

Abahani want good start

AFC President's Cup begins today

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani will fancy carrying their superb Bangladesh League form to the AFC President's Cup qualifiers that gets underway at the Bangabandhu National Stadium from today.

The popular Sky Blues, hosts of the four-team qualifiers, will take on New Road of Nepal in the second match under lights after the opening game between Kyrgyzstan's Dordei Bishkek and Chinese Taipei's Hasus NTCPE.

The opening match will kick off at 4:00pm while the second and the most anticipated match will start at 7:00pm.

Two-time Bangladesh League champions Abahani have had the bitter experience in the third tier Asian clubs' competition, having been eliminated twice from the group stage.

But this time they are determined to make it to the finals.

Abahani have been playing amazing football in the Bangladesh League, extending their unbeaten run to a staggering 32 games including eleven in the previous edition. The runaway leaders are heading to lift the professional league for the third time in a row.

And coach Amalesh Sen was excited about the prospect of crossing the qualifying hurdle in a season where his striking duo of Enamul Haq and Ghanaian Awudu Ibrahim are in superb form.

"We will be playing against the champions of other nations in the meet. But this time we expect to do better considering our performance

in the ongoing league," said the Abahani coach, adding that Kyrgyztan's Dordei Bishkek would be the team to beat in the group.

Amalesh said that they want to have a good start against the Nepalese champions.

"If we can beat both the Nepalese and Chinese Taipei's sides by good margins, we will stand a good chance to do something different this

time," he said.

He however admitted that it would be very tough to beat Dordei Bishkek, who played all five finals and clinched the AFC President's Cup title twice.

"Last time we were eliminated by virtue of goal difference despite having finished top with Turkmenistan's FC Asgabad. But two convincing wins and a draw might take us through this time."

He however admitted that he had little idea about the Nepal and Chinese Taipei sides.

Asked what would be the key role to fulfill his dream, the Abahani coach banked on his solid defence and the on-song striking pair.

"Our defence is more organised than last year and our striker Enamul is scoring in every league match," he said. Enamul has so far scored

18 goals in the league.

He admitted that he has a bit problem in the midfield where players lack the stamina.

The former Bangladesh international hinted that he might go with five defenders with Rajani Kanta Barman playing ahead of Ghanaian Samad Yousuf, Atiqur Rahman Mishu, Mohammad Sujon and Ibnul Siraji.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



PHOTO: STAR

Abahani players jog during a practice session at their club premises in Dhanmondi yesterday. They will take on New Road Team of Nepal in the AFC President's Cup qualifiers today.

Rajib takes early lead

SPORTS REPORTER

GM Enamul Hossain Rajib shared the lead in the Commonwealth Chess Championship along with 20 other players at the close of the third round in Delhi yesterday.

Rajib beat FM Rajesh to secure a maximum of three points from as many games.

GM Niaz Murshed, FM Abu Sufian Shakil and FM Mohammad Javed are in joint second position with 2.5 points while FM Minhazuddin

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4



SuperSport3

UEFA Europa League

Atletico v Fulham (Final)

Live from 12:30am (Thursday)

ESPN

Sportscentre India

Sports News

Live at 8:30pm



Asian Games Hockey Qualifiers

Bangladesh v Hong Kong

Time: 10:00am

Taipei v Thailand

Time: 2:00pm

Singapore v Oman

Time: 4:00pm

Venue: Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium

Bangladesh League

Ctg Abahani v Mukti Jodda

Time: 3:30pm

Venue: MA Aziz Stadium, Chittagong

Beanibazar v Arambagh

Time: 3:30pm

Venue: Sylhet Stadium

Tri-Nation Tournament

Bangladesh A v West Indies A

One-Day Match

Time: 9:15am

Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur

AFC President Cup Qualifiers

Dordei Bishkek v Hasus NTCPE

Time: 4:00pm

Abahani v New Road Team

Time: 7:00pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Colly aiming higher

AFF, Gros Islet



Paul Collingwood challenged his England side to raise their game still further after they beat New Zealand to set the seal on their qualification for the World Twenty20 semifinals.

England's three-wicket win over the Black Caps at the Beausejour Stadium here on Monday ensured they ended the Super Eight phase with a perfect played three, won three record.

"It was crucial you keep going and stay in winning ways," England captain Collingwood said.

"There are areas we can improve on but it was another solid performance."

Former Ireland batsman Eoin Morgan started with 40 after England, chasing 150 for victory, had slumped to 66 for four in the absence of star batsman Kevin Pietersen, who was back home for the birth of his first child, a boy, which took place on Monday.

England's victory, which also featured a handy all-round contribution from man-of-the-match Tim Bresnan (one wicket for 20 runs and 23 not out) also eliminated New Zealand from the tournament.

Defending champions Pakistan went through to the semifinals as Group E runners-

up on superior run-rate.

Meanwhile Collingwood while pleased to eliminate New Zealand, wanted more from his side, who should be bolstered by Pietersen's return, in the last four.

"We lost a few wickets in the middle so we could do a little bit better there and the fielding wasn't up to our usual standard but I'm delighted with how we've gone and momentum is one of the crucial things you can have in the finals," he said.

"We've got a bunch of guys who talk a lot about things off the pitch, do a lot of planning and they executed the plans well today [Monday]."

Collingwood added: "We've beaten a side who usually do well in these competitions, we've eliminated a very good side."

New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori blamed the team's defeat on a score of 149 for six, which he said was symptomatic of their failure to make big enough totals throughout the tournament.

"We could have bowled better, we needed to take wickets in clumps and we probably took them a little too late, but in all forms of the game batting has probably been our problem - not putting enough runs on the board," he said.

"One hundred and fifty was a competitive total but maybe 20 below par and we couldn't put pressure on them."

"We have some talented batsmen but there were not enough runs today."

Bravo ton downs SA A

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Darren Bravo's brilliant unbeaten century powered West Indies A to an 81-run victory over South Africa A in the ATN Records tri-nation series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The classy left-hander struck 107 as West Indies A made 295-8 from 50 overs after deciding to bat first on winning the toss. And the total proved too much for the Africans, who were bowled out for 214 in 44.3 overs. The victory set up a final between the same sides after the hosts, who take on West Indies A today, were knocked out after three consecutive losses.

Back to the day's match and it was Bravo's effort along with that of Brendan Nash's that took West Indies A to a position of strength. Bravo struck 10 boundaries and a six in his 119-ball knock and shared a 133-run fourth wicket stand with Nash, who made a run-a-ball 71 that had four boundaries and a six.

The innings got further impetus from Kirk Edwards who struck a 31-ball 50 that had six boundaries and the customary six. The right-hander shared a fifth-wicket partnership of 86 runs with Bravo who reached his century off 113 balls.

It was always a daunting task for the South Africans who fielded for 50 overs under intense heat and humidity and it showed. The openers made a rapid start, reaching 50 in the seventh over but Lionel Baker struck and soon they

were 60 for four, with Baker and Gavin Tonge sharing the four wickets.

Ryan Bailey and David Miller added 50 for the fifth wicket but couldn't carry on. Dean Elgar and skipper Thami Tsolekile also batted

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



PHOTO: COURTESY

West Indies A batsman Darren Bravo walks off after an unbeaten 107 against South Africa A in their tri-nation series match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Visitors take T20 spoils

SPORTS REPORTER

South Africa Academy ensured they went back home with a trophy after a three-wicket win in the second and final Twenty20 match against GP-BCB National Cricket Academy (NCA) at the BKSP in Savar yesterday.

The visitors made a clean sweep of the Twenty20 series after reaching the target in 18.3 overs. NCA had earlier been restricted to 142-9 in 20 overs. In the first match on Monday, the Africans won by six wickets.

Keshav Maharaj's left-arm spin accounted for the entire top-order, starting it all by trapping the in-form Rony Talukdar leg-before on the first ball of the match and Anamul Haque off the fifth.

Captain Mohammad Mithun (16) and Shuvogoto Hom (11) followed soon after, and it was only Shabbir Ahmed and Asif Ahmed (23) who could attack the visitors. All-rounder Shabbir slammed a 37-ball 38 with a boundary and a six while Nasir Hossain smashed three fours and a six in his 13-ball 23.

Cobus Pienaar and Wiann

SEE PAGE 18 COL 3

Old DOHS, Josephites cruise

SPORTS REPORTER

Old DOHS registered an emphatic 55-29 win over Bakshibazar in the Premier Bank First Division Basketball League at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

Tawhid and Jishan were architects behind Old DOHS's triumph, scoring 20 and 9 respectively while Mahin and Nabin caged 11 and nine goals for the losers.

Eagles Club overwhelmed the Shawn's 108-32 after establishing complete dominance in the first half with a 53-13 lead.

Arfan was Shawn's top scorer with 28 followed by Aminul's 24.

However, Josephites faced a tough challenge from Wraiths Club before handing them a 39-30 defeat.

BANGLADESH LEAGUE

Feni Soccer remain 4th

SPORTS REPORTER

Feni Soccer Club recorded their eighth victory in the Bangladesh League when the visitors handed a lone-goal defeat to Farashganj Sporting Club at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Ashraful Kader Manju separated the sides striking his second league goal in the 26th minute.

Newcomers Feni Soccer Club kept their fourth position securing 31 points from 20 games while Farashganj stuck to the third position from the bottom to have 15 points from 20 games.

HOCKEY QUALIFIERS

Hosts face HK today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh must bounce back from their shocking defeat against Chinese Taipei to keep themselves in the hunt for qualification of Asian Games when they face Hong Kong in today's match of the Robi Asian Games Hockey qualifiers at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium.

The top two teams from the seven will qualify for the Asian Games.

Bangladesh, as defending champions and highest-ranked team, were expected to qualify with ease.

But the hosts now find themselves in a precarious position as they went down to Chinese Taipei 5-7 after having made a flying start against Thailand with a 8-1 win. Bangladesh still have the likes of Singapore and Sri Lanka to face who are very much capable of springing a surprise.

One thing that Bangladesh might feel confident about is that they had blanked today's opponents 9-0 in a pre-tournament practice match. But they can't be too complacent as Hong Kong have started the campaign with a 1-1 draw followed by a 4-3 win over Sri Lanka only to fall to Singapore 3-1 in their third match.

Bangladesh coach musty make a few changes to his line-up, specially to the defence and midfield, after a lethargic

SEE PAGE 18 COL 3

Tigers' three-dayer heading for a draw

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The three-day match was heading for a draw with the Surrey boys showing strong batting display against the Tigers in their second innings on the final day at the Kennington Oval in London yesterday.

Surrey took a lead of 189 runs with eight wickets in hand as they scored 243-2 at tea after Bangladesh declared their first innings on the overnight score of 372 for six.

Pacer Mahbubul Alam gave the first breakthrough by removing Arun Harinath with the scoreboard reading 32 and the home side lost their second wicket for 61 runs when Thomas Lancelfield was dismissed by Shahadat Hossain.

But they strongly bounced back, courtesy of Usman Afzal and Laurie Evans who shared an unbeaten 182-run third wicket stand before the tea break.

Afzal was batting on 114 while Evans was not out on 85.

Earlier on the second day, Jahurul Islam extended his score to 158 that saw 19 fours and two sixes during his five-hour stay at the crease while wicketkeeper batsman Mushfiqur Rahim hit 52 off 90 balls with three boundaries. Mahmudullah Riyad added 27 runs.

Right-arm paceman Matthew Dunn claimed three wickets for 48 runs.

Tigers will play another three-day game against Essex from May 14 in Chelmsford and a four-day match against England Lions, which will start in Derby from May 19.



PHOTO: COURTESY

South Africa Academy captain Wiann van Zyl (2nd from L) receives the GP-BCB Academy Cup Twenty20 trophy from Grameenphone's head of corporate communications Syed Tahmeed Azizul Huq (L) at the BKSP in Savar yesterday.



DAYS TO GO

The greatest miracle

The semifinal, between Hungary and Uruguay, was a classic, with extra-time required to separate the two sides before Kocsis struck two late goals to give Hungary a 4-2 win.

The Germans, meanwhile, were hitting their stride and took care of neighbours Austria with a 6-1 in Basel, thanks in part to four goals from the Walter brothers.

Rain dampened the final, but not the Hungarians' resolve as they blasted their way to a 2-0 lead with goals from Puskas and Czibor, leading spectators believing a rout might be on.

The Germans had other ideas, however, and battled back brilliantly to level the scores through Maximilian Morlock and Uwe Rahn. It was 2-2 and only 20 minutes had been played.

The action swung back and forth for the rest of the first-half and most of the second, but with extra-time looming Rahn struck the championship winner with five minutes left, brilliantly set-up by Fritz Walter.

In the dying minutes Puskas ran onto Toth's pass to slide the ball under Turek, only for Mervyn Griffiths, the authoritarian, high-profile Welsh linesman, to leave his mark on the match as he was perhaps always likely to do. Offside, for ever. Thirty seconds from the end, Czibor put everything into a shot, but Turek, tremendously agile for a man of 35, turned it away.

It was the end of Hungary's virtual invincibility. They had strong claims to that unwanted title: best team never to win the World Cup.

For them this was the end of the World.



PHOTO: STAR ARCHIVE

The expressions say it all as Puskas congratulates Fritz Walter after the final.

U-14s off to Iran Sunday

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Under-14 squad will leave for Iran on Sunday to take part in the AFC Festival of Football to be held on May 17.

The Bangladesh boys will compete against Iran, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, Maldives, Bhutan and Afghanistan, said coach Abdur Razzak at a press conference at the Bangladesh Football Federation conference room yesterday.

Razzak said that they had a quite training camp for one month and the players were picked from the squad that toured Iran to take part in the AFC Under-13 Festival of Football last year.

Captain Rezaul Karim hoped that this time they had good training compared to the previous year and would fight well against the opponents to return home with highest points.

BFF vice president Kazi Nabil Ahmed, BFF general secretary Al Musabbir Sadi, BFF member Satyajit Das Rupu and team manager Azfaruzzaman Sohrab were present on the occasion.

The tournament will conclude on May 24.

SQUAD

Md Himel, Iqbal Hossain, Tariqul Islam, Rezaul Karim, Mofazzal Hossain Sujon, Shahriar Bappi, Amirul Islam Rony, Tanmoy, Ilias, Faisal Ahmed, Mehdi Hasan, M Mithu, Sabbir Hossain, Sohel Arman, Sajid Hossain, M Babu, Anik Hossain, Ujjal Prodhan, Sajal Prodhan, Bijoy Bishwas, Ibrahim Hossain and Shahjada Hossain.

Officials: Azfaruzzaman (manager), Abdur Razzak (head coach) and Nurul Haq Manik (Assistant coach).