

Abahani retain Joy, Ujjal

SPORTS REPORTER

Two-time B. League champions Abahani yesterday retained the services of Arif Khan Joy and Mehdi Hasan Ujjal to strengthen their reserve bench while other contenders Mohammedan SC signed up only four on the last day of the players' registration, leaving the backup bench seemingly handicapped compared to the former.

Abahani on Sunday withdrew a three-year suspension on medio Ujjal, who last season left the camp halfway through the B. League without informing the authority and was subsequently banned from the Sky Blues outfit.

"We withdrew the suspension following his appeals on Sunday though he was granted permission to practise with the team at the BKSP four days ago," said Abahani manager Satyajit Das Rupu adding that he had also promised that he would not leave the camp again without prior permission.

Ujjal said that he was targeting a return to the national fold with good performances in the upcoming Federation Cup as well as the B. League.

The inclusion of Ujjal and proven campaigner Joy will certainly strengthen the Abahani midfield that also comprises Pranotosh Kumar, Jahed Parvez Chowdhury, Matur Munna, Abul Hossain and Mohammad Shahed.

The Dhanmondi-based side also roped in three new players in defender Shahinor Rahman, midfielder Habibur Rahman Sohag and striker Bachchu Mandal Bibop from the U-19 team to extend the squad to 22.

Holding midfielder Joy has been with the squad since the start of the conditioning camp at the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan while Ujjal joined the team on September 27.

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Did U Know?

The first amateur sports organisation was a rowing club - Philadelphia's Schuylkill Navy, founded in 1858.



Talk Turkey



David Williams

(Interim West Indies cricket coach)
"Of course I am interested. I am the assistant coach and it is only natural I would want to one day become the head coach of the team. I set certain standards for myself as far as my coaching goes and would like to end up as head coach." While expressing his desire to fill the full-time post made vacant after the axing of John Dyson.



What to Watch

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 9:30pm
STAR Cricket
England v Australia
Second T20 Int'l
Live from 1:00am (Wednesday)



Juventus star Diego (R) is ecstatic after scoring one of his two goals against Roma during their Serie A encounter at Rome's Olympic Stadium on Sunday.

Diego dazzles in Rome

AFP, Rome



Brazilian magician Diego teased and toyed with AS Roma as he inspired Juventus to a crucial 3-1 victory over their Serie A rivals in the Italian capital on Sunday.

The Turin giants went top of the table after the former Werder Bremen star's brace at the Stadio Olimpico secured a second consecutive win and condemned Roma to a second defeat in two games.

Juventus coach Ciro Ferrara paid tribute to his star player.

"He already showed last week the quality he has. Technically he is very good but he's also very useful in the defensive phase," said Ferrara.

"Of course we had some difficulties during the game but overall we played as we should and deserved to win."

"This win gives us confidence and confirms that we have great players here but I'm not reading anything into the six points at this time, even if we are doing well."

After a quiet opening the game quickly became a personal battle between the central figures on each side: Juve's attacking midfielder

Diego and midfielder enforcer Daniele De Rossi of Roma.

And Roma coach Luciano Spalletti admitted not all his players have the same will to win as De Rossi.

"It's also my fault if the rest of the team does not have the same desire to fight," said Spalletti.

Diego was at the centre of everything the visitors created and it was from his free-kick delivery that former Chelsea man Tiago forced the first save of the match from Julio Sergio on 23 minutes.

Moments later Diego scored a brilliant solo goal after Marco Cassetti inexplicably dithered on the halfway line, being robbed by the Brazilian playmaker who then held off John Arne Riise's desperate challenge before flicking the ball beyond Sergio with the outside of his right boot.

It was a deserved lead as Juve were the only side that looked capable of scoring but De Rossi changed all that in an opportunist moment on 35 minutes.

David Pizarro played a quick free-kick sideways and from 35 yards De Rossi smashed a shot into the top corner, taking Gianluigi Buffon and Juventus completely by surprise.

Sergio tipped another header from Tiago

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SL eye India scalp

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Having toyed with Pakistan and New Zealand, Kumar Sangakkara's Sri Lanka are eyeing India as their next scalp as the battle heats up to be the world's top Test team.

Sri Lanka defeated Pakistan and New Zealand by identical 2-0 margins at home to climb to the number two spot in the official rankings with a rating of 120 behind number one team South Africa's 122.

With India just one rating point behind Sri Lanka on 119 and Ashes losers Australia in fourth place with 116, the scramble at the top could see a new number one by the end of the year.

