

Yet Rangers thru' Kings, Blazers to fight for 4th place

SPORTS REPORTER



Shahadat Hossain and Mohammad Rafique exploited the condition brilliantly as Dhaka Dynamites continued their winning run in the

Destiny Group National Cricket League T20s with an emphatic eight-wicket victory over Rajshahi Rangers at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

But despite their third straight defeat Rajshahi Rangers still moved into the semifinals as Kings of Khulna lost the day's first match against another semifinalists Sultans of Sylhet by 37 runs at the same venue.

The semifinals line-up will be completed after today's last league match between Kings of Khulna and Barisal Blazers who both have one win to their credit from four matches.

"We are hopeful about our chances of playing the semifinals. We need to play our natural game which is not so easy though," said national and Khulna skipper Shakib Al Hasan, who have been going through a lean patch ahead of the ICC Twenty20 World Cup to be held in West Indies.

TEAM	P	W	L	T	Pts
DHAKADYNAMITES	5	5	0	0	10
SULTANS OF SYLHET	5	4	1	0	8
RAJSHAHIRANGERS	5	2	3	0	4
BARISAL BLAZERS	4	1	3	0	2
KINGS OF KHULNA	4	1	3	0	2
CYLCONES OF CHITTAGONG	5	1	4	0	2

The Bangladesh skipper was also not worried with the national players' poor showing in the tournament ahead of the World Cup. "I don't think it would be a big problem because we had an impressive performance in our last international engagement. And what I believe is that it would be unwise to expect too much from the tournament because we are in a very tough group with Australia and Pakistan," he explained.

Khulna's batting was once again found wanting as they were restricted to 113-7 in reply to Sylhet's 150 for eight. And it was young spinner Farid Uddin Masud who made the damages by taking three wickets for 16 runs in four overs and was later adjudged man-of-the-match for a second time in the tournament.

Kings of Khulna lost wickets at regular intervals and Forhad Hossain made team highest 26 off 34 balls that contained only one boundary. Earlier riding on an 86-run opening partnership between Gazi Salahuddin and Kaushalya Weeraratna, Sultans of Sylhet scored 150 for 8 in their share of 20 overs. Salahuddin hit a 39-ball 42 that featured five boundaries and a six while Sri Lankan Weeraratna smashed seven fours and a six to make a 32-ball 47.

Back to the day's second game, lanky pacer Shahadat gave Dhaka Dynamites a flying start on a slow track as he removed both the openers -- Aiden Blizard and Hannan Sarker -- in the very first over and Rajshahi failed to recover from that early jolt as they scored the tournament's lowest score of 83 for seven wickets.

Shahadat picked up two wickets for 13 runs and was adjudged man-of-the-match while

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Off-spinner Farid Uddin Masud (2nd from L) celebrates with Sultans of Sylhet captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza after he had Mohammad Mithun (R) of Kings of Khulna out stumped in the National Cricket League T20s at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



MAX & SuperSport2

Indian Premier League
Punjab v Chennai
Live from 4:30pm
Delhi v Deccan
Live from 8:30pm

ESPN

English Premiership
Wigan v Arsenal
Live from 6:25pm
Portsmouth v Aston Villa
Live from 8:55pm

SuperSports3

Primera Liga
Real Madrid v Valencia
Live from 1:00am (Monday)

ATN Bangla

NCL T20s
Barisal v Khulna
Live from 2:20pm



NCL T20s
Barisal v Khulna
Time: 2:20pm
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Mirpur

Stop this joke

AL-AMIN

Anarchy is probably the suitable word for what transpired in the Club Cup hockey final on Friday.

It is nothing new in our domestic circuit where big clubs flex their muscles in an effort to bend the law. So when Mohammedan Sporting Club, one of the two most popular clubs, wished to field a Malaysian player without proper registration in the final against Usha Krira Chakra, the onus fell on the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) to protect a sporting Usha by upholding the law of the game. But what followed in the name of 'fair play' was the biggest joke the country's sports fraternity has ever experienced.

The game started under protest from Usha after 80 minutes behind schedule with Mohammedan swaggering on to the field with their unregistered Malaysian player. Just to remind the readers the match could not have even taken place had it been Abahani instead of the hapless Usha.

