



PHOTO: STAR  
BJMC winger Ronny Islam (R), under pressure from a Rahmatganj MFS defender, whips in a cross during their Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

# BJMC pip hapless Rahmatganj

SPORTS REPORTER



A second-half strike from Cameroonian midfielder Jean Jules Ikanga guided Team BJMC to a 1-0 victory over Rahmatganj MFS in their Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The fourth win in nine matches kept BJMC in third position with 16 points while Rahmarganj MFS remain rooted to the bottom of the 11-team points table with six points from nine matches.

Fresh from a 5-0 win over Arambagh KS, BJMC initially struggled against the Old Dhaka outfit but gradually asserted the authority in the midfield. BJMC cap-

tain Amit Khan picked up an injury on his left hand in the fifteenth minute which resulted in taking him to the hospital.

BJMC launched the first fruitful attack on 22 minutes when Mohammad Biplob fed Ismael Bangoura with the ball but the Guinean hitman miscued his with only to goalkeeper Sujan Chowdhury to beat. Bangoura failed again four minutes later as he sent a Bayback lob wide of the target. Bangoura then saw his effort narrowly miss the target in the 36th minute.

BJMC Coach Jakaria Babu sent on Abul Hossain in place of Abdullah Parvez to strengthen the midfield in the second half and moments later they were awarded a free-kick just outside the danger zone. Abul took the free-kick and Ikanga tapped in from close range

## Pak T20 match under scrutiny

AFP, Karachi

A match in Pakistan's domestic Twenty20 competition last month is under scrutiny over allegations of foul play and under-performance by some players, an official said.

Karachi Zebras lost the Super Eight tournament game by 31 runs against a weakened Peshawar Panthers side missing injured star Pakistan pace-man Umar Gul. The win lifted Peshawar to the semifinal and relegated Karachi.

"I myself felt some foul-play and several players under-performed so the manager of the team has submitted a report in which he has advised investigation," Siraj Bukhari, president of the Karachi City Cricket Association (KCCA), told AFP on Thursday.

Bukhari did not say whether players under-performed for money but said a committee will investigate and submit a report to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

## Betting rife in country

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maiden over or even whether a certain player will bowl the next over or not.

While these are the relatively "cheaper" formats, there lies an exclusive group that not only plays on match results but also on various spreads. It is understood that this group operates on the same rules as the other two but places bets at more than Tk 10,000.

Despite several attempts, contact could not be established with this lot who, it has been heard, take their betting very seriously.

**NO DARK ALLEYS**

When one thinks of a betting ring, a dark alley somewhere behind a business district immediately comes to mind.

But in Dhaka or in other parts of the country, it was nothing as such. Pool clubs and restaurants are favourite gathering points, but that is mostly for spread betting while those placing the bigger bets, mostly do it over the phone.

In one incident at a café in Dhaka, a group was told to leave after they were a bit too raucous.

It was also learned that another betting ring in Sirajganj was detained for a couple of hours by their college principal after news came through that they were taking part in betting in the cafeteria.

**EVERYONE PLAYS**

Having spoken to several groups of bettors, it was learnt

that people of all ages, backgrounds and income took part in betting activities. Students, even from reputed colleges and universities held a wager among friends, though it was almost impossible for outsiders to play in these groups.

The more serious ones, like the group in Sirajganj, only let a certain number of people take part in spread betting so that it doesn't attract attention. Over the phone however, many people took part. In fact, there are groups in Dhaka who have traditionally held bets over cricket and football matches of all sorts.

In 2010 The Daily Star Sport had reported a large group that sits at the Dhaka University Playground and spread-bets on the various league games. But during the last few years, newer age groups of bettors have emerged and during this BPL, it was found to be happening in more places around the country. It took many by shock, especially those involved in the game.

**POSTSCRIPT**

In a late string of good luck, Tonmoy made a slight profit on the BPL even before the final day.

"I left my interest in Sylhet. I picked Dhaka Gladiators as my team and won big on the semifinals," he said. During the Asia Cup, Tonmoy won big in just one game. The bookie back in Sirajganj too didn't have as jolly a time as he did

during the BPL because of the fewer number of games and the aversion for the underdog in the tournament.

Tonmoy too fell into that mentality and unwilling to lose money, put his money on the bigger teams and lost on two occasions.

But according to many who take part alongside Tonmoy, it will be the fifth edition of the IPL that will bring the Sirajganj trader his second bonanza.

**LOCAL SNIPPETS**

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Bangladesh Boys Club in their Destiny Group Dhaka Metropolis 2nd Division Football League at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

Selim Reza struck the all-important goal in the 76th minute.

**Boishakhi Kabadi Utshob**

'Boishakhi Kabadi Utshob', marking the Bengali new year, will be held at the Kabadi Stadium today.

Eight school teams of Dhaka metropolis, four in each girls' and boys' group will participate in the competition. Viqarunnisa Noon School (Bashundhara section), J. B. Memorial Academy, Maniknagar Model School and Kamalapur Shere-E-Bangla Railway High School will play in the girls' group while Maniknagar Model School, T&T School, Kamalapur Shere-E-Bangla Railway High School and J. B. Memorial Academy form the boys' group.

## Wozniacki advances

AFP, Copenhagen

Top seed Caroline Wozniacki won her 12th match in 12 career outings at the Copenhagen Open on Thursday as she moved closer to a third title with a 6-2, 6-1 second round rout of France's Pauline Parmentier.

The home star's win was in contrast to her opening round struggle past Poland's Urszula Radwanska.

"I got more used to the surface compared to the last match and that was definitely a difference," said Wozniacki, who plays another Frenchwoman, Alize Cornet, in Friday's quarterfinals.

"It was a very different match compared to the last one."

Wozniacki is now 12-0 at this event and has won 17 straight sets, the second set of her 2010 semifinal triumph over Anna Chakvetadze being the last one she lost.

Second seed Angelique Kerber of Germany had a much tougher path to the quarters, beating Britain's Anna Keothavong, 4-6, 6-3, 6-3, and will face compatriot Mona Barthel in the last eight.

**Siddikur**

him to equal fourth place alongside world number seven Martin Kaymer of Germany (67) in the 2.5 million dollar event sanctioned by the Asian Tour and European Tour.



PHOTO: AFP  
Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark stretches to make a forehand return against Pauline Parmentier of France in the Danish Open in Copenhagen on Thursday.

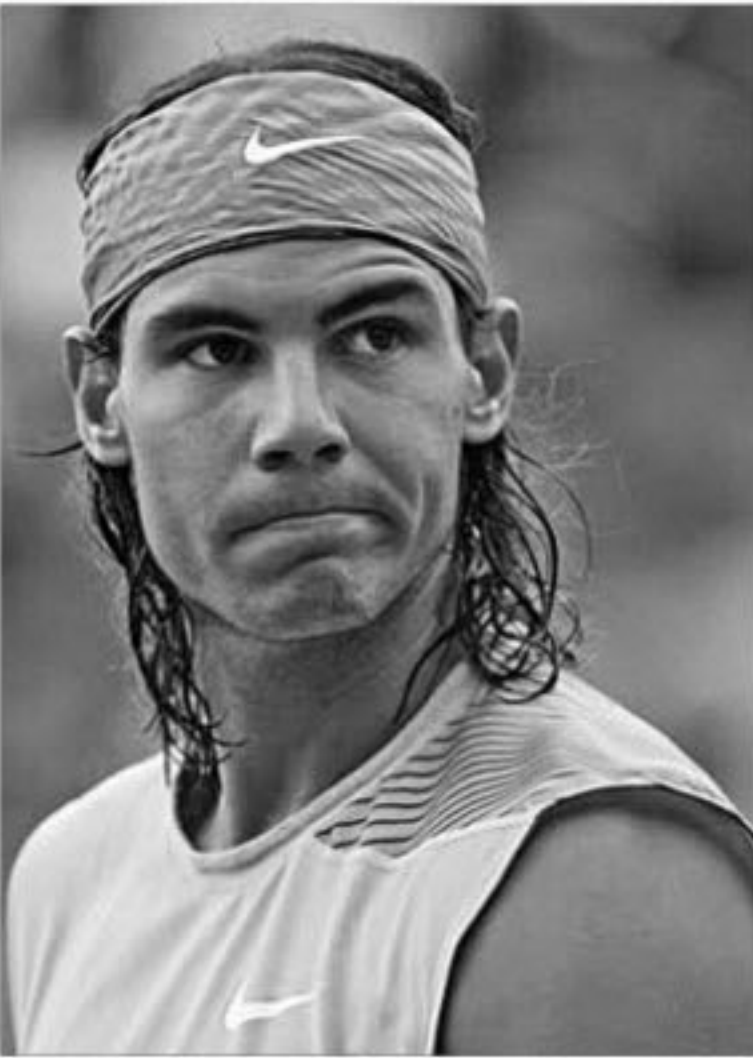
# Exciting battle on hand



NOVAK DJOKOVIC



ROGER FEDERER



RAFAEL NADAL

## Tennis

SHAFEEH MAJID

The clay court leg of the ATP tour is underway, and for the first time in a long time, fans of glorious uncertainty in sport are not yawning absently as a result. The essential part of the season is 3 Masters 1000 events and the Grand Slam Roland Garros (formerly "French Open"). Between 2005 and 2011, Rafael Nadal was utterly dominant on the red dirt winning 6 out of 7 French Opens, claiming 14 out of 19 Masters 1000 titles, and accumulating a 205-8 win-loss record. This year, however, world number 1 Novak Djokovic and 16 time Grand Slam winner Roger Federer pose significant challenges to the Spanish King of Clay's supremacy.

Since 2005, Djokovic and Federer are the only men have beaten Nadal more than once on clay. Djokovic was by far the player of the year in 2011 winning 3 Grand Slams, 5 Masters events and boasting a 70-6 record. So far this year, he has been almost as impressive, winning the Australian Open for a third time and retaining the Miami Masters. He has beaten Nadal seven times in a row. Perhaps his greatest unofficial achievement is that he seems to have gotten inside Nadal's head,

and made that great player question his own ability to get the job done. Nadal's ability to remain undaunted when confronted by the juggernaut that was Roger Federer in the mid 2000s was unique and ultimately served to actually intimidate Federer. To make such a player cast doubt on himself is no mean feat. Last year on clay, Djokovic won titles at Rome and Madrid, beating Nadal in the final on both occasions in straight sets. Djokovic has the consistency to reach the later rounds of tournaments, and both the game

MAJOR EVENTS IN CLAY COURT SEASON			
Monte-Carlo Masters	15th April-22nd April	Mutua Madrid Open	6th May-13th May
Rome Masters	13TH May-20th May	French Open	27th May-10th June

and mental edge to take down Nadal should the two meet.

Roger Federer finds himself in unfamiliar territory in that he has something to prove to the tennis world. He has slid to 3 in the World Rankings, and doubts have been cast on his ability to defeat his younger rivals and return to the top of the men's game. Federer has reacted well to the doubts. Since the US open, Federer has won a record breaking 6th year end ATP World Championship, 2 Masters titles to take his haul to a record tying 19, and 3 other tour-

# Finishing line in sight

AFP, Madrid



Cristiano Ronaldo feels that Liga leaders Real Madrid are now closing in on the title as they prepare to face struggling Sporting Gijon at the Santiago Bernabeu this weekend.

The Portuguese star scored his seventh hat-trick of the season as Real beat neighbours Atletico 4-1 on Wednesday to restore their four-point lead at the top of the table.

The pressure had been growing on Jose Mourinho's team as their lead - which sat at 10 points in mid-March - was whittled down to one in the wake of Barcelona's 4-0 victory over Getafe on Tuesday.

But, after some tense moments with the score tied at 1-1 at the Vicente Calderon, Ronaldo made the difference before substitute Jose Callejon got the other goal.

"Still there is a little way to go but the league is near now. We were anxious going into the game as we knew that Barca had won but now we are relaxed," said Ronaldo, who has already equalled his record-breaking tally of 40 league goals, set last season. That figure leaves him one ahead of Barcelona's Lionel Messi, although the Argentine has the most in all competitions with 61.

"Losing is not a word in my vocabulary. We knew it would be a difficult game against Atletico and they played very well so I am happy with the result. I

am not looking for personal records but titles for Real Madrid and I have to thank my teammates because without them I would not have scored," added Ronaldo.

April is a crunch month for Madrid and will go a long way to deciding their destiny in the title race.

Having taken four points from two league games against Valencia and Atletico, they still have a tough Champions League semi-final tie with

FIXTURES	
<b>Saturday</b>	Real Madrid v Sporting Gijon (1800 GMT), Levante v Barcelona (2000 GMT)
<b>Sunday</b>	Espanyol v Valencia (1000 GMT), Betis v Osasuna (1400 GMT), Malaga v Real Sociedad (1400 GMT), Villarreal v Racing Santander (1400 GMT), Zaragoza v Granada (1400 GMT), Athletic Bilbao v Mallorca (1600 GMT), Rayo Vallecano v Atletico Madrid (1930 GMT)
<b>Monday</b>	Getafe v Sevilla (1900 GMT)

Bayern Munich to come either side of their trip to the Camp Nou to face Barca in El Clasico.

Barcelona are pushing Real all the way having won their last 10 league games in succession but, as they prepare to travel to the season's surprise package Levante, midfielder Sergio Busquets points out that they are still reliant on the leaders dropping more points.

"It will be difficult to win the league but not impossible and they still have to come here to play us.

They have the advantage which we have had in the past and we have been champions but all we can do is go game by game," he said.

"Looking at the picture overall then we do have a good chance but we now have a difficult game against Levante. Madrid at the moment are first, they have a great team and deserve to be where they are but we are trying to make up the distance."

Meanwhile, Valencia have responded to recent a dip in form with a well-earned draw at the Bernabeu and a comprehensive win over Rayo Vallecano but they now have a tough trip on Sunday to an Espanyol side who are still in the hunt for a place in Europe.

Malaga are Valencia's biggest rivals in the battle for third place, and Manuel Pellegrini's side are in action at home to Real Sociedad.

Athletic Bilbao have just one win in seven games and are in need of a positive result as they prepare to entertain Mallorca at San Mames, while sixth-placed Osasuna travel to Betis.

Atletico have a second Madrid derby in five days as they face a Rayo Vallecano side who are one of the most unpredictable in La Liga.

Elsewhere on Sunday, there are key games at the foot of the table as Racing Santander go to Villarreal while Zaragoza entertain Granada.

Michel takes his Sevilla side to former club Getafe in the Monday night game which will be vital for the European ambitions of both teams.

## Misbah hails

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before taking on Australia in a limited over series -- also in Sri Lanka.

Misbah said Whatmore -- who rose to fame after guiding Sri Lanka to the World Cup title in 1996 -- is taking care of technical matters.

"Like a good coach whose job is to take care of the practice, how to prepare the team and what are the strengths and weaknesses of the rival team, he is taking care of all such things so it's nice to work with him," said Misbah.

## Spanish world order

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This then raised the, not unwarranted, argument that the Spanish league was too one-sided with Real and Barcelona the only two contenders. But critics are quick to forget the top four hegemony that existed like clockwork around the Premier League during its heydays, and for what it's worth, the performances in the Europa League long existing as a barometer of a league's strength in depth, would beg to differ. Three Spanish sides are the semifinal as aforementioned and Spanish sides have won the competition thrice in the last six years.

The signs are ominous for any sides wanting to challenge this Spanish monopoly. Their success is based, not on the commercial wind-

falls of marketing gimmicks, but a deep rooted football culture best evidenced by the now overtly popularized La Masia. Even as Spanish stars like Xavi and Iniesta edge slightly beyond their peak, their club sides are in an excellent position to replenish their resources with both home grown talent and through the capture of top notch prowess. Indeed, in Thiago Alcantara, Barcelona have a ready-made replacement for Xavi and the indefatigable metronome of Javi Martinez is a clone of Xabi Alonso. Add to the mix, the supreme talents of the Basque Iker Muniaín and the future looks like Spain's to lose. And if they ever get too complacent, a look across the waters to England will do no harm.