

Away games the key Bangladesh League kicks off today

SPORTS REPORTER

Playing better outside the capital will be the key to deciding the title of the Bangladesh League, which gets underway today with holders Abahani facing newcomers Beanibazar SC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Considering the performance in the just-concluded Federation Cup and the strength on paper, Federation Cup champions Mohammedan, reigning league champions Abahani, Sheikh Russel KC and a new-look Muktiyoddha Sangsad will go into the championship as favourites though the latter two team's performances were not up to mark in the just concluded Federation Cup.

The League this year will feature 13 teams and will be played at five different venues. The inclusion of Beanibazar from Sylhet, Shuktara Juba Sangsad from Narayanganj and Feni Soccer Club means that teams will have to travel to those places unlike two venues in Dhaka and Chittagong in the last two editions of the prestigious league.

It was evident in the previous two editions that teams from the capital struggled when playing against home sides in Chittagong and Khulna. Even giants like Abahani, Mohammedan, Brothers Union, Sheikh Russel, Muktiyoddha dropped points against Chittagong Mohammedan and Chittagong Abahani.

Nevertheless the performance, techniques, tactics, skills, fitness as well as a strong reserve bench will play a vital role in getting success in the marathon league.

Moreover, unlike last year, big teams will have to play more away matches this time in

unfamiliar environment against teams like Beanibazar SC, Feni Soccer Club and Shuktara who have showed lot of character in the Federation Cup.

Beanibazar and Feni Soccer Club have already showed that they would be very tough break on home turf after making it to the Federation Cup semifinals while Shuktara gave Mohammedan a run for their money before being eliminated from the quarterfinals in tiebreaker.

"It is true that big teams struggled playing outside the capital last season and it might be a psychological factor," admitted Mohammedan coach Maruful Haq.

"We need to improve the players' mental toughness as well as their fitness and performance compared to what they showed in the Federation Cup."

"These teams may be a cause for concern for the big sides if they keep up the good work in the Federation Cup," said the Mohammedan coach who is yet to conquer the professional league.

Abahani manager Satyajit Das Rupa also felt that the teams from outside Dhaka would be very tough at their own den.

"It is true that the teams from outside Dhaka will try their best to take the home advantage but our target would be not to lose a point and I think we are capable of winning away games provided that the grounds are good," said the former national midfielder.

Rupa said that they would not take any prisoners on the way to their hat-trick title.

Having got success in the Federation Cup, Beanibazar SC coach Jasimuddin Ahmed Joshi set his sights on the Bangladesh League.

"We are keen on taking home advantage

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PHOTO: STAR

Abahani coach Amalesh Sen (far left) watches his boys train at the club ground in Dhanmondi yesterday. The two-time B. League champions launch their campaign in the renamed Bangladesh League for the hat-trick title against newcomers Beanibazar at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.



Did U Know?

Everton's legendary striker Dixie Dean preferred to be called 'Bill'.



Daren Ganga

(West Indies batsman)
"Maybe it's the 12th man that's helping us win."

Who is overwhelmed by the crowd support in India, especially Hyderabad, in the Champions League T20 where he played for Trinidad and Tobago.



NEO Cricket

India v Australia
First ODI
Live at 11:00am

ESPN

English Premier League
Liverpool v Man United
Live at 9:00pm

STAR Sports

English Premier League
Man City v Fulham
Live at 11:15pm

Super Sport3

Primera Liga
Barcelona v Real Zaragoza
Live at 3:00am (Monday)



Citycell Bangladesh League

Abahani v Beanibazar
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
Time: 5:30pm

One-Day Practice Game

BCB XI v Zimbabweans
Time: 10:00pm

Gold eludes archers

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Bangladesh's lone hope of clinching a gold medal in the 5th Asian Archery Grand Prix went up in smoke when Emdadul Haq Milon was edged by narrowest of margins by Indian Tarundip on the final day of the meet at the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan yesterday.

