

Muktis, Abahani share points

SPORTS REPORTER

Leaders
Grameenphone Muktijoddha Sangsad and holders Abahani shared honours in their first meeting of the season when they played out a goalless draw in the Grameenphone Bangladesh League match at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

The first draw in seven matches meant Muktijoddha still led the 12-team table with 16 points while three-time champions Abahani were in the second position with two points less.

Muktijoddha could have secured full three points had a dying moment drive from left-back Yeamin Munna not come off the crossbar in a game where the All Red created more chances than Abahani after both sides seemingly made a cautious start, probably the fear of losing points was in their mind.

On the back of four straight victories, Muktijoddha looked confident on the field as the return of League's top-scorer Mithun Chowdhury and Federation Cup's top-scorer James Moga boosted them up front as they opted for attack straightaway, and created more chances but failed to cash in on any of those attempts.

On the other hand, Abahani looked more disorganised compared to their last match against Brothers Union and the absence of Awudu Ibrahim was felt up front though the Ghanaian striker replaced midfielder Abul Hossain in the second-half and almost snatched a decisive goal one minute from time, but Muktijoddha's former Abahani goalkeeper Biplob Bhattacharjee brilliantly tipped a Awudu free-kick over the crossbar in the last moment to salvage his new side.

"The boys should have won the game by at least four goals and instead they drew," said Muktijoddha coach Maruful Haq, who was not at all happy with the performance.

Haq was however happy to see the return of Moga, who played a vital holding role up front as Muktijoddha badly felt the absence of the Sudanese striker, who was busy saving his family in the trouble-hit country.

Abahani's Iranian coach Ali Akbar was also not happy the way his charges played and lamented the level of intelligence of the players.

"The boys did not play well today. They were instructed to keep the ball along the ground but they played at their will throughout and it is not football," said a frustrated Ali.



Pakistan opener Ahmed Shehzad plays a shot over covers in the fifth one-day international against New Zealand at Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Series Pakistan's

Cricket

AFP, Hamilton

A maiden century by teenage opener Ahmed Shehzad inspired Pakistan to a 41-run win over New Zealand Thursday to wrap up the six-match one-day series with a game to spare.

The 19-year-old cracked 115 off 109 deliveries in a masterful innings in Hamilton as Pakistan posted 268-9 after being sent into bat in the fifth ODI.

New Zealand, who are on a rotten run of form, made the worst possible start to their reply, losing a wicket on the first ball when Jesse Ryder was run out and they never threatened from there.

Their innings came to a halt in the 47th over at 227 to give Pakistan an unbeatable 3-1 lead in the series with one match washed out. New Zealand have now lost 15 of their past 16 ODIs.

With the World Cup beckoning, it was a timely performance from Shehzad, who delivered on the promise he had hinted at in his previous seven international innings, which produced a total of 173 runs.

"What a talent he is," said captain Shahid Afridi as Pakistan celebrated their first ODI series win since they beat the West Indies in 2008.

But it will be a worry for Pakistan that, apart from Shehzad's century, the other batsmen failed to get on top of a largely medium pace New Zealand attack.

Umar Akmal's 32 before he was run out by wicketkeeper Brendon McCullum was the second highest score while Misbahul Haq, the dominant performer in the series so far, struggled to 25 before he fell to an acrobatic

catch by Jacob Oram at deep square leg. After winning the toss and opting to bowl first in overcast conditions, New Zealand made the surprise move of resting their best swing exponent Tim Southee.

But their reasoning appeared to be a preference for slower deliveries, which paid dividends with medium pacers Oram and Scott Styris taking two wickets apiece.

Styris claimed the crucial scalp of Shehzad, who hit 12 fours and three sixes in his lengthy innings, all of them off new ball bowler Hamish Bennett.

He was striking out for another six when he was deceived by a slower ball and got under it too far, scooping a catch to James Franklin.

By the time Shehzad was dismissed Pakistan were in a healthy position of 197-4 in the 38th over but they were unable to capitalise on it over the remainder of their innings.

Afridi and Umar Akmal could only scrape together 39 runs in the batting power play between the 44th and 48th overs.

After Ryder was run out in a disastrous start, Martin Guptill and Ross Taylor both posted half-centuries for New Zealand, but unlike Shehzad they were unable to continue on and both threw their wickets away.

