

Shakib, a cut above

 Cricket

MOHAMMAD ISAM

It was always going to take a very special cricketer to replace a man of Jacques Kallis's stature. The South African is already regarded as a legend of the game with his unparalleled record with the bat and ball in all formats. By sheer number, Kallis has defeated competition for his throne and has kept himself head and shoulders above the rest. For Shakib Al Hasan to replace him at the top of the ICC all-rounders' rankings, after more than a decade, can end up as a one-off but it makes most sense that the figure at the top is indeed the Magura lad.

How a talented all-rounder has spruced up the fortunes of a fledgling Test side is not new in cricket history but the importance of such a cricketer can only be gathered when one looks at the change he has brought on. Shakib has made a world of difference to Bangladesh, be it with his batting, bowling or fielding. He has often been inspirational, galvanising the team together with his timely wickets and has always had the role of either saving his team from the brink of a total collapse or playing an innings that makes the others look good.

Kallis has continued the long line of great pace bowling all-rounders but Shakib has excelled in bowling spin and batting in the middle-order. It may sound easier but not many have fulfilled this criteria quite like

Shakib in the past.

There is one criteria where Shakib is ahead of Kallis and that is in the count for most 50 and five-wicket hauls in a Test. While the legend's two times in a 16-year long career is mainly due to a lack of opportunities with the ball, Shakib has completed the feat five times mainly due to him bowling and batting more than the others in his team.

What took him past Kallis was the 144 and 6-82 against Pakistan in the second Test, a performance that described Shakib's impact to Bangladesh to the tee.

The top-order collapsed within the first hour of play, leaving Shakib with two regular batsmen to work with. He cut out many positive shots, left more balls and slowly built his fort. Once the man at the other end settled down, Shakib felt secured enough to play shots. His acceleration is often early but this time, he wanted to play for the long haul and make a statement of intent. As the dominant bowling attack flagged, Shakib reached his second Test hundred and continued to extend himself the next day. A run-out ended his effort but it was as good an innings as anyone has ever played for Bangladesh.

If one were to compare, it could be kept in the same height as Mohammad Ashraful's unbeaten 158 which was made at the peak of calls to remove Bangladesh from Test cricket. Shakib's innings, despite the subsequent loss in the Test match, has kept the critics at bay for the time being.

With the ball in hand, Shakib remainxed

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Cox's City into finals



Action from yesterday's Federation Cup qualifying match between Cox's City and Beanibazar at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

PHOTO: STAR

SPORTS REPORTER

Newcomers Cox's City FC moved into the final round of the Grameenphone Federation Cup with a solitary-goal win over Bangladesh Navy in the opening match of the qualifiers at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Meanwhile, a brace from Shahinur Islam powered Wari Club to a 3-0 win over 10-man Beanibazar SC. Wari will now have to face the winners between BKSP and Bangladesh Army in a play-off match to ensure their final spot.

Nurul Absar struck the decisive goal in the first half of the insipid opening game of the season as neither Bangladesh Championship League's side

Cox's City nor Bangladesh Navy could impress the couple of hundreds spectators amid the chilly weather.

The standard of play was really frustrating as the players of the both side hardly managed to complete three consecutive passes. Both teams looked bereft of ideas and the ball was restricted to the midfield.

Amidst this poor play the only player who was mentionable for his performance was Nurul whose glancing header separated both sides at the end of the game. Nurul's goal came early, as he rose highest inside the box to head a Sirajul Karim left-flank cross past Navy goalkeeper Saleh Ahmed on 13 minutes.

Cox's City striker Saifuddin put up a miserable performance as the striker twice came close to doubling the lead but failed to beat opponent goalkeeper Saleh in one-on-one situations.

The second match between Wari Club and Beanibazar SC under the floodlights was comparatively more entertaining as both sides looked determined to leave the field with a victory.

From the beginning, a youthful Wari put up some signs of playing an organized game and went ahead with a fourth minute strike from Shahinur Islam, who converted a penalty shot after Mohiuddin Ahmed brought down Shafiqul Islam inside the danger zone.

Jakir Hossain Jiku doubled the lead in the 26th minute as the winger ran down from the right flank to send the ball over the head of advancing goalkeeper Sayeed Hasan.

Two minutes later, Beanibazar were reduced to 10 men when Zakir Hossain fouled Wari's Raji.

Despite being reduced to 10 men, Beanibazar, who once played in the professional football league, never gave up and tried to find a way back into the game. But with a man shot they never really threatened Wari Club whose counter-attacking

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England Lions due Jan 2

SPORTS REPORTER

England Lions, the second-string side, will arrive in the capital on January 2 to play five one-day matches and two Twenty20s against Bangladesh A.

The visitors will be led by Nottinghamshire batsman James Taylor.

After a practice match on January 6 at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong, the England Lions will play the first three one-dayers on January 8, 10 and 13 at the same venue. The tour will move to Sylhet where the last two one-dayers will be played on January 16 and 18 at the Sylhet Divisional Stadium.

The two second string sides will then play two Twenty20 matches on January 21 and 23 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium

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IFIC SHOOTING CHAMPIONSHIP

Rahin, Shila grab gold

SPORTS REPORTER

Abdullah Al Rahin and Sharmin Akhter Shila won the boy's and girl's 10m Air Rifles gold in the youth section of the IFIC 4th Air-Gun Shooting Championship on the opening day at the National Shooting Complex in Gulshan yesterday.

Rahin from Savar Sena Shooting Club scored 230 out of 300 to finish ahead of second-place Sajidur Rahman of Pabna Rifles Club who made 223.

Amir Ahmed Raja of Satkhira Rifles Club finished third with a score of 220.

In the girl's event, Shila from Jhenaidah fired 223 points out of 300 to win the gold while Jannatul from Chapainawabganj Rifles Club scored four less than Shila to be content with a silver medal.

Rajbika from Narayanganj Rifles Club finished third with a score of 213.

Before taking part in the final event, some 105 shooters from 44 clubs across the country were given six days training at the Shooting Complex and all took part in the competition.

"We got more than what we expected from the youth shooters. They have improved much with just six days training.

"We are expecting to get the star shooters from these lot

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B'ball title Europa's

SPORTS REPORTER

Europa Youth became undefeated champions in the Citycell Federation Cup Basketball Championship beating Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishthan (BKSP) 88-67 in the final at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

Europa led the first half by 41-28 points. Rashed scored highest 23 points for Europa while Shoeb caged 17. Linkon and Abir scored 19 and 14 points respectively for BKSP.

Meanwhile, a minute's silence was observed in memory of Brother Thomas Moor, the father of basketball in Bangladesh, who passed away at the age of 87 at a hospital in Indiana, USA on Thursday. Brother Moore, then a teacher of Saint Gregory's School in Laxmibazar of Old Dhaka, introduced the game among his students in 1950.



A Europa Youth cager jumps to score during their final of the Citycell Federation Cup Basketball Championship against BKSP at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

PHOTO: COURTESY

NCL matches suspended indefinitely

SPORTS REPORTER

The remaining matches of the National Cricket League, including the final, have been suspended at the request of the Cricket Committee for Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM).

Therefore, the second phase third round games scheduled to start today and the final will now be held as per a fresh itinerary which will be announced soon according to a statement from the tournament committee of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

Gazi Ashraf Hossain, the chairman of the tournament committee, however informed that they have temporarily suspended the remaining matches for two reasons.

"CCDM requested us to suspend the league temporarily as they have a plan to finish the first round of the Premier League by February 2 next year while two, three divisional side also suggested to suspend the league as it will be difficult for them to straight away play the NCL final after the Premier League limited-over matches," said Ashraf explaining the reasons behind their decisions.

CCDM also wants to give the clubs some time for

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MSC women booters win

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan SC women's football team won their second match of the northern districts tour beating Panchagar district women's team 2-0 at the Panchagar Stadium yesterday. Sainu Chakma and Lina Chakma scored the two goals for the Dhaka club. Earlier, Mohammedan had beaten Rangpur women's team 3-0 in their first match on Wednesday.



President E. J. Sirleaf of Liberia





Mr. Hicky Diaz
Honorary Consul General of Liberia in Bangladesh

HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS

Nobel Peace Laureate and the twice elected first woman President of Liberia in Africa Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has appointed Mr. Hicky Diaz, Chairman of Federal Group of Companies as the Honorary Consul General of Liberia in Bangladesh. All officers and staffs of Federal Group of Companies express this heartiest congratulation on this great auspicious occasion. May Almighty God bestow Mr. Diaz His divine providence, love & guidance to execute this great responsibility.

This appointment has opened the windows of opportunities for the people of Bangladesh & Liberia in the field of cultural exchanges and investment opportunities.

Liberia is a country of great opportunities in mineral and agricultural resources and Bangladeshi businessmen / investors can reap immense benefits.

We wish Mr. Diaz great success in this venture !

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