

SPORT

DHAKA, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2011, E-MAIL: sport@thedailystar.net

Lost passport delays King

Tottenham Hotspur defender Ledley King's groin operation has had to be delayed until next week after the former England player lost his passport. "He should have had his operation today," manager Harry Redknapp told the London Evening Standard after Spurs beat Blackburn Rovers 1-0 at Ewood Park on Wednesday night. "He couldn't make it. Why? It's a long story. (It's) next week now," he added. "He couldn't find his passport, so he couldn't fly out to have it done. He mislaid it. "He was going to see a lady in Germany," added the frustrated Spurs boss.



Russel, Jamal win

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel KC and Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club joined Abahani in second place to keep up the pressure on leaders Mukhtijodha by winning their respective matches of the Grameenphone Bangladesh League yesterday.

Sheikh Russel returned to winning ways as they handed a 3-0 defeat to Feni Soccer Club at the Bishreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium. Cameroonian striker Guy Charles scored two early goals before Monayem Khan Raju ensured all three points for the Dhanmondi club late in the second-half.

The other Dhanmondi Club, Sheikh Jamal, were away to Chittagong and returned with a convincing 2-0 victory. National striker Zahid Hossain Emily broke his duck in the league by scoring the first goal in the 49th minute before Cameroonian striker Modo Hugues sealed victory in the 72nd.

Sheikh Russel and Sheikh Jamal are both on 14 points along with Abahani, two behind leaders Mukhtijodha.

Sheikh Russel started the

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Siddikur closes in on title

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman made a dash towards the finishing line after posting a three-under-par 69 in the third round of the Grameenphone Bangladesh Masters at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

The third round did not go as well as the first two for Siddikur, but it was good enough to put on 16-under-par 200, nine strokes ahead of the second placed Mohammad Milon Ahmed who closed the round with a four-under-par 68.

Flamboyant Japanese prospect Yosuke Tsukada closed with a three-under-par 69 to lie in third place on a 210 total while Liton Hawlader of Bangladesh was a stroke behind in fourth place in the 75,000-dollar Asian Development Tour event.

Javed Inayat, a former ball-boy from the Karachi Golf Club in Pakistan, fired the tournament's first hole-in-one which he sank with a

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Army open with a win

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Army blanked Bangladesh Police 6-0 in the opening match of the Shaheed Smriti hockey tournament at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Mohammad Siraj of Army started the rout with a three-minute strike before he scored three more goals in the second half of to earn a creditable hat-trick.

Abdul Malek and Mohammad Hamid scored the other two goals to complete the rout.

Earlier, Shagufta Yasmin Emily, whip of Jatiya Sangsad, inaugurated the tournament as the chief guest.



Mashrafe Bin Mortaza returned to action yesterday for the Abahani-Mohammedan encounter of the Premier Cricket Super League at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium. Though the Sky Blues lost, Mashrafe took two great catches and bowled a fine 10-over spell.

PHOTO:
ANISUR RAHMAN

17th time for Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER



Abahani regained the most coveted domestic title despite losing the prestige battle against their traditional rivals Mohammedan by just one wicket in the exciting last round match of the Premier Cricket Super League at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Young paceman Abul Hasan's brilliant bowling of 6 for 31 and the presence of the inspirational Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was not good enough for Abahani to finish the job in style as Mohammedan chased down the target of 231 with three balls to spare.

The Dhanmondi outfit must thank Bangladesh Biman as the result at the other end of Dhaka in BKSP ensured them 24 points as well as confirming their 17th league title. Biman shattered Gazi Tank's dream of clinching their maiden title with a 15-run victory. A win could have given Gazi Tank a great success but they were bundled out for 198 runs in reply to Biman's 213.

Abahani officials and players were

busy with the news from BKSP while Mohammedan was dominating the proceedings in the second session and the celebrations started in the middle of the Mohammedan innings when the news came that Gazi Tank lost at BKSP.

