

Star SPORT

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'Title hopes over'

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger admitted on Sunday that the Gunners' hopes of snatching the Premier League title were virtually over after the 1-0 defeat at Manchester City. Defeat left Arsenal 12 points adrift of leaders City and Wenger conceded it would be tough to win the title from such a long way behind. "It will be difficult to close the gap on City now, but we will try," said Wenger. "This was a game we couldn't afford to lose. It's difficult to take but we



'Drop cost dearly'

MOHAMMAD ISAM

Through the drudgery of the third day's play at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, a few home truths resurfaced for the Tigers.

In a year that only sees five Test matches, it is hard to compose the perfect piece and there hasn't been one for them. Lack of bowling discipline from two pacers, dropped chances by some and the phantom stumping are the lost pieces of Test cricket's jigsaw puzzle that frustrated Bangladesh yesterday.

The game sprung to life in the first hour though it was in on an embarrassing note. The skipper Mushfiqur Rahim blew a golden opportunity to remove the day's hero, Taufeeq Umar, when the left-hander was on 56. The Shakib Al Hasan delivery slipped down the leg-side as Taufeeq skipped down the track. In his excitement to appeal for the caught-behind, Mushfiqur completely forgot to stump the batsman who was only just returning to the crease.

Right after lunch, Nazimuddin dropped a sitter at gully off Robiul Islam's first ball. The batsman was, once again Taufeeq, this time on 66. A while after tea, Younis Khan was dropped by Shahadat Hossain at deep mid-wicket, the paceman diving forward

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A SOLID REPLY: Pakistan opener Taufeeq Umar (L) raises his bat after reaching his century during the third day of the second Test against Bangladesh at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Taufeeq went on to score 130 which was instrumental in putting Pakistan in a position of strength at 292-3 at stumps.

Missed chances hurt Tigers

BISHWAJIT ROY



The fog continued to disrupt proceedings on the third day but the Bangladesh bowlers failed to capitalise on the conditions yesterday.

Pakistan rode on Taufeeq Umar's hundred to consolidate their position in the second Test match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur while the bowling from pacer Nazmul Hossain under foggy weather was the only bright spot for the home team on the otherwise dull day. What was more frustrating for the home team was that they missed some chances, which were all the more costly due to the benign nature of the pitch as the day wore on.

Like the first two days, the day started after more than one and a half hours due to dense fog in the morning and only 69 overs were possible in the day's play. Despite the toothless bowling Pakistan, resuming on 87 for one, progressed at a snail's pace as they added 205 runs losing only two wickets to end the day on 292 for three, when once again bad light stopped play.

Still 46 runs behind Bangladesh's first innings total of 338, Pakistan didn't try to force the issue against the pedestrian bowling, instead they were as cautious as they could be on a flat track. Opener Taufeeq was the hero for the tourists as the left-hander batted six hours and 256 balls to make 130, his

seventh Test hundred and second against Bangladesh studded with 16 boundaries. Nazmul, who bowled brilliantly in his spell in the third session, finally got rid of Taufeeq when Shahriar Nafees took a sharp catch at slip but the centurion enjoyed some luck on the day as he was given three lives on his way to the three-figure mark.

After lunch, left-arm spinner Shakib Al Hasan provided the first breakthrough of the day removing Azhar Ali, who scored 57 off 147 balls with seven fours, but it could have come earlier in the first session if keeper Mushfiqur had not committed a schoolboy error.

Taufeeq danced down the track to work the ball to the leg side off Shakib and missed, resulting in bowler and keeper appealing for caught behind, but in his eagerness to get the decision, Mushfiqur neglected to take off the batsman, then on 56, stumped. In the event, Taufeeq was adjudged not out and a precious chance had slipped out of the Tigers' grasp.

Then, Nazimuddin deprived Robiul Islam of Taufeeq's wicket off the very first ball after the lunch break as the left-hander cut uppishly to gully where Nazimuddin clanged a sitter.

Then it was Shahriar Nafees who was slow to get off his blocks at short leg and grassed a bat-pad chance to give Taufeeq his third life.

Just before that Shahadat Hossain dropped Younis Khan at mid-wicket which enabled the dangerous right-hander,

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WOMEN FOOTBALL MSC set off on Rangpur tour

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Women's Football team will travel to eight districts of Rangpur to play eight friendly matches against the respective district women's football teams.

