

BANGLADESH A-ENGLAND WARM-UP MATCH

Rokibul lone bright spot

Cricket

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR, Chittagong

Rokibul Hasan's century and three late English wickets saved the blushes of Bangladesh A after they scripted a batting debacle on the first day of their three-day practice match at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium here yesterday.

The second string side made only 202 in their first innings before the visitors slipped to 68 for three at stumps.

Right-handed Rokibul picked the best time to score his first century of the season, slamming an unbeaten 107 off 165 balls. He cracked 15 boundaries and three sixes in his three-hour stay at the crease.

He started cautiously as he reached his half-century off 82 balls but took little time to reach his century off 151 balls.

But apart from Rokibul, none of the A team batsmen made any impression on the visitors after Mohammad Ashraful won the toss and elected to bat first.

Ashraful himself scored just a single run before being caught off James Tredwell, England's hero of the day with six wickets for 95 runs.

The off-spinner accounted for Shamsur Rahman, brilliantly caught by Bell at silly mid-on, before removing Ashraful, Shuvogoto Hom, Noor Hossain, Syed Rassel and Robiul Islam in

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AND HE MANAGES TO CATCH IT: England's Ian Bell dives full-length to take a catch, offered by Bangladesh A opener Shamsur Rahman (not in picture), inches off the ground on the opening day of their three-day practice match at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. On the left is batsman Rokibul Hasan who is acknowledging the crowd's applause upon reaching his century.

PHOTOS: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

President's Cup games in Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER

Professional football league champions Abahani Limited will host Group A matches of the AFC President's Cup in May at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Abahani, the two-time Bangladesh League champions, have been drawn in Group A along with two-time President's Cup champions Dordei Bishek of Kyrgyzstan, Yoedy of Chinese Taipei and Nepal League champions (to be decided at the end of April).

Abahani, who also hosted the AFC President's Club group matches last year, will open their campaign taking on the Nepal league champions on May 12 while they will play against Yoedy on May 14 and fight against Dordei Bishek in their third and final match on May 16.

Meanwhile, some 11 clubs, split into three groups, will play the round-robin league basis matches and the top team from each group as well

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ATN Bangla

National Cricket League Final, Day Three Chittagong v Rajshahi Live from 9:30am

ESPN

Sportscentre India Sports News Live from 8:30pm English Premier League Wigan v Liverpool Live from 1:45am (Tuesday)

SuperSport5

Primera Liga Valencia v Racing Live from 2:00am (Tuesday)



Bangladesh A v England (3-Day Warm-up Match, Day 2) Venue: Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, Chittagong
National Cricket League Final (Five-Day Match, Day Three) Chittagong v Rajshahi Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur
Bangladesh League Rahmatganj v Muktijoddha Time: 5:00pm Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Mashrafe puts all behind

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Much has been made about the alleged rift between skipper Shakib Al Hasan and paceman Mashrafe Bin Mortaza. But man in question, Mashrafe, himself made it clear once again that the relationship was as good as ever, saying that he was like a big brother to Shakib. And he also said that the environment in the dressing room is warm and friendly.

"Things are normal in the dressing room. We are all united. Everything is okay with Shakib and other teammates."

Mashrafe said these after returning to the national camp yesterday and prac-

tised at the nets since his infamous 'walk-out' the day before the second ODI against England. Mashrafe later asked for withdrawal from the national squad citing family reasons. He joined the camp yesterday at coach Jamie Siddons's call and practised with other players.

However, he will not be playing the Test series and will be going to India instead to participate in the Indian Premier League (IPL) for Kolkata Knight Riders. Mashrafe asked for a leave till the 14th of April and had his wish fulfilled.

The decision to drop him from the team for the second one-dayer against England on Tuesday did not go down very well with the paceman. When he came to know of the decision, he walked out on the team and asked for leave from the squad for

remainder of the series. He later claimed that it was not his dropping, rather the way the things were handled, which led him to the decision. However, now that things have calmed down, Mashrafe has come to realise what was behind his dropping for the second match.

"I was dropped for poor form," said the paceman bluntly.

Having said that Mashrafe was determined to make a comeback to the side as soon as possible. "I will return with performance. The better I will bowl in nets, the better I will do in matches."

The Narail Express will join the national camp on April 15 for the T20 World Cup campaign. He has been selected in the 30-member preliminary

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Bangladesh cricket coach Jamie Siddons (L) talks to paceman Mashrafe Bin Mortaza as he oversees the bowling of Shahadat Hossain during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

8 players without team

Hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

A two-day special transfer window for the national hockey players opens today, although a number of players are still searching for a team the day before the start of the transfers, at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

As many as 19 players, who toured Europe to play the Germany League last year ahead of SA Games, have been kept in the 'pool' and each club have been allowed to sign up only four players from the pool.

Of the pool players, eight players including national skipper Moshirul Rahman Biplob have yet to find a team for the domestic league as most of the clubs have already decked up their squads during the main transfers that took place in October last year.

