

Becks pining for Olympic role

Former England captain David Beckham is desperate to be involved in the Great Britain football team at next year's London Olympics - even if that means being restricted to a backroom role. The Los Angeles Galaxy midfielder, who made his name at Manchester United, has not been involved in an England squad since October 2009, with Italian manager Fabio Capello all but calling time on his international career. Beckham will be 37 by the time the Games start on July 25 but, having played a role in bringing the Olympics to his home city he is especially keen to be involved in 2012.



Chennai Super Kings batsman Michael Hussey dispatches a delivery through the on side during his unbeaten 79 against the Rajasthan Royals at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

BJMC back to football

SPORTS REPORTER

There was a time when the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) was a formidable force in the country's football scene. Then, at the start of the 80s the team went into decline, vanishing from the picture in the middle of the decade to gradually become a distant memory in the minds of fans. The good news for former fans is that the BJMC team is back into the fold reincarnated as Team BJMC, according to an announcement by Jute and Textile minister Abdul Latif Biswas at the NSC Auditorium yesterday.

With the star striking duo of Salam Murshedi and Sheikh Mohammad Aslam, BJMC last emerged league champions in 1979 and became joint champions with Brothers Union in the 1980 Federation Cup. However, was relegated to the Second Division in the 1983-84 season and since then it was all downhill as the BJMC faced financial crisis.

"BJMC has been recovering its losses fast and heading towards being a profitable organisation, and so we have taken the initiative to revive our football team. It is a new birth of Team BJMC, which will start its journey as a child and we expect cooperation from all to help this team walk," said Biswas during the function at NSC, which included discussions of their future plans for Team BJMC as

well as a reception for former and current BJMC athletes of different disciplines.

The Jute and Textile minister appealed to the Bangladesh Football Federation to give Team BJMC a place in the country's professional football league from the next season.

"I would be happy to see a worthy side playing the professional football league. I have no problems if they form a worthy team with proper budget, players and provide adequate training facilities. I will even amend laws if necessary," said BFF president Kazi Salahuddin, who was also attending the programme, adding that he enjoyed a good relationship with Latif Biswas since 1972.

Earlier, BFF senior vice president Salam Murshedi and vice president Badal Roy said that they had no doubt about BJMC's organisational skills and requested the president to consider the matter.

The red and green jersey of Team BJMC was also revealed on the occasion along with the logo of the team.

Apart from Team BJMC, the Jute minister urged the sports minister to hold 'Road Show' in every district to raise awareness and interest for sport among the youth, adding that his ministry would work under the instructions of the sports ministry.

"Only sports can protect the children from social anarchy and we will sponsor and provide spaces in Dhaka,

Khulna, Jessore, Rajshahi for training if the sports ministry comes forward to take initiatives.

"Let's try to do something better for the next generation as we have to take every sector forward if we want to take our country ahead," said Latif Biswas, who mentioned that he was not an athlete but has worked as president of a football team for 17 years.

Biswas also said that they are thinking of introducing a quota for athletes at BJMC and taking initiatives to revive sports across the country.

Five organisers and 55 renowned former and current athletes, who are also employees of BJMC and achieved gold medals at international and national level, have been accorded a reception. Among them, SA Game's first gold medallist in athletics Mojibur Rahman Mallik, DU blue and 400m gold medallist Tofazzal Hossain, Jesim Akhter, Nilufar Yeasmin, Abdul Kuddus, defending sprint champion Nazmun Nahar Beauty, discus thrower Akhirunnesa, high jumper Sajib Hossain, Shah Alam, former footballers Salam Murshedi and Sheikh Mohammad Aslam were some notable names.

Sports minister Ahad Ali Sarker, sports secretary Mahbub Ahmed, Jute and Textile secretary Ashrafur Kabir, BOA vice president Mizanur Rahman Manu, BJMC chairman TD Mitra and its director Arif Khan Joy also spoke on the occasion.

CSK rout Rajasthan

INTERNET, Chennai



Michael Hussey and Suresh Raina shared a 137-run partnership to steer the Chennai Super Kings to an easy win over the Rajasthan Royals on their home ground in Chepauk on Wednesday.

Mid-way through Rajasthan's innings, Chennai coach Stephen Fleming was asked what total he'd be happy with. Pat came the reply - "148". It was an unusually specific score and considering the way the Royals were batting at that time, highly unlikely. But his words worked like a prophecy. At the half way mark the Royals were 86 without loss. The Super Kings then came back into the match, picked up wickets, slowed down the run rate and restricted the Rajasthan side. The runs they had to chase to win - 148. Spooky!

The total was never good enough to put pressure on the home side. Rajasthan needed early wickets to remain in the game. Murali Vijay went back in just the second over after making a mess of an attempted sweep shot off Johan Botha. That was to be the only small blip in the otherwise seamless chase.

Suresh Raina joined Michael Hussey at the crease and there was no looking back. They picked runs off all the bowlers easily and the target never seemed beyond reach. Stuart Binny had a very forgettable day; first conceding eight extras through some silly misfielding and overthrows and then Hussey slammed consecutive boundaries off the only over he bowled. When 19 runs came off a

Nayan Doshi over with both Hussey and Raina punishing him with sixes, the writing was on the wall. Both batsman matched each other shot for shot and completed their half centuries in the 13th over. Raina top edged a short ball from Siddharth Trivedi to depart with just 3 runs to go, but Hussey sealed the comprehensive win with a boundary off the very next ball. His 79 off 55 balls earned him the Man of the Match award.

Earlier, the Royals got off to a solid start aided a tad bit by Chennai's fielders. First R Ashwin let by four leg byes with a sloppy slide near the boundary and then Aniruda Srikkant dropped Shane Watson off Morkel when he was on nine. Scrappy - especially considering the standards they've set for themselves in the tournament. From there on, Rahul Dravid and Shane Watson took charge. Dravid in particular looked in supreme form, and didn't even hesitate to play a few lofted shots and reverse sweeps. His favourite shot for the day however was the pull over mid-wicket that he played for boundaries on demand.

Dravid raced to his half century, which came off just 37 deliveries. His knock off 66, studded with ten boundaries seemed to be just the launchpad Rajasthan needed for a big score. It wasn't to be. An amazing catch off his own bowling from Jakati broke the opening stand and sent back Watson for a well made 32. The wickets kept tumbling thereafter. Menaria, Botha and Rahane all departed cheaply. Ross Taylor tried hard to hit out but was sent back for 20. Albie

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BANGLADESH LEAGUE Feni edge Rahmatganj

SPORTS REPORTER

A brace by Nigerian forward Abakpono Rowland guided hosts Feni Soccer Club to a 2-1 victory over visiting Rahmatganj MFS in their GrameenPhone Bangladesh League encounter at the Feni Stadium yesterday.

Rowland, who signed for Feni Soccer Club just days before the start of the second phase of Bangladesh League and scored a hatrick on his debut put the hosts in front on the 36th minute and then doubled the lead 14 minutes later. Pashobon Mollah reduced the arrears for Rahmatganj 70th minute but the Old Dhaka outfit could not find and equaliser despite playing well for the rest of the match.

This win takes Feni to ninth position in the league standing with 12 points while Rahmatganj stay at seventh with 16 points.

Arambagh KS take on Brothers Union in the lone match today at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

An obituary



MOHAMMAD ISAM

Cricket is dead in the National Cricket League (NCL). And how.

When you take a sweeping view of what goes on during four-day games in this country, it would be hardly surprising if you find out players just waiting for the game to be over.

After having surveyed through players in the competition, it has been gathered that there is a huge lack of interest. That is mainly due to the ridiculously low pay they receive during a match. And a lack of competition is another major reason.

The points table of this year's competition says a lot about the quality and standard of cricket played. While Rajshahi and Dhaka have already qualified for the final (to be held from May 10 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium), the rest, particularly the bottom two, have provided nothing to first-class cricket in Bangladesh.

It is easy to figure out why Dhaka and Rajshahi continue to dominate this competition. The latter has a proper system in place while the former has too many players to choose from. Chittagong amassed only 30 points from their five games and since they produced Tamim Iqbal, the port

city has forgotten about playing cricket and concentrated on flimsy tournaments. Khulna, from where major talents have emanated even until very recently, are deprived of all their international-level players and have struggled to put together a decent eleven this season. Sylhet, though they finished third, drew seven out of eight games. When asked, one of them quietly admitted that Sylhet players don't even remember when they won a four-day game.

There have been similar stories of players' indifference towards the four-day game. A prominent figure in domestic cricket recently quipped that he is better off doing television talk shows than playing in the NCL.

Add to this, the dream of every club cricketer to play in this competition. It is a gateway to the national team but more importantly, a first-class tag on a player gives him a better standing in every which way.

And this is where a lot of discrepancies creep in.

Some players take this chance and during this season, a lot of lower league players got their noses ahead. If they had done well, it would have made great stories but they didn't and much like they slip into the system, they slip out as conspicuously and those who deserve it more, miss out.

A left-arm spinner from a remote district suffered this fate even after performing well. He made his debut for Chittagong back in 2007 and the next year, he became the second highest wicket-taker of that year's NCL. In the thirteen matches he played he picked up 46 wickets. But then he made the mistake of not joining the CWAB strike the following year. Some senior players and officials got angry at him and since then he was never even considered for the squad.

But these same officials manufacture dreams too.

This season Barisal picked an opening batsman who made his club cricket debut back in 2004-05 when he was only 17. After going through statistics, it has been revealed that he has played less than ten games in these six years. He played for Partex in First Division Cricket League and played only two matches.

Another lucky one, who played Third Division last year and was in Premier League team Old DOHS side this year. He is in the Under 19 probables and though he didn't get any matches to play in the Premier League, he is playing first-class cricket.

Dhaka also fielded a virtually non-descript team in their last NCL game before the final. It was so inexperienced that one match official was moved to

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INDEPENDENCE DAY HOCKEY Air Force pound Armanitola Jr

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Air Force crushed Armanitola Junior by 10-1 goals in the opening match of the Lyric Group Independence Day Hockey Competition at the Moulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Mamun Hossain and Rumman Ali scored three goals each while Saiful Hasan, Morshedul Islam, Zahid and Moniruzzaman netted one apiece for the winners. Rakib needed the consolation goal for the losing side.

Earlier, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee for education ministry Rashed Khan Menon inaugurated the meet

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Bangabandhu Int'l Youth TT this month

SPORTS REPORTER

In a bid inspiring the youth as well as spreading the game of table tennis among throughout the country, Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation is going to hold the Bangabandhu International Invitational Youth Table Tennis Championship this month.

The five-day competition with participations from China, Malaysia, Thailand, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bhutan and hosts Bangladesh will be held at the newly-built Wooden Floor Stadium from May 24-28, informed BTTF president Abdul Karim at a press briefing at the NSC conference room yesterday.

Karim also informed that the tournament would be a U-18 affair where both boys and girls would compete in five events - boys' singles and doubles, girls' singles and doubles and mixed doubles.

The logo of the tournament was unveiled by state minister for youth and sports Ahad Ali Sarker.

"International tournaments such as ICC World Cup, SA Games have been held here, which have been completed successfully and the results of those meets were also satisfactory. This time I hope this table tennis tournament will also be a satisfactory one," said Sarker.

The BTTF president informed that the championship would have an expenditure of approximately Tk 76 lakh and all money would be arranged through sponsorship. So far there has been good response from Bangladesh Bank Associations (BBA) and Robi, telecom operators.

BTTF general secretary Shamsul Alam Anu and sports secretary Mahbub Ahmed and others officials were also present on the occasion.



State minister for youth and sports Ahad Ali Sarker (L) unveils the logo of the Bangabandhu International Invitational Youth Table Tennis Championship to be held from May 24-28 in the city.

PHOTO: STAR