



Biman's Zahurul Islam flicks the ball on way to scoring a match-winning 96 against defending champions Abahani in a Premier League match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Biman surprise Abahani Mohammedan's winning streak on

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Abahani tasted their first defeat of the Premier League season as they went down to Biman by 29 runs at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. Abahani's biggest rivals Mohammedan, though, kept their hundred per cent record alive with a comfortable 52-run victory over Surjo Torun at the Fatullah stadium.

Biman opted to bat first after winning the toss and their batsmen justified the decision with some sensible batting. The first wicket partnership between Abhishek Mitra and Elias Sunny brought 48 runs in quick time. After those two departed in space of five runs, Zahurul Islam and Jehan Mubarak struck in a pivotal partnership of 175 runs that laid the platform for a challenging total. Jehan was dismissed by Rabiul Islam after scoring 77 runs including five fours and two sixes. Veteran left-arm spinner

Mohammad Rafique then chipped in with a few quick wickets. But Zahurul was there till almost the end to make sure Biman post a challenging total. He looked poised for his hundred, but fell just 4 short as he was caught by Rafique off the bowling of Rabiul for 96 in the last over. In the end Biman put on 238 for seven in their fifty over.

Abahani found their work cut out very early in the chase when they lost both their in-form openers Rony Talukder and Imrul Kayes cheaply. Rony Talukder, the most prolific batsman of the season so far, left for a golden duck while Kayes scored 7 as both fell victim to pacer Shafiqul Islam. All-rounders Nadif Chowdhury and Reshmi Ranjan struck a partnership of 72 runs in the third wicket to revive some hope for Abahani. But Nadif's entertaining knock came to an end when Mosharraf Hossain got him leg-before for 44. Reshmi Ranjan too got out for the same figure a little while later. In the mean time, Abahani were dealt a crucial blow as Biman skipper Sanwar Hossain accounted for a cheap departure of their

influential skipper Shakib Al Hasan (12). Abahani's saviour on number of occasions this season, Mohammad Rafique didn't last long too (16). Abahani had by then fallen well behind the required rate. The late order batsmen tried gainly to inch towards the target, but their efforts were not enough as Abahani ended their pursuit on 209 for 9 in fifty overs, conceding a 29-run defeat.

Over at Fatullah, Mohammedan were as imperious as they have been so far this season to beat Surjo Torun by 52 runs. Batting first, Mohammedan built their innings around a 83-run knock from opener Shamsur Rahman that included five boundaries and three sixes. Shamsur's innings was well complemented by Mahmudullah Riyad who followed his 64 not out in last match with a 70 run innings from 80 balls. Sri Lankan all-rounder Farveez Maharoof played a cameo of 33 to help Mohammedan to 234 for eight in their stipulated fifty overs.

And that 234-run total proved little too much for Surjo Torun as their lower order

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Junior golfers dreaming big

SPORTS REPORTER

The junior golfers will leave the country for Thailand on Tuesday to take part in the 2nd Singa Thailand Junior World Championship to be held at the Royal Hua Hin Golf Club from November 26 to 29.

"We are not expecting something from the junior golfer in the meet as they are going to compete in such a championship for the first time. However, if the things go in the right direction and it is their given day, then they can bring laurels to the nation," Bangladesh Golf Federation joint secretary general Col (retd) SM Shawkat Ali said at a press conference at the Kurmitola Golf Course yesterday.

Ali also thinks that taking part in the junior world championship is a great step towards Bangladesh's progress in golf.

"We are just behind cricket in the International level in a

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Shaky start to warm-ups

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

The national football team made a frustrating start to their preparations for the SAFF Championships as they slipped to a lone-goal defeat to Sheikh Russel KC in the first of three warm-up games at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Hafan Al Barkah from Togo struck the decisive goal early in the first half.

Brazilian coach Edson Silva Dido's successor Shahidur Rahman Santoo chose to play all his players dividing them into two groups in each half against Sheikh Russel and despite losing the match he praised his boys for their performance.

However, it was most pleasing that country's number one goalkeeper Aminul Haq stood under the post for the first time since his last match of the Citycell Super Cup final in March this year. Sacked coach Dido was also present at the venue, but he declined to make any comments on the game.

Interim coach Shantoo's side, especially the midfield comprising of senior players, appeared disorganised in the first half, but the

new set of young players did well in the second half and squandered a couple of good opportunities to level the margin.

Star striker Zahid Hasan Emily even missed a 12-yard spot kick while winger Zahed Parvez Chowdhury and striker Enamul Haq rattled the woodwork.

"Any loss is a disappointing one and it was also a warning message for us, but I just focused on seeing the players today (Sunday) before picking up the final 20-member squad on November 26," said Shantoo.

"The boys did well in releasing and receiving the ball, but their fishing was not up to mark," Shantoo said. "Besides, there was problems in shooting, overlapping as well as short passing and I have to work on those certain areas."

The interim coach wanted more shots from the players on the target and the second batch consisted of young players were more accurate on the target compared to the first batch, whose shots mostly floated over the crosspiece.

However, Shantoo's side were reduced to 10 men in the second half with Manik picking up the red card in the stoppage time.

Asked why stoppers Wali Faisal and Nasiruddin were not seen in their natural zone, overlapping their territories to release cross for

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SERVING A TOUCHLINE BAN! Sacked Brazilian football coach Edson Dido Silva (L) makes a point while watching the first practice match of the national team with Shiekh Russel Krira Chakra from the VIP stand of the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Sheikh Russel won the match 1-0.



PHOTOS: STAR



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Premier Div Cricket League
Parlex v Victoria
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium
Old DOHS V Kalabagan
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium
Cricket Coaching School v BKSP
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium
Gazi Tank v Khelaghar
Venue: BKSP-2

Gunners misfire

AFP, London



Chelsea strengthened their position at the top of the Premier League by cruising to a 4-0 win over struggling Wolves on Saturday.

