

Sixty million euro man

Palermo president Maurizio Zamparini on Thursday put a 60 million euro price tag on star playmaker Javier Pastore's head. Pastore played a starring role in Wednesday's 2-2 Italian Cup semifinal, first leg draw at AC Milan to add further weight to his burgeoning reputation. And when asked how much it would take to prise the 21-year-old away from Sicily, Zamparini replied: "Upwards of 60 million euros." However, the controversial club owner said that doesn't mean he is touting Pastore or any of his players to potential suitors.

- AFP



Sheikh Russel's Russian striker Eduard Sakhnevich evades Mohammedan's Hasan Al Mamun during their semifinal match of the Independence Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Sakhnevich's strike gave Russel a 1-0 win.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

INDEPENDENCE CUP

Russel Mohammedan's bogey again

Reach first ever final

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Russian striker Eduard Sakhnevich struck the only goal of the game to take Sheikh Russel KC into the Independence Cup football tournament final with a single-goal win over Mohammedan SC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Sheikh Russel will now take on Farashganj SC in the final on Sunday.

It is the first time that the two less illustrious sides have advanced into the final at any top-level competitions after dispatching country's established powerhouse likes Abahani, Muktijoddha Sangsad, Mohammedan and Brothers Union.

After debuting at the now-defunct Premier Division football league in 2003-04 to finish behind champions Brothers Union, Sheikh Russel had never defeated Mohammedan SC before this season. But they have more than made up for it on this occasion as they defeated the Black and Whites three times already this season.

Sheikh Russel tasted their first-ever

win over Mohammedan in the Bangladesh League match and then defeated them again in the group stage of this tournament and repeated the feat against the same opponents in yesterday's semifinal clash. All three games were won by the lone goal margin.

Under cloudy and pleasant weather conditions, Sheikh Russel controlled the midfield from the outset but could hardly breach the backline of Mohammedan, who gradually grew in confidence to fight equally before Eduard struck a stunning goal on the half-hour mark.

Sheikh Russel's national winger Monaem Khan Raju released a perfect lob from the centre area and the Russian striker, who also scored against Mohammedan in the group match, did not waste time to curl in a left-footer from the edge of the box to silence the hundreds who were cheering on Mohammedan.

And Sheikh Russel could have doubled the lead two minutes from time had Nigerian forward Effiong Duke not hit it straight to goalkeeper Titumir Chowdhury.

After the resumption, Mohammedan

enjoyed superior ball procession to press hard for an equaliser with a new formation of 3-4-3 and they could also split the opponent defense several times but the Black and Whites' forwards could not beat Sheikh Russel's national goalkeeper Mamun Khan, who thwarted at least three good chances from Nigerian duo Sunday, Amani and local midfielder Shariful Islam.

However, Mamun Khan was once beaten by an over-head chip by Sunday but defender Prodip Barua rescued Sheikh Russel to make a goalline save as well as make sure of Sheikh Russel's first-ever final berth at top-level competitions.

"All credit goes to the players, especially goalkeeper Mamun Khan," said Sheikh Russel coach Mahmudul Haque Liton adding that they had planned not to concede a goal in the second half after taking a lead in the first half.

"After going down, we created a lot of chances but the forwards could not avail any of them and that actually let us down," said Mohammedan coach Shafiqul Islam Manik.

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Siddikur's poor 2nd round

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman failed to emulate his first-round heroics at the Indonesian Masters as he relinquished an overnight lead to slip to 13th on the leaderboard before play was suspended due to lightning on Friday.

The lead was jointly shared by Shaaban Hussin of Malaysia and Park Hyun-bin of Korea, firing a 67 and 68 respectively to take the clubhouse lead on nine-under-par 135 in this inaugural Asian Tour event.

World number two Lee Westwood of England was nine-under and is slated to return at early Saturday morning to finish his remaining two holes at the Royale Jakarta Golf Club.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh's golfing superstar Siddikur, who had earlier shot a 1st round of 66 to take one-shot lead, lacked his touch in the second round and was one-over par in the 16 holes of the second round before play was halted.

Thitiphun Chuayprakong of Thailand shot a 68 to lie in third position on 136 while

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NATIONAL LEAGUE

Lone hand from Nafees

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Shahriar Nafees continued his good form with a century for Barisal in their last National Cricket League game against Sylhet at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday.

It was a captain's knock from the left-hander as his side crumbled in front of Alok Kapali's leg-spin to be bowled out for 257, Sylhet replying with six for no loss at stumps.

At the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra, Dhaka made 217-6 in their first innings against Rajshahi.

BARISAL-SYLHET

Nafees, who showed great form with the bat against Australia recently, hit fourteen fours and one six in his innings of 226 balls.

Put into bat by Sylhet skipper Kapali, Barisal were in trouble when Fakhrul Islam struck twice to remove both openers.

Nafees's younger brother Iftexhar Nayeem, who hit an impressive cen-

tury in the last match, came in at No 4 and the brothers shared a partnership of 103 runs.

Nayeem got out on 46 after hitting six boundaries and a six in his 96-ball knock. Sohag Gazi was the only other bats-



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man who made a notable contribution with his 47, hitting eight boundaries off 85 balls but it was the Sylhet captain who did a fine job with the ball.

Kapali picked up five wickets giving

away just 45 runs from his 19 overs. Left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed also took two wickets as did paceman Fakhrul.

Apart from Nafees, Nayeem and Gazi, none of the other Barisal batsmen made a decent score with last match's centurion Shahin Hossain getting out after a painstaking 17.

Sylhet batted three overs before the end of the day's play and scored six runs with both openers unbeaten at the crease.

