

NATIONAL CRICKET LEAGUE TWENTY20

Four franchises sold so far

SPORTS REPORTER

Four franchises have so far been sold for the National Cricket League (NCL) Twenty20 tournament.

ATN Records, who are taking care of the marketing aspects of the tournament, have sold Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Sylhet -- all for the base price of Tk 65 lakh each.

Beximco have bought the Dhaka franchise, IFIC acquired Chittagong, NM Group had Rajshahi and Riz Biz Events purchased the Sylhet franchise.

STS Group is set to get their hands on Khulna but the Barisal franchise remains unsought. As bidding for the teams ends this afternoon, it is believed that there will be a taker for the Barisal franchise.

The national selectors have singled out mega icon players to make sure that the leading players are distributed equally among the teams.

The mega icon players under the A+ Grade, will be sold for Tk 4 lakh each while A Grade players will go at Tk 3 lakh each, B Grade players will be sold at Tk 2 lakh each, C

Grade at Tk 1.5 lakh each and D Grade players at Tk 1 lakh each to the teams, who have all received a list of 125 cricketers from the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB). They will form 15-member squads from this list. The teams can also register six foreign players but field a maximum of two in a match.

The BCB and ATN Records decided that there wouldn't be any auction for the players for this year's competition because of time constraints, unlike the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) where the players' auction takes place and the cricketers turn into instant millionaires.

As for the title sponsorship, the marketing unit have received three applications, two of which are top mobile phone operators.

The NCL T20s are slated to begin on April 11 at two venues while the launch programme will now take place on April 7 after the Saturday event was deferred.

BCB delayed the introduction of franchises and the players' selection programme to ensure the players can return from the Port City League and rest

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The pain of brutal beating by police might have healed but the mental torture of it goes on for the country's ace shooter Asif Hossain Khan (L) and four others even almost five years after the Black Monday on October 2, 2005. On that day these golden sons were granted no respect and beaten up without mercy at the Gulshan Shooting Complex by the very men who were supposed to be their protectors. Here Asif stands in the corridor of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court yesterday to make his 25th appearance as an accused of a case filed by police following that heinous incident. To get out of this misery, Asif and co. filed a petition to the DC of Dhaka in May last year with a recommendation from the sport minister, appealing for the dismissal of the case. Unfortunately the petition is still lying with the public prosecutor.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Samir steers Russel

SPORTS REPORTER

Two goals from Moroccan striker Samir Omari steered Sheikh Russel to an emphatic 3-0 win over struggling Muktiyoddha Sangsad in the Bangladesh League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Kamal Hossain struck the other goal for Sheikh Russel, who raised their points tally to 33 from 14 outings to stay at third position while Muktiyoddha Sangsad, with their eighth defeat,

RESULTS

Sheikh Russel 3 (Omari 44, 66, Kamal 88)
Muktiyoddha Sangsad 0

remained on 14 points having played as many matches.

On the back of a 4-0 win over Shuktara Jubo Sangsad in their previous match, Sheikh Russel kept their tempo against a side who suffered a 3-1 defeat to them in their first meeting.

A resurrected Muktiyoddha Sangsad, however, gave some tough time to their mighty opponents with their foreign striking duo Eugene Jiah Gray and Raphael Sagno penetrating the opponents' backline though they finally failed to split them.

Sheikh Russel started the game promisingly and in the eighth minute Mohammad Rony should have opened the scoring off Omari's left-sided cross, but the striker drove it miles off target when composure was needed.

Afterwards, both sides appeared reluctant to press each other and it virtually turned into a boring affair until Omari put Russel ahead through a penalty, a minute from the break.

Capitalising on a low ball, Rajan Mia ran down the right to enter the danger zone before being tackled badly by Muktiyoddha defender Rasel Ansari and referee Mizanur

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Muktiyoddha's Eugene Jiah Gray (L) passes the ball under pressure from a Sheikh Russel defender during their Citycell Bangladesh League clash at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Malik gives his version

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Pakistani cricketer Shoaib Malik attempted in an interview published on Sunday to end confusion about his marital status ahead of his celebrity wedding to Indian tennis star Sania Mirza.

