

12-year-old Giada Scalise suffered a brain haemorrhage while watching a Juventus match on television last month. After two weeks without a change to her condition, the Scalise family turned to Del Piero for a different kind of help. He obliged with a video message to Giada. "That night (after listening to the message) something special happened," said the girl's father, Francesco. "First she moved her hand and then after a few hours she called out 'mamma'. Then after about 24 hours she talked and asked for an ice-cream".



Rajshahi off and running

SPORTS REPORTER
Duronto Rajshahi's six-wicket win over Khulna Royal Bengals yesterday have kick-started their Bangladesh Premier League campaign.

The traditional favourites of country's domestic cricket suffered two early defeats but have since fought back for their first win over Sylhet on Tuesday. They chased down Khulna's 145-7 by reaching the target in 19.1 overs.

Shahzaib Hasan struck 52 off 46 balls while skipper Mushfiqur Rahim contributed with an unbeaten 47.

The pair added 76 for the fourth wicket after Khulna took three quick wickets by the eighth over. Junaed Siddiqui made a quickfire 26 before falling to Khulna skipper Shakib Al Hasan, who ended up with two wickets.

Earlier, Shakib and Nasir Hossain added 65 runs for the fifth wicket with the former national captain making 44 off 26 balls.

Rajshahi's Pakistani recruit Abdul Razzaq took two wickets while the likes of Mohammad Sami, Marlon Samuels, Fawad Alam and Saqlain Sajib all bowled

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Chittagong Kings skipper Mahmudullah Riyad (L) and his batting partner Ziaur Rahman amble for a single on way to ensuring a comfortable 7-wicket victory over Sylhet Royals in their BPL T20 encounter at the SBNCS yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Ctg Kings win despite drops

SPORTS REPORTER

Chittagong Kings gave Sylhet Royals every chance to pick up their maiden Bangladesh Premier League win but yesterday remained the day for Mahmudullah Riyad & Co as they won by seven wickets.

It was the Kings' third win in the T20 competition as they remained among the top two after four games at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. But Sylhet should have made more than 152-4 in their 20 overs as they were given eight lives by the Chittagong fielders.

Kamran Akmal and Peter Trego made half-centuries but didn't kick on to make bigger contributions. The discarded Pakistani wicketkeeper-batsman made 54 off 41 balls while the Sylhet skipper struck a 48-ball 51. Alok Kapali remained unbeaten on a 23-ball 34 with the help of two fours and a six and became the first Bangladeshi batsman to score more than 100 runs in BPL.

Riyad, Arafat Sunny, Muttiah Muralidaran, Jason Roy and Kevon Cooper all dropped catches while Kapali survived a sure run-out chance but nobody made them count substantially.

Chittagong then lost Jahurul Islam early in the chase but Roy and Nasir Jamshed gave them the recovery before Ziaur Rahman and

skipper Riyad shepherded Chittagong to the winning target with 15 balls to spare.

The big-hitting Zia remained unbeaten on 48 off 32 balls with four sixes and two fours while Riyad, the eventual man-of-the-match, struck 56 off 38 balls. The national vice-captain also followed Kapali into the three-figure mark in the competition.

Sohail Tanvir, Trego and Brad Hogg all took a wicket each.

Chittagong however remained a team without their icon player, as Tamim Iqbal still hasn't recovered from the groin injury he suffered after the first game.

During the post-match press meet, Riyad said that Tamim wasn't 100 percent fit for the game yesterday: "He gave a fitness test today but we didn't want to take a chance on him for this game. He will hopefully play in the coming matches."

Royals' fielding coach Jason Swift said that it was not a situation his team would have liked to be in at the start of the tournament. "It's very frustrating and disappointing. We don't want to be in this situation for ourselves. It's not very nice going back to the hotel every night knowing you're in a team that's lost every game," he said.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SYLHET: 152-4 in 20 overs (Akmal 54, Trego 51; Forhad 2-28)

CHITTAGONG: 154-3 in 17.3 overs (Riyad 56 not out, Ziaur 48 not out; Tanvir 1-16)
Result: Chittagong won by seven wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Mahmudullah Riyad.

Why so many empty seats?

SPORTS REPORTER

The biggest disappointment in the first week of the Bangladesh Premier League has undoubtedly been the empty seats at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

It has stared glaringly back at the organisers who have been rendered helpless in the face of this snub by a cricket-loving city. The best turnout has been during the Barisal Burners-Dhaka Gladiators game on Tuesday evening when Chris Gayle struck his second century. But the day games, despite the slashed ticket prices, have taken a beating as barely 2,000-3,000 people have

turned up for most of them. The frenzied atmosphere that the Mirpur venue has grown used to during international matches has been missing, as only the franchise owners and their friends have made all the noise.

Several reasons have been marked out but apart from the ticket prices, only a few of the problems (for example, the performance of the local players) can be solved in short notice.

"I can't go to watch matches every-day," said Solaiman, who was passing by the Mirpur stadium yesterday. "I have watched several matches this year and most have been on Fridays and Saturdays. Otherwise it is not possible for me to go."

Apart from the weekday effect, the people of Mirpur have perhaps reached a saturation point when it comes to watch-

ing cricket. They have seen the greatest event in cricket take place in their locality so a tournament with several retired players isn't top of their priority.

"The overall quality of cricket is somehow not all that appealing. It's not like a must-watch," said Fahmim, a producer at ABC Radio, who is a regular at the Mirpur venue during international matches. "The star value is actually pretty good, given the packed international calendar at the moment. Maybe there aren't too many big names of today but there are some good quality players in the league."

Fahmim also mentioned the lack of runs and wickets from the local players that could work against drawing a big crowd. "Barring Mahmudullah today

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