

Muktis back on top

SPORTS REPORTER

Grameenphone Bangladesh League 2010
Sudanese striker James Moga struck second hat-trick of the league to take Muktijoddha Sangsad to the top of the Grameenphone Bangladesh League table with a 5-1 win over Rahmatganj MFS at the Bishreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Apart from the Moga treble, winger Mithun Chowdhury and midfielder Maruf Ahmed netted one goal apiece for the Reds, while Pushban Mollah scored the consolation goal for Rahmatganj.

This win takes the Muktis to the top with 28 points from 11 matches, two clear of second-placed Abahani. Rahmatganj remain at fifth position with 16 points.

A rejuvenated Muktijoddha, who thrashed Ctg Mohammedan 6-0 and Farashganj 5-0 in their previous two matches, toyed with Rahmatganj and ensured another comprehensive victory before starting the second-leg campaign, which will get underway from March 7 after the completion of the 27-day mid-season transfer window.

Moga, who joined the Reds after six matches of the season due to his personal problems, broke the deadlock in the 12th minute with a header and five minutes later doubled the scoreline through a solo effort beating Rahmatganj defender Ashraf Ahmed and goalkeeper Iran Sheikh from the left before placing the ball in the back of the net.

Veteran Iran Sheikh was replaced by

young keeper Sohel, who found it difficult as he could not stop the Reds from scoring another three goals in the second half.

Availing a clearance from goalkeeper Biplob Bhattacharjee, winger Mithun made it 3-0 in the 58th minute and midfielder Maruf Ahmed scored his first goal of the league with a drop-shot from outside the box five minutes later.

Rahmatganj had something to cheer about when young striker Pushban pulled one goal back with a brilliant curler in the 80th minute.

Moga hammered the final nail in the coffin and confirmed his hat-trick in the penultimate minute to raise his goal tally to seven, five less than top-scorer Mithun.

In the day's other match, a suicidal goal from defender Mohammad Javed handed star-studded Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club full three points as the newcomers came from behind to beat Brothers Union 2-1.

The match seemed to be heading for a draw before a low powerful shot from winger Zahid Hossain in the 89th minute was deflected by Brothers' defender Javed into his own net.

The speedy winger, Zahid earlier equalised for his team in the 50th minute with a brilliant solo effort after Brazilian recruit Danilo Rafael Vivaldo had given Brothers the lead in the 34th minute.

At the end of the first leg, Sheikh Jamal stand at third position with 24 points, four points behind the leaders Muktijoddha. Brothers Union on the other hand remain at sixth position with 13 points.

Uzbekistan's women booters arrive

SPORTS REPORTER

A 26-member Uzbekistan women's football team arrived in Dhaka yesterday afternoon to take part in the 2012 Olympic Qualification round-1 to be held from March 18-22 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Hosts Bangladesh, India and Uzbekistan will play each other in Group B.

Bangladesh Football Federation also announced an 18-member squad yesterday for the campaign which starts with the match against India on March 18. The women booters will then take on Uzbekistan on March 20. The last match will be between India and Uzbekistan on March 22.

Memorial chess

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Sheikh Abu Nasser Memorial International Open Rating Chess Tournament begins today at the Khulna Press Club auditorium.

Sixty players from Bangladesh, India and Nepal including four female players are expected to participate in the six-day tournament that is being organised by the Six Seasons Chess Club and sponsored by Destiny Group.

The prominent players of Bangladesh taking part in the weeklong chess tournament are Khandaker Aminul Islam, Debraj Chatterjee and Syed Mahfuzur Rahman Imon are the highest rated players from Bangladesh to take part in the tournament while Nikhilesh Kumar, Chandra Shekhar and Arindam Das are the most renowned players from India to participate.

Winners of the tournament will be awarded Taka 50,000 in cash.

What's in

FROM PAGE 16

"We were looking at opportunities of scoring in the initial powerplays when the ball was hard, but to be honest Shafuil did not allow us to do that.

"He went without a wicket, but probably deserved many."

The unassuming Shafuil, the son of a grocery shop owner in Bogra town, played down the rebuff from adjudicators.

"It's okay, I don't mind it at all," he said. "The important thing is that the team wins. The man of the match is just a tag."

For Shafuil, wearing the green Tigers jersey is the ultimate honour.

"When I as growing up, I would wear fake Bangladesh shirts while playing in my neighbourhood. I never expected I will wear the real one some day."

Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan saluted Shafuil, calling him a vital cog in the team's prospects.