The Bangladesh Hockey Federation first opted to run the domestic league keeping the national players out because of the national team's preparation for the SA Games (which was ended in February) and each club were allowed to rope in five foreign players in the absence of the national players. Later, the game's governing body gave permission to the national players to play the domestic league in the face of club pressures, but they did not change the quota of foreign players and thus the national players are being deprived of a team.

Last season, as many as nine players also suffered problems in the pool system as they did not find any team and later the federation made all nine players free and Usha Krira Chakra with a mutual understanding with the other clubs roped in all nine players to rescue them.

Nevertheless, this time too, the players are going to face such problems as eight

players -- Biplob, Musharaf Hossain Kuti, Pushkor Khisa Mimu, Zahid Bin Talib Shuvo, Khandokar Hasan, Abdus Sajjad John, Golam Mostafa Manik and Rimon Kumar Ghosh -- have been searching for a club.

Mohammed hockey committee secretary Sajed AA Adel said that they have confirmed the services of Mamunur Rahman Chayan, Rasel Mahmud Jimmy, Kamruzzaman Rana and Jahidul Islam Rajon from pool while Adel's rivals Abahani's hockey manager Zaki Ahmed said that they had only confirmed defender Asaduzzaman Chandan while it was learnt that Usha KC ensured the services of Sheikh M Nannu, Taposh Barmon, Imran Hasan Pintu and Krishna Kumar.

"We were against the pool system from the beginning and asked the federation to keep the players open but we don't know why they did it. Except four quota players,

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Perfect reply and another failure

Cricket

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR, Ctg

It was a contrasting day at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium for Rokibul Hasan and Mohammad Ashraful as one made most of his opportunity while the other continued his woeful form against England here yesterday.

Rokibul slammed fifteen boundaries and three sixes in his unbeaten 165-ball 107 and was the only batsman from the Bangladesh A side who looked comfortable.

With no batsman sticking with him, it was number eleven Robiul Islam who ensured the right-hander reached three figures.

In fact Rokibul later said that first time he

had the hundred in mind was when he was 15 runs away.

"When my score stood at 85, I planned for the century and chose (to force) spin instead of pace ball to make the plan a success," he said adding that England bowled well yesterday but will not be tough to play for the Bangladeshi batsmen in the Tests.

Rokibul and Robiul added 26 for the final wicket before the hosts were bowled out for 202 runs.

Rokibul said he took his axing from the national team's one-day side recently as a challenge. "Every player faces more or less pressure after dropping from the main team and I took it positively and as a challenge," he said.

While Rokibul was happy with his effort, it

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BANGLADESH LEAGUE Farashganj, Shuktara share points

SPORTS REPORTER

A stoppage time strike from Rezaul Karim Liton forced hosts Farashganj SC to play a 1-1 draw against Shuktara Jubo Sangsad in the Bangladesh League encounter at Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Farashganj thought that they were going to post their third victory in nine matches when the match rolled into the stoppage time in the second half but Shuktara captain Liton frustrated the hosts levelling the margin two minutes into injury time after Touhidul Alam Sabuz put Farashganj SC ahead in the 55th minute.

However, it was the fourth draw for both Shuktara and Farashganj, who joined fourth-placed Brothers Union with 10 points from nine outings while Shuktara have seven points from nine matches.

School Hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Habiganj High School were eliminated from the finals of the Ecstasy 6th National School Hockey Championship when they suffered a 1-0 defeat to Arjot Arjan School of Kishorganj in their second and last match at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Kaiser struck the match winner two minutes from time and the Kishorganj outfit will face Jessore Municipal Preparatory School in the Group B final match today in a bid to qualify for the last four.

In Group A match, Aided School of Sylhet got a walkover against Kanchannagar High School of Jhenaidah yesterday but Armanitola High School of Dhaka qualified for the semi-final as the first team as they on Saturday beat Aided School 9-0.

NATIONAL CRICKET LEAGUE Rajshahi make slow progress

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhiman Ghosh, captain Khaled Mashud and Anisur Rahman hit important half-centuries as Rajshahi consolidated their position further in the National Cricket League five-day final against Chittagong at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Rajshahi reached 372 in their first innings after which Chittagong only had time to score 21 runs without any loss from nine overs at stumps.

But the day was all about Rajshahi grafting their way to a sizeable first innings score even though they had five wickets in hand when the day started.

Veterans Mashud and Anisur batted with patience, adding 77 runs for the sixth wicket. While Mashud hardly forced the pace, Anisur struck eight boundaries and a six in his 92-ball 52.

After Elias Sunny removed Anisur with the score on 256, Mashud found good support from Dhiman who made an unbeaten 66 off

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Rajshahi captain Khaled Mashud follows through on an exquisite cover-drive on way to scoring an otherwise sedate 55 off 220 balls on the second day of the National Cricket League final against Chittagong at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR