

Big guns win again

SPORTS REPORTER

After fireworks at almost all venues on the opening day, the Big Boss Twenty20 Premier League saw low-scoring matches on the second day with holders Mohammedan, Abahani, Gazi Tank Cricketers, Bangladesh Biman and newcomers Khelaghar Samaj Kalyan Samity recording their second successive wins yesterday.

Mohammedan continued their aggression, riding on a blazing knock from opener Tamim Iqbal, who followed Wednesday's 60 with another half-century (69) to help the Motijheel-based outfit to a comfortable 79-run victory over BKSP at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The dashing left-handed opener, hammered three sixes and six fours in his 47-ball knock while captain Mohammad Ashraful chipped in with a 30-ball 34 that included three boundaries.

Chasing a mammoth target of 156 under lights, the boys from BKSP were skittled out for just 76 in 20 overs. Mohammedan pacer Sajedul Islam took two wickets conceding 14 runs.

Title-contenders Abahani laboured hard once again in the second match to record a four-wicket win over Old DOHS at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium (DCS), thanks to a timely 49-run knock from opener Rony Talukdar.

Abahani consumed 18.4 overs to reach a paltry target of 97 losing six wickets after spin-

ner Nasir Hossain (2-14) and pacer Shuvashish Roy (2-19) had bowled tightly to restrict DOHS to 96 for six in their allotted overs. Fazle Rabbi of DOHS top-scored with 39 off 34 balls.

Over at the Fatullah Stadium, left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak and medium pacer Farhad Reza shared six wickets to guide Gazi Tank to a 11-run win against Surjo Torun Club, who could manage 104 for eight in 20 overs in reply to Gazi Tank's 115.

Surjo Torun were in contention when Imtiaz Hossain and Rajin Saleh were in the middle. They contributed with 46 and 26 respectively, but soon after their wickets fell, they lost their way and their hopes of a second successive victory was finished. Farhad and Razzak played vital role in Gazi Tank's victory taking three wickets each.

Earlier, Sanjamul Islam and ICL-returnee Tapash Kumar Baisya wrecked Gazi Tank innings with their fierce spells, Sanjamul claimed five scalps for 22 and Tapash returned figures of four for 19. Farhad Hossain (23), Nayeem Islam (22) and Farhad Reza (20) were the notable scorers for Gazi Tank, who on the previous day beat Cricket Coaching School by 83 runs.

At Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, national wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim struck an unbeaten fifty to propel national flag carrier Biman to an emphatic seven-wicket win over Partex Sporting Club.

Biman raced to 103 for three in 16.1 overs in

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Summer Athletics today An opportunity for reality check

SPORTS REPORTER

Athletes now preparing for next year's South Asian (SA) Games will get an opportunity to assess their own performance when the daylong 10th National Summer Athletics Competition takes place at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

Some 36 athletes including 12 women, who have been training for the SA Games since January, however will have to be content with the age-old hand timing in what would be the last competitive meet for them ahead of the biggest regional sporting carnival, scheduled to be held in Dhaka from January 29 to February 9.

Apart from them, another 350 athletes including 125 women from across the country are also expected to compete in the meet, which is being held after a four-year gap.

"In a bid to assess the performance of the athletes ahead of the 11th SA Games in Bangladesh, we are staging a daylong meet and hope the athletes will be able to evaluate themselves," said Bangladesh Amateur Athletic Federation general secretary Shah Alam at a press conference at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Of the 36 SA Games camp's athletes, five -- Nazmun Nahar Beauty, Jasmine Akter, Al Amin, Afzal Hossain Surya and Emran Bhuiya -- will miss the meet as they have been receiving higher training in Malaysia.

The meet has been decked out with 21 events including 13 for women, the same number of events included in the coming SA Games.

Asked whether hand timing will reflect the real assessment of an athlete's performance, Alam said that they would have to live with it at the moment.

"I agree that hand timing might give a false impression but at the moment we have nothing to do as the electronic board has only arrived and it will not be ready before one month," said the former fastest man of Bangladesh.

The federation is expecting to win two gold medals -- in the women's 100m hurdles and in men's long jump -- in the SA Games, dropping the hope of clinching the men's 100m sprint crown.

"Foujia Huda Jui and Al Amin are doing well in their respective 100m hurdles and long jump events and we hope they will win gold medal in the SA Games," said Shah Alam.

"Our hopes of winning the men's sprint were effectively dashed after the departure of sprinters Shamsuddin and Abu Abdullah," said a dejected Shah Alam.

Asked whether they were aware of the records of other nations' athletes, Alam said that they were more or less aware of it.

"We will however get an up-to-date picture during next month's Asian track and field competition in China where top athletes from the sub-continent are supposed to compete," he said.

Rain keeps Ali, Ram waiting

Tennis

SPORTS REPORTER

Rustom Ali and Biplob Ram marked a memorable day for Bangladesh's tennis when they became champion and runner-up in the doubles in the Prime Bank ATP Under-14 Tennis Tournament at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

However, bigger glory was put on hold as the singles final match between the two could not finish on the day due to rain.

Ali won the first set 6-4 and was trailing 3-5 in the second when the rain came to push back the match to the reserve day.

Earlier, Ali took the doubles crown with India's Dhankar Shaurya, beating an all-Bangladeshi team of Biplob Ram and Jamil Bhuiyan in straight 6-3, 6-4 sets. Hong Kong's Ka Ma Carin and Ching Chan defeated Indian pair of Moulika Ram and Shambhavi Dixith 3-6, 6-3, 6-3 to take the girls' doubles crown. Carin later won the singles' title as well, beating India's Moulika Ram 6-1, 6-2 to claim a memo-

orable double.