Sri Lanka need to win their three-Test series in India in November-December to overtake South Africa, while a 2-0 win for Mahendra Singh Dhoni's men will push India to the top.

Sri Lanka have never won a Test match in India, let alone a series, in seven previous visits across the Palk Straits, with eight losses and six draws since their first Test there in Chennai in 1982.

It's a record Sangakkara, who has won four of his five Tests as captain since taking over from Mahela Jayawardene earlier this year, is determined to set straight.

"The Indian tour will test everyone, mentally, physically and skill wise," he told reporters.

"But if we do our homework right, be confident, prepare as best as we can and go out there looking to win, and if our attitude is positive, we will do well."

When they last played a

series in India in December, 2005, Sri Lanka lost the second Test in New Delhi by 188 runs and the third in Ahmedabad by 259 runs after the first game in Chennai was washed out.

"One likes to play against the best and India will definitely be a tough side to conquer," said Sangakkara. "It is not easy playing Test cricket in India."

Both sides get a chance to

gauge each other's strengths when India join New Zealand and Sri Lanka in a limited-overs tri-series in Colombo from September 8-14.

India and Sri Lanka are drawn in different group for the Champions Trophy in South Africa in late-September, but could meet in the semifinals if they qualify after the preliminary round.



Force India's Italian driver Giancarlo Fisichella poses with team owner Vijay Mallya at the Spa-Francorchamps Circuit after the Belgian Grand Prix on Sunday. Fisichella finished second behind Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen to win the first points of the season for the Indian team.

PHOTO: AFP

MSC set to consolidate Ashraful only star capture

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

When defending champions Abahani all but confirmed a bunch of star cricketers with a mission to retain the Premier Cricket League title, traditional rivals Mohammedan has focused on mediocre cricketers to improve their standings.

The Motijheel outfit however seem all set to bring former Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful back who played for Gazi Tank in the last season. Some influential Mohammedan officials met yesterday in an unofficial meeting where Ashraful was present to decide on the team for the upcoming competition of the most coveted domestic league.

Mohammedan, who finished third in the last season, has been also trying to sign former national skipper Khaled

Mahmud, who has earned a reputation as a shrewd tactician in the domestic scene, as a coach in their bid to improve their standings to put aside the last few seasons' frustrating performance.

Due to budget constrain, the popular outfit didn't show too much interest on star cricketers except Ashraful but they want to make up for it by confirming the services of Mahmud. However, it will ultimately depend on the amount they offer for Mahmud.

If his deal does go through Ashraful is all set to bag a handsome amount of Tk 12 to Tk 15 lakh. Besides the ex-national skipper, Mohammedan also confirmed the services of Nasiruddin Faruque and Shamsur Rahman.

All-rounder Sohrawardi Shuvo is all set to switch to Gazi Tank from the Motijheel tent but Mohammedan is trying to rope in at least one national all-rounder. Mahmudullah Riyad, who had a notable contribution in the Tigers historic tri-

umphs in West Indies, and Mehrab Hossain are in the consideration and the latter has a good chance to join the crowd-favourite club from Old DOHS.

Mohammedan is also negotiating with the wicketkeeper batsman Dhiman Ghosh, one of those cricketers who returned to the mainstream after ICL following the board's amnesty. But it was learnt that Dhiman is demanding a high salary.

The other cricketers who may join the club are Nabil Samad, Saqlain Sajib, Dollar Mahmud and Delwar Hossain.

Mohammedan is yet to decide about the middle order batsman Rokibul Hasan.

The most coveted domestic competition, the Premier Division Cricket League will kick off with the T20 version from October 10 to October 18 while the one-day competition is scheduled from October 23 to December 15.

The three-day players' transfer will start from September 29.

AFC U-16 C'SHIP BFF not to send team

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday decided not to send its squad to the qualifying round of the AFC Under-16 Championship in Philippines citing financial crisis as the reason.

Monday was the last date of sending the entries for the Group E qualifiers and the BFF wrote to the Asian Football Confederation that they were not able to send the squad due to financial problem despite having full preparation for the event.

Bangladesh wanted to host the Group E qualifiers in Chittagong, but the AFC awarded Philippines to host the matches with each of participating six nations paying 22,000 dollars for accommodation, food and transport.

Bangladesh were supposed to play against Japan, Indonesia, Mongolia, Chinese Taipei and hosts Philippines.

Manikganj football

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Dashara Nabajagaran Sangsad routed Katigram Sporting Club 6-1 in the Hafizul Islam Khan Uttu Smriti First Division Football League at the Shahid Miraz-Tapan Stadium in Manikganj yesterday.