RAJSHAHI-DHAKA

Dhaka, led by Mosharraf Hossain Rubel, decided to bat first and finished the day on 217 for six.

Rubel once again showed his batting quality scoring 69 of 212 balls with nine fours after the top-order fell off for just 21 runs in the 15th over.

The tall left-handed all-rounder added 75 for the fourth wicket with Mehrab Hossain to consolidate the Dhaka innings but the latter fell for 42. But Rubel kept up the partnerships going as he added a further 81 for the fifth wicket with Tayebur Rahman, who made 36.

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S Africa A

level series

3rd game today

CRICINFO

South Africa A levelled their five-match one-day series against Bangladesh A with an easy victory in the second game in Paarl.

The result was set up by big-hitting from the hosts' lower-middle order, which plundered 68 runs off the last 25 balls of the innings. That took South Africa A to a score of 285, which proved too much for Bangladesh A.

Having chased successfully in the first one-dayer, Bangladesh chose to field, and they got a couple of early wickets. Jacques Rudolph, the South Africa A captain, had not had a big innings in the four-day matches or the first 50-over game, and was keen to get some runs. His 89, along with Farhaan Behardien's 66, gave the batsmen a platform from which to launch.

The score when Behardien fell in the 46th over was 217 for 5 and at that stage Bangladesh were still in the game. Vaughn van Jaarsveld started the onslaught, smashing two sixes and a four in the 47th over, before holing out in the deep for 37 off 25 balls. The next two overs went for 18, and in the 50th, 19-year-old legspinner Noor Hossain was taken apart. Allrounder Vernon Philander hit him for two straight sixes before wicketkeeper Heino Kuhn struck two more, again straight. The over cost 27 and South Africa went into the break with all the momentum.

Bangladesh needed to start their chase aggressively and they did, but lost wickets too. Philander, who had scored 23 off 9 balls, did the early damage, picking up three wickets to leave Bangladesh 87 for 4.

Bangladesh A captain Mohammad Ashraf, who had scored an unbeaten century in the previous game,

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GP-BCB National Cricket Academy batsman Anamul Haque Bijoy is overjoyed after reaching his century against South Africa Cricket Academy at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Anamul shining light for Academy

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Anamul Haque Bijoy's superb unbeaten 127 gave GP-BCB National Cricket Academy a brilliant start to their second and final four-day game against South Africa Cricket Academy at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The first day ended with the home team comfortably placed at 332-6 in the first innings, a complete contrast to the two poor outings the top-order had in the first game of the series in Fatullah.

Bijoy, the under-19 wicketkeeper, was brought into the side as a No 3 batsman and immediately, in the second over of the day, was called into action after Myshukur Rahman was cleaned up by paceman Machant de Lange.

Bijoy, who was playing for the Academy side for the first time, added 135 runs for the second wicket in just over 30 overs with Rony Talukdar, the Kushtia-born player reaching his fifty off 81 balls.

Rony made 74 off 91 balls with the help of eleven boundaries, but after he fell to left-arm spinner Siya Simetu, the home side lost

two quick wickets (skipper Mithun Ali and Mominul Haque) and were again staring down the barrel.

But alongside Shuvogoto Hom, the fresh BKSP graduate Bijoy reached his century off 181 balls with eighteen boundaries. The duo added 127 for the fifth wicket but Bijoy went on and remained not out when stumps were drawn.

He ended with 127 runs off 260 balls with 21 boundaries, an innings that spanned just two minutes short of six hours as he batted the entire day at a good pace, a quite rare occurrence in this country.

The 18-year-old has always given a glimpse of his talent when he made his first-class debut for Dhaka in 2008 but was overshadowed by older campaigners.

In this first-class season, he has 299 runs with a century (against Khulna on October 4, 2010) and an average of 59.80 after eight innings.

The performance and his slow rise is especially heartening as the country's cricket rarely throws up talented wicketkeepers who also bat well and gets the required exposure.

BRIEF SCORES

GP-BCB NCA: First innings 332-6 in 90 overs (Bijoy 127 not out, Rony 74, Shuvogoto 70; Simetu 2-45, de Lange 2-80).

Gayle blows away KKR

AFP, Kolkata



Chris Gayle hammered an unbeaten 102 off just 55 balls to power Royal Challengers Bangalore to a nine-wicket victory over Kolkata Knight Riders in the Indian Premier League on Friday.

The West Indies batsman cracked seven sixes and 10 fours in a superb display of power-hitting as Bangalore achieved a 172-run target with 11 balls to spare for their second win in six matches of the Twenty20 tournament.

Gayle, playing his first IPL match after being dropped for the opening home games against Pakistan, put his team on course for victory with a 123-run stand for the opening wicket with Sri Lankan Tillakaratne Dilshan.

Dilshan scored 38 off 31 balls with the help of six fours before being bowled by fast bowler Lakshmipathy Balaji.

But there was no stopping Gayle, who completed the victory and his century when he hit left-arm spinner Shakib Al Hasan through the covers for a four. Virat Kohli was the other notable contributor with an unbeaten 30.

Kolkata, who suffered their third defeat in six matches, earlier posted a competitive total, thanks to skipper Gautam Gambhir (48), Yusuf Pathan (46) and South African Jacques Kallis (40).

Kallis put on 44 off just 4.5 overs for the opening wicket with Australian Brad Haddin (18) and 58 for the second

wicket with Gambhir before Pathan stepped up the run-rate in the closing overs.

Gambhir hit six fours in his 38-ball knock, while Pathan

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Royal Challengers Bangalore batsman Chris Gayle celebrates his 55-ball century in the IPL Twenty20 match against Kolkata Knight Riders at the Eden Gardens yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP