

Samir lifts Russel

SPORTS REPORTER

A second-half goal from Samir Omari gave Sheikh Russel KC a winning start in the Grameenphone Bangladesh League with a lone-goal win over Farashganj SC at Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

The Moroccan striker separated both sides in the 67th minute.

Omari made no mistake while placing a well-judged cross from Cameron recruit Jimgou Guy Charles from the left field into the net to help the third-placed finishers of the last season secure all three points.

After the dull first half, the game got some momentum as both sides playing attacking football. Sheikh Russel were deprived of a certain opener in the 63rd minute when striker Mohammad Yusuf struck the woodwork off a Moro Mohammed low cross from the right.

Farashganj came close to levelling two minutes from time when a header from substitute Atiqul Islam narrowly went wide of the far post.

V-Day hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Muktobihango and Dinajpur DSA won their respective matches in the Dhaka Bank Victory Day Hockey tournament at Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Muktobihango handed a 4-0 defeat to Bangladesh Police with Tuhin, Habul, Chandan and Niloy scoring one goal apiece.

Dinajpur routed Armanitola 9-1 with Al Mamum striking three goals while Rocky, Siham, Khairul, Yakub and Nahid scored one goal each for the winners.

Nafees, Kapali

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knock as DOHS reached a modest 183-run target in 46.4 overs. Earlier, Forhad Reza's four wickets helped bowl out Biman for only 182 from 49.3 overs.

ABAHANI-CCS
Abahani's Indian recruit Mithun Manhas struck an enterprising 89 off 80 balls (with five boundaries, three sixes) as the Dhanmondi giants made 274-7 against Cricket Coaching School at the BKSP.

Despite Shahbaz Butt's best efforts, 72 off 98 balls, and Nazmul Hossain Milon's late-order scare (53 off 42 balls), Abahani won the game by 35 runs with Saqlain Sajib and Farhad Hossain sharing six wickets equally.

BRIEF SCORES
MSC: 339-5 in 50 overs (Nazimuddin 115, Shamsur 108 not out; Kapali 2-10).
GAZI TANK: 340-3 in 48.4 overs (Nafees 114 not out, Kapali 73 not out).
BIMAN: 182 all out in 49.3 overs (Perera 57, Asif 38; Forhad 4-31).
DOHS: 185-6 in 46.4 overs (Mehrab 73 not out, Hanif 45; Elias 3-46).
Result: DOHS won by four wickets.

ABAHANI: 274-7 in 50 overs (Manhas 89, Riyad 66; Haldar 3-51).
CCS: 239 all out in 48.1 overs (Butt 72, Milon 53; Saqlain 3-32).
Result: Abahani won by 35 runs.



Sheikh Kamal's Moroccan striker Samir Omari about to score the loan goal that brought victory in a Bangladesh League match against Mohammedan at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Pakistan crush NZ

Cricket

AFP, Christchurch

Pakistan humiliated New Zealand in the third and final Twenty20 international in Christchurch Thursday as the hosts collapsed spectacularly chasing Pakistan's six for 183, with the top four batsmen all out for ducks as the mercurial tourists shrugged off a form slump that cost them the first two games of the three-match series.

Scott Styris was the only New Zealander who offered any resistance, scoring 45 off 34 balls as Abdul Razzaq and Pakistan skipper Shahid Afridi tore through the batting line up.

New Zealand's total of 80 after 15.5 overs was its lowest in Twenty20 internationals and Pakistan's 103-run winning margin was the largest ever between two Test playing

nations.

Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi said he wanted to set an imposing target after winning the toss and electing to bat on a dry wicket.

His batsmen backed him up with a sparkling display, while Afridi himself led from the front, scoring a rapid-fire 14 before snaring four for 14, including the dogged Styris.

He said the victory was a confidence booster for Pakistan, a team struggling for consistency amid corruption allegations against some of its top players.

"This is the talent of Pakistan but we should be consistent," Afridi said. "We're trying to make a team combination before the World Cup (in February).

"I know we lost the series but this was a big win for us to keep our morale high."

Openers Ahmed Shehzad and Mohammad Hafeez went after New Zealand's bowlers from the outset, scoring at a rate of almost 10 an over for a partnership of 81 to give Pakistan their best start of the series.

Razzaq also pitched in with 34 not out then took three wickets for 13 in a man-of-the-match performance.

Any hopes the home side had for a miracle were dashed when Styris went lbw to Afridi in the 14th over.

The teams will next play two Test matches in January, followed by six one-day internationals.

SCORES IN BRIEF
PAKISTAN: 183 for 6 (Shehzad 54, Razzaq 34 not out, Hafeez 34, U.Akmal 30; Franklin 2-12, N.McCullum 1-29, Milne 1-48)
NEW ZEALAND: 80 all out in 15.5 overs (Styris 45; N.McCullum 8; Afridi 4-14, Razzaq 3-13)

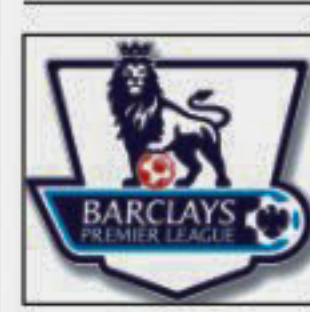


Pakistani allrounder and Man-of-the-Match Abdul Razzaq celebrates the wicket of New Zealand opening batsman Jesse Ryder for a duck during their victory in the third Twent20 match at Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Chelsea bounce back

AFP, London



Arsenal missed the chance to go second in the Premier League after failing to protect a lead in a 2-2 draw away to 10-man Wigan Athletic at the DW Stadium on Wednesday.

Meanwhile champions Chelsea, beaten 3-1 by Arsenal on Monday, returned to the top four and ended a six-game winless streak after a 1-0 victory at home to Bolton Wanderers.

At Anfield, Wolves moved off the bottom of the table with a 1-0 win away to Liverpool that piled the pressure on Reds manager Roy Hodgson.

Two goals in six minutes near the end of the first half from Arsenal's Andrey Arshavin and Nicklas Bendtner saw the Gunners recover after Ben Watson had put Wigan ahead from

the penalty spot at the DW Stadium.

It seemed as if Wigan had blown their chances of an equaliser when Charles N'Zogbia was sent-off in the 78th minute after recklessly leaning his head into Arsenal substitute Jack

Wilshere.

But three minutes later Wigan were level when Arsenal's Sebastien Squillaci turned a header across goal from Hugo Rodallega into his own net.

The draw left Arsenal third, two points behind leaders Manchester United and second-placed Manchester City, while the result saw Wigan climb out of the relegation zone.

Chelsea were booed off

at half-time by their own fans at Stamford Bridge after a dire first half where neither they nor sixth-placed Bolton managed a shot on target.

But the jeers turned to cheers just after the hour mark when Malouda turned in a Didier Drogba cross at the far post.

Victory left Chelsea four points behind United, who have a game in hand.

Arsenal were 1-0 down in the 18th minute.

N'Zogbia ran at the Gunners' defence before tumbling on the edge of the box as Diaby and Laurent Koscielny and Watson made no mistake with the ensuing spot-kick.

The Gunners, though, scored twice shortly before half-time.

They drew level in the 39th minute when, after Bendtner's shot was blocked by Wigan keeper Ali Al-Habsi, the ball looped up to Russia inter-

national Arshavin, who struck an acrobatic volley from 14 yards out.

Roles were reversed in the 44th minute when Arshavin ran at Wigan and then found Bendtner on the edge of the area.

The Danish striker powered his way past a couple of weak challenges before calmly shooting past Al-Habsi.

Liverpool, kings of English football from the mid 1970s through the 1980s, had already lost at Anfield to newly-promoted Blackpool this season.

But this defeat, against a Wolves side that had not previously won away from home this term, was arguably even worse.

Stephen Ward sealed a priceless win for Wolves in the 56th minute when, played outside by Liverpool's Glen Johnson, ran through and beat Pepe Reina to give the Black Country club their first win over the Merseysiders in 26 years.

'Shakib, Tamim good for Australia'

Cricket

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons would love the opportunity to take on Australia in Test cricket in April, and said he had two players who would be "walk-up starts" in the Australian XI.

Siddons said hard-hitting opener Tamim Iqbal, who is cut from the same cloth as India's Virender Sehwag, was good enough to partner Shane Watson at the top of the order, while spinning all-rounder and captain Shakib Al Hasan would slot in at No.6.

"[Al Hasan] I would say is the equal of [New Zealand's Daniel] Vettori but a much, much better batsman," Siddons said yesterday. "Tamim Iqbal, a Sehwag-type player who made hundreds in England, he's a quality player."

"There's a couple of guys there who are dynamite."

"Shakib would walk in and bat at six and be their No.1 spinner by that far it's not funny, and Tamim Iqbal would be your other opener with [Shane] Watson without a doubt."

"They'd walk in at the moment, but it's easy to say that when the boys are struggling."

Clarke replaces Ponting

AFP, Sydney

Michael Clarke will captain Australia for the first time and Usman Khawaja will make an historic debut in next week's final Ashes Test in the absence of injured skipper Ricky Ponting.

Clarke was promoted on Thursday from vice-captain to lead the team after Ponting was ruled out with a fractured little finger.

Clarke will also captain Australia in the limited overs and Twenty20 matches against England following the Test series, with Cameron White his deputy.

Pakistan-born Khawaja will become the first Muslim to play Test cricket for Australia as Ponting's batting replacement as the home side seeks to level the series.

Wicketkeeper Brad Haddin was named vice-captain under Clarke for the Sydney Test, which gets underway on Monday.

BNP blamed for Nimbus deal

Cricket

RASHIDUL HASAN

The parliamentary standing committee on Youth and Sports yesterday blamed Hawa Bhaban and Arafat Rahman Koko, younger son of Khaleda Zia, for making the controversial TV rights deal with Nimbus "BCB (Bangladesh Cricket Board) made this ambiguous agreement with Nimbus because of Hawa Bhaban and Arafat Raman Koko. You know Nimbus owes Tk 100 crore to BCB," said Zahid Ahsan Russel, chief of the parliamentary body, after the meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.

He also warned that the standing committee would form a House probe body if BCB failed to realise the outstanding amount from Nimbus by January 24 next year.

"BCB high officials took two months time during the November 24 meeting

Sehwag out of ODIs

PTI, Durban

India were on Thursday dealt a massive blow ahead of next month's ODI series against South Africa with aggressive opener Virender Sehwag ruled out due to a shoulder injury.

Sehwag, who had nursed a shoulder injury a few months ago as well, will be replaced by Rohit Sharma in the squad for the five-match series starting here on January 12.

Irony at the heart

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for himself and his family. Bigger challenges like the Asian Tour was never even on the horizon.

But then suddenly his career started gathering pace. He won a few tournaments in India, capturing the PGTI Players Championship at Poona Golf Club in September 2008 and the HUDA - GTPL - Unitech Haryana Open two months later. In 2009, he also won the prestigious Global Green Bangalore Open.

It was as if his talent had finally come to the fore, guiding him like an infirm through the maze. In 2009, he finally attained the Asian Tour Card, after finishing qualifying school in the top forty. He played 13 tournaments in the Tour that year, and posted three top-20 results.

But his star had still not fully risen. 2010 proved the breakthrough year for Siddikur. Till then, he was still known only in select quarters, by the men at the Kurmitola Golf Club who had supported his meteoric yet somehow unnoticed ascent. Caught up with their cricket stars, the country suddenly realized that Siddikur too was a hero. And in 2010 they finally embraced him.

2010 did not start well for Siddikur, but it is easily the most memorable year in his life. In Thailand, he posted his first career top-ten finish and in the Kingdom of Brunei, Siddikur finally realized his dream.

In a tense play-off with JBE Kruger of South Africa, Siddikur came out on top and became the first Bangladeshi to win a tournament on the Asian Tour.

"I will say the turning point of my career was to win Brunei Open and it is

still pushing me to go further. To be honest, after winning the Brunei Open and doing well in other tournaments, I realize that I have the ability to be truly successful in the professional circuit," said Siddikur.

The boy from Madaripur has come a long way. He now finds himself lining up alongside golf stars like Australian legend Greg Norman and Europe's Ryder Cup stars Miguel Angel Jimenez and Edoardo Molinari, his idol Ernie Els and Adam Scott.

But there really has been no shortcut to success for Siddikur, just an undying desire to succeed.

"I remember how I used to light up mosquito coils and practice putting late into the night, at the club," says Siddikur with a wry smile.

And he is quick to acknowledge the constant support that he has received from the Kurmitola Golf Club and its patrons.

"Everyone at this club has always supported me in any way they can. I really would not have been successful without them," he says.

And the young man is already looking forward and aiming to consolidate on his success of the past year.

"I aim to play up to 35 tournaments next year," he says, a fact made easier since he will be exempt from qualifying for the next two years due to his tournament victory at Brunei.

Siddikur's story is a modern day fairytale, it sounds too good to be true at times. But the boy who traipsed around the back alleys of Manikdi has finally made it big, and in the most elitist sport of them all. As with many other things, his story is made real only by its irony.