"He is one of the most selfless players I have seen," Shakib said. "He is willing to do anything for the team. Of course, he deserved some man of the match awards."

"But I am sure he will get some on the way. The tournament is not over yet for us."

Bangladesh are level with the West Indies and South Africa on six points, one behind Group B leaders India and a point ahead of England, with four teams qualifying for the knockout round.

A West Indies win over England in Chennai on Thursday would mean Bangladesh will be through to the last eight even before their final league match against South Africa in Dhaka on Saturday.

Bilbao salvage draw

AFP, Barcelona



A last gasp header from substitute Urko Vera salvaged a 2-2 draw for Athletic Bilbao against Getafe on Monday.

The battle for a place in the Europa League remains wide open as none of the contenders appears capable of asserting their authority on the race.

Athletic suffered four straight defeats before their win against Sevilla last weekend and again they were far from their best against a Getafe side whose own European hopes appear over having gone six games now without a win.

"In the circumstances a point was not a bad result because it was not a

good game for us," said Bilbao coach Joaquin Caparros.

"It was very painful to see how we conceded the two goals because we are playing for our futures and we need to know how to deal with these situations."

His Getafe counterpart Jose Michel was angry with the score and felt that there was a foul on Jordi Codina before Athletic's second equaliser.

"There should have been a free-kick before the goal so it was more than just unlucky," he said.

"Results like this have been very costly for us and we have conceded late goals in a lot of matches."

"I am annoyed because my players are not happy and they have given their all in the match."

"I don't want to talk about anything other than the football but everything we have won this season we have

achieved ourselves," he added.

In a disappointing game both sides were reduced to shots from distance. Athletic looked marginally more dangerous on the attack through Iker Muniain and Fernando Llorente while their own defence was holding firm.

Manu broke the deadlock after the break but then deflected a free-kick into his own goal a minute later.

It was Manu again who looked to have won the game for the home side before a grandstand finish saw Vera head home from a corner kick.

Barcelona's lead at the top of the table was reduced to five points as they could only draw 1-1 with Sevilla at the weekend.

While a Karim Benzema double gave Real Madrid a 2-0 win over Hercules, Barcelona paid for a poor second half showing.

Japan hits home

Tennis

AFP, Indian Wells

Russian tennis star Maria Sharapova says seeing footage of Japan's quake-tsunami disaster has brought back memories for her family of the Chernobyl nuclear crisis 25 years ago.

The devastating quake compromised a nuclear plant, and three explosions and a fire at the facility have sent radiation to dangerous levels.

"Crazy, right? Can you believe one disaster 25 years ago? Now another?" said Sharapova who wore a T-shirt to her Indian Wells press conference on Monday with a reference to the anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear crisis.

Sharapova's family was living just 130 kilometres (80 miles) north of Chernobyl in Gomel, Belarus, when her mother was pregnant with Maria in 1986.

The family fled Gomel and ended up in Nyagan, Siberia, where Sharapova was born. "It is something you can't even prepare for," said Sharapova, following her third round win. "It happens, and you see the

coverage on it and the videos, and it's really incredible that something like that can even happen in the world."

Sharapova has been active over the years in raising awareness for the victims of Chernobyl by working as a United Nations goodwill ambassador.

The three-time Grand Slam winner has visited Japan over the years and has fond memories of the people she met and places she saw.

"It's a country where I have very great memories from," Sharapova said of Japan. "I started there when I was very young, and I always loved my experiences there. So to see what is going on there to its culture and the people, it's really sad."

World number one Rafael Nadal said Monday that the players are thinking about what they can do to help the victims of Japan's worst earthquake and the deadly tsunami that followed.

"We are thinking about what we can do," Nadal said following his win Monday over American Ryan Sweeting.

"I was in Japan last year and people were nice to me," Nadal said. "I am so sad at what happened. It is terrible. I hope the situation gets better soon but it is going to be difficult."

DSA Cup cricket

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Siraj Memorial 15th DSA Cup Cricket Tournament-2010-11 starts today at the at the Khulna Stadium. sponsored by AB Bank

16 teams from premier and first division cricket league are taking part in this knock-out tournament which is being sponsored by the AB Bank.

Khulna Metropolitan Police Commissioner Shafiqur Rahman will inaugurate the opening match as chief guest.

Trott senses

FROM PAGE 16

"I hit a few one-bounce fours in Australia."

"If I started hitting the ball in the air and getting caught on the boundary you guys (the press) would probably be having a go at me for that anyway."

Someone who does not have problems hitting sixes is West Indies all-rounder Kieron Pollard, who hammered 94 off just 55 balls as his side beat Ireland by 44 runs in their previous group match.

"Whatever England say about coming back, they are entitled to do that," Pollard said. "We're just concentrating on what we have to do."

"After losing that first match against South Africa, we've really bounced back as a team."

"We have a lot of things that are driving us at the moment, one of the things being we were written off. We are using that as a motivating factor."

Still room for

FROM PAGE 16

"You know that the coach gave everybody a specific role in the team and its nice to see that all are trying their best to play according to that role."

The team has been in a good shape after two victories but despite that Tamim believes that they must focus on their batting if they want to win the big matches.

"We have to mind it that the conditions suited our bowlers most in the last two games. We need to have some big partnerships up top and in Dhaka we would need a handsome total to defend if we bat first and on the other hand you have to chase a handsome total against South Africa if you bat second," said Tamim, who was however very much upbeat about their chance against South Africa.

Razzak also echoed the sentiment.

"We would need at least 2/3 big partnerships against South Africa. I think we are playing good cricket despite a setback against West Indies but there is a lot of scope to improve our batting. Everybody is looking forward to playing against South Africa because nobody is concentrating on any equation rather they want to win the match to qualify into the quarterfinals," said the experienced campaigner, who led the spin-battery from the front in the last two games by taking five wickets.

"The slow and low wicket in Chittagong helped us lot but it would be a different scenario in Dhaka where we must bat well," opined Razzak.

Imrul Kayes not only showed a rare consistency but also set an example by finishing the last game on Monday and this kind of effort will be needed more from the top order batsmen.

"A modicum of perspective says that we're in the most privileged position going. An earthquake and tsunami has just killed thousands of people in one part of the world (Japan) and in New Zealand."

"If I was to sit here and say 'oh my God these five-star hotels and all this travel', it's our job. It's our lot."

"If it's an issue then the only option is to retire from international cricket and go and play county cricket."

"It's very hard to do day in and day out but that's what we strive for because we have to. It would certainly be easier if we played 20 less games a year, those games that nobody cares about."

"It would probably make things a bit easier and keep the standard of world cricket higher but I'm not on the ICC [International Cricket Council] committee and it's my own personal view, not that of the team," Swann stressed.

Russian club tortured player

Football

AFP, Moscow

A Montenegrin footballer has complained to FIFA and UEFA that his Russian club Kuban Krasnodar violently coerced him into breaking a contract under threat of leaving him damaged for life, local media reported Tuesday.

Nikola Nikezic's contract was due to run until 2012 but he has alleged he was forced to pull out of the deal after being beaten up and threatened with permanent physical damage.

"I signed a two-year deal with Kuban in March 2010 and helped the club to win promotion into the Premier League last year," Kommersant daily quoted Nikezic as saying.

"However, this year club chiefs said they do not need my services any more

and offered me to break the contract. But I refused, asking the club for a transfer move."

The player added that the club, which is presided by Krasnodar region governor Alexander Tkachev, refused to trade him to any other side after he refused to break the deal.

Nikezic also said that on March 7, the club manager invited him to come to the club's training base, where the manager once again proposed that he break his contract with the club.

"After my refusal two strongmen came into the room and started to beat me badly, threatening me with maiming and demanding that I sign some papers," Nikezic said.

"It lasted for about 20 minutes," he added. "After that I felt myself completely exhausted and signed the papers."

The accusations will prove embarrassing for Russia, which is keen to

promote a clean domestic game ahead of its hosting of the World Cup in 2018.

After consulting representatives of the players and coaches' union Nikezic decided to lodge an official complaint with European and world football ruling bodies UEFA and FIFA.

"I decided to go for it, all the way," the player said. "I don't believe in an impartial investigation of the case by the Russian Football Union and decided to appeal to FIFA and UEFA."

The club meanwhile denied the allegations, calling the Nikezic's story 'improbable'.

"I met with Nikola (Nikezic) and talked to him," Kuban press spokesman Vyacheslav Ivanov told the newspaper.

"Some time ago he experienced certain problems when he failed to win a place in the team line-up. He told me he was seeking a new club but issued no complaints at all."

Loew extends deal

Football

AFP, Munich

Joachim Loew on Tuesday extended his contract with the German Football Federation (DFB) to coach Germany to the 2014 World Cup, ruling him out of the running for the Bayern Munich job.

