

Star SPORT

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Bebeto joins WC panel

Former Brazilian star Bebeto has been selected as a member of Brazil's World Cup national organizing committee, fellow football icon Ronaldo announced Thursday.

"I want to welcome Bebeto, who is the third and last member of the committee's board of directors," Ronaldo told reporters.

Bebeto, who turned 48 on Thursday and was a member of the Brazil squad that won the 1994 World Cup, will work alongside Ronaldo and Ricardo Teixeira, president of the Brazilian Football Confederation, in organizing the 2014



Locals must stand up

Kings' first home game today

SPORTS REPORTER



After a week of action, the Bangladesh Premier League took a break as the six franchises travelled to Chittagong where the matches resume today.

The port city will first host the match between Khulna Royal Bengals and the struggling Sylhet Royals followed by their home side, the Chittagong Kings, taking on Duronto Rajshahi. Both matches, and the next four days of the T20 competition will be played at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium.

Though it is fundamentally a domestic tournament, the performances of the local players have not made a huge impact yet.

Only Mahmudullah, Alok Kapali and Mushfiqur Rahim have scored more than 100 runs while Mohammad Ashraful, Imrul Kayes and Junaid Siddique have given mere glimpses of their current form. The bowlers, especially of the slower variety, have had it better. Elias Sunny and Enamul Haque Jr have kept the left-arm spinners' flag flying by being the top two wicket-takers so far.

Riyad and Mushfiqur have led their respective teams, Chittagong and Rajshahi, from the front in every sense of the word, impressing with their captaincy as well as playing handy knocks whenever necessary. Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, leading the Dhaka Gladiators, have also shown glimpses of his skills while Shakib Al Hasan has done well in charge of the Khulna franchise. But it hasn't been quite the same for Shahriar Nafees, the left-hander now facing the greater challenge

without his gun batsman -- Chris Gayle.

Among the icon players (who are not captains), Kapali has been one of the few shining lights for the winless Royals while Mohammad Ashraful has flattered to deceive as he often does. Tamim Iqbal, the Kings' icon, has only played the first match before suffering a groin injury and missing the next four.

None of the national team batsmen have really stood apart as the tournament's run-getters list has been dominated by Gayle and a plethora of Pakistanis.

Riyad has agreed that due to the larger amount of money being paid to the foreigners, the locals haven't found themselves with enough opportunities and time in the middle. While this is true for himself and a few others, the likes of Jahurul Islam and Imrul Kayes who are openers haven't kicked on after starts.

The younger lot, especially those who haven't played international cricket, have given glimpses of their talent. Anamul Haque, Mominul Haque and Mizanur Rahman haven't really made the big ones but their batting has been impressive.

Among the bowlers however, the local spinners are leading the pack. Elias Sunny, the left-arm spinner, has seven wickets at the top of the wicket-takers' list with Enamul Haque Jr in joint second with six scalps. Shakib has five wickets.

The lack of performances from the local players has certainly been off-putting for some of the fans with many waiting for that one big knock, the batting more in focus since this is a Twenty20 competition.

Two weeks is good enough time for someone to put their hand up and be counted.



Mohammedan coach Emeka Euzeigo (R) cheers on as his charges come from behind to draw 1-1 against archrivals Abahani in their Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Mohammedan, Abahani fight to a lively draw

SPORTS REPORTER



There-time champions Abahani were held to a 1-1 draw by archrivals Mohammedan SC in their Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. The Sky Blues opened the scoring a minute before the break, thanks to a Lucky Paul slap-in before Basden Wilcox headed in the equaliser on the hour mark to snatch a valuable point for the Black and Whites. The draw put Abahani in second place on the points table with seven points from three matches, two behind pace-setters Muktiyodha Sangsad while Mohammedan have four points from two matches.

The encounters between the two archrivals, despite their flagging fortunes and the disparaging difference in quality, always live up to the billing of tight affairs and so was the case yesterday at the Big Bowl, before some 3000 or so spectators who shouted at the top of their voice to cheer and jeer on the teams. Mohammedan, the underdogs on paper, started the game livelier as they made a number of inroads at the Abahani defence within the first quarter of an hour. Nigerian striker

Wilcox's feeble grounder on the fifth minute was tipped for a corner for a corner by Abahani goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel and five minutes later, the young goalie dived to his right to thwart a powerful shot from the same striker.

Mohammedan had a loud appeal for a penalty in the 16th minute when striker Edozue Ochendu was pulled down inside the box, but the referee waved play on. After weathering the initial burst, Abahani slowly asserted some control on the midfield and mustered their first shot on target through Awudu Ibrahim on the 34th minute, which was nervously parried away by Mohammedan goalkeeper Himel. Much against the run of play, Abahani found the opening goal in the 44th minute, when Nasirul Islam's low cross from the right was threaded to the path of Lucky Paul in front of goal and the Nigerian obliged by placing it at the back of the net.

Abahani came close to doubling the lead in the 58th minute, but Twum Frank's header came rasping off the upright. However, Mohammedan hit on the counter attack two minutes later as Wahed headed in a long ball to Wilcox at the edge of the six yard box and the Nigerian striker headed in past

the keeper to restore parity.

Abahani piled up pressure in the dying minutes and twice came close to scoring, but the Mohammedan keeper stood tall to deny the Sky Blues of their third win in a row.

And as has become the custom of the league, both coaches blamed the referee for not being able to win the match. The Abahani coach Ali Akbar Purmoslemi was more vocal on the issue as he said, "Mohammedan played a very physical game. The referee helped physical play, not technical play."

Mohammedan coach Emeka Euzeigo refuted Akbar's claim by saying that football is a body-contact game and physical prowess is an essential tool for the modern day game. Emeka was clearly the happier of the two coaches as he said his charges put their best performance of the season so far against their archrivals.

TEAMS

Abahani: Sohel (GK), Nasir, Waly, Samad, Arman (Mamun), Zahid (Touhid), Pranotosh (C), Frank, Sujon, Ibrahim, Paul
Mohammedan: Himel (GK), Rajani, Munna (C), Parvez (Mobarak), Wahed (Rony), Yasin, Sohel, Johnson, Ochendo, Wilcox, Kelechi

Gayle out for two weeks

SPORTS REPORTER

Chris Gayle will leave the capital by tomorrow depending on availability of flight after his MRI revealed that he will be out from cricket for two weeks.

The 32-year-old Jamaican pulled up in his last Bangladesh Premier League innings on Thursday after injuring his groin while taking a single for the Barisal Burners against Chittagong Kings in Mirpur.

The two-week break in cricket means that Gayle will miss the start of the MiWay T20 challenge in South Africa where he is contracted to play for the Dolphins.

"He [Gayle] is going to be assessed by their medical team and they will advise us accordingly," Jesse Chellan, chief executive of the Dolphins, told ESPNcricinfo.

Their first match is against new franchise, Impi, on Sunday. He is the second of Dolphins' two overseas signings to suffer injury in the lead up to the tournament. Australia fast bowler

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Khulna Royal Bengals captain Shakib Al Hasan enters the team hotel after arriving in Chittagong yesterday to play a few matches of the Bangladesh Premier League.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS



PHOTO: STAR

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gives a certificate to a schoolgirl during a certificate award ceremony yesterday at the Shaheed Suhrawardy National Indoor Stadium, for the volunteers and participants of the World Cup opening ceremony that was held on the same day last year. BCB president AHM Mustafa Kamal (R) is also seen in the picture.

Westfield jailed over spot-fixing

AFP, London

An English cricketer who claimed to have been lured into a spot-fixing scandal by Pakistan international Danish Kaneria was on Friday jailed for four months.

Former Essex player Mervyn Westfield had admitted receiving £6,000 (9,200 dollars) to bowl badly so that 12 runs would be scored in the first over of a 40-over match between Durham and Essex in September 2009.

Westfield was ordered to serve half the four-month term behind bars while he was also hit with a confiscation order for £6,000 during Friday's sentencing hearing at the Old Bailey.

Prosecutors had earlier told the court that Westfield, SEE PAGE 17 COL 5

FIFA positive on academy

DFA votes intact in BFF election



SPORTS REPORTER

FIFA will provide Bangladesh Football Federation with technical, financial, logistic and player selection related help, said BFF president Kazi Salahuddin yesterday. The BFF boss, along with the high-ups of the federation, held a meeting with a three-member FIFA delegation team which is currently in Dhaka to weigh up the initiative of BFF's proposed football academy in Sylhet and also fixing the agenda of the upcoming visit of FIFA president Sepp Blatter in March.

"I am satisfied with the outcome of the meeting. Everything went as we wanted. They (FIFA) will provide us with technical, financial, and logistic support," said Salahuddin after the meeting with the FIFA delegate at a local hotel.

The football academy in Sylhet, which is expected to be inaugurated by July this year, will train U-16 and U-18 teams who will be selected by a scouting team of FIFA within May. FIFA will also provide a technical director, four coaches and financial assistance for at least two years to run the academy.

The BFF boss also reaffirmed that the election of the football's governing body will be held in due time (April) and the SEE PAGE 17 COL 5

Shahid Smriti hockey on

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Army won the opening day's matches of the Exim Bank Noorjahan Group Shahid Smriti Hockey Competition at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Navy blanked Bangladesh Air Force 6-0 in the first match, thanks to two goals each from Rimon and Shohag and one each from Bachchu and Mamun.

Army chalked up a bigger win as they thrashed Police 13-1 with Malek, Sirajul, and Milon grabbing three goals each.

Earlier, Mohammad Shahriar Alam MP inaugurated the competition as the chief guest where Sanjeeb Chatterjee, the executive vice president of Exim Bank and Kazi Motahar Uddin, the head of marketing of Noorjahan Group were also present.