickets for 26 runs while

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

CA unwilling to host Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Cricket Australia (CA) is reluctant to invite Bangladesh for the pending two-match Test series citing that it would not be commercially viable for them.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) however believes that their Australian counterparts will show due respect to the FTP (future tour programme) of the International Cricket Council (ICC).

The BCB stated that they have also sometimes had to accept the loss while holding the series but have always showed their respect to the FTP.

As per FTP, the Tigers were scheduled to play two Tests and three one-day matches during their second trip to Australia in August-September last year but the CA hosted them only for three one-day internationals.

It was then stated by the BCB officials that CA took the decision to avoid a broadcasting clash with the Beijing Olympics.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

We know what you're doing Buchanan

MOHAMMAD ISAM

It was tolerable for the first three games but after the Kolkata Knight Riders ignored Mashrafe Bin Mortaza for the tenth consecutive time, patience is running thin for millions of cricket fans in the country.

The Knight Riders turned a million heads when they insisted on landing Mashrafe in their books for an astonishing 600,000 dollars back in February. In fact the effort shown by the black-and-gold brigade during the auction to capture Mashrafe made sure that their fan base here was greater than before.

But the honeymoon is over, thanks to the oddball nature of coach John Buchanan.

With only four foreigners allowed, it was natural to load a Twenty20 team with world-class batsmen. Chris Gayle, Brendon McCullum and Brad Hodge were automatic selections while the last spot would naturally go to Ajantha Mendis or Mashrafe since David Hussey was unavailable for much of the campaign.

But Buchanan gave that spot to Moises Henriques, a little known Australian all-rounder.

Obviously the talent has not come through for the Australian: just 35 runs and two wickets from the four matches he's played.

Clearly the Australian coach did not take past success or experience as a prerequisite when it came to picking a foreign bowler. How else would one describe the snub on Ajantha Mendis after just a few opportunities when commentators are waxing lyrics on the less illustrious spinners on the dry South African pitches?

But the point here is picking a paceman and whether or not Henriques is better than Mashrafe. One would have felt Mashrafe was unlucky if the deadly Charl Langeveldt was picked ahead of him but to go for a greenhorn

ahead of experienced international bowlers is simply illogical.

But for the 'lateral-thinking' Buchanan, being illogical could probably be a compliment. Remember the multi-captain theory? The studios looking coach tried to employ what Kolkatans call the 'get rid of Ganguly' theory. It's history now even though McCullum has clearly been out of his depth with the bat. If the multi-captain theory had its merit then why wasn't the Kiwi dropped and the captaincy rotated?

When Gayle left, Morte van Wyk was picked as the fourth overseas player and although he did well, the Kolkata side has been inundated with wicketkeepers when the need of Twenty20 cricket is hard-hitters and wicket-takers.

The quirky selection decisions have greatly contributed to Kolkata's eight losses out of ten games and so has the squabbles we hear about every day.

The rather large support staff sent Aakash Chopra and Sanjay Bangar home and if the phantom 'fake IPL player' is to be believed, Buchanan's dispute with Sourav Ganguly is still on. Like most unsuccessful teams, the Kolkata Knight Riders also have the poisonous grouping problem where Mashrafe is neither in the Indian party nor in the foreign faction.

And all this means that only Ishant Sharma has taken the wickets while the second best has been Hodge's occasional off-break. So what could possibly make a successful coach not pick a likeable international fast bowler who has the track record, form and the hunger to perform?

Mashrafe was not just picked to fulfil BCCI's promise but because he has been in top form since 2007. Just before the auction, Mashrafe destroyed the Sri Lankan batting line-up in a

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



PHOTO: STAR

Champions Mohammedan Sporting Club players jubilate after beating Bangladesh Ansar & VDP in the Women's Club Cup cricket tournament at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Chargers thrash Royals

AFP, Kimberley

Dwayne Smith smashed a brisk 47 and Rohit Sharma grabbed three quick wickets as Deccan Chargers thrashed Rajasthan Royals by 53 runs in an Indian Premier League match here on Monday.

Deccan rode on West Indian Smith's 32-ball knock to post 166-7 before restricting Rajasthan to 113 for their sixth win in 10 matches. Rajasthan have so far won five of their 11 games.

Defending champions Rajasthan faltered against the pace-spin combination, with opener Swapnil Asnodkar alone offering resistance with a 39-ball 44.

Veteran Sri Lankan seamer Chaminda Vaas (2-19) did the early damage with two wickets in a lively opening spell to reduce Rajasthan to 19-2. The left-arm paceman trapped South Africa skipper Graeme Smith (one) leg-before and then had Australian Lee Carseldine (eight) stumped by Adam Gilchrist.

Off-spinner Sharma ensured an easy win with three wickets for just 12 runs off three tight overs.

Deccan earlier plundered 58 runs in the last five overs, thanks to man-of-the-match Smith who smashed four sixes in a superb exhibition of hard and clean hitting.

Spinners Yusuf Pathan (3-34) and Ravinder Jadeja (2-26) threatened to restrict Deccan to a modest total before Smith propped up the innings with a 37-run stand for the fifth wicket with Vaas (20).

Off-spinner Pathan struck with his third delivery when he trapped Gilchrist (10) leg-before and then accounted for Vaas and Smith. Left-arm spinner Jadeja also kept pressure on the batsmen and got a big wicket when he bowled Andrew Symonds, who hit a 19-ball 30.

BRIEF SCORES
DECCAN CHARGERS: 166-7 in 20 overs (Smith 47, Symonds 30, Suman 29, Vaas 20; Pathan 3-34, Jadeja 2-26)
RAJASTHAN ROYALS: 113 in 19.3 overs (Asnodkar 44; Sharma 3-12, Vaas 2-19)
Result: Deccan win by 53 runs.

School football

SPORTS REPORTER

Raja Surya Kumar Institute defeated Islamiya Aliya Madrasa 3-0 in the first zonal semifinal of the Citycell National School Football Championships in Rajbari yesterday.

In the second semifinal of Rajbari zone R.K. Institute beat Kushtia Zilla School 7-6 in the tiebreakers at the same venue.

In Patuakhali, Town School of Barisal demolished Baidarpur School 8-0 in a knock-out stage match where Rimon scored a hat-trick.

Victoria High School, Moulvibazar take on Zia Sar Karkhana High School of Brahmanbaria while Ramu Khijari High School of Cox's Bazar meet Gov. Nasirabad School & College in the zonal finals today.

Trophy unveiled in Mumbai

CNN-IBN, Mumbai

The trophy for the Twenty20 World Cup in England this June was unveiled in Mumbai on Monday.

The trophy has been designed in Australia and weighs seven and a half kilograms. Distinctive in its silver finish the trophy will be handed over of course, to the captain of the victorious team on the 21st of June at Lord's.

India are the defending champions and won the first T20 World Cup in South Africa in 2007. For the first time the women's T20 World Cup will be played alongside the men and former chairman of selectors Dilip Vengsakar believes India will be hard to beat.

And already the fans are expecting an encore from India. They gathered to sign up on a huge 80-foot long bat in Mumbai on Sunday.

The mammoth bat was thrown open to the public to write their views and opinions on India's chances. The organisers claimed it was the largest ever bat made and just looking at it, you can't really argue with that!

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

Ansar Academy ground to hold int'l cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has been entitled to hold domestic and international matches at the Assault Ground of the Ansar and VDP Academy in Shafipur.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the BCB and Bangladesh Ansar and VDP yesterday for use of the ground for the period of ten years.

The BCB will develop the infrastructure at the ground and will prepare the pitches and outfield. The ground will be used exclusively for cricket during the agreement period.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Hosts trounce Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh National Hockey team continued their poor form in the 8th Asia Cup Hockey Tournament in Malaysia after they were trounced 7-1 by the hosts in their second match yesterday.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

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