

Mashrafe back to lead Sultans

SPORTS REPORTER

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza surprised everyone yesterday when he entered the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium conference room with Alok Kapali in the Sultans of Sylhet's official press conference ahead of the National Cricket League T20s.

Mashrafe was named captain of the Sylhet franchise after being given the green signal from his Indian Premier League side Kolkata Knight Riders to play in the domestic competition at home.

Mashrafe has so far failed to make even a single appearance for the Knight Riders in the ongoing season of the IPL, being restricted solely to practicing in the nets.

"(Kolkata) Knight Riders released me because it is far better to play matches than just practice," said Mashrafe, who was enlisted as an A+ grade player but not an icon player, which would have tied him to one of the franchises automatically, rather than being claimed by Sylhet.

"(Sultans' co-owner) Ali Asif Khan had a talk with them (Kolkata management) and they told me that they would clear my payments although I'm playing for Sylhet

now," he informed when asked about his arrangement with the IPL team who are currently sixth in the points table with five wins from ten matches.

With no more IPL this season, playing for Sylhet will be his top priority and the Narail Express was optimistic of his team's chances in the tournament.

"We will definitely go for the championship. We believe that our young players would be important to our chances. We also have experienced players like Alok (Kapali) and (Mosharraf) Rubel so I'm very hopeful," said the national paceman.

Alok Kapali, the Sultans' icon player, will be Mashrafe's deputy while Forhad Reza, Nazmul Hossain Milon, Nazmus Sadat and Dhiman Ghosh will add balance to the side.

The Sultans also announced that Pakistan's Faisal Iqbal and Rashed Hanif and Sri Lankan Indika de Saram would fulfil their foreigners' quota.

Iqbal, the right-handed batsman who played in the Port City League in Sharjah earlier this month, received a clearance to play in the tournament from the Pakistan Cricket Board.

Indian news agency ANI had earlier quoted Iqbal as saying that he is looking

forward to doing well to force his way into the national squad after he couldn't make it into the Pakistan's World T20s side.

"I'm hoping that my performances in Twenty20 format will be noticed by the selectors because I've had several good scores in the National Twenty20 Cup and the Sharjah event," Iqbal said.

Mashrafe, who will play in the forthcoming World Twenty20s in West Indies, mentioned how the NCL T20s is a great stage for all players even though the national team has already been selected for the Caribbean tournament.

"This tournament will be a good preparation for us but I still think that the other players have a great chance to show their skills in this format even though the team has been selected. A good performance will further their chances in future selections," said Mashrafe.

He also hoped the franchises keep this trend of buying into divisional teams for the first-class competition as well. "The players will be benefited financially if the franchise system is also followed in the four-day format," he added.

Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhit is the chief patron of the Sultans.

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NARAIL EXPRESS RETURNS: Sultans of Sylhet captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza shares a light moment with his deputy Alok Kapali before his team's official press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Alfaz goes AWOL

SPORTS REPORTER

Without informing Arambagh KS management ace striker Alfaz Ahmed recently left home for England to play in some exhibition matches there.

"He did not inform us about his intention to tour England and we will now lodge a complaint about him to the football federation," Arambagh KS general secretary Zahidul Islam Khokon said after their 6-1 loss to Sheikh Russel KC yesterday.

However, Alfaz, who has scored nine goals so far in the ongoing Bangladesh League, informed his coach Wazed Gazi and promised to join the training within the next two to three weeks.

Gazi said that he heard that Alfaz, Arman Mia along with other players had gone to England to play in some matches there.

Jayasuriya wins Parliament seat

AFP, Colombo

Veteran cricketer Sanath Jayasuriya has won a seat in Sri Lanka's Parliament, a local official said Friday.

Jayasuriya contested Thursday's polls for President Mahinda Rajapakse's ruling United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) and left the island a day before voting to play at an Indian tournament.

The 40-year-old batsman and political novice was given special permission to cast his ballot on Wednesday, a day ahead of the nationwide election.

Jayasuriya garnered 74,352 votes to win his seat in the southern district of Matara, an official with the local election commission told AFP.

Jayasuriya retired from Test matches in 2007 to prolong his career in the shorter forms of the game. He has been included in Sri Lanka's squad for the World Twenty20 tournament in the Caribbean from April 30-May 16.

Sri Lanka's 1996 World Cup winning skipper Arjuna Ranatunga was also a candidate in the elections, representing the opposition Democratic National Alliance. He entered politics after retiring from cricket.

With counting still in progress, it was still unclear if Ranatunga would join Jayasuriya in parliament.

What to WATCH

Max & SuperSport2

Indian Premier League
Deccan Chargers v Chennai Super Kings

Live from 4:30pm
Bangalore Royal Challengers v Kolkata Knight Riders

Live from 8:30pm
ESPN

English Premier League
West Ham v Sunderland

Live at 7:55pm
STAR Sports

English Premier League
Hull City v Burnley

Live at 7:55pm
SuperSport7

Bundesliga
Leverkusen v Bayern Munich

Live from 10:30pm
SuperSport3

Primera Liga
Real Madrid v Barcelona

Live from 2:00am (Sunday)

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh League
Ctg Abahani v Brothers Union

Time: 5:00pm
Venue: MA Aziz Stadium, Chittagong

Rahmatganj v Ctg Mohammedan

Time: 5:00pm
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

MSC one-up bitter rivals

Hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan beat defending champions and bitter rivals Abahani 2-1 to emerge champions of Group A in their Dhaka Bank Club Hockey Championship match at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

After a barren but exciting first half, Mohammedan went into the lead with a goal from a penalty corner in the 44th minute through Ariful Haque Prince before substitute Belal Hossain made it 2-0 seven minutes later. Abahani pulled one back on the hour mark through Mohammad Milon Hossain.

The Abahani forwards then gave their opposition some anxious moments, but could not find the equaliser. This result gives Mohammedan the top position with four wins out of four while Abahani finish

as runners up from the group with three wins. Mohammedan will now meet Group B runners up Sonali Bank in the semifinals while Abahani will meet Group B champions Usha KC.

The match was however more memorable for on-field and off-field antics from the players and supporters of both sides. The umpire Latifur Rahman came under fire from the players a couple of times during the game and had to leave in a police cordon after the match. Supporters of both sides staged protests against match officials and federation officials during the match.

Back to the match, Mohammedan controlled proceedings for the first twenty minutes of the game raiding the Abahani backline with a couple of attacks and earning as many as three penalty corners. But it was either their forwards misfiring or the Abahani keeper Monowar Hossain Russel who came in between to keep Mohammedan at bay.

Abahani then pushed up their game and might have taken the lead had Niloy not wasted two glorious opportunities before the break. And they were to rue their missed opportunities as Mohammedan took the lead ten minutes after the breather from a penalty corner. From Musa Mia's push, Chayan pushed the ball to Jimmy who flicked it to prince for an easy tap in. Going a goal up, Mohammedan upped the ante and found a second through Belal Hossain.

It was a wonderfully worked goal as Rajon and Prince took the ball down the right flank with a one-two before releasing a square ball for Belal who lunged forward to make it 2-0.

Abahani though didn't give up and made a couple of good chances themselves. The goal came when Niloy pushed the ball upfield to catch the Mohammedan defenders off-guard. Milon Hosain had the easiest job in the

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Ariful Haque (L) of Mohammedan Sporting Club celebrates with teammates after scoring a goal against Abahani during their Club Cup hockey tie at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Mumbai vanquished

SPORTS REPORTER



A sparkling half-century from captain Kumar Sangakkara propelled the Kings XI Punjab to a comprehensive 6 wicket win over leaders Mumbai Indians during their IPL match at the Punjab Cricket Association Stadium yesterday.

The defeat means that Mumbai now still have to wait to confirm their semifinal participation while Kings XI still retain an outside chance of making it to the last four.

Kings XI captain Sangakkara hit a sparkling 56 with six fours and a six to see his side overhaul a victory target of 154 with six wickets and four balls to spare.

The Sri Lankan was ably supported by West Indian Adrian Barath, as the opener chipped in with a vital 33.

Opener Mahela Jayawardene also set the platform with a quickfire 31 from 18 balls that contained 7 boundaries.

The Mumbai Indians struggled to curb the flow of runs throughout with only paceman

Lasith Malinga setting himself apart with two wickets, albeit for a 36 run margin.

Earlier a three-wicket burst from Piyush Chawla and a similar return from Irfan Pathan restricted Mumbai Indians to 154 for 9 from their 20 overs.

The Kings XI bowlers maintained a restricted line and length throughout the innings, conceding just one wide. It was a performance that restricted the Mumbai innings to fits and starts on what was a sluggish pitch.

Chawla ended with 3 for 24 from 4 overs while Pathan took the same number of wickets for 29 runs.

For the Mumbai Indians, JP Duminy was the man who stood firm as he played the anchor role to score 35. Ambati Rayudu, who chipped in with 33, ably supported him.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Mumbai Indians: 154 for 9 from 20 overs (Duminy 35, Rayudu 33; Chawla 3-24, Pathan 3-29)

Kings XI Punjab: 158 for 4 from 19.2 overs (Sangakkara 56, Barath 33; Malinga 2-36)

Ganguly uncertain for next match

INTERNET, undated

Kolkata Knight Riders skipper Sourav Ganguly has injured his right ankle during their last match against Delhi Daredevils and is uncertain for the team's next Indian Premier League match against Royal Challengers Bangalore on Saturday.

