

Sheikh Jamal, Muktis in final round

SPORTS REPORTER



The final line-up of the Grameenphone Federation Cup was completed yesterday after rejuvenated Muktijoddha Sangsad and newcomers Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club emerged champions in their respective group matches at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Sepoy Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

Under the floodlight, Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club ensured their final round berth with a 2-0 defeat of Arambagh KS, thanks to a brace from striker Enamul Haq. Sheikh Jamal had earlier beaten Youngmen's Club of Fakirerpool 3-0.

After a barren first half, Enamul, highest scorer of last season's Bangladesh League, converted a penalty in the 57th minute to give the star-studded side the lead and 12 minutes later, sealed the fate of the game with the season's third goal in only two matches.

In the first match, a brace from midfielder Alamgir Kabir Rana gave Muktijoddha Sangsad to an emphatic 3-0 win over Farashganj Sporting Club in Group C match to join Sheikh Jamal, auto-qualifiers Bangladesh League champions Abahani, runners-up Mohammedan SC, Sheikh Russel KC and Feni Soccer Club in the eight-team finals, which starts from Monday.

It was not another goal feast like the 8-1 drubbing of Bangladesh Navy but the victory was enough to confirm a place in the final round for Muktijoddha Sangsad, who had to wait for almost half-an-hour to open their account against Farashganj.

James Moga broke the deadlock in the 27th minute to give Muktijoddha Sangsad a deserved first-half lead before young midfielder Rana added two more in the 57th and 63rd minutes respectively to complete the rout.

On Thursday, Brothers Union and Chittagong Abahani had confirmed their berth in the final round.



Sheikh Jamal striker Enamul Haque points at the crowd after scoring one of his two goals against Arambagh Krira Sangha during their Federation Cup match at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Sepoy Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Fifteen fail beep test

SPORTS REPORTER

As many as 15 foreign recruits including Abahani's long-serving Awudu Ibrahim have been temporarily declared unfit for the upcoming Bangladesh League after they failed to pass the beep test, organised by the Bangladesh Football Federation for the first time since the start of professional football league in 2006.

The disqualified foreign footballers will however get another chance to prove their fitness for the league in the next month.

Apart from Awudu Ibrahim, Abahani's Frank, Yusuf Aminu and Samad Yousuf voted the test successfully while Mohammedan's Eugene was declared unfit though Emeka, Amani, Mohammed Al Hassan, Idris and Ismail qualified.

However, Sheikh Russel KC, Feni Soccer Club, Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club and Chittagong Abahani did face such problems as all of their players passed the test.

Maximum four players from Rahmatganj were declared unfit while Arambagh saw their three foreign recruits failing.

Imran blasts Butt

Cricket

INTERNET

Legendary all-rounder Imran Khan has lashed out at Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ijaz Butt, claiming his leadership during the spot-fixing controversy was "a failure".

The current PCB head got himself into hot water when he claimed that England's players had accepted "enormous sums of money" to lose the third one-day international held at the Brit Oval -- the claims were strongly denied by the England team and Butt later apologised.

"Ijaz Butt's governance has been a failure," Khan told Pakistan's Geo News channel. "He should have resigned the moment he apologised to the England board and withdrew his statement because they threatened him with legal action."

Khan also criticised the PCB and Butt for their lack of initiative in handling the spot-fixing saga, which resulted in the suspensions of Test skipper Salman Butt, and pacemen Mohammad Aamer and Mohammad Asif for allegedly bowling no-balls to order during the

fourth Test against England, a claim which the trio have denied.

"When the spot-fixing allegations first came out against our players, the PCB itself should have taken action against the players instead of waiting for the ICC to step in," said Khan.

"Today we face problems because the cricket board never took action against the players accused. In order to save itself and ensure we didn't lose key players, the administrators were reluctant to carry out and complete investigations against such players."

The International Cricket Council (ICC) this week issued a warning to the PCB over its future conduct, adding that serious action would be taken if their recommendations over anti-corruption measures were not implemented within 30 days.

And Khan admitted the warning was yet another wake up call for his country's cricketing officials.

He added: "The ICC move to warn us and put us on notice is a shameful day for every Pakistani. It is a shame for Pakistan cricket and the reason is we don't have any cricket institution in Pakistan."

Philosophia chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Fire Service & Civil Defence SC emerged unbeaten champions in the Philosophia Second Division Chess League after the seventh and last round held at the Chess Federation hall-room on Thursday.

Fire Service earned 12 points to clinch the title while Toyota Motors finished runners-up following a play-off match against Agrani Bank after both secured 11 points.

The play-off match was held yesterday where Toyota Motors beat Agrani Bank.

Friends Chess Power ended fourth while Boroder Daba School finished fifth with eight points each while Rajshahi Daba Unnayan Sangstha finished sixth with seven points.

Sehwag Tamim's inspiration

PTI, New Delhi

Virender Sehwag's nonchalant approach towards batting is something that inspires dashing Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal.

The 21-year-old Tamim, who won the Wisden's Cricketer of the Year award on Thursday, feels that Sehwag's approach gave him confidence to go for attacking shots in the first session of a Test match.

"When I first came into scene, I wasn't doing badly in the one-dayers but in Test cricket, I used to be caught in two minds. Whether to attack or defend and more importantly when to attack. Sehwag is one batsman who changed the grammar of batting as far as Test openers are concerned," Tamim told PTI over phone.

"After a certain point of time, I decided that I will play my natural game just like Sehwag does. That is to dominate the bowlers and fortunately I have been successful in my endeavour," Tamim added.

I'm the right man: Ricky

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Ricky Ponting says he is still the man to lead Australia in next month's Ashes series with England amid calls for his sacking and questions over his tactics.

Ponting arrived home late Thursday from a 2-0 Test series loss to India to be greeted by calls from former Test pacer Geoff Lawson for him to step aside as skipper.

Ponting was also publicly criticised by former Test teammate Shane Warne for his field settings during spinner Nathan Hauritz's bowling during this week's second Test loss to India in Bangalore.

Pressure has mounted on Ponting's leadership ahead of the five-Test home series against England after Australia lost three consecutive Tests for the first time in more than 20 years.

Asked by reporters if he was the right man to captain Australia this summer, Ponting declared: "Absolutely, I've got no doubt about that at all."

"It was disappointing over there (India)... but that's the game of cricket. I'm still learning about my own game and my captaincy and if the other players can learn a bit from that trip then it should hold us in good stead for the summer."

Ponting said he always gave his absolute best when he played for his country.

"I'm trying to do my best as captain to help some of these guys through some difficult times," he said.

"That's all I can continue to do. I give my absolute best as always, ever since I've been the Australian captain, to be the best leader I can be and be the best player I can be and if I get criticised for that along the way then I can't do anything about that."

Lawson has called for deputy Michael Clarke to lead Australia against England at the Gabba in Brisbane from November 25.

Lawson said Ponting, 35, had now lost five series as skipper, and relieving him of the captaincy would allow him to focus more on his batting.

"I mean he's now lost five series, it may be time to say, 'Look mate, we've got Michael Clarke ready to go with a nice fresh young mind,'" Lawson told Friday's Daily Telegraph.

"He (Clarke) can be the captain and you focus on your batting and try to restore yourself to the level we know you're capable of."

But Clarke has his own problems and scored just 35 runs from four innings in the Indian Test series.

Ponting said he had told Warne directly of his feelings about his controversial remarks on Twitter.

It was Hauritz, in fact, Ponting emphasised to reporters, who set his own fields.

"I sent (Warne) a few texts and I'm not hiding the fact I was really disappointed with the tweets that I read," Ponting said.

"I've just got to put it behind me now. I told him that I was a bit disappointed, and I thought what he had to say was very unfair, for the fact it was pretty ill-informed comments that he made."

"I've never been one to run away or be too big or too good for criticism."

Ponting said Hauritz had also been in immediate telephone contact with Warne.

The embattled skipper was given a vote of confidence from the federal Sports Minister Mark Arbib.

"I'm a big fan of Punter (Ponting), Arbib said. "I think Ricky Ponting has been a wonderful captain for our country and over a long period of time so I think he will remain as captain going through the Ashes."

Former Test fast bowler Brett Lee said the three successive Test losses would rule out any complacency ahead of the Ashes that might have crept into the Australian dressing room.

"The thing I can say is complacency won't be setting in now because the shoe is on the other foot," Lee told The Daily Telegraph on Friday.

Secret of Kirsten's success

ANI, Bangalore

Indian cricket team's coach Gary Kirsten has revealed how he has turned the team from being perpetual underachievers to a dominant Test team in the world within two years.

When asked about his successful stint with Team India when many foreign coaches have failed in the subcontinent, Kirsten said: "It was very different, I probably made a few errors up front, coming in with a South African mentality."

"I spent a lot of time learning and understanding the environment, being very respectful of the Indian way: this is a very good cricket country, this is how they do things. And I buy into that, and I said what ways can I influence them to make an even better team?," the Sydney Morning Herald quoted Kirsten, as saying.

"I think once you come from a platform of really buying into the way they play cricket, then you only look at it from a positive point of view," he added.

Djokovic, Federer storm into semis

Tennis

AFP, Shanghai

Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer set up their third major semifinal clash in two months on Friday as the pair each sailed to straight-set wins at the Shanghai Masters.

Second seed Djokovic, who lost to the world number three Swiss in Toronto in August but beat him at the US Open in September, earned a ninth straight match win in China as he advanced over Guillermo Garcia-Lopez 6-2, 6-3.

Spaniard Garcia-Lopez made his name this autumn as he beat Rafael Nadal in the Bangkok semi-finals a fortnight ago.

Federer was at his ruthless best as he dismantled the big game of Swede Robin Soderling 6-1, 6-1 in just 53 minutes.

The quick victory took his runaway record in the series to 14-1, with his sole loss in last spring's Roland Garros quarterfinals.

Friday's match was Federer's most devastating defeat of Soderling, a finalist at the last two French Opens.

At the top of the draw, fourth seed Andy Murray faces a surprise opponent in Juan Monaco after the Argentine beat Jurgen Melzer 6-7 (6-8), 7-5, 6-2 a day after the Austrian had put out world number one Nadal.

Murray turned in another efficient performance against Frenchman Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, who he easily brushed aside 6-2, 6-2.

Murray's game was looking bleak a week ago in Beijing when he lost in the quarterfinals and remained without a place in next month's eight-man World Tour Finals in London.

But that problem was solved with Murray's third-round win on Thursday against another French opponent in Jeremy Chardy, who proved to be just a warm-up for the damage inflicted on Tsonga, the 2008 Australian Open finalist.



PHOTO: AFP

Andy Murray of Britain serves against Jo-Wilfried Tsonga of France during their Shanghai Masters quarterfinal match in Shanghai yesterday. Murray won 6-2, 6-2.

Aussies praise CWG

AFP, Sydney



Australia praised New Delhi's Commonwealth Games as "exceptional" Friday after organisers overcame a shambolic build-up and widespread criticism to deliver a largely successful event.

Sports Minister Mark Arbib said authorities "really got their act together" after a dreadful lead-in which included an attack on tourists, a footbridge collapse and accusations the athletes' village was unfit for human habitation.

"There were some difficulties prior to games getting underway, some issues around the village, some issues around unfinished facilities," he told public broadcaster ABC.

"But the Indian authorities really got their act together in the last couple of weeks, got the Games facilities completed and got underway and the Games, when they were on, were very good."

Australia's official travel advice warned of a "high risk of terrorism" during the Games, adding to concerns over the event, while three Australian athletes pulled out over health and safety concerns.

Australian Olympic chief John Coates said Delhi should never have been awarded the Games, as Arbib was forced to fend off calls to withdraw the entire team of about 380 athletes.

Chef de mission Steve Monaghan also complained that athletes were "treated like cattle" during the opening ceremony, leading to threats to boycott Thursday's spectacular close.

Sports Minister Arbib said Australia's athletes had faced "challenges and trials" during the Games on their way to dominating the medals tally with 74 golds.

"The Australian athletes have just shown so much resilience," Arbib said.

"Through all the challenges and trials of the Games and the Games village the Australian athletes have not lost the smile on their face. They've been very committed to competing the whole way through."

But he added: "Overall as our athletes are saying and as the Commonwealth Games Federation said, they were an exceptional Games."

Australian and New Zealand media also congratulated Delhi on the event in a surprisingly upbeat assessment.

"Bravo India" declared an editorial in Sydney tabloid the Daily Telegraph which described the New Delhi Games as a "glorious competition".

"They've pulled it off admirably and deserve better than the carping, nit-picking and

borderline racism that has masqueraded as informed coverage of the Games," wrote Sydney Morning Herald journalist Peter Hanlon.

The New Zealand Press Association said organisation gradually improved as the Games progressed, to the point where everything was running like clockwork just before the closing ceremony.

"For a Games where all the (Western media) talk going in was about cancellation, or a swift transfer to Melbourne, and where athletes bailed out pre-Games for fears over their safety and hygiene, Delhi far exceeded expectations," it said.

"Delhi did perform, and it did deliver, albeit in a quirky, colourful, spasmodic, random and often frustrating fashion."

Warne offers Hauritz help

Cricket

INTERNET

If Nathan Hauritz is chasing someone to help re-tune his bowling he need look no further than Shane Warne, the man who drew him into this week's tactics controversy.

Warne has offered his services to boost Hauritz ahead of the Ashes after his troubles during the India series.

Hauritz managed six wickets at 65 in the two games and on the final day of the second Test, Warne tweeted his disbelief at the fields Ricky Ponting had for the offspinner.

Ponting has since said Hauritz had asked for the settings and the three men have spoken about the differences of opinion.

Warne said he would work with Hauritz providing Australia's team management agreed.

"That's up to Ricky Ponting and Tim Nielsen but if they are happy for me to work with Hauritz before the Ashes, then I'm more than happy to," Warne said in the Courier-Mail.

"I will make myself available and fit it into my schedule."

"Murali, Daniel Vettori and myself and a lot of other spinners have been smashed in India at times."

That is no disgrace at all.

How Hauritz bounces back in Australia this summer is the key. In my opinion Steve Smith is still a long way short of being Australia's No.1 Test spinner. Australia are now fifth in the world and Warne said the players needed to attack during the game's big moments.

"Why aren't we converting strong positions into victories?" Warne asked.

Kramnik keeps the lead

PTI, Bilbao

World champion Viswanathan Anand split the point with leader Vladimir Kramnik of Russia to remain second after the end of the fifth and penultimate round of Bilbao Final Masters chess tournament here on Friday.

The draw took Kramnik near the title as he retained his two points lead over the Indian ace with just one round remaining in this category-22 double round robin tournament between four players.

The Russian moved to an impressive nine points aided by two wins and three draws thus far while Anand took his tally to seven, with four draws and a sole win that came against Magnus Carlsen of Norway in the second round.

Carlsen, meanwhile, snatched the third place from Shirov after a hard-fought victory against the latter.

Anderson injury not serious

CRICINFO

James Anderson, the England fast bowler, is suffering from a cracked rib, an injury he sustained during the team's recent preparation camp in Germany, but the ECB expects that he will be fit for the first Ashes Test beginning in Brisbane on November 25.

"Anderson is continuing his training programme ahead of the Ashes tour and will fly out to Australia with England's Test squad on October 29," the ECB said. "It is anticipated that he will be fit and available for selection for the first Test match against Australia in Brisbane."