On the other hand, defending champions Mohammedan not only avenged their heavy ten-wicket defeat in the first round against their arch-rivals but they also finished runners-up after victory in the nerve-wrecking game as they improved their tally to 23 points, one ahead of Gazi.

Back to the match and it was a perfect ending after the way the battle of the two traditional rivals finished.

"Nothing could have been better if we could have finished the campaign with a win. But cricket is the winner in today's match. Everybody wants to watch this kind of match when the country's popular sides are involved," said Abahani coach Khaled Mahmud.

Requiring nine runs from the last over with one wicket in hand, Enamul Haque cleverly managed one run from the first delivery from Hasan, who suddenly brought back life in the

match, leaving Pakistani Azhar Mahmood to score eight runs from the last five balls. Azhar cut the second ball to the fence and hit the third ball over mid-wicket to seal the victory. Azhar's run-a-ball 34 made sure that the two brilliant knocks from Shamsur Rahman (65) and Faisal Hossain (65) would not go in vain.

Mohammedan made a disastours start when Hasan removed openers Nazimuddin and Shoaib Malik and Nafis Iqbal fell victim of a silly run-out with the scoreboard reading 12 for three.

Captain Khaled Mashud (27) promoted himself in the batting-order to join Shamsur and shared a 66-run partnership for the fourth wicket. Mohammedan were well placed at 156 for five before Hasan's four wickets.

Earlier Abahani got off a confident start when Anamul Haque (46) and Rony Talukder (38) added 87 runs in the opening stand but their innings lost the way in the middle as the batsmen were struggling against the spinners.

Abahani finally could manage a

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BATTLE PLAN

Lot depends on trio

MOHAMMAD ISAM



In what is building up to be the big occasion of the World Cup opening game against India, it won't be a bad idea to give Nazmul Hossain the first over, given that there's little hope in Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's full recovery.

Nazmul is, after all, the most experienced pace bowler in the 15-man Bangladesh squad. But as it looks likely, the February 19 clash will be headed by Shafiul Islam and Rubel Hossain, Tigers' men in form in international cricket.

It is a bit strange that the man who made his debut in 2004 (against South Africa in Nottingham) has only played 34 one-dayers. But the Habiganj-born Nazmul was always a stop-gap option, never really given a stretch to prove himself though hardly ever disappointing with his performance.

Rubel and Shafiul, on the other hand, are the regulars in the line-up with the former having cemented a place despite having a few off-days. Shafiul though has a lot to fall back on, especially his ability to bowl better with the old ball. His yorkers in the death overs are vital as more often than not, the opposition team takes their Batting Powerplay in the last five overs against Bangladesh. Rubel, too, is fine in the end overs but as he is the fastest bowler among the Tigers, the vital time for him would be with the new ball.

Despite their relative age difference and diverging career paths, Nazmul, Rubel and Shafiul are making their World Cup debuts, but with the seniormost being Nazmul and the one with the most experience, he could

have his nose ahead in terms of making a maiden World Cup appearance in the first game. His case could be made stronger if Rubel is deemed a risk with his back, shoulder and finger injuries.

Shafiul however is the automatic choice but it would be important for the soft-spoken Bogra lad to keep up his focus in such a big event.

Mehrab Hossain, the left-handed batsman who played for Bangladesh in seven Tests and 18 ODIs, thinks that Nazmul is the best among the trio of pace bowlers.

"I have trouble playing Nazmul (Hossain). I think he is a good bowler and he keeps it tight," said the captain of Premier Cricket League side Old DOHS.

"As for Shafiul (Islam) and Rubel (Hossain), I think they are almost similar, though they are good bowlers. I could play them comfortably, but apart from that, I don't think they have got into that stage where they can command a place in the team," said Mehrab.

Clearly Rubel and Shafiul have quite a way a long way to go before he could lay an impression on a seasoned campaigner like Mehrab but they have been doing well in the last few months for the Tigers and of course, they would be front-runners to take up the new ball.

