

Star SPORT

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Socrates mulls Cuba job

Former Brazil star Socrates is mulling over an offer from the Cuban authorities to take on the post of national coach, the former Corinthians midfield stalwart said on Friday. The Cubans are struggling in the ongoing Gold Cup and are coming off a 5-0 thrashing by Mexico and Socrates is seen as the man who can lift sagging morale. "We are going to talk and I'll see what they think. If I can help I will," added the 54-year-old. He added that were he to take the job he would expect to earn a normal worker's wage.

- AFP



Sheikh Jamal's Cameroonian striker Stephan Bouga celebrates one of his three goals against Rahmatganj MFS during their Bangladesh League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. INSET: The fans, who were none too happy and suspected foul play, are seen brandishing their shoes to show their displeasure.

PHOTOS: STAR



A 'tainted' Jamal win

ATIQUE ANAM

It is hardly the case that a team is booed off and gets a swearing ovation from the crowd just after they have won a crucial league match to tighten their grips on what promised to be their maiden league title. Ironically that was the case at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday, and the recipients were Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, the cash-rich inclusion to the fourth edition of the Bangladesh League this year, who won 5-2 against Rahmatganj MFS yesterday.

Angry fans, who felt that they were cheated, booed the players on their way back to the dressing room after the match. Some agitated supporters even showed their slippers or shoes while venting their anger for what they claimed a 'fixed' affair.

Officials and coaches of both teams however ruled out any foul play and seemed satisfied enough with the day's work.

"It matters little what the people say, we have played on the pitch and played a good match. We came from behind to win the match which is a creditable achievement," said Manzur Quader, president of Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club.

Quader's words were echoed by Packer Ali, the Dhanmondi Club's coach: "No

need to hear what the spectators say and you can't help it. It's me and the team officials who make the game plan and execute them. Our side is full of quality players who can turn around matches like that."

The Rahmatganj coach Ali Asgar blamed the red card to one of his players (Moshfilur Uddin) for their defeat: "We lost one stopper to the red card and another (Ddumba Michael) through injury, which is what led to the defeat."

The match itself was no less intriguing, as the underdogs Rahmatganj raced to a 2-0 lead within 32 minutes to wow everyone at the big bowl, before conceding five. Cameroonian striker Stephan Bouga scored the ninth hattrick of the league.

The first goal took only 12 minutes to be registered, when Sheikh Jamal defender Nasimul Islam inadvertently headed the ball into his own net trying to divert a Jamal Hossain cross.

The lead was doubled in the 32nd minute when Nigerian forward Uche Felix tapped in a Pushbon Molla minus from close range.

But that was as good as Rahmatganj got in the match. The complexion of the contest changed completely within the next five minutes as Sheikh Jamal regrouped and scored twice in as many minutes to restore parity. First, it was Atiqur Rahman Meshu's

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Tsonga shocks Nadal

Tennis

AFP, London

World number one Rafael Nadal crashed out of Queen's on Friday when French fifth seed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga pulled off a shock 6-7 (3/7), 6-4, 6-1 win in the quarterfinals.

Nadal arrived at the Wimbledon warm-up event admitting he felt exhausted in the aftermath of his record-equaling sixth triumph at the French Open.

Despite his tiredness this was still a major blow for the Spaniard, who had reached seven successive finals before this defeat, and it leaves him short of game time on grass ahead of the defence of his Wimbledon title later this month.

"After losing the second set, mentally I lost my concentration. It has been a lot of matches in a row and after that break in the third set it was a mountain for me to come back," said Nadal.

"I am a little tired. I wasn't there like usual and certainly I think I need a little bit of break."

Tsonga added: "The first time I reached the world top 100 was here at Queen's and today I have beaten the world number one. It was close to my best tennis -- it has to be to beat Rafa."

The match wasn't even two games old when a light shower forced the players off court, but they returned within half an hour to slug it out in a gruelling first set.