Manchester United remained five points adrift of the leaders after beating Everton 3-0 at Old Trafford but Arsenal stumbled significantly ahead of their meeting with Chelsea on Sunday, November 29.

The Gunners failed to score for the first time this season as they went down to a 1-0 defeat at Sunderland, with England striker Darren Bent notching the winner in the 71st minute.

Chelsea's win was their 12th on the trot at Stamford Bridge, a new club record.

Florent Malouda opened the scoring with a 25-yard drive and a Michael Essien double ended the contest before half-time.

Joe Cole's first goal of the season, 11 minutes into the second half, rounded off a satisfying afternoon for Blues boss Carlo Ancelotti.

"It was an easy game because we played very well," said the Italian, who was without Didier Drogba, Frank Lampard and Michael Ballack.

"It shows we have a very good squad."

After losing to Chelsea on their last outing, Manchester United returned to winning ways with the help of a stunning opener from Darren Fletcher, who lashed a bouncing ball into the top corner of the net ten minutes before half-time.

Second-half strikes from Michael Carrick and Antonio Valencia completed what manager Sir Alex Ferguson described as a "controlled performance".

Ferguson underlined the importance of staying in touch with Chelsea.

"If we get to the new year within a point or level at the top of the league we have a big chance in the second half of the season," the Scots said.

Arsenal's failure to score underlined the significance of the injury which will keep top scorer Robin van Persie out for up to six weeks.

"We can only blame ourselves because we didn't score," admitted Arsene Wenger, the Arsenal boss. "That's worrying because going forward we lacked sharpness and the desire to get behind defenders."

Liverpool and Manchester City's hopes of challenging for the title were left looking

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Div I cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Young Pegasus all-rounder Ijarul Islam played a brilliant knock of 146 not out off just 120 balls to help his side to a 5 wicket victory over Baridhara Dazzlers in a high-scoring match of the First Division Cricket at the Dhaka University Ground yesterday. Chasing a mammoth 295-run total from Baridhara which was built on Fahmid Ahmed's 93, Young Pegasus got home in 48 overs with five wickets in hand, courtesy of Ijarul's huge knock that consisted of 7 sixes and 14 boundaries and an unbeaten fifty from Shahadat Hossain. There was another century on the day. A 117-run knock from Sadaf Sarker helped Agrani Bank to a 7-run victory over Dhaka Wanderers at the City Club Ground. Wanderers could muster 260 runs for nine wickets chasing a target of 268 posted by Agrani Bank.

A four-wicket haul from Humayun Kabir helped Brothers Union to a 13-run win over Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club at Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium. In the other matches of the day, Indira Road won against Uttara Club by 52 runs while Bangladesh Boys defeated Gopeebagh Friends by 7 wickets.

Gayle likely for first Test

AFP, Kingston

West Indies cricket captain Chris Gayle, who abruptly quit the Tour of Australia to be with his sick mother, will head Down Under on Monday and hopes to play in the first Test, Jamaican media reported Saturday.

Local television reported on Saturday that Gayle told reporters he would be leaving on Monday for the trip back to Australia. The first Test of the West Indies' tour starts Thursday in Brisbane.

The report said Gayle was attending a football game involving his high school

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Pool system remains

Hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Though Bangladesh Hockey Federation has promised to keep national players free this season, the game's governing body has failed to dissolve the 'pool system' in the face of firm stance from most Premier League clubs.

The League Committee had a marathon four-hour meeting with representatives from all 11 clubs in a bid to dissolve the pool system on Saturday but they could not convince the majority including giants like Abahani, Mariners, Sonali Bank as eight out of 11 participating clubs took stance against keeping free the national players, who had earlier chosen to play in the German Hockey League instead of taking part in the domestic league.

Now each club will be able to rope in four national players, two less than last season's six while 17 national players except two goalkeepers, who traveled to Germany in September-October, have been bracketed and the clubs will also be able to field five foreigners in each game.

"We must be considerate to the clubs. Most

clubs have already formed their squads as national players were not supposed to play in the domestic league this season because of their traveling to Germany in quest of preparing for next year's South Asian Games at home," said BHF general secretary Khondoker Jamiluddin when reminded that they had earlier promised to the players to keep them free this season.

"We also made mistake by not allowing the national players in the domestic league in line with suggestion from coach Gerhard Peter Rach. We tried a lot to convince the clubs to keep the players free in the meeting, but they did not agree citing that national players had earlier wished to play in the German Hockey League, not the domestic league."

"Most of the clubs had resolved to allow two national players for each club in the coming league, but I personally requested them to increase it to four players," said Jamil.

Meanwhile, national players wished to play in the German Hockey League as they were assured of handsome money from their respective German clubs, but it turned out that the players hardly got their promised money.

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Manchester United midfielder Darren Fletcher (R) hits a first time volley to score a fabulous goal during their Premier League match against Everton at Old Trafford on Saturday.

Cricket

AFP, Centurion

Paul Collingwood, making a record 171st one-day appearance for England, took two wickets and held a superb catch as South Africa were restricted to 250 for nine in the second one-day international at SuperSport Park on Sunday.

Despite half-centuries from Hashim Amla (57) and Alviro Petersen (64), South Africa were unable to dominate against steady bowling which was backed by good ground fielding.

South Africa's total was only nine runs higher than they made in a Twenty20 international against the same opponents on the same ground seven days earlier.

After heavy rain in the area, which caused Friday's first one-day international in Johannesburg to be abandoned without a ball bowled,

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England paceman Tim Bresnan (L) celebrates dismissing South Africa captain Graeme Smith during their second one-day international at SuperSport Park in Centurion yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP