



Mohammedan players stretch during their practice session at the BUET ground yesterday. They will meet archrivals Abahani in the Citycell Federation Cup final today at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Derby date in final

SPORTS REPORTER

Citycell FEDERATION CUP '09 Mohammedan are tagged as the favourites in the final of the Citycell Federation Cup when the defending champions take on archrivals Abahani in their season's first meeting at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

The end of last season saw the Taka one-crore Super Cup play host to both teams in the final in front of a packed stadium. And the football fans are again set to get feverish at the big bowl with Bangladesh Television telecasting the Dhaka derby live from the venue at 5:00pm.

Old foes Abahani and Mohammedan, as expected, reached the season's curtain-raising tournament final to fulfill the hopes of the football's governing body and now the

onus is on both giants to please the football fans through their performance in the classic showdown, the eighth Federation Cup final clash between two powerhouses.

Star-studded Mohammedan have been quite entertaining in their five outings scoring 22 goals, led by lethal attacking duo Nigerian Alamu Bukola Olalekan and Zahid Hasan Emily, who together have struck 15 goals.

The task of scoring has apparently become easier for both marksmen when they were getting tremendous support from dynamic midfielders like Zahid Hossain, Nigerian Christian Emeka, Mamunul Islam and Arman Aziz.

Coach Maruful Haq also admitted his real strength lies in the midfield and his first target in the final is to enforce the authority in the midfield and then build up the attack

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Abahani players jog during their practice session at the club ground yesterday. The Sky Blues moved into the final drubbing Beanibazar 4-1 on Sunday.

Rustom, Biplob in final again

SPORTS REPORTER

The stage is set for another all-Bangladeshi singles final inside five days when Rustom Ali and Biplob Ram advanced into the BKSP AFT U/14 Tennis Competition at the BKSP Tennis Court yesterday.

Rustom went 4-6 down in the first game against Duzbionjit Singh of Malaysia but soon staged a comeback to beat Singh in the next two games 6-2 and 6-4 while Biplob handed a straight 6-2 and 6-3 defeat to Indian Mehrotra Raghav in the semis.

Rustom and Biplob also played the boy's singles final of the ATF U/14 Tennis Tournament organised by Bangladesh Tennis Federation last week where Biplob clinched the title.

In the day's girl's singles, Indian Shabbavi Dixith and Ka Man Carin Ma of Hong Kong

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Shakib may play Semifinals today

SPORTS REPORTER

Citycell FEDERATION CUP '09 Star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is all set to return to action to boost Abahani as traditional rivals Mohammedan and Abahani clash in the first semifinal of the Big Boss Premier Twenty20 League at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today.

Shakib, who struck a record-equaling transfer deal along with Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Mohammedan's Tamim Iqbal, remained out of action to nurse a groin injury since he guided Bangladesh to 4-1 win in Zimbabwe in August.

In the absence of injured duo Mashrafe and Shakib, Abahani almost faced an early elimination. And they rode their luck to reach the last four as Group B runners-up only to set up the match against the perennial foes who, with an all-win record, progressed as champions from Group A.

"Shakib is fit for the semifinal as he completed his healing period," Abahani's cricket official Jalal Yunus informed. "He was also fit for the last group match, but we waited for the next match. It is not that he has decided to play the game defying injury for the sake of the club."

When contacted, Shakib said that he would undergo a fitness test before the match and play the semifinal only after he was declared fit.

Jalal said that his club has little expectation from the side as they were almost going to miss the semifinals. He added that he told the players in team meeting that they had been given a gift by the God and they should try to use it.

Shakib also believes Abahani will play without any pressure and try to execute their plan.

"I have no personal expectation from the match, but want to play my natural game," said Shakib, who also believed that Tamim has been the lone performer for Mohammedan.

Tamim made 245 runs in five group match at a staggering average of 61.

"Our top-order is playing good cricket at the moment and I think that is the key for success in Twenty20 cricket. But I am not getting complacent as anything can happen in this format," said Mohammedan's Khaled Mashud.

Satellite television Desh TV will telecast both the semifinals live from the venue. The first semifinal will start at 2:30 while the second match between Gazi Tank Cricketers and Khelaghar SKS starts 6:30pm at the same venue.

SA GAMES PM orders foolproof security

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked the authorities concerned to ensure foolproof security during the 11th South Asian (SA) Games to be held in the capital over January 29-February 9 next year.

She gave the directive while addressing the first meeting of the Organising Committee for the SA Games at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday afternoon.

The prime minister also assured the organisers of all necessary support from her government for unblemished arrangement of the SA games.

Finance Minister and chairman of the SA Games Organising Committee Abul Mal Abdul Muhith, State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarkar and Bangladesh Olympic Association president and Army Chief General Abdul Mubeen attended the meeting.

Youths finish with a flourish

Cricket

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Bangladesh Under-19 team pulled off a dramatic two-wicket win against the visiting England Under-19s on the final day of their only four-day Test at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday, thanks to superb batting by wicketkeeper-batsman Anamul Haque and some fired up bowling by the home team.

The match, which showed all the symptoms of heading for a draw after the first three days, stored all the excitement and drama right from the word go on the final day where the visitors suffered a stunning collapse, giving the home youths a victory target of 157.

Bangladesh took the challenge gamely with their openers Amit Majumder and Saikat Ali producing 50, making the task lot easier for the following colleagues. But once both the openers departed in quick succession, the home team showed all the signs of perishing quickly like the visitors, who started the day at 38-2 with an overall lead of 87 runs but collapsed to 107 in their second knock.

Amit scored 20 while Saikat made 29 before both were dismissed by England paceman Danny Briggs. Bangladesh lost their third wicket (Mominul Haque) with the score at 57.

But man-of-the-match Anamul and Imamul Hossain fought back nicely in the fourth wicket, contributing 34 valuable runs. When Imamul departed (91 for four), the home team still needed another 66 runs.

Although wickets fell at regular intervals at the other end Anamul kept his cool and guided Bangladesh to a nervy win with a priceless unbeaten 58. Anamul also scored 46 in Bangladesh's first innings total of 172 while the visitors made 221 in their first essay.

Earlier, resuming the final day on 38 for two, England lost both their overnight batsmen Charlie Roebuck and Joe Root in successive overs, without adding anything to the overnight score. Alauddin and Shaker sent them back to the dressing room. The duo struck again in the 20th and 23rd over, sending Ben Stocks (0) and Azeem Rafiq (4) and leaving England tottering on 46 for six. Michael Bates with 27 was the only touring batsman who could provide some resistance against the all out attack of the home

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PCB rejects resignation Younus to continue as captain till WC

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Jiaz Butt, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman, has given Younus Khan the backing he wanted, insisting he will remain ODI captain until the 2011 World Cup.

Butt appears to have ended days of speculation over the future of the Pakistan captaincy, reiterating once again that he had not accepted Younus's resignation. Younus handed in his papers last week after attending a National Assembly committee meeting, in which allegations of match-fixing during Pakistan's semi-final loss to New Zealand were investigated. Those charges - as well as persistent politicking in the team by a group of players to undermine his leadership - were reasons believed to be behind his move.

Butt, however, rejected the resignation and opted to meet Younus privately instead, in a bid to

change his mind. It is believed that at the meeting Younus laid down conditions which had to be accepted before he could return: he wanted to streamline the selection process, an assurance of a lengthier tenure than just on a series-by-series basis, and also changes in the team management. The PCB held meetings to discuss the matter though the meeting with the governing board today is said not to have raised the subject.

Though Butt did not speak of any such conditions, he was unequivocal in his support for Younus. "When I first appointed him in January 2009, there was no tenure for his captaincy but obviously sometimes security is needed. He is definitely our captain till the 2011 World Cup provided he remains fit. His performance has been excellent, he is fit, he has won a World Cup and as long as the selectors keep picking him, he is our choice as captain," Butt told Cricinfo.

Earlier, Butt had rejected Younus's resignation during an eagerly-awaited press conference at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore, saying

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- BTV**
Federation Cup Football Final
Abahani v Mohammedan
Live from 5:00pm
- Desh TV**
Premier Div T20 Cricket
SEMIFINALS
Mohammedan v Abahani
Live from 2:30pm
Gazi Tank v Khelaghar SKS
Live from 6:30pm
- ESPN**
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 9:30pm
- SuperSport3**
UEFA Champions League
Alkmaar v Arsenal
Live from 1:15am (Wednesday)
- SuperSport7**
UEFA Champions League
Liverpool v Olympique Lyonnais
Live from 1:15am (Wednesday)



Michael Schumacher
(Formula One's seven-time world champion)

"I have nothing to prove to anyone, not even myself. I still slightly regret having retired three years ago but there's no reason whatsoever for me to definitively announce that I will not come back."



PHOTO: STAR

TIME TO BEAT THE PAIN BARRIER! Abahani's world's best all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (L) talks with teammate and former national left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique at the club's Dhamondi tent yesterday. Shakib is likely to play in Abahani's all-important Premier T20 semifinal against bitter rivals Mohammedan today.

Clarke eyes India tour

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Michael Clarke, Australia's new Twenty20 captain, has said he's still hopeful of playing some part of the ODI tour of India starting Sunday. He continues to recover from the lower-back problem which forced him to return home early from the ICC Champions Trophy last month in South Africa.

Clarke is back in training as part of his rehabilitation from the injury that has troubled him over the past couple of years. "It's going okay, I had a bit of a jog this morning which is fantastic," Clarke said. "It's good to get out of the house and get back into the gym but at the moment I'm having

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Asif has to wait

CRICINFO, undated

Mohammad Asif's return to international cricket will be temporarily derailed as the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) clarified that he will not be travelling with the team to Abu Dhabi and Dubai for the ODI and Twenty20 series against New Zealand in November.

Asif was deported from the UAE last year, having spent 19 days in detention at Dubai Airport, after he was found to be in possession of a small amount of opium. Though criminal charges were not pressed -- reportedly after high-level contacts between the government of Pakistan and the UAE monarchy -- the court order called for his immediate deportation and banned him from entering the UAE until further notice.

The PCB had been trying to clarify what the situation was now that Asif is once again

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Under-19 cricketers pose with the winners' trophy after beating England Under-19 team in the four-day youth Test at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.