



Abahani striker Lucky Paul cuts inside the challenge of two Sheikh Russel players during their Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

# Abahani go top

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani survived a late spot-kick to go top of the points table when they handed a single goal defeat to Sheikh Russel KC in their Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Substitute striker Shakawat Hossain Rony struck early in the second half before goalkeeper Mohammed Al Hasan saved the late penalty to take the Sky Blues to the top of the table, one point clear of Muktijoddha Sangsad who are now in second position with 13 points from six matches. Sheikh Russel remained in third position on goal difference with eight points from six outings.

In the absence of suspended Ghanaian midfielder Awudu Ibrahim, Abahani gave Ghanaian goalkeeper Mohammad Al Hasan a chance in the

eleven keeping first-choice keeper Shohidul Alam Sohel at the bench and the Ghanaian justified his inclusion by saving the penalty kick from Alamu Bukola five minutes from time.

Abahani had to toil hard though to post their fifth victory as they struggled in the midfield without Ibrahim and were hardly able to penetrate the Sheikh Russel defence. However, they managed to capitalise on one of the two chances they created as Rony, who came in as a substitute in his first match of the season, scored the decisive goal with a spectacular diving header in the 54th minute.

Sheikh Russel, on the other hand, were unlucky as they rattled the crossbar once and let the penalty kick go begging to break the streak of defeats.

Sheikh Russel's Nigerian striker Kondaponi Naftali made the first rousing move in the 14th minute as he entered the Abahani box from the left, only to hit the crossbar. Abahani came

close in the 42nd minute with Lucky Paul sending a Nasirul Islam lob wide off the target when all he needed was to control the ball with only the goalkeeper to beat.

After resumption, Abahani coach Ali Akbar sent on Rony in place of winger Zahid Hossain and it proved a masterstroke as Rony dived to head in a cross from Lucky Paul past Sheikh Russel goalkeeper Biplob Bhattacharjee to open the scoring.

Abahani could have gone further ahead but Paul again squandered an opportunity in the 83rd minute when he shot wide from close-range. However, Abahani gave Sheikh Russel the lifeline two minutes later when Wali faisal pulled down Alamu Bukola inside the box.

Bukola himself stepped up to take the shot but Abahani keeper Al Hasan was up to the task as he dived to the left to stop the shot and earn three valuable points for his team.

## Tributes

FROM PAGE 16  
Pietersen wrote: "Rahul Dravid-LEGEND!! Plain & simple.. congrats on an incredible career!! India will miss The Wall."

India boss Srinivasan called Dravid "one of the finest cricketers India has ever produced" and a "great role model".

"I would echo everyone's praise when we say 'Thank you Rahul. Thank you for what you have given to Indian cricket and we wish you very, very well,'" he said.

"He (Dravid) is actually irreplaceable. None of us want to see such players go away, we like to think they are permanent. Not only has he been a great player but also a great role model."

Australia all-rounder Shane Watson, who played with Dravid for the Rajasthan Royals in the Indian Premier League (IPL), described the Indian as "the nicest guy" in world cricket.

"He's probably the nicest guy -- no, he is the nicest guy -- that I've met in cricket. He's a phenomenal man," said Watson.

"He loves the game with so much passion, it's in his blood and in his heart. He is certainly going to be sorely missed by the Indian public and the cricket-loving public as well."

## Focus not

FROM PAGE 16  
has not been a part of dressing-room talk and he believes it is time to stop talking about it altogether.

"We shouldn't talk or think about such things. I haven't heard anyone in the dressing room talk about it in the last few days. The one who had the issue is now in the team and I hope he will try to play at his best," he explained.

# Watson vows to carry Aussies

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Stand-in Australian captain Shane Watson vowed on Friday to lead from the front with his team battling fatigue after a grueling summer, as they set off for a tour of the West Indies.

The one-day squad left Sydney for the Caribbean a little more than 12 hours after winning the tri-series title against Sri Lanka in Adelaide.

The players were woken before daybreak to catch flights to Sydney and then on to the West Indies with a five-match one-day series, beginning on March 16, crammed over 10 days.

Some of the team will then back up for two Twenty20 matches and three Tests.

Watson said his injury-hit season made him fresher than those involved in a heavy eight-month schedule which has included tours to Sri Lanka and South Africa and a full domestic programme against New Zealand,

India and Sri Lanka.

"From my perspective, I'm very fresh after missing the majority of the summer so I'm really excited about being able to go and continue to play a lot more cricket," he said at Sydney airport.

Watson led Australia to victory in the deciding third final against Sri Lanka on Thursday in the absence of the injured Michael Clarke.

Clarke's hamstring strain has already ruled him out of the opening phase of matches in the West Indies, although he is confident of being ready for the Tests.

"There's no doubt there's some guys that have played the whole summer who are going to be a little bit tired," said Watson.

"But in the end, that's part and parcel of playing international cricket.

"You are playing just about all year round, and you've got to find ways to be able to freshen up whenever you possibly can and to be able to keep doing everything you can to stay as fresh as you can to be able to perform."

## Kuerten

FROM PAGE 16  
Spending 43 weeks atop the world rankings, Kuerten reached his heights on the red clay at Roland Garros, winning the French Open in 1997, 2000 and 2001.

"During my career in tennis I was fortunate to have many victories, but the Hall of Fame induction is a special one," Kuerten said.

Kuerten praised the influential players upon his career, including legends Bjorn Borg, Pete Sampras, John McEnroe and Andre Agassi.

"I was inspired by lots of great tennis players, like Maria Bueno and Thomas Koch, two of the biggest Brazilian tennis players, and I have also always greatly admired Hall of Famers including Borg, McEnroe, Sampras, and Agassi.

## Dravid calls time

FROM PAGE 16  
"I had thought about it (retiring) even before the tour of Australia," he said. "I knew in my heart... I knew deep down that the time was right. For the past year, I had assessed my future after every series.

"My approach to cricket has been reasonably simple -- it was about giving everything to the team, it was about playing with dignity and it was about upholding the spirit of the game.

"I hope I have done some of that. I have failed at times, but I have never stopped trying. It's why I leave with sadness, but also with pride."

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly, a fellow debutant with Dravid in the 1996 Lord's Test, said it will not be easy to replace him.

"He was a perfectionist. His determination, technique and commitment towards the game was something special," said Ganguly. "It's really tough to become another Rahul Dravid. It will not happen overnight."

Dravid will continue playing in the lucrative Indian Premier League Twenty20 event where he will lead Rajasthan Royals this year after the retirement of Australian spin legend Shane Warne.

## Ryder taking a break

AFP, Wellington

Troubled New Zealand batsman Jesse Ryder will take an indefinite break from cricket to deal with personal issues after being dropped following a drinking binge.

Ryder had been through a "deeply stressful and emotional time" and needed to concentrate on his personal wellbeing, the player's manager Aaron Klee told Fairfax Media on Friday.

Ryder and paceman Doug Bracewell were suspended from the New Zealand one-day team for one match after going drinking after a loss to South Africa in Napier last week and becoming involved in a row in a hotel.

The 27-year-old Ryder was also left out of the Test squad for this week's first Test against the Proteas, although selectors insisted the omission was due to concerns about form and fitness.

He has a Test batting average of 40.93 and an ODI average of 34.37 but his career has been marred by incidents involving alcohol.

Klee said Ryder, who is contracted to the Wellington Firebirds, decided to stand down from all forms of cricket after discussions with his management, Cricket Wellington, a psychologist and the players' association.

Ryder could be available for the Firebirds within weeks "but it would be imprudent of me to try and put an exact date on this", said Klee.

"We are not dealing with this from a professional perspective as a cricketer, this is all about Jesse as a person," Klee said. "That is my total focus as his manager and as his friend."

## Dokic out of Indian Wells

AFP, Indian Wells

Irina Falconi, Gisela Dulko and Johanna Larsson all advanced to the second round at the Indian Wells tournament early on Thursday as their opponents withdrew with injuries.

Australia's Jelena Dokic pulled out after just nine minutes in the first set with a right wrist injury, sending Dulko, of Argentina, into the second round, where she will face second seed Maria Sharapova.

Dulko has reached the quarterfinals in Indian Wells twice, in 2004 and 2006.

Sweden's Larsson was 4-1 ahead in the first set when qualifier Greta Arn of Hungary retired from their match with a neck injury.

Larsson will face former world number one Ana Ivanovic, who is seeded 15th, in the next round.

Arn reached the third round of the Australian Open and the semi-finals in Monterrey, Mexico, last month, where she lost to Romania's Alexandra Cadantu.

American wild card Falconi advanced after Alexandra Dulgheru withdrew from their match with a right knee injury. Dulgheru won the first set 6-4 and was trailing 5-2 in the second when she pulled the plug.

Sweden's Sofia Arvidsson swept past Eleni Daniilidou of Greece in her opening match 6-4, 7-6 (7/4).

The 28-year-old Arvidsson kept her unforced errors down to a minimum and won 65 percent of her second serve points in the one hour, 55 minute match.

The men's side of the draw began play Thursday as wild card Sam Querrey defeated fellow American Tim Smyczek 7-6 (7/1), 6-4, Poland's Lukasz Kubot beat Ivo Karlovic, of Croatia, 6-4, 6-2 and Italy's Andreas Seppi rallied to defeat Olivier Rochus, of Belgium 4-6, 6-3, 6-4

# Centurion duo puts SA on top

Cricket

AFP, Dunedin

Century-makers Graeme Smith and Jacques Kallis gave South Africa an imposing 233-run lead with seven wickets remaining on the third day of the first Test against New Zealand on Friday.

South Africa were in trouble at 47 for two, only 12 runs ahead, when the pair came together to forge a 200-run stand on an even University Oval wicket. The tourists were 268-3 in their second innings at stumps.

Smith's captain's knock of 115 came to an end with the arrival of the second new ball late in the day while Kallis atoned for his first innings duck to reach 107 not out at stumps with Jacques Rudolph on 13.

New Zealand were bowled out early in the morning session for 273, a lead of 35 runs, and they had reason to feel confident when Doug Bracewell dismissed Avirol Petersen (25) and Hashim Amla (2) in a five-ball burst.

But from there South Africa's senior batsmen Smith and Kallis set about regaining the initiative in a carefully measured partnership.

Smith took 234 balls for his 115 while Kallis has faced

236 deliveries. Smith has never lost a Test in which he has reached 100.

Kallis brought up his century with a five off Chris Martin when he played to cover-point for a quick single and the fielder's return went past the stumps and across the outfield to the boundary.

Martin, New Zealand's chief destroyer in South Africa's first innings, had no luck the second time around in the field with Bracewell the only bowler to taste success.

Following his two early wickets, Bracewell returned with the new ball to bowl Smith with a good length delivery that came back and caught the inside edge.

He also had a successful LBW appeal against Rudolph overturned on appeal, finishing the day with 3-53 from 18 overs.

Rudolph appeared ready to walk when given out by umpire Aleem Dar but Kallis insisted on going for the review, which showed the ball had pitched outside leg stump.

On a day when New Zealand had little to celebrate, there was one moment to cherish after play resumed in the morning.

In the second over of the day Trent Boult belted 22 off Vernon Philander including

three sixes.

Philander was the most successful of the South African bowlers with figures of 4-72 from 18 overs.

## SCOREBOARD

**SOUTH AFRICA:** First innings 238 (Amla 62, Smith 53, Rudolph 52; Martin 4-56)

**NEW ZEALAND:** First innings (overnight 243-9)

Nicol c Smith b Philander	6
Guptill b Morkel	16
McCullum c & b Tahir	48
Taylor c Boucher b Morkel	44
Williamson c Boucher b Philander	11
Vettori c & b Kallis	46
Van Wyk c Smith b Philander	36
Bracewell b Steyn	25
Southee c Smith b Philander	0
Boult not out	33
Martin c Amla b Steyn	5

Extras: (lb-3) 3  
Total: (All out in 88.2 overs) 273

Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-41, 3-106, 4-116, 5-135, 6-188, 7-229, 8-229, 9-239, 10-273.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Steyn	20.2	4	79	2
Philander	18	1	72	4
Morkel	18	5	52	2
Tahir	24	6	55	1
Kallis	8	2	12	1

**SOUTH AFRICA:** Second innings

Petersen c Southee b Bracewell	25
Smith b Bracewell	115
Amla c Guptill b Bracewell	2
Kallis not out	107
Rudolph not out	13
Extras: (b-2, lb-1, w-1, nb-2)	6
Total: (For 3 wks in 89 overs)	268

To bat: De Villiers, Boucher, Philander, Tahir, Morkel, Steyn.

Fall of wickets: 1-45, 2-47, 3-247.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Martin	17	4	57	0
Boult	16	3	52	0
Bracewell	18	2	53	3
Southee	17	3	58	0



Graeme Smith (R) is congratulated by teammate Jacques Kallis after the South Africa skipper scored a century on the third day of the first Test against New Zealand at the University Oval in Dunedin yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

# 'No obsession to beat Djokovic'

Tennis

AFP, Indian Wells

Rafael Nadal says he's not obsessed with beating Novak Djokovic despite some heavy soul searching after seven straight losses to the world No. 1, the last three in Grand Slam finals.

"I don't have the spirit of revenge. I don't have the spirit of obsession of another player," Nadal said Thursday at the ATP Tour's Indian Wells Masters series tournament.

"I want to improve to beat Novak and Roger (Federer). I try every day to improve my level of tennis.

"But whenever I go on the court for practice I don't think about Novak, I think about getting better."

Spaniard Nadal says he's ready to reclaim his throne as the top ranked player in the world, but that path clearly goes through Djokovic, who defeated Nadal in the final of this year's Australian Open 5-7, 6-4, 6-2, 6-7 (5/7), 7-5 to win his fifth Grand Slam title and third in a row.

The match lasted almost six hours, the longest Grand Slam final in history, and marked Djokovic's seventh-straight win over the claycourt specialist, beginning with last year's final here in the California desert.

"It was a great match, great quality and it was physically demanding and emotional.

He won, I lost and I was happy to be part of that," said Nadal, who is playing his first tournament since the Australian Open.

World number two Nadal holds a 16-14 career record over Djokovic but couldn't overcome the Serb in the most recent Aussie Open, US Open and Wimbledon.

"You have to have a reference on what you have to do to improve," said Nadal, who won the 2011 French Open. "I prefer to be in front."

Nadal, 25, said there is no magic formula to beating Djokovic. It is going to come down to hard work.

"He brings tennis to another level. But nobody is forever. There was Federer then something happened and then Djokovic and in three to five years when I come back here there will be somebody better than him. I don't know if it will be me the one to have success.

"Victories for everybody have an end." Nadal, Indian Wells champion in 2007 and 2009 -- will play a South American in his opening second round match of the men's draw which got underway on Thursday.

If he gets past either Argentina's Leonardo Mayer or Colombian Alejandro Falla, who played on Friday, he would be on track to possibly face world number six Jo-Wilfried Tsonga or tenth seeded Janko Tipsarevic in the quarterfinals.

"I feel I am hitting more winners than before," said Nadal, who is 31-5 at Indian Wells