



Rajshahi batsman Naeem Islam plays an off-drive during his patient 112 against Dhaka in the National Cricket League final at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

NATIONAL CRICKET LEAGUE

Rajshahi edge ahead on Naeem ton

SPORTS REPORTER

Naeem Islam scored a laborious century to put Rajshahi on top against Dhaka on the third day of the National Cricket League final at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The seven-hour long marathon innings under humid conditions from Naeem, who made 112 off 281 balls with fifteen boundaries, helped Rajshahi take a small but much-needed first innings lead which left Dhaka in a must win situation if they want to regain the title.

Despite lanky paceman Shahadat Hossain's five-wicket haul on a sporting track, Rajshahi managed a 34-run first innings lead because of Naeem's patience in the middle. The right-hander, who usually bats down the order with the national team but batted at the number four position in the match, even kept his cool after making a hundred by taking a cheeky single. Naeem started the day on 42 and completed his century playing 129 balls while he took 241 balls to complete his first hundred in the league.

Resuming the day on 177 for four, defending champions Rajshahi were all out for 314

just before the tea break. But they soon took three Dhaka wickets including the prize scalp of Mohammad Ashraful to tighten their grip on the five-day final.

Dhaka scored 97 for three in their second innings when stumps were drawn for the day. The Dhaka batsmen including two not out batters Mehrab Hossain (32) and Mahmudullah Riyad (9) must do something special on the fourth day to bounce back in the match.

National pacer Shafiul Islam gave the breakthrough by removing Rony Talukder and then left-arm spinner Saqlain Sajib took the wickets of Shamsur Rahman, who was caught at long-on, and Ashraful, who tried to sweep but top edged to reach the safe hands of Jahurul Islam at silly point. To add to their woes, one down Anamul Haque retired hurt after receiving a nasty bouncer from Shafiul.

"We (Rajshahi) are in a good position after the third day's play and Dhaka must do something special if they want to come back into the match. I was determined to stay in the middle so that we could take the much-needed first innings lead," said Naeem, who is

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India still don't support UDRS

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

India's powerful cricket board on Thursday said it would continue to oppose the umpire decision review system (UDRS) despite a recommendation for its use in all international games.

Following a two-day meeting at Lord's, the cricket committee of the International Cricket Council (ICC) recommended on Wednesday that the review system be used across all international games.

The decision on whether to extend the use of the technology will now be taken by the ICC's executive board in June.

"I am a member of the executive board. We will put forward the BCCI's position, which is very clear right from the start, when the executive board meets," N Srinivasan, secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), told AFP.

India have been sceptical of the system, which allows teams to question an umpire's on-field decision, ever since it was introduced on a trial basis during their tour of Sri Lanka in 2008.

The Indians struggled with the referrals, getting only one right, while Sri Lanka successfully challenged 11 decisions.

India's stance hardened further following a controversial

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Ex-captains wade in on game development

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

A number of former national cricket captains have given their opinions on a long-term strategic plan which the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has prepared to improve the standard of the game in the country.

They put their suggestion while exchanging views with BCB's chief executive officer (CEO) Manzur Ahmed, who placed a four-year long plan, yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

"I felt honored. We touched almost all the areas during the discussion. We must have a long-term plan if we want to improve the standard of the game in the country. We must improve our ranking otherwise we simply can't survive," said former captain Roquibul Hassan.

"To improve the standard we have to have a permanent calendar, we must focus on our age group cricket as well as form different management for the different teams like Bangladesh A

team, Academy team etc. Above all we must improve our infrastructure and improve the facilities immediately," he added.

Gazi Ashraf Hossain, former skipper, now turned, influential BCB director, said that the time has come to make a long-term plan and implement it immediately to survive in international cricket. He especially emphasized on creating more venues.

"We discussed many things on the presentation of a four-year plan. If we want to improve the standard of the game in the country we should take a long-term plan and we must reach a consensus to implement the plan. I think time has come to work together for greater interest of the game, so we have to talk with everybody. We must ensure that even for political changes, the policy will not change," suggested Ashraf.

"We fail to implement many things mainly because of a lack of grounds in the country, so I think we should solve this issue first if we want to implement a long-term plan. We must have long look at our age level cricket otherwise we can't survive," he added.