The last match in the series is in Auckland on Saturday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: 268 for 9 (Shehzad 115, K Akmal 17, Younis 21, Misbah 25, U Akmal 32, Afridi 24; Mills 2-42, Oram 2-49, Styris 2-51)
NEW ZEALAND: 227 (Guptill 65, Taylor 69, Franklin 16, McCullum 14; Riaz 3-51, Gul 2-28, Afridi 2-55)
Result: Pakistan won by 41 runs.
Man-of-the-match: Ahmed Shehzad.

Footballers disciplined

SPORTS REPORTER

Three footballers have been suspended for different terms as well as fined monetarily following their involvements in the scuffles during the Bangladesh League match between Sheikh Russel KC and Arambagh KS.

Arambagh captain-cum-defender Deen Mohammed was handed a two-match ban and fined Tk 20,000 after he was found guilty of hitting Sheikh Russel coach Mahmudul Haq while Arambagh foreign recruit Mustafa Kaba and Sheikh Russel forward Chahrout Youssef were suspended for two and one match respectively during a disciplinary committee meeting yesterday.

Brother Union and Abahani were also fined Tk 10,000 each following their rowdiness during their match on January 27.

Besides, Farashganj players Sohel Rana, Khokon Das, Sajidul Islam and coach Kamal Babu were let off with warnings for abusing the referee during their away match against Chittagong Mohammedan SC. But the Farashganj Club were fined Tk 10,000.

Following their no response to the query, Dhaka Mohammedan SC were also fined Tk 10,000 as punishment.

The committee also warned Mohammedan that their supporters will be restricted or banned from entering the galleries if they repeat their unruly behaviour during the Muktijoddha-Mohammedan match.

Only shiny

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the other venue in the country for the World Cup, to paint their vehicles by February 28. And mobile courts in the port city will keep a watch on automobiles from March 1.

Passenger buses of the Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation will have colourful graffiti of players and welcome slogans on them.

The meeting, which was attended by leaders of different transport associations, also urged the city dwellers to obey traffic rules and maintain road discipline.

State Minister for Home Affairs Shamsul Haque Tuku was present at the meeting and called upon the main opposition BNP to withdraw their February 7 hartal.

Shakib, a Saddam boy

AFP, New Delhi



If Saddam Hossain had not intervened, Shakib Al Hasan, Bangladesh's World Cup captain and leading all-rounder, may have been lost to football.

Growing up in Magura, a small town away from the capital Dhaka, Shakib was hooked on football, a game his father played at the club level while a cousin had represented the country.

The only link with cricket was an occasional game with a taped tennis ball, but it was enough for a local official named Saddam Hossain to see the potential Shakib had with both bat and ball.

Saddam invited the young lad to play for his club in the Magura cricket league and Shakib responded by claiming a wicket off his first delivery with a normal cricket ball.

Shakib's career took off and he is now top all-rounder in the official one-day rankings ahead of stalwarts like Jacques Kallis of South Africa, Pakistan's Shahid Afridi and Australian Shane Watson.

This when Bangladesh continue to languish at number nine in the rankings ahead of only Ireland, Zimbabwe, the Netherlands and Kenya.

In 102 one-day internationals since his debut in 2006, the left-hander has scored 2,834 runs at 34.98 with five hundreds and 17 half-centuries.

He has also claimed 129 wickets at 28.80 with his left-arm spin, with a best of 4-33 against New Zealand in

Christchurch last year. Shakib, who turns 24 on March 24, has loads of self-confidence and is determined to outdo the other, whether a team-mate or rival.

"Whenever anyone outperforms me, whether in academics or sport, I tell myself that if he could do it, so can I," Shakib told Cricinfo in a recent interview.

"If someone from the team is adjudged man of the match, I feel the honour could have been mine as well. It's not jealousy - my team-mates' success obviously gives me a lot of joy - but if he could, why couldn't I?"

Often asked if he was a batting or bowling all-rounder, Shakib has one answer, as simple as his game in the middle. "I am a cricketer," he says.

Shakib was a star performer for Bangladesh in the last World Cup in the Caribbean, where the minnows knocked out India in the first round and then stunned South Africa in the Super Eights.

