

INDEPENDENCE CUP FOOTBALL Arambagh, Feni draw

SPORTS REPORTER

Arambagh Krira Sangha and Feni Soccer Club scored a 1-1 draw in the Independence Cup football tournament at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The listless draw played in an empty bowl keeps Group C yet undecided. Feni have one point from two matches, Arambagh one from one while the other team in the group, Muktijoddha Sangsad have three points from the one game they played. The group will be decided on Saturday when Muktijoddha take on Arambagh.

The first real chance in yesterday's game came in the 10th minute when Feni's Nche Francis headed one only to brush the outside of the bar. At the other end, Arambagh's Nigerian forward Benjamin Cooper narrowly missed the target as the keeper had advanced down the track.

Ten minutes later, Cooper found the

back of the net, but this time it was ruled out for offside.

A minute later, Feni took the lead when striker Sohel Rana unleashed a left-footer from the edge of the box and the ball went in after hitting the side bar.

Bangura Ismael missed a wonderful chance to equalise in the 34th minute. Collecting a minus from Cooper, he let the ball roll past the far post while the keeper struggled to cover.

Arambagh though found the equaliser in the 43rd minute when Cooper evaded the challenge of a defender to slide in a low cross from Khan Sharif into the back of the opposition net.

Cooper should have given Arambagh the lead on the hour mark, but his header on an open net bewilderingly went skyward.

Apart from that the second-half was an even contest as was the first and both teams lacked the penetrative edge and the match exasperatingly rolled into a draw.

PCB plans own 'IPL'

Cricket

CRICINFO, Karachi

Pakistan's players have not been a part of the Indian Premier League (IPL) since its inaugural season, but the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has plans to launch their own equivalent of the Twenty20 tournament, though they have admitted it will not be possible to host it in Pakistan.

Instead, they want to host the tournament in Dubai, where Pakistan have played one-day internationals against Australia and South Africa, and the latter in a Test match.

Sultan Rana, the chief of PCB's domestic cricket department, told Pakpassion.net the plans had been in the pipeline for the last two years but the board had to delay it because of the attack on Sri Lanka's cricketers during their tour of Pakistan in March 2009.

"We first considered the idea a couple of years ago," he said. "The documents were

complete and we were all set to go, but the attack on the Sri Lankan team meant that we had to shelve all of our plans at that time

"I recently went to Sri Lanka during the World Cup and spoke to many other countries' board representatives, but apart from Sri Lanka they are reluctant to send their players to Pakistan. So, that presents a problem for us. We simply cannot host the tournament in Pakistan if we want to attract the top players."

The IPL was also hosted abroad in its second season, when the tournament was shifted to South Africa after security concerns arising from the Mumbai attacks in December 2008 meant it could not be staged in India. Rana was confident Pakistan's board could do something similar.

"What we are trying to do is to organise a competition in Dubai. This idea was discussed in the past and has very much been in our plans and is still on the table. I'm sure we (PCB) can organise this tournament, which will run along the lines of the Indian Premier League."



PHOTO: AFP

World number one Spaniard Rafael Nadal serves to Finnish Jarkko Nieminen during the Monte-Carlo Masters Series match in Monaco yesterday. Nadal won 6-2, 6-2.

No stopping Hussey

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we were kids (laughs). We used to fight when we used to play backyard cricket. I think that's where we got our competitive spirit. Our backyard test matches were very hotly-contested?

Obviously now we are all grown up, he lives in Melbourne, I live in Perth so we don't get to see each other as much as we used to. We probably get on a lot better now than when we were kids.

DSS: What is it about brothers playing for Australia?

MH: I think we just love sport in Australia, whether it is Aussie Rules Football or cricket. I think the Waugh brothers were good at soccer as well.

In Australia, we are brought up on a lot of sport. Mum and dad told us to get out and kick a footy or play cricket, so it probably just grew from there.

DSS: This February, there were calls for your retirement and later it was denied. How did you take that?

MH: Again, I don't take too much notice of what critics are saying on the outside. I just concentrate on what I have got to do.

I hadn't thought about retiring at all, because it took me so long to get me one game. I still feel like I am fit and enjoying challenge in the middle. I still want to keep playing.

DSS: What would be your favourite innings?

MH: Geez, it's hard to say. If you can be out there to hit the winning runs for Australia, that is probably the most special.

There are probably a couple that springs to mind. One of them being the Twenty20 semifinal against Pakistan; that was a pretty amazing feeling.

Also the Test match in Adelaide (against England in 2006), I only got 60-odd but I hit the winning runs. That was probably the best feeling I've had on a cricket field.

DSS: In that Twenty20 innings against Pakistan last year, what was going through your mind in that last over?

MH: I'm not sure I believed 100 per cent. There was no fear and I swung hard and luckily for me it came off.

DSS: Do you like the nickname Mr. Cricket?

MH: It's not something I really enjoy. There are more Mr. Crickets out there than me: Murali for one, he loves the game very much.

Ricky Ponting and Shane Warne as well; it is not something that sits well with me but I guess there can be a lot worse nicknames.

DSS: How do you see the progress of the Bangladesh cricket team?

MH: I think they definitely progressed. They are getting better and better all the time. I think there looks to be more expectation now on the team, which is good.

I think there level has improved in the last two years. Hopefully, it continues to improve. It takes time but they have got the making of some really good players there. If they can get consistent, I think they're going to be the next Sri Lanka.

When Sri Lanka first came in they were inconsistent but now they are obviously one of the world's best teams and I think Bangladesh will go in the same path.

DSS: You are now part of the new era of Australian cricket. How do you see yourself in it?

MH: I need to lead by example and keep doing the things I do. I have to show the younger guys that they stick to their own game, make sure what your game is and be passionate about playing for Australia.

DSS: How do you like to be remembered?

MH: Just someone who was passionate about the game, loved playing for Australia; was cool under pressure. Mainly, someone who was a good team man.

Nadal gets off the mark

AFP, Monte Carlo

Rafael Nadal stormed past Finn Jarkko Nieminen 6-2, 6-2 Wednesday to begin the quest for an unprecedented seventh consecutive title at the Monte Carlo Masters.

Spain's top-seeded king of clay, who lost his only match in the principality in 2003, spent just 69 minutes in putting out Nieminen, who dropped the first ten points of the one-way contest.

Third seed Andy Murray was due on court in a second-round opener against Czech Radek Stepanek as the Scot tries for his first win since January in the wake of four defeats, the worst run of form in the career of the three-time grand slam finalist.

Nadal took charge immediately against the 59th-ranked Nieminen, sweeping the first set in 32 minutes as he found his feet on his favourite surface. But in the end, it did not go totally to plan.

Nieminen saved a pair of match points trailing 1-5 in the second set with a cross-court volley winner and a Nadal forehand wide, eventually holding for 2-5. But reality returned a game later as the Spanish seed served out victory on his third match point, a winner which Nieminen could not touch.

Nadal, the only player to win an ATP title six straight years, improved to an overwhelming 35-1 in the principality and has won 33 straight matches at the venue since his 2003 debut (a third round loss to Guillermo Coria).

He pounded Nieminen for the sixth time without a loss, running his record on sets against the Finn to 15-1.

Carlo defends

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was unrepentant.

"I thought a lot of time to take this decision," Ancelotti said. "I preferred to start with Fernando for this kind of game. But Didier played very well in the second half."

Ancelotti rejected suggestions from Sir Alex Ferguson that it would have been impossible for the Chelsea coach not to pick Torres given the club's record outlay on the player.

"A lot of people thought Drogba would play, but I thought that having signed Torres for the money they did, they had to play him," Ferguson said. "I wasn't 100 per cent sure. But I couldn't see how they could leave Torres out."

Ancelotti insisted however that Ferguson's comments were wide of the mark.

"This is not true," he said. "I picked Fernando because I felt his skills and ability could be good for us."

Drogba had been brought on at half-time because Chelsea were chasing the game at 1-0 down, Ancelotti said.