Mohammedan's iconic former player Minhazul Abedin Nannu (L) embraces another former cricketer of the club, Sri Lanka's 1996 World Cup-winning captain Arjuna Ranatunga during the club's reunion at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre yesterday evening. The event also marked the club's transformation into a public limited company and was attended by some 1200 former and current players and 213 members. Notable names included Kolkata Mohammedan's vice president Mohammad Kamranuddin, Nigeria's World Cup footballer Emeka, and Pakistani hockey players Shahbaz Ahmed, Kamran Ashraf and Momotaz Haider.

PHOTO: STAR

BKSP trounce Gulshan Youth

SPORTS REPORTER

BKSP rode on a fine unbeaten 46 from Farzana Haque to overcome Gulshan Youth Club by 96 runs in their Women's Club Cricket League encounter at BKSP-2 yesterday.

Batting first, BKSP were all out for 147 in 39 overs, a score that in the context of the tournament is fairly respectable. Coming in at number four after a solid opening stand of 55 between Farzana Akter and captain Sharmin Akter, Haque stayed the course to guide her team to the competitive total. For the Gulshan Youth Club, Halima Akter took two four wickets.

In reply, Gulshan were all at sea against the hosts' bowling as Puja Das picked up three wickets in seven balls and Shumona Akter two from five overs of economical bowling. Four runouts did not help as Gulshan were all out for only 52 in 18.1 overs, with 19 extras proving to be the most significant contributor to the score.

Farzana Haque was adjudged player-of-the-match.



Players of the 2011 Independence Cup football champions Farashganj Sporting Club parade their trophy, which they won on April 24 by defeating Sheikh Russel in the final, in a rally at Farashganj yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

No day-night Tests with red balls

Cricket

AFP, London

International Cricket Council (ICC) chiefs believe floodlit, day-night Tests could take place in the next few years but insist more work needs to be done on the ball before they give the go-ahead.

A traditional red leather ball is difficult to see under floodlights, while the white ball used for day-night one-day internationals doesn't wear at the same rate and so is considered unsuitable for longer formats.

Finding a suitable ball has so far proved the key stumbling block, with David Richardson, the ICC's general manager for cricket, telling reporters at Lord's here on Wednesday: "We've spent a lot of time over the last 24 months trying to develop a ball.

"Now we've crystallised that there's not much difference between the pink and orange balls and it was a question of finding a ball that could retain its colour throughout 50-80 overs."

Richardson was speaking after a two-day meeting of the ICC's cricket committee at Lord's, the self-styled 'home of cricket' and the headquarters of Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), who are still responsible for the sport's rules or Laws.

Officials at MCC believe they have found a solution to the ball problem by developing

a pink ball with a black seam.

This ball was used during their first-class match against England's champion county, Nottinghamshire, in March -- the traditional curtain-raiser to the English season which for the second successive year took place in the non-traditional setting of Abu Dhabi rather than Lord's itself.

MCC are convinced the ball can last in Tests and former South Africa wicketkeeper Richardson said: "In the Abu Dhabi match it did but the conditions were fairly benign, the outfield was a good one, there was no dew and the balls stood up well."

The dew factor was emphasised by ICC cricket committee chairman Clive Lloyd, the former West Indies captain, who said: "We were worried by the dew factor. If one side bowls at night, it could be with a bar of soap." Richardson said: "We decided we needed further trailing in multi-day competitions," adding he hoped the pink ball would be used in at least one round of first-class tournaments such as England's County Championship or Australia's Sheffield Shield during the next 12 months.

"If the reports coming back are that the ball keeps its condition and colour then I think we will be in a position this time next year to select a couple of venues and trial a day-night Test.

"The venue still needs to have decent lights, somewhere like Lord's, Sydney or Abu

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INTER-DIST CRICKET Narayanganj, Rajshahi win

SPORTS REPORTER

Narayanganj and Rajshahi won their respective encounters against Brahmanbaria and Rajbari by convincing margins in the second round of the 31st District Cricket Championship yesterday.

At Bogra, Narayanganj amassed 251 for six from their 50 overs, with Minhaj Khan weighing in with an unbeaten 68 and Masum scoring 42.

In reply, Brahmanbaria were thoroughly outclassed by a five-wicket haul from Apu to be bowled out for 154 in 49.3 overs. Masum capped a fine all-round show by taking

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