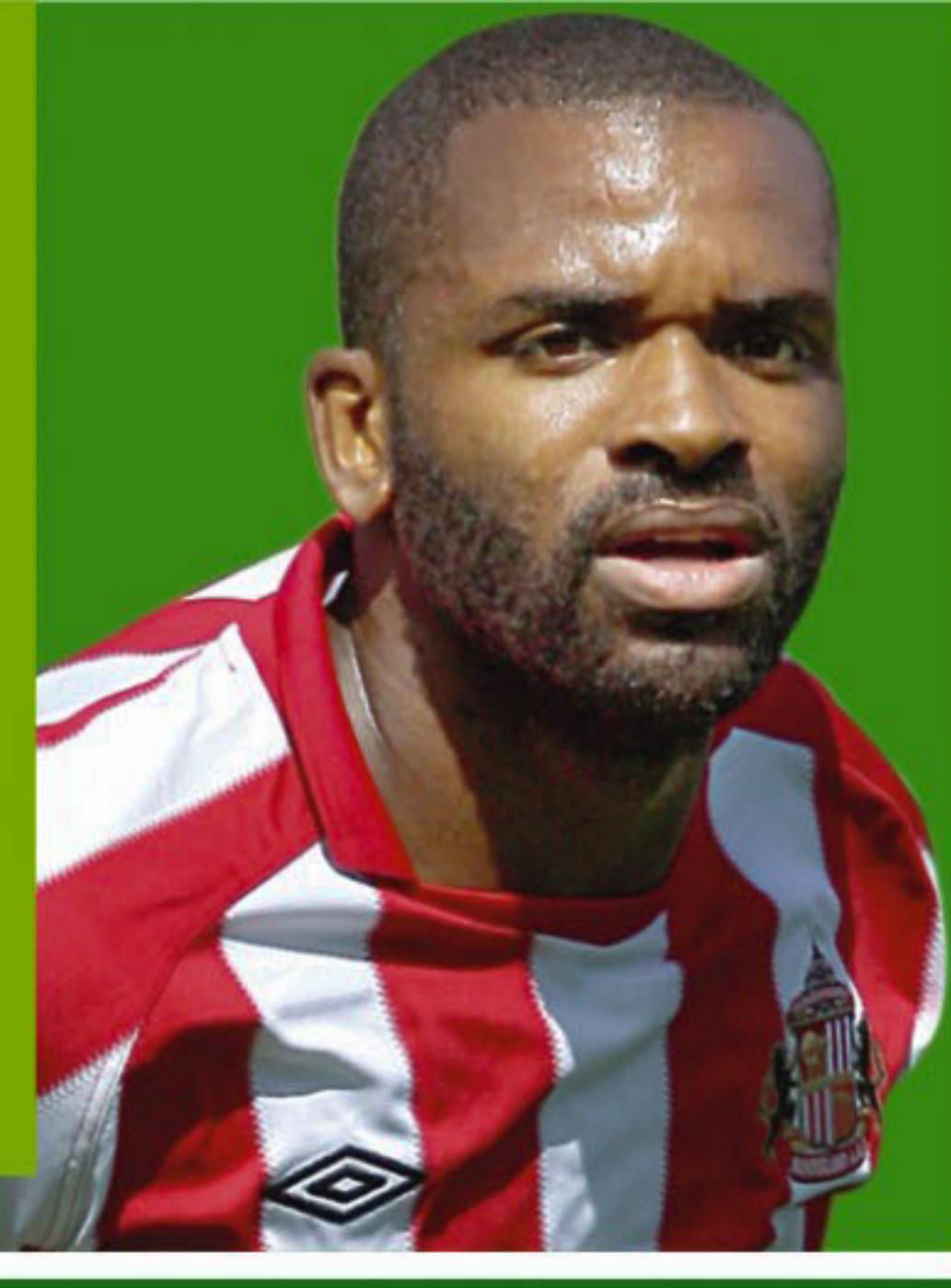


Bent's Euro heartbreak

England striker Darren Bent looks set to miss out on Euro 2012 after suffering ruptured ankle ligaments, his club Aston Villa reported on Monday.

Bent was injured when playing for Villa in Saturday's 0-0 draw against Wigan. The extent of the problem was confirmed by a leading ankle specialist in London.

The injury means he is unlikely to be available to play again until the end of May, with the Euro finals getting under way just over a week later in Poland and the Ukraine.



Shehzad ignites Burners to final

SPORTS REPORTER

BPL T20 A big-hitting masterclass from Ahmed Shehzad shot the unlikely semifinalists Barisal Burners in the final of the BPL T20 yesterday. They beat favourites Duronto Rajshahi by eight wickets, with ridiculous ease.

The Pakistani opener struck a 49-ball 113 not out as he carried the big 185-run chase single-handedly giving the slowly-growing crowd a lot to cheer about at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

The 20-year-old batsman from Lahore, who was supposed to watch the match from the stands as Barisal were not expected to make it to the semifinals according to the bylaws of the tournament, stamped his signature on the tournament by hitting his first hundred after four half-centuries and in the process also became the leading run-scorer with 458 runs.

Man-of-the-match Shehzad hit six sixes, including four in a row from Abdul Razzaq (who gave 26 in that over), and a dozen boundaries in his whirlwind knock that became the fourth fastest century in a Twenty20 innings. He added 103 runs in 7.5 overs for the first wicket with skipper Brad Hodge, who came back from the airport to play the match and made his presence counted by scoring 33 runs off 23 balls with the help of three fours and two sixes.

Later on, surprising everyone with the ease of the chase, he added 74 runs for the second wicket with Phil Mustard, who also made 33 off 20 balls.

It was entirely Shehzad's day as he also survived two dropped chances on 23 (at mid-wicket by Sabir Rahman) and 71 (at deep square leg by Md. Nabiullah).

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GOING BOOM: (L) Barisal Burners opener Ahmed Shehzad punches the air in celebration after scoring the fastest century, off 40 balls, of the BPL T20 in their semifinal match against Duronto Rajshahi, and (above) Dhaka Gladiators batsman Shahid Afridi slog-sweeps the biggest six of the BPL in their semifinal against the Khulna Royal Bengals at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTOS: ANISUR RAHMAN

Dhaka set up Barisal final

SPORTS REPORTER

BPL T20 Dhaka Gladiators made it to the final of the BPL T20 last evening with a 9-run win over Khulna Royal Bengal in the pulsating second semifinal. A packed Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium backed the Dhaka team like a home team is usually supported, though for the first time in the competition.

Dhaka successfully defended their total of 191-4 as Khulna could reach 183-7 in 20 overs. Khulna though threatened Dhaka for most of the game, courtesy of skipper Shakib Al Hasan, who made his first Twenty20 half-century, an unbeaten 86 off 41 balls, punctuated by four sixes and 9 fours.

But it was too little too late for the Royal Bengal who bowled quite poorly from the onset against a revamped Dhaka side that had Shahid Afridi, Saeed Ajmal and Awais Zia flown in from Dubai.

After Dhaka lost the big-hitting Zia and Nazimuddin for 22 runs, Imran Nazir smashed 41 off 25 balls with six fours and two sixes before falling in the eighth over to Mohammad Hafeez.

The Dhaka Gladiators' huge score was based on a 72-run third wicket stand between Mohammad Ashraful and Azhar Mahmood, who made 65 off 39 balls with six fours and three sixes. The former Bangladeshi captain struck four boundaries and a six in his 33-ball 47.

Afridi put the icing on the cake with a ballistic 11-ball 27 that had three sixes. He was particularly harsh on Shakib, hammering 19 in the last over of the innings.

Khulna lost their foreign top-order (Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Herschelle Gibbs, Mohammad Hafeez and

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Midnight farce denies Ctg justice

SPORTS REPORTER

BPL T20 The latest twist in a long tale of controversy in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) was the outcome of a midnight drama the name of which can be best described as 'Exit Chittagong, Enter Barisal'.

It was the wee hours on Tuesday when the BPL governing council and its glorified technical committee decided that Barisal instead of Chittagong would play the semifinal as the fourth-qualified team.

But by that time the whole nation knew that Chittagong would play Rajshahi in the first semi courtesy of an earlier announcement by BPL chairman Gazi Ashraf Hossain to a loyal print and electronic media followed by endorsement from Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president AHM Mustafa Kamal, who termed Gazi Ashraf's decision perfectly within the law book while appearing in a late night show on a private TV channel.

But the U-turn understandably let loose a

chaotic atmosphere in the morning. Barisal called back their Australian captain Brad Hodge from the airport, managers of the other three semifinalists called an impromptu press briefing in an apparent effort to show their support for Chittagong but left the scene without expressing anything conclusive, leaving the port city franchise to fight their own battle against what its CEO Sameer Quader Chowdhury termed a coup d'état.

The BPL council issued a statement in support of their decision that read: "Since three teams, namely: Dhaka Gladiators, Barisal Burners and Chittagong Kings are on equal points at 10 each. Dhaka Gladiators beat both Barisal Burners and Chittagong Kings in their matches. Therefore, Dhaka Gladiators qualifies as the third semifinalist. In regards to Barisal Burners and Chittagong Kings beating each other once, the issue of the fourth qualifier had to be decided on the basis of better net run rate."

But the by-laws that the BPL governing council has taken into consideration to award Barisal the semifinal spot interprets something different. And

if anyone reads between the lines of Clause Two in the article 21.8, it certainly favours Chittagong.

The clause reads: "When three (03) or more teams finish with equal points and equal wins in the league, then the team (s) which was (were) the winner of the most number of matches played between those equal teams in the league will be placed in the higher position (s)."

And understandably the Chittagong Kings officials came down heavily on the BPL management, even raising questions about the fairness of the tournament itself, claiming that the organisers have deprived them as per the by-laws they should have been in the semifinal. They also threatened to take legal action though they could not file the case yesterday.

"According to the by-laws we should have been in the semifinal because Dhaka won three, Chittagong two and Barisal one match (between them). We have taken all kinds of preparations and two Pakistani players (Umar Akmal and Wahab Reaz) also arrived to play the semifinal

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'A big shame'

SPORTS REPORTER

BPL T20 Mushfiqur Rahim yesterday blasted the organisational capacity of the BPL after the fiasco over the semifinal opponents of Duronto Rajshahi emerged only few hours before the game.

The captain of the franchise that lost the first semifinal against Barisal Burners by eight wickets was understandably miffed but boldly criticised the overall mishap that has become the T20 tournament.

"The whole world saw how disorganised the tournament was," said Mushfiqur Rahim at the end of the game. "Barisal were told they have to score the [151] runs in 16 overs [against Chittagong Kings on Sunday] and they progressed. Then it was said that Chittagong would go through. This is only possible in Bangladesh. I am not saying this just as a player, but as a human being as well."

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It is indeed a big shame.

"Till the evening we knew it was Barisal. Afterwards during the second game yesterday [Monday], we heard it is the Chittagong Kings who are going through. That's what we knew when we went to sleep. After waking up, we find out it is Barisal. The league has been running like this. It is nothing impossible for us, so we didn't take it in that way," added Mushfiqur about the overnight fiasco surrounding the fourth semifinal spot.

The national captain also said that they didn't receive the promised payment, around 75 per cent of contracted amount, before the tournament ended.

"Not just the local players, most of the foreign players also haven't received any payment yet. And even if they have been paid, it has been very little."

"The commitment was to pay us 75 per cent of the contracted amount before the end of the tournament. But we haven't received

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Women leave for Kabaddi World Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

A 14-member national women's kabaddi team will leave for India today to take part in the inaugural Women's World Cup to be held in the Eastern Indian state of Bihar from March 1 to 4.

A total of 16 teams, split into four groups, will take part in the four-day meet where top team from each group will advance to the semifinals, said a press release from Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation yesterday.

Despite having confirmed about participation in the World Cup about two years ago, Bangladesh only started their preparation from January 15 and coach Abdul Jalil expressed his concern over lack of preparation.

"One and a half month's preparation is not enough for a tournament like World Cup where teams like India, Iran, Japan are taking part. However we will try our best to produce good results," said Jalil on the eve of departure yesterday.

Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation's general secretary

Kohli keeps India alive

Cricket

AFP, Hobart

Virat Kohli blasted an unbeaten 133 off just 86 balls as India's stunning seven-wicket bonus point victory over Sri Lanka kept them alive in the tri one-day series in Hobart on Tuesday.

POINTS TABLE					
Team	M	W	L	T	Pts
Australia	7	4	3	0	19
Sri Lanka	7	3	3	1	15
India	8	3	4	1	15

[Gautam] Gambhir we knew the run-rate was coming down and we knew it would become a Twenty20 game for us.

"I have been believing in myself every day and waking up and thinking I belong here and that I can score runs at international level and that's the biggest thing that has kept motivating me on this tour."

India came into the Hobart match on the back of three defeats and a tie and their problems were magnified when in-form Sri Lanka appeared to set a daunting target of eight runs an over for them to claim the vital bonus point.

Tillakaratne Dilshan equalled his best one-day score of 160 and Kumar Sangakkara smashed a ton to push Sri Lanka's total to 320 for four off 50 overs.

Dilshan took just 165 balls to reach his total, battering 11 fours and three sixes.

He equalled his highest ODI score, also set against India in 2009, and shared a 200-run second wicket stand with Sangakkara to leave India with it all to do.

Sangakkara's 105 came off 87



India batsman Virat Kohli leaps in the air after scoring a scintillating century against Sri Lanka in their CB one-day international series match in Hobart yesterday.

balls -- with eight fours and two sixes -- at the small Bellerive Oval.

He fended off the Indian attack and has now scored 10,152 runs in the limited overs game at 37.88.

Openers Virender Sehwag (30 off 16 balls) and Sachin Tendulkar (39 off 30 balls) gave India a flying start and Gambhir chipped in with 63 off 64 balls.

It was Gambhir and Kohli's third-wicket stand of 115 runs that accelerated India's run-rate and they were well in the hunt when Gambhir was run out with the score at 201 for three.

Raina (40 not out) carried on the big hitting with Kohli and the pair added a further 120 runs off just 55 balls to see India cruise to an unexpected comfortable victory.

Kohli smashed Lasith Malinga for two, six, four, four and four to plunder 24 runs off the 35th over and leave India just 18 runs away from a sizzling bonus-point victory.

"They had the licence to go for it today, there was nothing left for them to do but to go for it which they did," Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene said.

"The wicket played pretty well, we didn't pick up wickets up front and they batted exceptionally well."

"It's tough to try to stop somebody [Kohli] going like that, SEE PAGE 17 COL 1

Ross fit for first Test

CRICINFO, Napier

Ross Taylor will captain New Zealand in the first Test against South Africa after impressing the medical staff with his recovery from a calf injury. But his side will be without the batsman Dean Brownlie, who needs more time to get over a fractured finger he sustained during the second ODI against Zimbabwe.

Taylor suffered his problem during the only Test against Zimbabwe last month and has missed the ODIs and Twenty20s against both Zimbabwe and South Africa. Brendon McCullum has led the side in Taylor's absence and he will hand the reins back for the first Test, which begins in Dunedin on Wednesday next week.

Taylor has been his country's leading Test run scorer since he took over the captaincy from Daniel Vettori last year and his inclusion will be a major boost for New Zealand, who are hoping for their first Test series win against South Africa. But the loss of Brownlie will hurt, given the success he has had in his short Test career.