



Mohammedan's centre-forward and goal-scorer Anwar Hossain battles it out with Chittagong Mohammedan player Markson Gray in pursuit of the ball during their Bangladesh League match at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

MSC take solo lead Beat Chittagong namesake 2-1

SPORTS REPORTER



Mohammedan Sporting Club took a solo lead in the Grameenphone Bangladesh League points table with a 2-1 win over their Chittagong namesakes at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. An opportunistic strike in the first half from centre-forward Anwar Hossain, doubled in the second half by Roni Islam gave the Motijheel tent breathing space before Liberian forward Jerry Odesco reduced the margin for the black and whites from Chittagong. Mohammedan had a player sent off, which added an interesting finale to the battle. Mohammedan coach Shafiqul Islam Manik was cautiously optimistic about his side's perfect record in the season. He felt it was just the beginning of the season and could not count on the start. "The season has just started. So, it won't be too wise to read too much

from just three results. Nevertheless it's always pleasing to win," said the former national midfielder. The game had a very quiet pace about it in the first half as there were very few attacking intents from either sides. However, Mohammedan took the lead with a fortuitous goal when Anwar finished with an easy tap-in after goalkeeper Khaled Azam failed to clear a cross from Emeka Christian. The keeper though, after that initial mistake, made amends and foiled a few attacks valiantly. Eleven minutes after the restart, Chittagong Mohammedan skipper Farhad missed a glorious chance when he drilled the ball right on the body of Mohammedan keeper Titumir Chowdhury. Fellow striker Jerry, who was waiting in front of the goal, was left pounding the ground in frustration. Winger Akbar Hossain came in for goalscorer Anwar on the hour-mark and made immediate impact, floating an excellent cross for Emeka whose header however was saved by the keeper. Roni then doubled the lead with another easy tap-in on a

goalbound ball in the 71st minute, after Amani's initial shot was parried away by Khaled and Akbar's rebound was only half-stopped. But the leaders were reduced to ten men when defender Emeka Lucky received straight marching orders for being involved in a scuffle with an opposition player. The Chittagong team made their man advantage count as Jerry turned in an expert cross from Farhad down the left flank with seven minutes of regulation time left. But the Motijheel tent held on to the slender lead for the remaining minutes, albeit nervously, to eke out their third win in as many matches. TEAMS Mohammedan Sporting: Titumir, Arafat, Amani, Sharif, Anwar (Akbar), Emeka, Ismail, Roni, Ramzan, Yeasin, Lucky. Ctg Mohammedan: Khaled Azam, Tommy, Gray, Sumon, Farhad, Jerry, Blamo, Shujon, Morshed (Razu), Nazir, Khaled Red Card: Emeka Lucky Uti

Robin, Andy in Brisbane final

Tennis

AFP, Brisbane

Top seed Robin Soderling will take on second-ranked Andy Roddick in the final of the Brisbane International after both men survived tough semi-final examinations on Saturday. Soderling enjoyed a 6-3, 7-5 win over a typically feisty Radek Stepanek in the first semi-final, before defending champion Roddick overcame big-serving South African Kevin Anderson in three sets 6-2, 4-6, 6-2 in the second. Soderling, the first top-five player from Sweden in a decade, will go into the final as slight favourite after giving a serving masterclass during his win over Stepanek. He broke the Czech early in both sets and was untroubled on his own serve until inexplicably stumbling while serving for the match at 5-4 in the second. Stepanek seized on his only break point opportunity in the match to level the set at 5-5, only to drop his own serve immediately and hand the initiative back to Soderling. This time the 26-year-old world number five made no mistake as he comfortably held to wrap up an entertaining match. "I've served well and played well the whole week," an upbeat Soderling said later. "I think today was my best match." Soderling said he became too conservative when he got the chance to serve for the

match the first time. "I missed a couple of easy shots but at the same time he played really well," he explained. "Maybe I didn't go for my first serve as much as I should have -- I tried to put it in but he returned very well. "I think it was a mix of me playing a little bit too safe and him playing very well." Roddick opened his semi-final strongly against a nervous-looking Anderson, breaking the South African twice on his way to a 4-0 lead. Anderson recovered and gradually came into the contest, beginning to dominate during the second set and breaking the American at 5-4 to level the match. However, he seemed to lose concentration at the start of the third and Roddick pounced, breaking Anderson twice to again race to 4-0 before comfortably serving it out to take the match. "I felt like I was in control pretty much the whole match, even in the second set I played one bad game but I thought I had more looks at his serve than he had at mine," Roddick said. "I actually broke more than I thought I would against his serve." Roddick said he expected that the final would bring out the best of both men. "We're going to see the best of what we've seen this week," he said. "He's playing great, he served real well today. He was in control of that whole match -- he's been in control of all his matches this week."