While Shafiul has been heavy on wickets (32 in 21 ODIs in 2010), he has been on the extravagant side. He has had some terrible days, notably against Pakistan and England during the summer tours but in this area, Rubel seems to be doing a better job. He was calm when the Kiwi batsmen went after him during the October series and was rewarded

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Mash catches up on fitness



BISHWAJIT ROY

It was hard to believe that Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was playing his first match since recovering from a knee injury after the way he dived to take a sharp catch at mid-wicket yesterday.

He was at his best to take this brilliant catch to dismiss Khaled Mashud off Rajat Bhatia during the mouth-watering Abahani-Mohammedan Premier League clash at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium. And earlier he grasped another sharp catch at slip to send Shoaib Malik back to the pavilion. There was hardly any sign of discomfort while he was taking the two catches.

But most importantly, the pace spearhead bowled ten overs with a good rhythm, although he conceded 55 runs and captured the important wicket of Shamsur Rahman. Initially he looked rusty and lacked pace but gradually he got his tempo and bowled on a good line and length.

In the titanic clash, the focus was on the Narail Express as the paceman returned to competitive cricket after he was sidelined for a month and a half following a knee injury during a Premier League match at BKSP on December 21.

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3rd SL-WI ODI today

CRICINFO, Colombo

It took three Tests and two ODIs for the rain-hit tour(s) to yield an outright result. The comprehensive win in the second ODI was a boost to Sri Lanka, affirming their superiority in home conditions, and a blemish for the visitors who had appeared to punch above their weight in the contests thus far.

But the outcome of the three-ODI series, third and final match of which is scheduled for today, is unlikely to leave either team too demoralised or too elated ahead of the World Cup. The series, which was rescheduled from December due to inclement weather, is much shorter than some of the series played by other teams in the World Cup build-up, and the

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SONY NAT'L TENNIS Seeds thru'

SPORTS REPORTER

All the seeded players won their respective matches in the first round of the Sony National Tennis Tournament held at the National Tennis Complex yesterday.

Top seed Amol Roy trashed Gulzar Lal 6-0, 6-0 while second seed Alamgir Hossain overwhelmed Babu Lal 6-2, 6-2 to advance to the second round of the men's singles.

In some of the other matches, Mamun Khandakar beat Channu Lal 6-2, 6-2, Delwar Hossain outplayed Salim Hossain 7-5, 6-0, Asmot Ullah defeated Sazzad Hossain 7-6, 7-5, Anwar Hossain prevailed over Ilias 6-1, 6-4, Milon Hossain overcame Zaved by 6-4, 6-1 and Dipu Lal overpowered Y MongMarma 6-2, 6-2.

Second round matches of men's singles, first round of women's singles and other age-group events will start from today.

Shameful day in Dhanmondi

MOHAMMAD ISAM



Farcical doesn't begin to describe what happened at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday. What was supposed to be the last Premier Cricket Super League game between Cricket Coaching School (CCS) became a scene of immense frustration as the match had to be called off due to, according to the league authorities, an 'unprepared' pitch.

It was miscommunication and incompetence of the highest order of the two BCB standing committees -- CCDM (Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis) and the grounds committee. A routine Premier League match could not take place due to what could easily be called utter negligence and a lack of responsibility among the committee members and officials.

It will make for funny reading but this was the scene when the two teams arrived a couple of hours before the toss. As the players tried to find the key to the dressing rooms, they saw the groundsman sleeping in their rooms at 7 o'clock in the morning. After waking up, they were shocked to learn that a match was going to take place, that too a Premier League game. The confusion ended when the umpires and the match referee arrived and after that, the players had an endless wait for the groundsman to try and prepare the wicket, a near impossible job, especially because it was

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WHAT ABOUT THE MATCH? Groundsman at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium sit idly near the pitch yesterday after the Premier Cricket Super League match between Old DOHS and CCS was called off after the league authorities failed to tell the groundsman about the game.

PHOTO:
AMRAN HOSSAIN