"In a quest of celebrating the 40th Victory Day of Bangladesh as well as creating the opportunities for women footballers and encouraging them at district level, we have decided to play friendly matches against all districts of Rangpur Division," said Qamrun Nahar Dana, chief of Mohammedan's women's wing, at a press conference yesterday.

A 20-member squad accompanied by technical director-cum-coach Joshimuddin Ahmed Josy will leave Dhaka for Rangpur

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Tons sink Dhaka Metro

SPORTS REPORTER



The first-class season of Jahurul Islam and Junaed Siddiqui sprang to life yesterday when the Rajshahi pair struck big hundreds against Dhaka Metropolis during their second phase game of the National Cricket League.

Rajshahi ended the second day on 355 for two, a 154-run lead already in the first innings. The Sylhet Divisional Stadium was awash with runs after the defending champions began the day on 94-1.

Jahurul and Junaed added 345 runs for the second wicket, the third highest partnership in Bangladesh's first-class history. It overtook the 322-run stand set by Dhiman Ghosh and Alauddin Babu for Rangpur earlier this month.

It was a burst of form by the pair who had thus far struggled in this format. Jahurul was averaging poorly in the four games while Junaed also worked his way into runs.

The day was quite frustrating for the Dhaka

Metro bowlers, who had to wait till quite late in the day for the only wicket, that of the left-hander who made 161 off 322 balls. Jahurul was unbeaten on 167 off 381 balls and he will come out with Hamidul Islam to bat on the third day with possibly one eye on the year's highest score in the NCL.

The Khulna-Sylhet tie at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong was more of a balanced encounter.

Sylhet are still 58 runs adrift of Khulna's 301-9 declared, though they only have two wickets in hand.

Rajin Saleh and Golam Mabud struck half-centuries but the rest only had starts.

Dollar Mahmud took three wickets while Al-Amin Hossain and Murad Khan picked up two each.

SCORES IN BRIEF

DHAKA METRO: First innings 201 all out. **RAJSHAHI:** First innings 355-2 in 119 overs (Jahurul 167 not out, Junaed 161; Taskin 1-36, Sunny 1-62).

KHULNA: First innings 301-9 dec in 76.1 overs

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Tendulkar has an attendant in Australia

AFP, Sydney

A cricket enthusiast listed in the Indian touring squad as an "attendant" is helping Sachin Tendulkar prepare for India's quest to win their first Test series in Australia, reports said on Monday.

DVGI Raghavindraa has never played first-class cricket but what he lacks in playing expertise he makes up for with enthusiasm and his presence in Australia, The Sydney Morning Herald said.

Raghavindraa is being used on tour for his throw-down skills in the practice nets and the Herald said he has come with strong recommendations from Tendulkar and fellow Indian batsman Rahul Dravid.

The newspaper said Raghavindraa, 27, is listed as an "attendant" on a Board of

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PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

YOU CAN WIN IF YOU WANT: Participants compete in the physically disabled's segment of the 7th Chittagong Divisional Disabled Sports Competition at the MA Aziz Stadium on Monday. National Association for Disabled's port city chapter and Chittagong Society for Disabled organised the competition in three categories for persons who are visually impaired, physically disabled and have special needs.

Fed Cup draw set

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Navy will play Cox's City FC in one of the two opening day matches of the Grameenphone Federation Cup Qualifiers on Friday at the Bangabandhu National Stadium as the draws of the 12 participating teams was held yesterday at the BFF House.

A total of seven matches will take place in the knock-out based qualifying round among 12 teams and 5 out of them will join the 11 teams of the Bangladesh Premier League.

FIXTURE

December 23	Bangladesh Navys Cox's City FC Beanibazar SCvs Wari Club
December 24	Bangladesh Policevs Ctg Abahani BKSPvs Bangladesh Army
December 25	Victoria SCvs Bangladesh Air Force Uttar Baridharavs Agrani Bank

"We have chosen the knock-out based qualifying round because there are many participating teams and because we also have domestic commitments like the Bangladesh Premier League, Bangladesh Championship League and the Women's Corporate League. We also lack playgrounds," said BFF senior vice president and Bangladesh Premier League chairman Abdus Salam Murshedy at a press conference yesterday.

"However, the finals will be held in a round-robin basis and the teams will get more matches to play," he added.

Participating teams seven from Bangladesh Championship League and five from services teams including Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan will play knockout based matches to advance to the final round but two winners of the knockout round will have to take part in a play-off match as only five teams will advance to the final round.

According to the draw, the winner among

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