Hilditch on the defensive

PTI, Melbourne

Laying the blame squarely with the players for the humiliating Ashes loss, Australian selection panel chairman Andrew Hilditch said that the selectors had "done a very good job" and reiterated that he won't step down from his post. "I think we've done a very good job as a selection panel, but reality is we were totally outplayed," Hilditch told Sydney Morning Herald. "I take responsibility for doing the best job I can possibly for Australian cricket. It's what I've always done, I have a great passion for it and still want to do it. "You can't get away from that fact, they were better than we were, we put a side on the paddock we expected to compete really well, but they gained momentum probably at the start of the Adelaide Test match. Naeem salvages

FROM PAGE 16 struck 56 off 66 balls with the help of seven boundaries, though the Orient new-ball bowlers did quite well with Abu Zayed taking three for 37.

BRIEF SCORES SURJO TARUN: 191 all out in 46.4 overs (Rajin 58, Devendra 40; Kapali 3-16, Rasel 3-32). GAZI TANK: 195-5 in 47.1 overs (Naeem 68 not out, Sanjamul 56 not out; Razzak 2-48). Result: Gazi Tank won by five wickets. OLD DOHS: 154-8 in 34 overs (Jamshed 51, Hanif 39 not out; Kamran 3-19). PRIME DOLESHWAR: 117 all out in 30.4 overs (Kamran 37, Uttam 23; Forhad 3-17, Hanif 3-9). Result: Old DOHS won by 37 runs. BKSP: 247 all out in 49 overs (Liton 56, Soumya 53; Zayed 3-32). ORIENT: 193 all out in 46.2 overs (Shahzad 85, Asif 38; Soumya 3-33). Result: BKSP won by 54 runs.

Shakib

FROM PAGE 16 Dav, but also the fact is that I will get a lot of Bengali-speaking people around me," he said. With the latest success the young Bangladesh skipper, who was the only Bangladeshi player to play County cricket and was a successful performer for Worcestershire, put another feather on his cap to get 2011 off to a bright start. Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was Bangladesh's hot pick in the 2009 auction as Knight Riders bought the country's leading paceman for \$650,000.

Pakistan dominate



AFP, Hamilton

A crucial unbroken 128-run stand between Misbahul Haq and Asad Shafiq saw Pakistan regain control of the first Test against New Zealand on the second day on Saturday. The salvage mission for the fifth wicket took Pakistan to 235 for four at stumps, trailing New Zealand's first innings 275 by 40 runs, with six wickets in hand. Shafiq has produced the highest score of the Test so far to be unbeaten on 74 with his captain Misbah on 50 not out. The pair came together when New Zealand had seized the initiative in the middle session with three quick wickets to have Pakistan teetering at 107 for four. But the bowlers were unable to press home their advantage, toiling away on a placid wicket while Shafiq and Misbah set about rescuing Pakistan's innings. The in-form Misbah grafted for more than three hours and was content to play the anchor role while Shafiq kept the scoreboard ticking over, finding boundaries every 20 balls. New Zealand skipper Daniel Vettori rotated his bowlers and even resorted to using part-timers Kane Williamson and Martin Guptill but Shafiq belted both of them out of the attack, scoring freely on both sides of the wicket. Shafiq reached his 50

ticking an attempted yorker from Brent Arnel to fine-leg for a single and 14 overs later Misbah reached his milestone, hitting Williamson to the boundary. The New Zealand first innings ended early in the day when their last three wickets fell for the addition of 15 runs. Tim Southee failed to add to his overnight 56 while Kane Williamson reached 50 before he fell and Arnel was the last batsman to be dismissed. Tanvir Ahmed had the best return of the Pakistan bowlers with four for 63. Abdur Rehman, who tied up New Zealand on the first day, was not required on the second morning and did not add to his overnight figures of three for 51. New Zealand then made the best possible start in Pakistan's innings when

Chris Martin dismissed Mohammad Hafeez without scoring in the opening over, caught at second slip by Tim McIntosh. But it was to be a long wait before New Zealand would strike again as Taufeeq Umar and Azhar Ali launched into the quick bowlers and raced to 72 by the 22nd over. They were seldom troubled before the initiative changed in a brief spell after the break. Martin, who had been punished for bowling full, dropped one short which Ali edged to debutant wicket-keeper Reece Young and was dismissed for 24. Umar continued to plunder the boundaries and had reached 54, including 11 fours, when he flicked a full delivery from Brent Arnel and was caught at mid-wicket by Kane Williamson. Younis Khan had five

fours in his 23 when he attempted a similar shot to Umar and sent a leading edge back to the bowler to give Arnel his second wicket. That was to be the end of New Zealand successes for the day as Misbah and Shafiq regained the initiative. For New Zealand Arnel has two for 53 and Martin two for 67, but the two most effective bowlers were Southee, who yielded only 37 runs from 19 overs and genuinely troubled the batsmen, while Vettori conceded 29 runs in 22 overs. SCORES IN BRIEF NEW ZEALAND: First innings 275 (McCullum 56, Southee 56, Guptill 50, Williamson 50; Tanvir 4-63, Rehman 3-51, Gul 2-84) PAKISTAN: First innings 235 for 4 (Shafiq 74, Umar 54, Misbah 50; Arnel 2-53, Martin 2-67)



Pakistan captain Misbahul Haq reverse sweeping one during his unbeaten half-century. PHOTO: AFP

Nafees threat The unluckiest man

FROM PAGE 16 "We will pick up the fifteen and that will be good for the World Cup," said Siddons. The 46-year-old Australian was also happy with the choice of captain and vice-captain of the national team, saying that the friendship between Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal will work in their favour. "I think the two are very good choices and the two guys will be around for a long time. They are pretty close friends and they will work pretty well out on the field together," he said.

FROM PAGE 16 DSS: How was the overall performance? EHM: I think our performance could have been much better but everybody was so excited and tensed with the World Cup appearance that nobody could perform as per their potential. DSS: You played in the Scotland win... EHM: In my opinion, Nannu's batting performance against Scotland was best. He played really a good innings under pressure. And you know I had also some contribution in that game. DSS: And how about taking

the wicket of Mark Waugh? EHM: I can still remember the wicket of Mark Waugh. We had nothing to lose in the match but Australia had a target to achieve. In that match I took two wickets. DSS: How about this current lot, expect much from the World Cup? EHM: There are some highly talented players in the current team and you can dream something with this side. I believe as a home team they will play quarterfinal but there is also a good chance that this team will go beyond their expectation.

Gambhir: 2.4 million man

FROM PAGE 16 Australian all-rounder Andrew Symonds -- were bought for more than \$1 million at the inaugural auction in 2008. This time Symonds went to Mumbai Indians for \$850,000. Each of the 10 franchises has a purse of \$9 million to spend at the auction. Former captains Brian Lara of the West Indies and Sourav Ganguly of India remained unsold on the opening day, along with hard-hitting West Indies batsman Chris Gayle. Lara, 41, was among 21 cricketers with the highest reserve price of \$400,000 for a three-year contract. The annual IPL tournament revolutionised cricket when it burst on to the scene in 2008 with a high-octane blend of international star players, Twenty20 matches and Bollywood glamour. But its fortunes dipped dramatically last year after allegations of massive corruption, money-laundering and tax evasion, as well as secret deals to hide teams' real own-

ers, and even links to India's criminal underworld. IPL founder Lalit Modi -- whose brash style personified the event -- was thrown out by the BCCI, the sport's governing body in India, over allegations about his conduct and organisers hope this year will provide a fresh start. The tournament, starting on April 8, will feature 10 teams, including the two new sides -- Pune Warriors and Kochi. Twelve players have been retained by their original franchises, with Dhoni staying with the Chennai Super Kings and Shane Warne and Shane Watson sticking with the Rajasthan Royals. Pakistan's cricketers continued to miss out on the IPL bonanza after none of them was included for the auction. Pakistan players participated in the inaugural IPL, but were forced out of the 2009 season due to security concerns following the Mumbai attacks, and were then ignored for the 2010 tournament.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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