The inspirational Ganguly, who was adjudged Man of the Match in their victory over Delhi Daredevils last night, went for an MRI scan today and the report of it is still awaited.

The team left for Bangalore for their away match but Ganguly, who is in pain, is yet to join the side.

Team CEO Joy Bhattacharya refused to comment on Ganguly's injury but said, "He is coming to Bangalore on Friday."

More twists in Sania-Shoaib marriage

PTI, Hyderabad

In yet another twist to their controversial wedding build-up, Indian tennis star Sania Mirza and Pakistan cricketer Shoaib Malik sought to get married yesterday but were forced to push it back to the original date of April 15 due to legal hassles.

The marriage, which was confirmed by the Quazi Azmatullah Jaffri of Dar-ul-Qazat earlier in the day, could not be performed as Shoaib reportedly could not submit necessary documents like passport and clearances with regard to closing of the criminal case filed against him.

The Hyderabad police took Shoaib's passport after Ayesha Siddiqui, a Hyderabad girl whom he allegedly married in 2002, lodged an FIR against him for dumping her after the marriage.

Shoaib, being a foreign national, his passport was deposited in a local court as part of the police procedure.

AP adds: New barricades were erected outside their home in Hyderabad to keep the media away.

Sania's aunt, Hameeda Usman, denied the wedding date had been changed.

Zia in 2nd position

SPORTS REPORTER

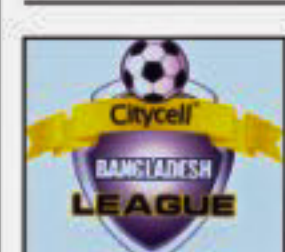
GM Ziaur Rahman shared second position along with 12 other players at the close of the fifth round in the third Kuala Lumpur Chess Championship in Malaysia yesterday.

Zia drew with Uzbek IM Khamrakulov Dzhurabek in the fifth round to raise his tally to four points. GM Niaz Murshed shared the third place along with nine other players. Niaz have now 3.5 points as he drew with FM De Ramos Julius Joseph of Philippines.

Some 111 players including 12 Grandmasters, four women Grandmasters and 18 IMs from 22 countries are taking part in the event.

Sheikh Russel rout Arambagh

SPORTS REPORTER



Braces from Mohammad Rony and Salah Maflooh helped Sheikh Russel KC record their 11th victory in the Bangladesh League as they thumped Arambagh KS 6-1 in their away match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Apart from Rony and Maflooh's doubles, midfielders Jamal Nakhle and Abdullah Parvez added one goal apiece against Arambagh, who held Sheikh Russel to a 2-2 draw in their home match.

Sheikh Russel kept their third place with 36 points from 15 matches, four points behind second-placed Mohammedan SC.

In the day's other match, visitors Farashganj SC handed a 2-1 defeat to hosts Beanibazar SC at Sylhet Stadium to leapfrog into sixth place from the 11th position to join Arambagh and Brothers Union with 15 points from as many matches.

After a barren first half, Farashganj went ahead in the 76th minute through a strike from Sabuj before Nigerian striker Kalu Johnson doubled the margin one minute from time to give the old Dhaka outfit their third win in 15 matches. Shohel Rana pulled one goal back in stoppage time but could not avert Beanibazar's sixth defeat in the league.

Back at BNS, the margin might give an impression of a one-sided affair, but the fact was that both Arambagh and Sheikh Russel presented a lively game and the ability of availing opportunities was what actually made the difference between them.

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IHF U-21 HANDBALL Hosts' hopes dashed

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Bangladesh's dream of playing the final of the IHF Handball Challenge Trophy were dashed when they suffered a 33-24 defeat to Pakistan in the semifinal at the Shurawardi Indoor National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Now Pakistan will play in today's final against their perennial foes India, who handed an emphatic 45-18 defeat to Yemen in the other semi at the same venue.

The Bangladesh boys took to the field with high hopes of playing the final but from the beginning they appeared nervous and struggled to grip the ball properly and took huge pressure on themselves and Pakistan availing on the hosts' lapse went two goals up through penalty throws.

Bangladesh opened their account when Pakistan were 4-0 up and the hosts never came back in the game with Pakistan ending the first half with a comfortable 14-5 lead as Bangladesh's strategy to attack the direct route was well blocked by Pakistan's tall players.

Pakistan were fast in the counter attack and most of their goals came through that way and simultaneously Bangladeshi struggled to restrict the tall Pakistani players and conceded goals one after another through both wings.

However, after the resumption, Bangladesh put up a brief resistance and went close to levelling the scores and were 19-23 at one stage in the second half but they could finally not recover from their slow runs and went down by a distance.

Besides, the host side were pretty unlucky as many of their

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ALL IN VAIN: Bangladesh's Robiul Islam tries to attack the Pakistan goal during their Exim Bank IHF Handball Challenge Trophy game at the National Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.