Loew, Germany coach since 2006, had a contract until just after the Euro 2012 tournament, to be held in the Ukraine and Poland, but after reports he wanted to stay on until 2014, the DFB moved quickly to sign up the 51-year-old.

It means the team of Loew, assistant coach Hansi Flick, goalkeeping coach Andreas Koepke and team manager Oliver Bierhoff will take Germany to the Brazil tournament.

With Bayern Munich set to part ways with coach Louis van Gaal at the end of the season, Loew has removed himself as a potential replacement and said he is focused on Germany with his team top of their Euro 2012 qualifying group.

"I am pleased that we were able to agree quickly to a continuation of our co-operation up to the 2014 World Cup," said Loew at the DFB headquarters in Frankfurt.

"We believe in the quality of our players

and see good prospects for our team."

"So we were pleased to accept the offer from the DFB's senior management to sign an extension early."

Loew admitted he was surprised at the speed of negotiations.

"It demonstrates the relationship of trust that the negotiations will be closed in the next few days," he said.

Loew said he had wanted to make sure the contract extension was formalised long before the end of Euro 2012 -- which culminates in the final in Kiev on July 1, 2012 -- and avoid the previous negotiation problems last seen in February 2010.

Loew and the DFB failed to agree terms at the beginning of last year, when his contract was last under renewal, and a deal was only done after the World Cup last July, as Germany came third.

"Joachim Loew and his team have left their mark on the team in recent years," said DFB president Theo Zwanziger. "The smooth contract talks have once again shown clearly how great the mutual trust is."

"These respectful, open dealings with each other is the best way to ensure the successful co-operation of the past will continue to work in the future."

Loew has said he would not consider carrying out his national team coach role alongside the soon-to-be vacant Bayern job.

Zlatan out of Milan derby

AFP, Rome

Serie A leaders AC Milan's Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic was ruled out on Monday of their crucial derby with Inter Milan as he was handed a three match suspension for his red card in last weekend's match with Bari.

Ibrahimovic will miss the match on April 3 after being sent-off for aiming a karate chop into the ribs of Bari defender Marco Rossi in the 74th minute of the 1-1 draw last Saturday.

Milan - who lead defending champions Inter by five points - have appealed the decision and it will be heard on either Thursday or Friday this week, though, most observers feel they have little chance of winning it.

Should the decision be upheld then Milan will have to do without their leading scorer - he has scored 14 goals in Serie A this season - for not only the derby match but also next Saturday's away to Palermo and against Fiorentina.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS**
- 1 Cherished one
 - 5 Pitch
 - 8 Praise to the skies
 - 12 Advantage
 - 13 Hasten
 - 14 Therefore
 - 15 Musicians Kings of —
 - 16 Peculiar
 - 17 Rue the run
 - 18 Not idling
 - 20 Pulverize
 - 22 January and February
 - 26 Oil of roses
 - 29 Overactor
 - 30 Winery vessel
 - 31 Sense
 - 32 Chop
 - 33 Transcending (Pref.)
 - 34 Prior to
 - 35 Off-tattooed word
 - 36 Chart holder
 - 37 Glazier's item
 - 40 Bedouin
 - 41 One of the Royal Family
 - 45 Meditation method
 - 47 Type squares
 - 49 Reverberate
 - 50 Still
 - 51 Asian language
 - 52 Prophet
 - 53 Picnic spot
 - 54 Prune
 - 55 Salver
 - 3 Enthusiastic
 - 4 Non-cancellation
 - 5 Rose's protector
 - 6 Help
 - 7 Beef, e.g.
 - 8 Minimum
 - 9 Sites for public records
 - 10 "Yecch!"
 - 11 Fawn's mama
 - 19 Atmosphere
 - 21 Branch with a dull sound
 - 24 Partner
 - 25 List-ending abbr.
 - 26 Some
 - 27 Hatcher or Garr
 - 28 Adolescent
 - 32 Metallic percussion instrument
 - 33 "She Done Him Wrong" star
 - 35 Extinct bird
 - 36 Conclusion
 - 38 Imbided
 - 39 Man of morals?
 - 42 Big name in desktop computers
 - 43 Comical Caroline
 - 44 "Finding Nemo" fish voiced by Ellen DeGeneres
 - 45 "Uh-huh"
 - 46 Eggs
 - 48 Long March leader

Solution time: 25 mins.



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CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF "WHEEL OF FORTUNE"
CO-HOST WHITE EVER CHANGED HOMES, I
WOULD CONSIDER HER A MOVING VANNA.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: A equals X