Rubel and Salahuddin Rubel scored two goals each while Raju and Salauddin added one apiece for the winners. Bimal pulled one back for Katigram.

Earlier, Dashara Nabajagaran Sangsad recorded an emphatic 3-0 win over Dautia Bulbul Club.

Force India go crazy

INTERNET, undated

Force India owner Vijay Mallya said his team were in shock after storming the Belgian Grand Prix podium for their first points in Formula One.

"This is a bit of a state of shock actually. Every TV, every channel; it's going crazy in India," he said.

It was more of a bittersweet moment for Italian driver Giancarlo Fisichella, who made the big breakthrough with a stunning second place from pole position at one of the sport's most demanding and revered circuits.

He finished 0.9 seconds behind Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen after an early safety car interlude allowed the Finn to close up and then use his car's KERS energy recovery boost button to power past.

"Before we came here...to finish eighth would have been fantastic," said Fisichella, whose last podium finish was with Renault in 2006.

"We are second. It is a great weekend for us; pole position. But considering our pace in the race, I was quicker than

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BCB's amateurish move

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The two-year tenure of Rafiqul Alam-led selection panel expired yesterday. Interestingly though Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is yet to decide on whether the same panel would continue with the job or if there will be new faces. It is an example of an unprofessional attitude from a sports body that loves to brand themselves as a professional organisation.

BCB has in recent times desperately tried to attach the professionals tag against their name but this kind of dilly-dally move hardly reflects what they are trying to preach.

One might say that it would not make any substantial difference if it takes few more days to decide on the issue. But the question remains why these lapses would arise in the working procedure of a professional organisation like BCB.

What was expected of BCB, particularly the relevant committee (cricket operations), was to do all their homework well before the expiry date to make their decision on the committee but the way they have dealt with the issue hardly goes with the meaning of professionalism.



Chittagong Abahani's Nigerian recruit Yakubu Audu Suleiman signs for the club as the others stand behind during the last day of the players' registration at the BFF House yesterday.

Brothers rope in unknowns

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Coach Wasim Iqbal confessed he was in the dark as a depleted Brothers Union signed up 24 players for the upcoming season on the last day of the month-long booters' transfer at the BFF House yesterday.

The Gopibagh-based outfit, Brothers, one of the established forces in country's football, were initially forced to let most of last season's recognised players go following the financial crisis. And even when they came into the scene of the bourse, they hardly got any familiar players to add to defenders Masud Rana and Liton Khan, the only duo who did not leave the 'All Oranges'.

Big names like wingers Zahid Hossain, Abdullah Parvez, left-back Mishu, goalkeeper MN Shakil, defenders Ariful Islam, Amit Khan Shuvo, midfielders Arup Kumar Baidya, Shakil Ahmed, Rezaul Karim Liton and Hasan Imam Rikto, striking duo Mehdi Hasan Tapu and Ashraful Kader Manju all left to join the club likes Mohammedan SC, Abahani, Muktiyoddha Sangsad and newcomers Beanibazar.

It was not all doom for Brothers, however as they roped in a few proven campaigners like Sheikh Russel's winger Tanvir, striker Bulbul, medio Yousuf, Muktiyoddha Sangsad's striker Milon, Dhaka Abahani's substitute striker Toru and Dhaka Mohammedan's defender Ripon

Khan.

"Except Masud and Liton, I have no concept of other players and honestly I can only tell you something about the squad seven days later. I am supposed to see them playing in the whole field today (Monday)," said Wasim, who last time coached Brothers Union to finish fourth in the 11-team point table.

Brothers Union on Sunday arranged a trial at its Gopibagh ground and picked the players from 43 booters.

"It will be a tough challenge for me to give the squad a shape ahead of the Federation Cup and I am looking forward to the B. League instead of the Federation Cup," said Wasim.

The former national footballer said that he would find out the weakness of the current squad and then ask the authority to fill up those positions with quality foreign players.

Manager Amer Khan admitting to have financial problems said that they had lacked organisational activities this time, but the players particularly Mamun, Nayan, Nahid, Tanvir and Bulbul had potential.

"After raising the fund, we saw that there was no quality players as most of the team decked up their squad," opined Khan.

On the other hand, Muktiyoddha Sangsad, Chittagong Abahani Limited and Chittagong Mohammedan SC turned up on the last day to complete their players' registration formalities. Muktiyoddha signed up 12 players, Chittagong Abahani and Chittagong Mohammedan 19

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