"I wanted to put more pressure on the front," Ancelotti said. "We needed to score. I felt Didier was fresh and we could use his power in front. This was the reason I took out Fernando."

Scoreboard

Bowler O M R W

Johnson 9 0 67 3

Hastings 9 0 42 0

Pattinson 7 0 39 1

Watson 9 0 49 2

Doherty 6 0 33 0

Smith 8 0 45 0

Clarke 2 0 13 0

Result: Australia won by 66 runs and clinched three-match series 3-0.

Man-of-the-match: Michael Hussey.

Man-of-the-series: Shane Watson.

SAA take

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underway on April 19.

Mehrab Hossain, Kamrul Islam Rabbi and Saqlain Sajib will return home on completion of the four-day series.

DSS: How do you like to be remembered?

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh top-order batsman Shahriar Nafees nudges the ball on the off-side during an absorbing second wicket stand of 136 runs with a more aggressive Imrul Kayes against Australia at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Nafees scored 60, his second successive half-century against the Aussies.

Valthathy powers Punjab

AFP, Mohali



Unheralded Paul Valthathy smashed an unbeaten 120 off 63 balls as Kings XI Punjab shocked defending champions Chennai Super Kings by six wickets in the Indian Premier League on Wednesday.

Valthathy, 27, clobbered 19 fours and two sixes in a stunning counter-attack to help Punjab overhaul an imposing 189-run target with five balls to spare for their first win in two matches.

A surprise promotion to the opening slot, Valthathy single-handedly fashioned the highest successful run-chase in the ongoing Twenty20 tournament.

Dinesh Karthik brought off the winning runs with a six, much to the delight of Adam Gilchrist's team, reeling under a heavy defeat to Pune in their opening match.

Opener Murali Vijay earlier struck a fine 74 off 43 balls to help Chennai overcome the loss of two wickets off the first two balls of the innings.

Vijay also shared a 122-run partnership for the third wicket with Subramaniam Badrinath who remained not out on 66 with eight fours, after Punjab won the toss and elected to field.

Fast bowler Praveen Kumar gave Punjab the perfect start when he had in-form opening batsman Anirudha Srikant trapped leg before and Suresh Raina caught at midwicket the next ball.

But Vijay and Badrinath brought the innings back on the track with a mix of aggression and caution and set the stage for a late assault by skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

Dhoni smashed four fours and two sixes to score 43 runs off 20 balls as his wife Sakshi cheered from the stands.

SCORES IN BRIEF

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS: 188-4 in 20 overs (Vijay 74, Badrinath 66, Dhoni 43; Kumar 2-37)

KINGS XI PUNJAB: 193-4 in 19.1 overs (Valthathy 120 not out)

Result: Kings XI Punjab won by six wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Paul Valthathy.

Mumbai maul Bangalore

PTI, Bangalore

Skipper Sachin Tendulkar and young Ambati Rayudu clobbered the Royal Challengers Bangalore bowling as title contenders Mumbai Indians cruised to a nine-wicket victory in an Indian Premier League match at the Chinnaswamy Stadium on Tuesday.

Chasing a target of 141, Mumbai Indians reached the target with nine balls to spare. Mumbai Indians now have two wins from as many matches.

On a strip where RCB batsmen struggled to get going, Tendulkar (55 not out, 46 balls, 7x4, 2x6) and Ambati Rayudu (63 not out, 50 balls, 9x4) sent the RCB bowlers on a leatherhunt with an undefeated 110-run second wicket partnership from 86 balls.

They were also helped by some lacklustre fielding by the home team.

It was Davy Jacobs (22, 16 balls, 2x4, 2x6) who started the charge by hitting Zaheer Khan for a couple of fours and two big sixes over long-on and deep mid-wicket.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE: 140-4 in 20 overs (Dilshan 59 not out, De Villiers 38; Pollard 2-25, Malinga 2-32)

MUMBAI INDIANS: 143-1 in 18.3 overs (Rayudu 63 not out, Tendulkar 55 not out)

Result: Mumbai Indians won by nine wickets.

Man-of-the-match