

### KHULNA-RAJSHAHI FINAL

# Rangers defuse Dynamites

SPORTS REPORTER

Rajshahi Rangers stormed into the final of the Destiny Group National Cricket League T20s after a 12-run win over Dhaka Dynamites in the second semifinal at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Rajshahi will now take on the Kings of Khulna on Wednesday that begins from 5.20pm in an unlikely finals line-up that had Dhaka's and Sylhet's name virtually written on it following their fantastic form in group league matches.

Dhaka, the form team during the group stages with five wins out of five, were caught unawares as the Rangers bowled and fielded quite brilliantly in a breezy evening as they successfully defended their score of 142-6 from 20 overs.

With 21 needed off the final over, the Rangers shut out the Dynamites with Shafiqul Islam bowling fast, accurate yorkers as Dhaka were bowled out for 130 in 19.5 overs. Tail-enders Taposh Baisya and Shahadat Hossain added some excitement in the end with a few sixes but that was never enough after Thilina

Kandamby was run out for 33 off 36 balls in the first ball of the last over.

At the start of the chase, spinners Naeem Islam and Sohrawardi Shuvo gave Rajshahi the first three breakthroughs. Dynamites captain Mohammad Ashraf continued his poor form, miscuing a pull that landed easily on Aiden Blizard's hands at short-fine leg in the first over of the match, bowled by Shuvo. Naeem removed the dangerous Shamsur Rahman for six, caught by his namesake. Jahurul Islam became Naeem's second victim, having been stumped by Khaled Mashud.

Dhaka's woes deepened when the left-handed Mehrab Hossain top-edged a sweep, easily caught by Shafiqul Islam at short fine-leg. Two overs later, Jeewan Mendis fell to Sanjamul Islam and the score read a precarious 43 for five.

Thilina Kandamby, who came in at number three, saw all this mayhem from the other end. He added 39 for the sixth wicket with Mahmudullah Riyad, who made 25 off 23 balls with the help of a four and a six.

But with Riyad's dismissal coming in the 15th over, Dhaka's chances dwindled further. Mohammad Rafique followed suit soon after and if Taposh Baisya didn't slam a couple of sixes, the match would have been over quite early.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



Rajshahi Rangers captain Khaled Mashud (L) leads his team to celebrate the fall of another Dhaka Dynamites wicket during the second semifinal of the NCL T20s at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Rajshahi will play Khulna in the final tomorrow.

PHOTO: STAR

# Kings depose Sultans

SPORTS REPORTER

Kings of Khulna came up with their best when it was most required as Shakib Al Hasan's men pulled off an upset six-wicket victory yesterday over Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's Sultans of Sylhet to move into the final of the Destiny Group National Cricket League T20s.

Despite the match being a low-scoring affair and some bad decisions by umpire Nadir Shah, the first semifinal produced a close contest in an otherwise dull and drab tournament in front of some 4,000 spectators at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Mashrafe's men dragged the game into the last over. But with four runs required to win, Farhad Hossain slammed a boundary down the ground from the fourth ball off the Sylhet captain as the Kings overhauled their target of 131 with two balls to spare.

Kings of Khulna were poor in the league stages but it seemed that they got back their rhythm after a crucial victory against Barisal Blazers on Sunday, which confirmed their semifinal berth and they took control of the match soon after Mashrafe decided to bat first.

Sri Lankan pacer Nuwan Zoysa gave Khulna a great start by removing openers Kaushalya Weeraratna and Gazi Salahuddin with the scoreboard reading 24 for two in five overs, but some credit must go to another Sri Lankan recruit Mahela Lakmal Udawatte who took a splendid running catch to send back his compatriot.

Sylhet's crisis deepened when leg umpire Nadir Shah raised his finger although inform Alok Kapali's back-foot was well inside when wicketkeeper Mohammad Mithun broke the stumps.

Sultans of Sylhet however posted a decent total, thanks to Forhad Reza who clobbered three big sixes and a boundary to make a 34-ball 43 before he was caught by Shakib off Alauddin Babu. The young paceman captured another important wicket, that of Sri Lankan Indika De Saram.