The day's most eagerly awaited event at Court 1 saw Bangladesh's Ali, who deposed top seed Duzbionjit Singh of Malaysia in the quarterfinals, take on Ram, who got rid of second seed Prajwal Dev of India in quarterfinals.

Ali was dressed in red shirt and black shorts for the final while his counterpart Ram was attired in ash shirt and black shorts.

Ram got an early break in the very first game, but Rustom broke back in the next to draw level 1-1. Ram went on to win the next two games to go up 3-1 and was looking to be in control. However, Rustom upped his ante and won the next four games on the trot and ultimately took the first set 6-4.

Ram started the second set more in command, he was playing the more aggressive tennis now, and sent Ali running for the ball. Ali's powerful groundstrokes were countered by Ram's wider range of shots that included powerful back-hands and cross-court winners. Ram was leading the second set 2-1 when the match was briefly interrupted by a dust-storm.

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PHOTO: AFP

SPRINTING TO SOUTH AFRICA: Argentina substitute midfielder Mario Bolatti is ecstatic after scoring the all-important goal against Uruguay during their 2010 World Cup qualifier at the Centenario Stadium in Montevideo on Wednesday. Bolatti's goal put his team through to South Africa.

Argentina scrape thru'

AFP, Montevideo



Argentina scraped into the World Cup Wednesday with a 1-0 win over Uruguay as

Diego Maradona finally celebrated mission accomplished after a stumbling, lacklustre qualifying campaign.

The two-time champions needed a goal by substitute Mario Bolatti six minutes from time to earn the three points and secure the fourth and final qualifying spot from South Africa.

Brazil, Chile and Paraguay had already made sure of their places in the finals.

Uruguay finished in fifth and now face a play-off against Costa Rica, who finished fourth in the CONCACAF region behind USA, Mexico and Honduras, to decide their World Cup fate.

In a poor match with few opportunities, the crucial moment came when Uruguay were reduced to 10 men when Martin Caceras was red-carded for a foul on Jonas Gutierrez.

From the ensuing free-kick, Juan Sebastian Veron had a shot charged down, but Bolatti, on the field for just four minutes after replacing Gonzalo Higuain, reacted quickest to the loose ball to beat Nestor Muslera in the Uruguayan goal.

Maradona, who had used over 70 players since taking over a year ago, opted to leave Carlos Tevez on the bench

alongside Martin Palermo, who grabbed the last-minute goal which saw off Peru on Saturday.

"I thank the team and the fans, who crossed the River Plate, for the privilege of tak-

ing Argentina to the World Cup," said Maradona, who was in combative mood at his post-match news conference.

"But there were people who did not believe in us and who treated me like rubbish."

Uruguay, needing a win to make sure of automatic qualification, were on top early with Argentina unsurprisingly nervous and defender Gabriel Heinze picking up a booking after just nine minutes.

Andres Scotti almost gave the home side the lead at the famous Estadio Monumental, but his header slipped by Argentina goalkeeper Sergio Romero's post.

Lionel Messi, who has yet to shine under Maradona despite his scene-stealing performances for Barcelona, attempted to catch out Muslera with a long distance free-kick.

The goalless half-time stalemate suited Argentina as Ecuador, the only other rivals for the last qualifying spot, were also being held 0-0 at the interval by Chile in Santiago.

The low-quality affair continued after the break with the first opening not coming until the 73rd minute when Diego Lugano headed wide from a pinpoint Diego Forlan free-kick.

Uruguay continued to press against an Argentine team happy to pack seven defenders behind the ball as the clock ticked down before Bolatti, in just his third international, put his country into the finals.

In Santiago, Chile took the lead against Ecuador thanks to a 51st-minute strike from Humberto Suazo. Ecuador, who had Segundo Castilla sent-off, needed to win to keep their qualifying hopes alive.

Five-time champions, and

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PHOTO: STAR

Abahani batsman Rony Talukdar cuts off the back-foot during his 49-run knock against Old DOHS in their T20 Premier League match at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Records roll on opening day

Swimming

SPORTS REPORTER

Seven records were set on the opening day of the 25th National Age-group Swimming Championships at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishthan (BKSP) indeed dominated the pool, winning 18 gold, 16 silver and 14 bronze medals, expectedly but it was their rivals, Bangladesh Ansar, who created more records.

Jewel Ahmed of Ansar

alone set two new records in the boys' 15-17 years age group while his teammates on the distaff side Nazma Khatun, Babita Khatun and Lucky Khatun set new marks in their respective events. Ansar finished the day with 17 gold, 13 silver and nine bronze medals.

Asif Reza Noor and Nazma Akter set the other records for BKSP on the day.

Jewel won the 200m individual medley with a record timing of 2 minutes 24.17 seconds, eclipsing the previous best of 2 minutes 30.34 seconds. He also created another record in the 400m

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Pexatech Open Int'l Rating Chess

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Pexatech Open International Rating Chess Tournament got underway at the Chess Federation hall room yesterday. Ninety-eight players won their first round matches in the day and earned full points.

Earlier, sub-continent's first Grand Master Niaz Murshed inaugurated the tournament. Mokaddes Hossain, general secretary of Bangladesh Chess Federation, delivered the host's address. Vice president of BOA Mizanur Rahman Manu, IWM Rani Hamid Masudur Rahman Dipu, general secretary of the federation were also present at the inauguration ceremony.

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DAY'S EVENT

Premier Div T20 Cricket
Mohammedan v Partex (1:30pm)
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium

BKSP v Victoria (1:30pm)
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium

Biman v Khelaghar KS (1:30pm)
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium

Gazi Tank v Abahani (5:30pm)
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium

Surjo Torun v Cricket Coaching School (2:30pm)
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium

Old DOHS v Kalabagan KC (2:30pm)
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium