

Star SPORT

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Gerrard wants to lead England

Liverpool skipper Steven Gerrard says he would relish the opportunity to captain England at the 2012 European Championships.

"If I get offered it, I'll take it and I'll be delighted and I'll be very proud to take it," Gerrard told BBC's Football Focus on Saturday.

"It's not my decision. It's down to, first of all, who Stuart Pearce wants to lead the team out, then whoever gets the job full time. But I want to be England captain." The midfielder believed that manager Fabio Capello's resignation could give the team the necessary lift "for a successful summer".



Explosive Pollard delivers easy win

SPORTS REPORTER

Kieron Pollard played a hurricane knock after Imran Nazir's blitzkrieg as Dhaka Gladiators bounced back strongly with a five-wicket victory against Barisal Burners in the crucial match of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Smarting from a 13-run defeat in their previous match, a low-scoring encounter against Chittagong Kings, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's men showed some character to improve their semifinal chances as they sit on ten points from nine matches while Barisal, with eight points from nine games, have seemingly had their hopes dashed by the defeat.

Chasing a 157-run winning target, young Anamul Haque whacked pacer Kabir Ali for six as Dhaka completed their chase with ten balls remaining. Before that West Indian Pollard's big-hitting display entertained the near-8,000 strong crowd.

Pakistan spinner Ahmed Shehzad, who bowled round the wicket, felt the heat most as he was mercilessly punished by the well-built West Indian right-hander who consecutively hammered a four and three sixes over long-on, long-off and mid-wicket in the 18th over which made the game, up till then a close one, easy for Dhaka.

Pollard smote one four and four sixes during his unbeaten 17-ball 35.

Before that Pakistan opener Imran Nazir, who was later adjudged man of the match, returned to action with a bang after his head injury as he hit six sweetly timed boundaries and three sixes in his 40-ball 65 which laid the foundation for the victory.

Dhaka got off to a poor start, losing two wickets in Mohammad Ashraful and Aftab Ahmed with the scoreboard reading 11, but Azhar Mahmood joined Nazir to steady the ship, associating 92 runs for the third wicket. Mahmood smashed seven fours to make 42 off 30 balls.

There was a hiccup in the middle of the Dhaka innings as they lost three wickets for only 9 runs thanks to left-arm spinner Sohrawardi Shuvo who inflicted the damage through the wickets of Nazir and Darren Stevens, but Pollard seized the initiative with a superb display of power-hitting.

"Our confidence is now high and we are confident about our semifinal berth. The team strength will further be enhanced when Saeed Ajmal and Shahid Afridi join the squad," said Imran Nazir after the match.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2



Kieron Pollard pounds the ball into the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium stands during his unbeaten 17-ball 35 in Dhaka Gladiators' win over Barisal Burners in the BPL T20 yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Royals' 2nd win

SPORTS REPORTER



Sylhet Royals spoiled Chittagong Kings' chance for an early entry into the semifinals of the BPL T20 with a 35-run win yesterday. It was the second win for the struggling franchise in nine games but more importantly, the loss in the evening game at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium keeps Chittagong on ten points with a game in hand.

If Chittagong could have managed to reach the 166-run target, it would have confirmed their place in the last four but it wasn't to be. They were stopped at 130 for eight in 20 overs after the Royals had made 165-3 in 20 overs.

The top-order failure, barring Jahurul Islam's dismissal for three in the third over, was all down to Nasir Jamshed's inexplicable failure to communicate with Jason Roy and Brendan Taylor. The Pakistani opener was at fault in the run out of both batsmen, calling them for the second run but standing his ground on both occasions at the non-striker's end. After the twin failure, medium-pacer Peter Trego immediately removed the dangerous Dwayne Bravo for a duck to reduce the Kings to 34 for four in the sixth over.

Jamshed had trudged to 27 off 29 balls with the help of two boundaries before becoming the fifth wicket to fall in the tenth over with the score on 58 runs.

Chittagong skipper Mahmudullah Riyad and Ziaur Rahman then added a 65-run stand for the sixth wicket, the pair threatening to lead a charge into the Sylhet total in the final quarter of the game.

Zia rattled three sixes and three boundaries in his 28-ball 40 but fell to Scott Styris in the 17th over. Forhad Reza and Riyad then got out in the eighteenth over ensuring Sylhet's second consecutive win.

Sohail Tanvir took three wickets while Trego, Styris and Nabil Samad picked up one apiece.

Earlier, Kamran Akmal and Trego added 97 for the opening stand with both openers reaching half-centuries. Akmal hammered four sixes and five boundaries in his 37-ball 53, Trego making 68 off 53 balls with one six and six boundaries.

Styris flayed around for a 20-ball 29 with two fours and a six. For Chittagong, Bravo, Forhad and Kevon Cooper took one each.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SYLHET: 165-3 in 20 overs (Akmal 53, Trego 68, Styris 29; Bravo 1-27, Forhad 1-30, Cooper 1-30).

CHITTAGONG: 130-8 in 20 overs (Zia 40, Riyad 30; Tanvir 3-18, Trego 1-20, Nabil 1-26).

Result: Sylhet won by 35 runs. Man-of-the-match: Peter Trego.

Amir proves his point

Athletics

SPORTS REPORTER

The taste of victory couldn't have been any sweeter than this. Amir Ali of Chittagong, whose premature celebrations in the 5,000m run the previous day was cut short cruelly by the announcement that he had run a lap less than the others, came back strongly in the 10,000m to take gold miles ahead of the others. The lanky runner burst into tears as his supporters, the athletes of various district sports associations, thronged to congratulate him.

Amir Ali was behind three of the runners with only 200 metres left in the 10000m race. But in a glorious burst

of faith he put all three of them behind to rightfully grab the gold of the event which he was not slated to run. "I was behind three men 200 metres to the finish. I summoned all my power to become number one and in

Justice served

SPORTS REPORTER

Amir Ali is going to win a share of the 5000m gold after an emergency meeting of the Bangladesh Athletic Federation last night found his claims valid, confirmed a source inside the federation. Amir was denied the medal after the jury board claimed he had run a lap less during the event on Friday which the athlete had immediately protested and lodged a complaint with the federation. Some had also suspected foul play in the event. Now that his claim has been found valid, Amir will be declared joint winner along with Jamrul Islam while the chief of the judges Abdul Khalek is learned to have been sacked for foul play. The technical officials are also expected to be cautioned, confirmed the source.

at the end I finished at least 30 metres ahead of the second. I can now rightfully claim my gold in the 5,000m," said an emotion-choked Amir as the other district participants threw him up in the air in celebration and supported

his claim.

The victory was all the more memorable as the 10,000m was not his favourite event and he was only running to prove a point to the organisers.

On Friday, the opening day of the Walton 37th National Athletics Championships at the Bangabandhu National Stadium athletics track, Amir thought he had won the gold as he started celebrating finishing ahead of the others. But he was soon informed that he had run one lap less than the others.

"I could not sleep the whole night. I did not have the preparation to run in this event. But my coach said 'You will have to run the way

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Amir Ali of Chittagong is the centre of celebration after he won the 10,000m gold on the second day of the Walton 37th National Athletics Championships at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

BPL ticket prices raised

SPORTS REPORTER

Ticket prices for the semifinals and final of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20 have been increased by Tk 100. This is after prices were slashed at the start of the tournament due to dwindling crowd interest.

The two semifinals will be held on February 28 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur and the final will take place at the same venue on February 29.

The revised prices are: East Gallery (Block I to N) Tk 300, North Gallery (Block O to Q) Tk 500, South Gallery (Block F to H) Tk 500 and Club House (Shaheed Jewel and Shaheed Mustaq Stand) Tk 800.

Mashrafe, Kapali fined

SPORTS REPORTER

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, the Dhaka Gladiators captain and Sylhet Royals skipper Alok Kapali were fined following their respective BPL T20 matches on Friday.

The match referee imposed a fine of Tk 25,000 on Mashrafe for his team's slow over rate against Chittagong Kings in the day's first game.

Kapali was penalised Tk 15,000 for turning up late for the toss and for failing to submit the team list on time in the match against Duroto Rajshahi.

Meanwhile, today's matches will be held at the same time as all the previous matches. But the time written on the tickets will show a different time.

Prince wins it for Abahani

Hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

As if to maintain the tradition of domestic hockey events, the final of the Exim Bank-Nurjahan Group Shahid Smriti Hockey Competition was postponed by 45 minutes before Abahani beat Bangladesh Army by 3-2 goals to win the title.

The controversy arose when favourites Abahani were found to be playing a non-registered player in their team. The Army men declined to take part if the player was not deleted from the line-up which held up the start of play for 45 minutes. Only after Abahani conceded to the demand of the Army men did the match get underway.

Once it did get underway, Abahani dominated the proceedings as they raced to a 2-0 lead within the first seven minutes. Both goals were scored from open play by the skipper and eventual player-of-the-match Iqbal Nadir Prince. Prince scored the first goal in the second minute when Sarwar Hossain's initial shot was saved by the Army goalie which came to Prince and he slotted it at the back of the net. Prince grabbed his second four minutes later as he beat the keeper with an angular shot from inside the penalty area.

However, Army bounced back quickly to restore parity within eight minutes. The Army men used their penalty corners as Rokonzaman Sohag dragged both goals after being set up by Maksudul Haque on corners taken by Milon Hossain. The second goal though was deflected off a defender before it found the back of the net.

But Abahani went ahead again before the breather with a wonderfully worked goal in the 28th minute. A neat one-two

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1

Siddikur ends with a flurry

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman finished the SAIL-SBI Open with a flurry as he carded a three-under-par fourth round to end the tournament in fifth position. The 27-year old golfer, who started the day on tenth position on five-under-par, carded five birdies along with two bogeys to move up five places and collect a 12,300-dollar pay cheque in the 300,000 dollar Asian Tour event.

India's Anirban Lahiri claimed the home trophy by defeating Thailand's Prom Meesawat at the first play-off hole after both were tied at 14-under-par (274).

Bangladesh's only Asian Tour winner showed tremendous resilience as he kept improving after a horrid start to the event when he was placed at 87th with a two-over-par first round. A five-under-par second round saw him leap to joint 16th position and there was no stopping him since.

The other two Bangladeshi participants in the event, Shakhawat Hossain Sohail and Zamal Mollah failed to make the cut.

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