"It was not a bad total to defend in this kind of pitch. It's not easy to play shot there. I think bowlers were benefited more from this kind of condition," said Shakib.

"It's a funny game," he smilingly responded when asked how it felt to knock out the favourite team and especially when they were so ordinary in the

league stage.

Mahela Udawatte and Mohammad Mithun made a bold reply but the former was lucky enough as Farid Uddin Masud dropped him off Forhad when he was on six.

The opening pair added 38 runs before Mithun was caught by Salahuddin of Mashrafe but Imrul Kayes joined Udawatte and batted cautiously during his 46-ball 38 that contained three fours.

Udawatte became the second victim of a poor decision when television replays again showed that he was in when Forhad's throw from the edge of the circle hit the stumps at the bowler's end.

Sultans of Sylhet then returned to the match with tight bowling from spinners Kapali and Masud and they had to defend 19 runs from the last three overs.

Farhad however took away the initiatives by making a crucial 11-ball 15 that saw two valuable boundaries.

Sylhet skipper Mashrafe however rued over his team's poor fielding effort.

"It would have been fantastic if we could managed 20 more runs but still 131 was also not a bad total in this kind of surface. Actually we dropped a few chances and our ground fielding was also poor," explained Mashrafe.

There was however every reason for the Narail Express to be happy with his own performance in the tournament ahead of the World Cup as he made an unbeaten run-a-ball 15 and then took two wickets.

"It was a good tournament from a personal point of view," said Mashrafe, who played a full tournament for the first time after recovering from a knee injury.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**SULTANS OF SYLHET:** 131-8 in 20 overs (Dhiman 18, De Saram 22, Forhad 43, Mashrafe 15\*; Zoysa 2-16, Alauddin 2-32).

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



PHOTO: STAR

Kings of Khulna's Imrul Kayes whacks one over mid-wicket during his fine knock of 38 against Sultans of Sylhet during the first semifinal of the NCL T20s at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

### INTER MILAN V BARCELONA

# Special One against the best

AFP, Milan

If Inter Milan beat holders Barcelona in the Champions League semifinal first leg at the San Siro on Tuesday, they can thank Mother Nature for her helping hand.

The all-conquering Spaniards faced an arduous 1,000 kilometre, two-day coach journey just to make it to the game due to the volcanic eruption in Iceland last week.

With flights grounded all over Europe and trains crammed full of travellers trying to get home, Barca decided that taking the long route along the roads and crossing three countries, was the only way to arrive.

But they're not complaining. "We'll have to see what happens with problems surrounding the trip to Milan, but the team is really up for the game -- who wouldn't be? It's a Champions League semifinal," said Swedish forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who will be facing his old club.

Ibrahimovic's comment came before Barca began their marathon journey that would see them stop over in Cannes in southern France on Sunday night following a 634km trip from



Barcelona.

That would just leave them the 351km from Cannes to Milan to do on Monday morning, before training at the San Siro in the evening.

They left at 14:30 local time on Sunday for a game that begins at 20.45, two days later.

"We have to put this behind us and focus on the Champions League semifinal ahead of us," added midfield maestro Xavi.

"We have to go to Milan, play our game, score goals and come home with a win. We are in with a chance of reaching another final and we don't want to throw that away."

The two sides have already met in the group stages with the San Siro game finishing in a 0-0 stalemate before Barca put on a masterclass in a 2-0 win at the Camp Nou.

There is the added spice of not only Ibrahimovic returning to his old stomping ground but Samuel Eto'o, a scorer in two successful Champions League finals with Barca, playing against his former team-mates.

And he more than anyone else knows how hard it will be to dethrone the champions.

"How do you prepare to play Barcelona? With calmness. We have to try to get our heads into the game before it starts because games like this are almost played more with the head

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

# Austerity at BNS at last

SPORTS REPORTER

The remaining matches of the ongoing Citycell Bangladesh League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium will now be held in daylight instead of floodlight following the power crisis.

The Youth and Sports Ministry has instructed the Bangladesh Football Federation to hold the matches in daylight and the match at BNS will now start at 4:00pm instead of 4:30pm.

The BFF had initially moved for day-night games on the pretext that crowd turnout would be higher than for day games. However, even big local derbies including the one between Abahani and Mohammedan have drawn only a sparse crowd of a couple of thousand.

## After five months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Five months after being postponed, an unfinished football tournament is going to be rolled again on to the ground in Sylhet.

The Mayor Cup Football tournament came to a halt on November 13 last year during a game between Ward 17 and Ward 24 when a contentious decision from the referee infuriated Ward 24 players who walked off the field in protest against the ruling. The tournament altogether had been on a hold since then. However, the deadlock has been broken recently and the tournament starts again today with the match between Ward 11 and Ward 17 at the Sylhet Stadium.

Meanwhile, the unfinished match is scheduled for April 22. If that match and the others end as planned, the final will be held on April 28.

# ASIAN GAMES HOCKEY QUALIFIERS Veterans recalled

SPORTS REPORTER

Veteran Isa Mia, Musa Mia and Maksudul Alam Habul have been recalled in the preliminary hockey camp for the upcoming Asian Games qualifiers to be held in Bangladesh from May 7 to 15 at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

The selection committee also included four out of six players, who retired from the national team on March 9 after failing to find a club in the special players transfer, in the 25-team squad.

They are: Mashur Rahman Biplob, Abdus Sajjad John, Mosharraf Hossain Kuti and Zahid Bin Talib. Besides, Rimon Kumar Ghosh, one of the six, has been kept in the five-member standby list.

This qualifying tournament however is of little importance considering the fact that six participating teams out of seven will qualify for the Asian Games to be held in China in November.

"We had no instruction from the federation to keep those retired players out of the squad and we have included them on the basis of their performance in the SA Games as well as the just concluded Club Cup Hockey," said chief selector Mamun Ur Rashid.

Isa, Musa and Habul were also called for the SA Games hockey event in early 2009, but then they refused to join the long-term camp citing different problems.

"We think they have still something to give to country's hockey and they played very well for their respective teams in the recent tournament," said Rashid.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

### INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

# Consolation win for Kolkata

SPORTS REPORTER

Kolkata Knight Riders signed off from the third edition of Indian Premier League with a consolation win over title-contenders Mumbai Indians at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata yesterday.

The home team won the dead rubber by wickets nine with their beleaguered captain Sourav Ganguly and out of sort Brendan McCullum coming to the party with some lusty blows against an understrength Mumbai that rested as many as five first-choice players including champion batsman Sachin Tendulkar.

Chasing Mumbai's modest 133, Knight Riders cruised to 135 in 17.3 overs with Sourav hitting a 36-ball 42 that contained four fours and two sweetly-timed sixes.

McCullum struck an unbeaten 57, his first fifty in the tournament.

The defeat however meant little for Mumbai, the first team to have made it to the semifinals.

They will take on Royal Challengers Bangalore in the first semifinal on April 21. Chennai Super Kings will face Deccan Chargers in the second semis on April 22. The final is billed on April 25. All the three matches will take place in Mumbai.

Back in game, Knight Riders, the only team that has failed to

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4

# Wrong way concert!

SPORTS REPORTER

There was a concert in Mirpur yesterday but the singer was facing the wrong way.

The organisers, very thoughtfully, wanted to keep the crowd entertained during the 40-minute interval between the two semifinals and arranged the concert but it turned out to be bit of a laughing stock.

Rock star Mila belted out some well-known numbers, but soon realised she was singing in front of a few photographers and players from Dhaka Dynamites who were too busy preparing for their impending match against the Rajshahi Rangers.

Mirpur, like any other Twenty20 venues, is fast becoming a multi-purpose stadium but, at least, the stage could have been in a better place!



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Time: 4:00pm  
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

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