The final, after all the fuss, was heading to a peaceful ending with Mohammedan leading Usha 4-2 when bad light halted play 15 minutes before the regulation 70-minute play.

The light was really bad and Usha had a valid case to refuse to continue. The situation demanded some sense from the BHF officials at that point as the law clearly stipulates that 'any unfinished game should resume the next day from the point where it ended'.

But the protectors of law defied it by declaring Mohammedan the Club Cup champions with an excuse that chief guest Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith 'might consider it as a failure'.

This was what BHF general secretary Khandaker Jamil Uddin felt while defending a decision that belies all logic. The decision to declare a team winner in this fashion is not only unheard of but depicts how badly hockey is being managed in our country.

It was learnt that Jamil Uddin has desired to step down from the comedy of errors he has committed. The question is why he should resign. He should be thrown out for making a mockery of the game.

And his resignation or anything else could mean little for the damage that was done on Friday unless things are properly addressed and solved in the line of the game's by-laws if we are really interested to stop this anarchy.

To do that we would like to urge the highest authority to immediately put the decision of the championship on hold until the findings of the league committee and a proper recommendation in line with the game's by-laws.

This is high time to reign in the lawlessness. If we fail to protect the law, it's better to close down the Bangladesh Hockey Federation.

Jamil was helpless?

SPORTS REPORTER

Under-fire general secretary of Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) Khandaker Jamiluddin has tendered his resignation to BHF president Air Marshal SM Ziaur Rahman taking all the responsibility for the farce of a final match on Friday that was played and decided in dubious circumstances.

This move came as no surprise since most of the responsibility fell on him as the chief of the federation's executive body. His deputy Anvir Adel had resigned from his post as tournament and league committee secretary before the delayed start of the game, and said that it was tough for him to work in the situation.

However, none of the resignation letters were entertained and both of them attended the governing body meeting last evening which discussed this issue and the upcoming Asian Games qualifying round matches which are scheduled for May 7 to 15.

Jamiluddin later explained to the media his view of the things and explained why he resigned.

"I have decided to step down from the position of general secretary of BHF taking full responsibility for whatever happened yesterday

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Why having this NCL?

MOHAMMAD ISAM



This is not exactly what Twenty20 cricket is supposed to be like. And this is not how you prepare for a major tournament like the World Cup.

But the Destiny Group National Cricket League T20s, projected to be the country's richest cricket tournament and the perfect build-up for the imminent World T20s, has turned out to be one boring party -- if you leave out the opening ceremony -- where most of the main attractions have put everyone to sleep, quite literally.

The organisers have done plenty to add lustre to the meet but while the event has run smoothly and been organised well by ATN Records, BCB and the franchises, the on-field events have left a lot to be talked about.

But let's get the external factors, or what some would call the excuses, out of the way first. Indeed two factors have played a key role in bringing down the tournament: player and pitch fatigue.

The tournament is being played at the end of a most gruelling season for players, both national and local, and the pitches in Mirpur.

After the Dhaka Premier League came the first-class competition, intertwined by visits by Sri Lanka, India and England and a short trip to New Zealand. The under-19 players spent most of the season preparing for and playing their World Cup. Then they all converged for the Port City League in Sharjah and within a few days, they came back to a sweltering Dhaka to play the glitzy NCL T20s with tired bodies. And spare a thought for the cricket ground. The Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium has easily been the most used venue than any field this season. Sluggish pitches and players obviously don't paint the prettiest picture.

BCB has time and again called this a 'build-up' tournament. Apart from Tamim Iqbal and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who look like the only people who get Twenty20 cricket, the rest of the national cricketers selected for the World Twenty20s look terribly out of touch. Not out of touch with bat and ball but clearly with the format.

It seems that the only way top batsmen like Shakib Al Hasan, Aftab Ahmed, Imrul Kayes and Naem Islam know how to get out of trouble is by slogging. And after connecting a few cross-batted heaves, they get out in one of two ways: holing out to a boundary-rider or their stumps are shattered.

Of course Shakib, Mahmudullah Riyad and Naem haven't stopped playing since July 2009 so a dip in form would be tolera-

ble, but what about Aftab? The pocket rocket has certainly seen much better days. His trademark flicks and robust cuts seem to find fielders more often.

Mohammad Ashraf has flourished with his bowling, which has drawn further attention to his falling stocks as a batsman. It seems that his speciality -- the one magical innings -- is long overdue.

But leaving aside the flaws of the national batsmen, this tournament has mirrored the level of understanding of the players and the six think-tanks.

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Cheerleaders perform during the National Cricket League T20s match between Rajshahi Rangers and Dhaka Dynamites at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. While they have added the entertainment factor to the tournament, the on-field action has left a lot to be desired.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Kolkata stay in the hunt

CRICINFO, undated

Kolkata Knight Riders' bowlers knocked out Rajasthan Royals from the IPL, and kept their semifinal hopes alive, by limiting them to a below-par score on a slowish pitch, and Sourav Ganguly backed them up with another significant contribution to ensure a comprehensive eight-wicket win.

The effort overcame an intimidating start from Shane Watson, who began with a series of boundaries, and the loss of early wickets in the chase.

Kolkata, however, face a tough task in ensuring a qualification for the knockout stage, as they have to beat a formidable Mumbai Indians in their next game and by a big margin to boost their negative net run-rate.

SCORES IN BRIEF

RAJASTHAN ROYALS: 132 for 9 in 20 overs (Watson 44, Finch 21; Dinda 2 for 24, Unadkat 3 for 26)

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS: 133 for 2 in 16.1 overs (Ganguly 75 not out, Pujara 45 not out; Kamran Khan 2 for 13)

Result: Kolkata Knight Riders won by 8 wickets

Man-of-the-match: Jaidev Unadkar



IT'S NOT OVER TILL IT'S OVER: Manchester United midfielder Paul Scholes (R) is ecstatic after scoring the winning goal deep into injury time during their Premiership clash against Manchester City at the City of Manchester Stadium on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Scholes at the death Keeps MU's title dream alive

AFP, Manchester



Paul Scholes' 93rd minute winner settled an otherwise lacklustre Manchester derby at Eastlands here on Saturday as Manchester United's 1-0 victory kept alive their dream of a fourth successive English Premier League title.

The veteran midfielder rose to meet Patrice Evra's left-wing cross with 18 seconds remaining of the three minutes of added time and his clinical header, from 12 yards, may yet prove costly for Manchester City as they seek fourth place and a first ever taste of Champions League football.

This derby's importance, above all others in recent Premier League history, was not lost on both teams given the clubs' respective targets at or near the top of the table.

Perhaps that explained the slightly cautious first half, particularly from City for whom a draw would have been better than it would for their second-placed visitors.

City, consequently, seemed to spend much of the first period defending extremely deep in an effort - successful, for the most part - to stifle United.

The best chances of that opening period both fell to United and came in the final five minutes as Sir Alex Ferguson's men finally found a way through the massed ranks of the City defence.

Valencia again beat the recalled Wayne Bridge far too easily down the United right and delivered a low, driven near-post cross which Ryan Giggs poked tamely into the hands of Shay Given.

Those openings aside, first half opportunities were sparse with Edwin van der Sar required to make the only save of note when he leaped high to his right in the 12th minute to catch a direct Carlos Tevez free-kick, awarded 25 yards from goal after a foul on the Argentine striker by Darron Gibson.

As the half wore on, Rooney, who was passed fit after recovering from the effects of his ankle injury, cut an increasingly frustrated figure, frequently arguing with referee Martin Atkinson, a controversial late call-up to officiate the game because of his role in the first Manchester derby of the season in which he played additional time that allowed Michael Owen to score the winning goal in United's 4-3 victory.

Craig Bellamy wasted a glorious chance on the counter for City, taking a Tevez pass in his stride only to hurry his shot into the side-netting.

At the other end, Giggs was similarly profligate with a wasteful first-time volley from an accurate Valencia cross when the veteran winger had time to bring to control the ball had he elected to do so.

But City manager Roberto Mancini had seen enough and sent on defensive midfielder Patrick Vieira for Adam Johnson, who had put in a disappointing performance in front of watching England manager Fabio Capello.

Finally, the contest was opening up and

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