Nadal had been below his best in a three-set win against Radek Stepanek in the previous round and Tsonga provided an even greater threat than the Czech veteran.

He refused to give an inch to Nadal as the first set went

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Bitter past should bring better days

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY

Nobody knows better than this new crop of national selectors the pain of unfair treatment by the team management, in particular from the foreign coach.

The bitter memories of the untimely exclusion from the national team still haunt chief selector Akram Khan and his two colleagues Minhazul Abedin and Habibul Bashar. An experience which the three will carry for the rest of their lives though these days, they tend to speak of it with a touch of humour.

The common sentiment for long has been that things could have been different for Bangladesh cricket if there was a continuation with the selection procedure and if there was a fair judgment on the senior players. It's said

that the foreign coaches had an aversion towards the seniors, in their words the 'aged' players, and many believe that because of this one-eyed policy, Bangladesh is now running with a team whose average age is 23.

The captain usually calls all the shots in cricket but this common practice is not so common for an improving side like Bangladesh where the coach enjoys huge power, especially regarding selection of the team. There was a healthy and interesting battle between former Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore and the Faruque Ahmed-led selection panel but some have said that the last panel, under the leadership of Rafiqul Alam, gave priority to the opinions of another Australian Jamie Siddons.

The new coach is all set to take the helm of the Tigers within a very short time and the expectation is that this

new selection panel will take a fresh guard. With their first-hand experience of dealing with the foreign coaches during their playing career at the highest level of the game, Akram and co are expected to set an example.

One observes that this kind of incident would not happen anymore if the new selection committee maintains a policy regarding selection of the players and most importantly show courage when dealing with the foreign coach.

Akram however assured that his panel will be strict on their policy and take the advice of others if only they thought that those are logical.

"Nobody knew better than us what happened in the past, so we must be careful. We have to have the consistency in the team selection. What we believe is that the current national team is in

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Shakib stars with ball

Cricket

STAR SPORT DESK

Shakib Al Hasan picked up three wickets in Worcestershire's first win in the Friends Life t20 competition on Friday evening.

The Royals defeated Northamptonshire Steelbacks by seven wickets at New Road. It was another batting failure for the visitors who failed to reach 150 for the third time in four matches, struggling to 134 for 9 before Moeen Ali starred with the bat to give the home county a welcome win.

Shakib however didn't make any contribution with the bat as the Bangladesh skipper fell for a first-ball duck to South Africa off-spinner Johan Botha with the team cruising at 97 for two.

It took some sheen off his superb final over in which he picked up all three of his wickets. The left-arm spinner withstood an attempted bombardment with the help of two catches on the boundary by Moeen and another by Vikram Solanki at deep midwicket as Alex Wakely, Northamptonshire's top-scorer, fell in the last ball of the innings.

Shakib finished with three for 29 from his four overs while the other left-arm Shaiq Choudhry picked up two and Moeen one.

Wakely made 62 off 45 balls with the help of seven boundaries, an exception among their batsmen were tied down by a slow pitch that served Worcestershire's game plan of using

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Stalwarts urge for consensus

SPORTS REPORTER

Former players of Mohammedan Sporting Club Limited yesterday urged all to bring the club back from the courtroom and establish a board of directors based on consensus to resolve the divisions amongst the club members and directors. Some thirty former players from football, cricket, hockey and other sports congregated at the club in Motijheel yesterday to discuss the issues and later briefed the press of the outcome.

Badal Roy, former footballer of the club and vice-president of Bangladesh Football Federation said on behalf of others, "We want a consensus panel to take the club forward. We need to stand together and take the club out of the courtroom for the greater interest of the club."

The legendary club, which turned into a limited company on March 24, has been embroiled in a bitter



Jo-Wilfried Tsonga of France leaps for joy after defeating Spanish world No.1 Rafael Nadal in the quarterfinals at Queen's in London on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

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