But he goes into his second World Cup a reluctant leader, having publicly denounced the responsibility thrust on him since he wanted to concentrate on his batting and bowling.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board deliberated hard on the captaincy before appointing Shakib after senior pro Mashrafe Mortaza went down with a recurring knee injury.

His cricket-crazy nation, which co-hosts the World Cup with India and Sri Lanka, will hope Shakib continues to lead from the front.

Fountain tweaking

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coloured balls to each other and catch with one hand.

"It is part of my SPACE program, which expands to Safety, Power, Accuracy, Control and Excellence. It is to try and bring them on as a whole, not just as a right-arm thrower, but to try and bring out every aspect of their agility, strength and balance. We work very much on an ambidextrous level, so that when a ball is hit you don't instinctively stick out your right hand. A golden rule I live by is that you need to be happy taking any ball at any angle," he said and went on to explain the drill with different sized balls. "I work with different sized balls, different coloured balls, different shaped balls just to mess with a fielder's senses. Let's take the slips as an example. A slip fielder doesn't generally drop a catch because he can't catch. It's usually because of a lapse in concentration. Practising with different balls makes the fielder refocus every time."

One crucial indicator of a side's fielding strength is the direct hits they make over the course of the game. "I can't quote you the statistics from the last two series, because I haven't got them at hand unfortunately. But our direct hits are increasing every fixture we play. It's the law of averages, the more you hit the stumps, the higher the chances that you are going to

get run-outs. We set a target that in every fifty-over game we are going to hit the stumps ten times. Currently, the number stands at four or five, so we need to raise that up, but it's getting there," said the animated fielding coach.

There are few better ways to gauge the health of a cricket team than to observe the players on the field. To an extent, fielding is the one discipline in which a player can achieve high levels of proficiency without possessing a great deal of natural talent. The higher the number of good fielders in the side, the higher the number of players exhibiting a good work ethic. Happily, thanks to the efforts of people like Fountain, the fielding seems to be an aspect of the Tiger's cricket supporters can be confident about when they take the field on February 19.

Hopes rest

FROM PAGE 16
Boucher and Justin Kemp off successive deliveries to leave the Proteas reeling at 87 for 6.

With the 2011 World Cup starting in just over two weeks, all eyes will be on Shakib, as this time he is the captain, and the hopes of millions rest on his shoulders. The whole nation will be praying that he can lead by example, and that he continues the habit of taking Bangladesh to new heights.

'Trophy'

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because it seemingly was not the same to that which was unveiled in January last year at Dhaka. And many believed that it would not be so easy to touch if it was an original one.

"I could not understand why they are playing hide and seek with the trophy. Everybody can understand that it's a replica and there is nothing wrong if you campaign with the replica for security reasons," said a BCB official on condition of anonymity.

According to a BCB official another official sponsor, Pepsi, will hold the trophy from February 9-11 and use it for their commercial purposes and it will be in BCB custody from February 14 to February 16.

"We have some plans with the trophy which we will later disclose. The trophy will be displayed in the opening ceremony as well as during the opening match," informed BCB's media committee chairman Jalal Yunus.

The mega opening ceremony will take place at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on February 17 and the opening match between India and Bangladesh will be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on February 19.

Nat'l tennis Start today

SPORTS REPORTER

Amol Roy and Sarda Alam are top seeded in the men's and women's singles events when Sony National Tennis competition gets underway at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna today.

The tournament is being sponsored by Rangs Electronics Ltd and organised by Bangladesh Tennis Federation. The sponsor will cover all the estimated budget of Tk 3.5 lakh.

349 players from 32 DSAs and clubs are taking part in the meet which comprises of men's singles, doubles, women's singles and doubles, boy's U-16 singles, girl's U-16 singles, U-10 boy's and girl's singles and U-8 boy's and girl's singles events.

J Ekran Hussain, deputy managing director of Rangs Group of Companies, promised to continue their support to tennis in the future.

Siddikur

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shared fourth place with identical 2-under-par 70.

Siddikur lived up to his billing as the top player in the event where he made 24 putts, highlighted by five consecutive 1 putts from the 11th hole, in a round of seven birdies against one bogey.

Upul lifts Lanka

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Upul Tharanga cracked an unbeaten 101 to steer Sri Lanka to an emphatic eight-wicket victory over the West Indies in the second one-day international on Thursday.

The left-handed opener hit seven fours in his ninth one-day century as Sri Lanka achieved a rain-revised target of 197 with more than four overs to spare for a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

The opening game of the series was abandoned due to rain on Monday. The final match will be played on Sunday.

Tharanga added 70 for the second wicket with skipper Kumar Sangakkara (20) and 97 for the next with Mahela Jayawardene (48 not out) to ensure his team's comfortable victory.

Former captain Jayawardene finished the match when he cut spinner Nikita Miller for his fifth boundary.

Sri Lanka were earlier indebted to paceman Lasith Malinga (3-30) and off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran (2-42), who bowled the tourists out for a modest 203 at the Sinhalese Sports Club in Colombo.

Half-brothers Darren and Dwayne Bravo scored 39 each. The West Indies, put in

to bat, put on 45 for the first wicket before losing openers Chris Gayle and Adrian Barath in the space of three balls.

Barath, who scored a century in the rain-hit opening match, was trapped leg-before for 12 by Nuwan Kulasekara, while Muralidaran removed Gayle (28) with his first delivery.

SCORES IN BRIEF

WEST INDIES: 203 (Gayle 28, Darren Bravo 39, Sarwan 21, Dwayne Bravo 39, Baugh 28 not out; Malinga 3-30, Kulasekara 2-42, Muralidaran 2-42)

SRI LANKA: 199 for 2 (Tharanga 101 not out, Sangakkara 20, Jayawardene 48 not out)

Result: Sri Lanka won by eight wickets on D-L method.

Man-of-the-match: Upul Tharanga.

UPUL THARANGA ... 101 n.o



CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 12-Down's network
4 Upper limb
7 Relaxation
11 Historic periods
13 Hawaiian neckwear
14 Mid-month date
15 Mischievous Norse god
16 Remiss
17 Capricorn critter
18 Between, in verse
20 Oodles
22 Play-ground game
24 Rowling's Harry
28 Hedonistic fellow
32 Entire
33 Weaving device
34 LummoX
36 English river

DOWN
1 Irishman, e.g.
2 Forehead
3 H.H. Munro pseudonym
4 Every last bit
5 Paper quantity
6 Confusion
7 9-to-5 shift, e.g.
8 Fuss
9 Red or Black
10 Superlative suffix
12 Andy Rooney's show
19 Bill

21 Heifer's mom
23 Sticky stuff
25 Go sight-seeing
26 Otherwise
27 Clarinet insert
28 Troop grp.
29 Un-escorted
30 Top-rated
31 Sweet potato
35 "Great!"
38 Kreskin's claim
40 Mai - (cocktail)
42 Draft animals' joiners
45 Sneaker brand
47 Verve
48 Frizzy hairdo
49 Settle to earth
50 Firmament
51 - budget
52 Not many
54 Morning moisture

Solution time: 24 mins.

M	E	L	D	S	L	A	M	B	S
R	E	E	D	E	I	M	P	A	I
H	A	G	G	L	E	G	I	G	L
E	N	E	L	A	T	H	E	M	I
A	L	L	I	T	R	U	T	L	A
S	N	O	D	B	A	N	A	N	A
G	O	P	S	A	P				
S	T	R	A	T	U	M	B	E	F
L	E	E	S	L	O	B	L	I	R
A	N	A	C	L	A	I	R	Z	E
B	O	G	G	L	E	J	O	G	L
S	N	A	P	A	T	U	B	O	I
S	N	O	W	S	U	S	A	G	E

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11			12			13			14
15						16			17
18				19		20		21	
			22		23		24		25
26	27	28	29	30		31		32	
33					34		35		36
37				38		39		40	
41				42		43			
			44		45		46		47
48	49	50	51	52		53		54	55
56						57			58
59						60			61

CRYPTOQUIP

B Q V T R P Q U D ' P O F V B I R Z V P

O E T Y F V Y R Z V Z E V R Z S F V R X N R P Z,

W E J E K Z Q U T X Z Q V J

P Q E K A W D F V N V F S E R Z I V R A ?

Saturday's Cryptoquip: IF SINGER REESE WERE VISITING A FASHION SHOW IN DOVER, WHAT WOULD DELLA WEAR IN DELAWARE?
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: J equals Y