"Sania Mirza will be my first wife. I have been cheated by Ayesha Siddiqui," Malik said, referring to an Indian woman who claims he married her "by telephone" in 2002 and that she possesses documents to prove their alliance.

In an interview with the

Times of India, Malik said he began a telephone relationship with Siddiqui in 2001 after she sent him photographs.

He and his family repeatedly made attempts to meet Siddiqui as he wanted to marry her but she always refused, he said.

Malik admitted to the newspaper that in 2002 that he signed a "nikahnama" (wedding agreement) "thinking the girl I was marrying was the one in the photographs."

But "the girl who was accepting the proposal was someone else. That's cheat-

ing," he said, without giving further details.

Malik distributed a press statement and also took a few questions from a battery of mediapersons outside Sania's house in posh Jubilee Hills.

In yet another twist, Malik claimed he had spent time with Ayesha Siddiqui's "elder sister" who told him that Ayesha would not meet him as she had put on weight. Malik said he now believes the "sister" was actually Ayesha herself.

The labyrinthine and often contradictory tale has attracted avid public attention across Pakistan and India, two countries normally locked in fierce rivalry.

Malik, 28, arrived on Saturday in the Indian city of Hyderabad, where he is scheduled to marry 23-year-old Mirza on April 15. A reception will be held at the Taj Krishna the same day.

The couple -- who are both Muslim -- plan to live in Dubai after the ceremony.

But Siddiqui has threatened to sue Malik, a wealthy international sportsman, if he refuses to "formally divorce" her before marrying Mirza.

Siddiqui has circulated supposed copies of her Muslim nuptial agreement to media outlets in both India

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PHOTO: INTERNET

Pakistani cricketer Shoaib Malik takes questions from mediapersons outside Indian tennis icon Sania Mirza's house at Jubilee Hills in Hyderabad yesterday.

Wari avoid last place

SPORTS REPORTER

Wari Club signed off their Dhaka Bank Club Cup Hockey campaign with a 2-1 victory over Sadharan Bima at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

With both teams already knocked out of the tournament, it was a match to avoid the wooden spoon and Wari started off well with a goal in the sixth minute. Rana made it 1-0 through a field goal.

Four minutes after the breather, Faisal all but sealed the match when his field goal had the old Dhaka outfit go up by two goals.

Bima however pulled one back when Turjo struck a penalty in the 59th minute.

Delhi tame Bangalore

SPORTS REPORTER

Delhi Daredevils turned in an emphatic performance in the IPL T20 as they defeated Royal Challengers of Bangalore by 37 runs at their home ground last night. After a fiery start from Virender Sehwag (35) and Virender Sehwag (33), a blitzkrieg of 75 from just 46 deliveries from Englishman Paul Collingwood gave Delhi a challenging total of 184 for five.

In reply, despite a rollicking start from Jacques Kallis (54), Bangalore found none other to turn on the slog as they limped to 147 for five after 20 overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF
DELHI DAREDEVILS: 184 for five in 20 overs (Collingwood 75 not out, Sehwag 35, Warner 33; Appanna 1-24, Kumble 1-33)

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE: 147 for nine in 20 overs (Kallis 54, Taylor 22, Pietersen 16; Sangwan 3-22, Mishra 3-32)

Result: Delhi Daredevils won by 37 runs

Man-of-the-match: Paul Collingwood

Mahela powers Punjab

CRICINFO, undated



There were two captivating innings of contrasting styles on show at the Eden Gardens on Sunday and, eventually, it was the precision of Mahela Jayawardene's graceful strokes that helped Kings XI Punjab overcome the challenge set by Chris Gayle's exhibition of bottom-handed power-hitting. Jayawardene started in high gear and kept the accelerator floored all the way to his first Twenty20 century; his partnership with Sri Lankan teammate Kumar Sangakkara ensured Punjab's string of deplorable performances this season ended with a chase that was always several steps ahead of the asking-rate.