Bangladesh, however, grabbed four silver and one bronze medals in the tournament while India kept their supremacy on the medal table with six golds, two silvers and three bronzes, followed by runners-up Myanmar, who took two golds, one silver and three bronzes.

Milon was just not lucky enough to give the hosts a gold medal in the men's individual 70m recurve bow as he lost to Tarun, who scored one point more than Milon's 107. Another star Bangladeshi archer Sajjad Hossain had won the individual recurve gold medal in the fourth edition in India last month.

The men's team also finished behind Indians in the recurve bow, scoring 214 points, three points less than the winners' 217.

In the women's individual recurve bow, all three medals went to India with Dola Banerjee, Belsri and Bombala

Devi clinching the gold, silver and bronze respectively.

However, the women's team of the home side showed some maturity in the recurve team event finishing behind champions India (206). Myanmar's women's team finished third scoring eight points less than Bangladesh's 191.

In the compound bow, Indian Chungda took the gold

medal scoring two points more than Myanmar's Ye Min Swe, who made 116. Chungda's compatriot Sing Sidu finished third in the event.

India, Bangladesh and Myanmar finished first, second and third respectively in the men's compound event while Myanmar bagged both the gold medals in the

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PHOTO: COURTESY

Emdadul Haq Milon sets his sight on the bulls eye during the 70m recurve bow event on the final day of the fifth Asian Archery Grand Prix at the BKSP in Savar yesterday. Milon won silver in this event.

Nat'l players can play domestic hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) yesterday decided in principle to allow the national players to play in domestic competitions in the face of constant demand from the clubs.

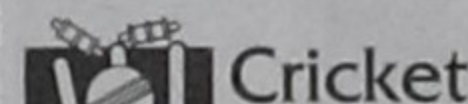
The meeting has also decided in principle to permit those players who have been in the national camp to play in the domestic competition until December 31, subject to the willingness of the individual, said a BHF member after the meeting at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

The national players are scheduled to return home early November after finishing their commitments in the German Hockey League and some friendly matches against Holland and Scotland.

Head coach Gerhard Peter Rach had earlier asked the federation to make all the players available for the national camp for the South Asian (SA) Games from January next year. The SA Games are scheduled to be held here in Dhaka over January 29-February 9, and

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India hit by injuries ODI series against Australia starts today



AFP, Vadodara

Injury doubts over captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and explosive batsman Yuvraj Singh hit India's preparations ahead of the first one-dayer against Australia here on Sunday.

Dhoni limped off the ground after hurting his left knee during practice Friday while Yuvraj was yet to recover fully from a finger injury that kept him out of the Champions Trophy in South Africa in September-October.

Dhoni stopped short of ruling out Yuvraj for the opening game while also refusing to confirm his availability.

"I am feeling a lot better now but I will see how it goes on the morning of the match," Dhoni told a pre-match media conference on Saturday.

"As for Yuvraj, all I can say is that he will surely be available for the second match," he said. "Most guys are carry-

ing small niggles but there is nothing major.

"You can't do much when someone gets injured while batting or bowling during practice sessions, which are so intense."

The injuries increase the home team's troubles, sulking after a first-round exit from the Champions Trophy.

Dhoni is the only specialist wicketkeeper in the 15-member Indian squad with the selectors opting to leave aside Dinesh Karthik, who was the back up keeper for the Champions Trophy.

India will however be strengthened by the return of aggressive opener Virender Sehwag, who missed the action in South Africa with a shoulder injury.

Australia, in prime form after winning a second successive Champions Trophy, have also been hit by injuries to leading players.

Key middle-order batsman Michael Clarke (back), first choice wicketkeeper Brad Haddin (finger) and left-arm paceman Nathan Bracken (knee) have all been forced to follow the action

from the sidelines.

The second match will be played in the western city of Nagpur on October 28.

TEAMS

INDIA (from): Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Sachin Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Yuvraj Singh, Suresh Raina, Virat Kohli, Ravindra Jadeja, Harbhajan Singh, Ashish Nehra, Munaf Patel, Sudeep Tyagi, Praveen Kumar, Ishant Sharma, Amit Mishra.

AUSTRALIA (from): Ricky Ponting (captain), Michael Hussey, Doug Bollinger, Nathan Hauritz, Jon Holland, Ben Hilfenhaus, James Hopes, Mitchell Johnson, Brett Lee, Shaun Marsh, Tim Paine, Peter Siddie, Adam Voges, Shane Watson, Cameron White.

FIXTURES

Oct 25	1st ODI, Vadodara
Oct 28	2nd ODI, Nagpur
Oct 31	3rd ODI, New Delhi
Nov 2	4th ODI, Mohali
Nov 5	5th ODI, Hyderabad
Nov 8	6th ODI, Guwahati
Nov 11	7th ODI, Mumbai

NSW has last laugh

CRICINFO, undated



a jackpot of 2.5 million dollars, in Hyderabad on Friday.

The 41-run margin of victory, however, didn't mean it was a one-sided contest: T&T dominated initially, reducing NSW to 83 for 6, before Lee's fighting innings lifted his side to a competitive total. He then returned for a fiery spell with the new ball, jolting T&T's chase with two early wickets.

The match was won and lost in ten overs -- the last five of the NSW innings and the first five of T&T's -- and it was Lee who imposed himself on the game-breaking moments. The game had several subplots -- the nervy collapse of both top orders, Ravi Rampaul's canny seam bowling, Steven Smith's sensible support act and the threat posed by Kieron Pollard -- but the one that had the biggest impact was Lee's all-round contribution.

He walked in with NSW tottering and proceeded to slowly pull them out of the hole before shifting gears to propel them to a competitive score. It was almost the perfect counter punch. Lee's first priority was safety -- he scored just 7 off 13 deliveries -- but, knowing that meandering to a below-par total would be futile against an aggressive T&T team, he upped the ante with precise and powerful blows in the final overs.

Lee launched his assault in the 16th over against Lendl Simmons: the first delivery -- a full toss -- was swung over square-leg for six, the

fourth was hit over long-on, and the last one carved to the cover boundary. From then on he repeatedly cleared the front leg and swung cleanly through the line. Navin Stewart disappeared over long-on and Sherwin Ganga was heaved over midwicket. Lee got support from Steven Smith, who did what was required: give the strike to Lee, try to pinch the occasional boundary, and ensure he didn't lose his wicket.

Lee was the last man out but wasn't done for the night. He returned to harass the T&T top order with pace, bounce and movement. He bowled the impetuous William Perkins with a full, fast and straight delivery and removed Lendl Simmons by taking a sharp return catch off a slower one. Stuart Clark, with his slower cutters, and Doug Bollinger, with his bounce from short of length, proceeded to strangle T&T's middle order and it was left to that man Pollard to try to do the improbable. And he nearly did.

Throughout this tournament, Pollard has batted like Lance Klusener did in the 1999 World Cup. No target seemed to be too much for him. Just like Klusener, he showed unbelievable composure: he started his innings calmly, dealing in singles, before he unleashed his own brand of razzmatazz. He pulled a free hit from Bollinger over midwicket, swung Nathan Hauritz over long-on and got the equation down to 47 from 31 balls when it happened. He went for another six off Hauritz but couldn't clear the boundary, and who else but Lee at long-on settled under the catch. With Pollard's exit, Trinidad's dream run came to a crushing halt, and they had to settle for second prize -- 1.3 million US dollars.

It ended with defeat, but the game had started splendidly for T&T. If NSW were to reach

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PHOTO: INTERNET

Star performer Brett Lee hoists his NSW teammate David Warner in celebration after defeating Trinidad & Tobago in the final of the Champions League T20 in Hyderabad on Friday.