While this victory did little for Punjab's semi-final chances -- they need to win five more in a row and then pray -- it damaged Kolkata's campaign. Had they won, they would have climbed to fourth in the league after nine games, ahead of Chennai Super Kings, but instead they remained fifth, just above the Rajasthan Royals. Such a helpless defence of a formidable target would have been far removed from the expectations of a noisy crowd, high on adrenalin after Gayle had blitzed 88 off 42 balls during an innings that contained a 33-run over, the costliest of the IPL.

It began poorly for the hosts, with Murali

Kartik fumbling the first ball of the chase at point and allowing a single, which brought Jayawardene on strike. He got on his toes as Shane Bond delivered, rode the bounce, and cut his first ball to boundary. Jayawardene, who had asked to open because Shaun Marsh was injured, continued to thread cuts through the off side, against Bond and Jaidev Nadkat, and also found the long-off boundary with a graceful straight drive. His first leg-side boundary was a lofted six off Nadkat in the fourth over. He lost his opening partner Manvinder Bisla, who biffed few boundaries as well, in the fifth over to an arm ball from Kartik, but his intensity and strike-rate did not relent.

Yuvraj Singh, smarting from the criticism heaped on him by the media, ensured there was no choke, clouting 33 off 16 balls. He was applauding Jayawardene's century, off 55 balls, even before they completed the run that got him there. The match ended with successive boundaries from Jayawardene -- one helped past fine leg, the other pulled in front of midwicket -- off the first two balls of the 19th over, but the Eden Gardens faithful had been silenced well before that.

Unlike Punjab's chase, which was fuelled by consistently expensive overs, Kolkata's innings relied on Gayle awakening from a run-a-ball torpor to reach 200. He had faced only 24 balls

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Another one for Kim



AP, Key Biscayne

Serena Williams cupped a hand to her mouth and hollered from her front-row seat, like any other fan hoping to see a better match.

Or at least see Venus Williams win a point.

Kim Clijsters claimed another trophy in her career comeback Saturday by beating the older Williams 6-2, 6-1 in the final of the Sony Ericsson Open.

The match was even more lopsided than the score might suggest. Clijsters won 17 consecutive points in the second set, the equivalent of more than four games.

"It wasn't my best day," Williams said. "She played extremely solid, but it's not like I was blown off the court. Unfortunately, I was my own worst enemy."

Mercifully, it lasted only 58 minutes, ending with some ticket-holders still snarled in traffic on the causeway to the island.

When Williams hit one final errant forehand on match point, Clijsters raised her arms in triumph. Williams greeted her at the net with a gracious grin.

"I felt like from the beginning I was ready to go and really seeing the ball well," Clijsters said. "Of course she hit a lot of easy mistakes today, so I was just really trying to not lose my rhythm."

Clijsters also won the tournament in 2005. Andy Roddick bids for his second Key Biscayne title Sunday against Tomas Berdych, who upset Roger Federer en route to the final.

After retiring in 2007, Clijsters married and became a mother before returning to the tour last August. She won the US Open the following month, and now has three titles in her comeback.

"What has changed for me now is whatever I do at the courts, it's almost like my time off," Clijsters said. "I get to come here, work out and play my matches. It's like Mommy time. When I'm done, I'm really focused on my family life, and I like the balance."

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PHOTO: AFP

THE COMEBACK QUEEN: Kim Clijsters of Belgium poses with the Sony Ericsson Open trophy on the beach in Miami on Saturday. She beat Venus Williams of the United States in the final at Crandon Park Tennis Centre in Key Biscayne earlier in the day.

What to WATCH

Max & SuperSport2
Indian Premier League
Deccan Chargers v
Rajasthan Royals
Live from 8:30pm

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh League
Farashganj v Rahmatganj
Time: 5:00pm
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium