

Rahmatganj 'sack' Liton

SPORTS REPORTER

Rahmatganj MFS unofficially terminated their coach Mahmudul Hasan Liton following the club's poor performance against neighbouring Farashganj SC in the Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League.

Football secretary of the club Mohammad Iqbal instructed Liton not to train the boys as the club are on the verge of relegation. Rahmatganj MFS have been fighting to avert relegation as they are at the bottom of the 11-team table with only nine points from 15 matches. Rahmatganj MFS has appointed Mala as the interim coach.

Easy wins for Ispahani, Rising Star

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Ispahani Cricket Academy recorded a massive 125-run victory over Ekushey Cricket Academy in the CJKS-Urban American Under-18 T20 Cricket Tournament at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Battling first, Ispahani made 162 for six in 20 overs with Susanta Das top-scoring with an unbeaten 44 runs off 30 balls with 4 fours and 2 sixes. Abbas Khan of Ekushey took three wickets for 21 runs.

In reply Ekushey were all out for just 37 runs in 11.4 over as Saiful and Raihan of Ispahani took four for 8 and three for 7 respectively.

Susanta of Ispahani was adjudged man of the match.

In the day's other match, Rising Star Academy defeated Shadhinata Academy by 7 wickets.

Shadhinata was all out for 124 runs in 20 overs with Junayed scoring 22. Asrar of Rising Star claimed three for 16.

In reply Rising Star lost three wickets in reaching the target with 7 balls remaining. Sadab of Rising Star was adjudged the man of the match for his 38-ball 46 runs which featured 5 boundaries.

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

Could the Tigers have played other formats before World T20s?

Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote

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What to WATCH

Maasranga TV

Euro 2012

Poland v Greece

Live from 10:00pm

Russia v Czech Republic

Live from 12:45am (Saturday)

STAR Cricket

England v West Indies

Third Test, Day 2

Live from 4:00pm

NEO Sports

French Open

Men's Singles

Seminifals

Live from 6:00pm

Euro 2012

Russia v Czech Republic

Live from 12:45am (Saturday)

ESPN

Sportscenter India

DAY'S EVENT

Premier Div Cricket Super League

Old DOHS v Victoria

Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium

Abahani v Mohammedan

Venue: Shaheed Chandu Stadium, Bogra

Gazi Tank v Sk Jamal

Venue: BKSP-2

Bangladesh Premier League

Abahani v Sk Jamal

Time: 5:30pm



PHOTO: STAR
Nigerian striker Sunday Chizoba (C) blows a kiss to Muktiyoddha fans after scoring against Sheikh Russel in their Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League clash at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Muktis join Abahani at the summit

SPORTS REPORTER

Title contenders Muktiyoddha Sangsad joined leaders Abahani in the Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League with a 2-0 win over Sheikh Russel KC in their crucial tie at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Nigerian striker Sunday Chizoba gave Muktiyoddha Sangsad an eighth-minute lead before local hitman Zahid Hasan Emily struck the second one in the seventith minute to extend Muktiyoddha Sangsad's winning streak as well as reach the top of the 11-team points table with 37 points from 17 matches, though three-time champions Abahani have identical points having played a match less.

"The players were much eager to win today's match to continue their push for the title. They played with the same attitude they showed against Brothers Union and left the field with a victory," said Muktiyoddha Sangsad coach Shafiqul Islam Manik.

According to the bylaws, if two teams finish top of the points table with equal points then the title will be decided by a play-off match between the two teams.

Last season's runners-up Muktiyoddha Sangsad have tough challenges ahead as they will have to face Team BJMC, holders Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club and Abahani, who

have less challenges to face with their opponents being Sheikh Jamal, Feni Soccer, Farashganj SC and Muktiyoddha.

"We are not thinking of Abahani, rather our lone focus is to win the remaining three matches to create an opportunity of a play-off match and we are determined to do it," said coach Manik.

Muktiyoddha Sangsad went ahead in the eighth minute when striker Emily snatched the ball from Sheikh Russel midfielder Mezbabul Haq to put a through for Sunday, who had after a dazzling run mustered a left-footer from the edge of the box to beat Sheikh Russel goalkeeper Biplob Bhattacharjee.

Muktiyoddha were then denied by the woodwork when defender Ariful Islam headed a Mamunul Islam free-kick to the post in the 19th minute while Emily, after missing an open net opportunity, doubled the lead and sealed the match in the seventieth minute with a sliding effort from a Sunday cut-back.

"Muktiyoddha played their best match today so far and we could not stop them on the pitch," said Sheikh Russel coach Maruful Haque.

The Bangladesh Premier League was supposed to be suspended for a two-week period as the under-22 players would be unavailable due to the U-22 Asia Cup, but yesterday it was revealed that the League would be suspended for less than a week, from June 20 to June 25.

Ferrer fears none

French Open

AFP, Paris

David Ferrer says he is ready to face the toughest challenge in world tennis -- going up against Rafael Nadal on the clay courts of Roland Garros at the French Open.

The player they call "The Bulldozer" because of his relentless and attritional style has played 19 times against his fellow Spaniard and he has lost 15 of them.

Oddly for two such claycourt stalwarts, only once previously have they met at Roland Garros and that was in 2005 when Nadal made his debut in Paris and won comfortably 7-5, 6-2, 6-0 before going on to win his first Grand Slam title.

In fact the only time that Ferrer, who at 30 is four years older than Nadal, has beat him on clay was in their very first meeting in Stuttgart in 2004 and even that took three tough sets to get the job done.

The hard facts make grim reading for the hopes of Ferrer ahead of Friday's semifinal.

Nadal's straight sets victory over another Spaniard, Nicolas Almagro, in the quarterfinals brought up his 50th win at Roland Garros against just the one defeat -- to Swede Robin Soderling in the 2009 fourth round.

On top of that, Nadal has added motivation this year as a win on Sunday would make him the first man to win seven French Open titles, snapping a tie with Swedish legend Bjorn Borg.

It would also be his 11th Grand Slam title, putting him level with Borg and Rod Laver.

Ferrer, through to his first semifinal here,

insists that defeat for him is not inevitable.

"Yes, Rafa is always difficult to play. Even more so on clay," he said.

"But as I said and I will say again -- I will try and play a beautiful match, my best tennis. I have great ambitions, and I'm quite certain this is going to be a very physical match."

The two have met twice on clay in the buildup to Paris, in Rome and Barcelona, with Nadal winning both in straight sets, but Ferrer came agonisingly close to taking the first set in the Italian capital before ceding in a tie-break.

He then lost the second set 6-0.

That, he says, is the problem against Nadal -- he never, ever lets up.

"In Rome it was different, because I had opportunities to win a set, but he played extremely well," he said.

"I think you can win a set against Rafa, but there is a difference between winning a set and winning a match."

"Winning a match against Rafa is almost impossible. He is in such good shape."

Nadal, who has yet to drop a set this year at Roland Garros, is full of praise for his Davis Cup partner and close friend.

"His game bothers everybody because he's one of the best players in the world on every surface, on clay especially," he said.

"He's a complete player. It's very difficult to play against him, because his movements are probably the best of the world, and he's able to hit the ball very early a lot of the times."

"It will be a very tough match."

Friday's other semifinal is a repeat of last year with top seed Novak Djokovic going up against third seed Roger Federer.

Neither player has ever beaten Nadal at Roland Garros.

Euro 2012 kicks off today

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to France in February and in May to Switzerland, though, have raised last-minute doubts.

Questions have also been asked about whether the team's Bayern Munich stars have the mental strength to pick themselves up not only from their Bundesliga and German cup final defeats to Borussia Dortmund and Champions League loss to Chelsea.

Should either Spain or Germany fail to shine, the Netherlands are obvious candidates to take advantage and add a second European title to the one they won in 1988.

The Dutch have no shortage of class but, as in previous major tournaments, they have a tendency to self-destruct. This time round, coach Bert van Maarwijk's decision to play one up front could be the spark for dissent in the Oranje camp.

Van Maarwijk has chosen Arsenal star Robin van Persie -- fresh from 30 goals in the English Premier League -- over Schalke 04's Klaas-Jan Huntelaar, who top scored in the Bundesliga last season with 29.

Any discord could be fatal in the so-called "Group of Death", opening the door to out-of-form Portugal or solid, if unspectacular, Denmark.

Of the others, injury-hit England for once travel with such low expectations in Roy Hodgson's first campaign in charge that even making the quarterfinals could be hailed as a success.

They face two-time European champions and Group D favourites France, who arrive on the back of a 21-game unbeaten streak and with genuine hopes that they can go far in the tournament.

EDGBASTON TEST Opening day washed out

AFP, Birmingham

The first day's play in the third Test between England and the West Indies at Edgbaston here on Thursday was washed out without a ball being bowled.

Heavy overnight and early morning rain meant the square was fully covered when the captains should have been tossing up ahead of a scheduled 11am start.

There was a brief spell when the covers were removed but fresh rain meant it was not long before the pitch and square were fully covered again, as over-cast skies threatened another downpour.

And further rain saw the square remain covered and at 3.35pm the announcement was made that play had been abandoned for the day.

Rain is also forecast Friday.

Billy calls it a day

AFP, New Delhi

West Indies official Billy Doctrove has retired from umpiring after a 14-year international career, cricket's world governing body said on Thursday.

Doctrove, 56, declined to seek an extension to his annual contract which was due to expire at the end of June, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said in a statement.

The ICC did not specify any reason for his decision.

Doctrove, who umpired his first international game in 1998, stood in 38 Tests, 112 one-dayers and 17 Twenty20 internationals, including the final of the 2010 World Twenty20 between England and Australia in Barbados.

McInnes set

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Gazi Ashraf Hossain, who is also in charge of looking after the academy.

Richard McInnes, who coached the Bangladesh Under-19 team to a plate title in the Under-19 World Cup in 2004 beating Australia, played a big role in the formation of today's star cricketers like Shakib Al Hasan and captain Mushfiqur Rahim.

The post of the academy's head coach was vacated after another Australian, Ross Turner, had resigned on health grounds in October last year after taking over the job in April.

Usha thru'

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one goal for Bangladesh SC. Imran Ahmed scored the consolation goal for Wari Club, who finish their campaign winless after suffering defeats in all their four matches.

Maria-Sara showdown

French Open

AFP, Paris

Maria Sharapova defeated Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova 6-3, 6-3 to reach her first French Open final on Thursday, reclaiming the world number one ranking and moving one win away from a career Grand Slam.

The Russian second seed, twice a semifinalist in Paris in 2007 and 2011, will tackle Italian 21st seed Sara Errani in Saturday's final, the



PHOTO: REUTERS
Italy's Sara Errani is delighted after winning her French Open semifinal against Samantha Stosur of Australia at Roland Garros in Paris yesterday.

Pakistan easy victors

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Dinesh Chandimal to send Sri Lanka reeling at 23-3.

He was superbly backed by Sami, who dismissed Kumar Sangakkara and all-rounder Angelo Mathews in his first two overs to reduce the hosts to 41-5.

Lahiru Thirimanne, who added 50 for the eighth wicket with Nuwan Kulasekara (18), top-scored for Sri Lanka with an unbeaten 42 while extras contributed 31, the second-highest of the innings.

Thisara Perera (17) and Upul Tharanga (10) were the other batsmen to reach double-figures.

The second one-dayer will also be played inallekele on Saturday and the last three games in Colombo on June 13, 16 and 18.

first meeting between the two players.

"It's an amazing feeling to be in my first final. I have been in two semifinals but it was always my dream of getting to the final stage," said Sharapova, who will take the number one spot for the first time since 2008.

"That's pretty special. After my shoulder surgery, my ranking was out of the 100 in the world, but I thought if I could be number one in the world before that then I could do it again."

Sharapova, the 2004 Wimbledon, 2006 US Open and 2008 Australian Open champion will become just the 10th woman to complete a career Grand Slam if she takes Saturday's final.

But she admitted she is in for a tough contest against Errani, who defeated Australian sixth seed Samantha Stosur earlier Thursday to reach her first major final.

"It'll be a tough final. She's a great claycourt player and it will be a real challenge," she said.

Sharapova, at an imposing 1.88m, and Kvitova, just 5cm shorter, both struggled for accuracy in the testing conditions on Philippe Chatrier court, where the wind whipped up the clay and helped balls sail out.

Meanwhile, Errani crushed the French Open hopes of Stosur with a 7-5, 1-6, 6-3 win.

If she triumphs on Saturday she will be only the second Italian woman to win the French Open, two years after Francesca Schiavone's breakthrough triumph and the first player ranked outside the world top 20 to win in Paris since 1976.

US Open champion Stosur was bidding to become the first Australian woman to win the French Open title since Margaret Court in 1973.

overs will be	Hafeez	10	3	20	2
Free-Test series	Ajmal	5	0	23	0
22.	Afridi	4	2	12	0
D	PAKISTAN				
	Hafeez st Sangakkara b Herath				37
	Azhar c Sangakkara b Malinga				3
3	Younis b Kulasekara				5
5	Misbah run out (Mathews/Sangakkara)				30
9	Akmal not out				36
0	Afridi not out				2
10	Extras: (b-2, lb-13, w-6, nb-1)				22
ni	Total: (For 4 wkts in 34.1 overs)				135
0	Fall of wickets: 1-11, 2-27, 3-78, 4-133				
42	Did not bat: Sarfraz, Gul, Ajmal, Tanvir, Sami				
17					
ni					
18					
0					
	Bowler	O	M	R	W
31	Malinga	7	2	24	1
3	Kulasekara	9	3	29	1
135	Mathews	6	1	18	0
	Perera	6.1	0	31	0
2, 3-23, 4-40, 5-41, 6-	Herath	6	0	18	1
	Result: Pakistan won by 6 wickets (D/L method).				
M	R	W			
2	24	3			
0	30	0			
2	19	3			
	Man-of-the-match: Umar Gul.				
	Toss: Sri Lanka.				

Victoria's flair

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and Victoria started the league as the favourites, but we have been playing good cricket consistently in the competition. Our team effort has so far been fantastic; our slow bowlers especially have played a big role in us keeping the top slot and I'm hopeful that we can continue our form in the last game to clinch the title," said Mahmud.

Referring to the two-month suspension of the league, the former Bangladesh captain said: "It's not so easy to gain momentum in any competition, so we really suffered due to the stop-start league. I hope the board will be very careful in this regard in future."

While Victoria bank on their star players like Shakib and Tamim, DOHS don't have any big names in their team and they definitely will be looking forward to get the best from their three foreign recruits -- Indian Uday Kaul, South African Roelof van der Merwe and Pakistani Adnan Raza.

Indian left-arm spinner Iqbal Abdullah is the only foreign recruit for Victoria.

The match will go into the reserve day if rain ruins today's play and the points will be shared if the match is ultimately abandoned, in which case DOHS, at the top of the table, will clinch the title, but everyone is looking for a spirited finish to the league.

Hosts relying

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from a qualifying campaign in which they saw off Croatia and Israel.

They have creative talent in right-sided midfielder Sotiris Ninis, who has recovered from a serious knee injury suffered against Israel in a qualifier last September. His attributes include an impressive change of pace and powerful shot.

"What we know about the Greeks is they are a collective. They defend as a unit and have proven they are very good at taking their chances," Polish chief scout and assistant coach Hubert Malowiejski told a news conference this week.

"They are a very difficult prospect."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Use the couch

4 Fidel Castro, e.g.

9 Picks out of a lineup, briefly

12 Japanese pond carp

13 Last Greek letter

14 Ultra-modernist

15 Office-holder

17 Pitcher's topper

18 Apiece

19 Merman and Mertz

21 Label founded by Clive Davis

24 Gets a gander at

25 Fellow

26 Pvt.'s superior

28 Takes five

31 Snapshots

33 Finish

35 Willy Wonka's creator

36 Narrow cuts

38 Sleuth, for short

40 Born

41 — moss

43 Fed well, as a Biblical calf

45 Twist in pain

47 Mrs. McKinley

48 Coloration

49 Rainy, perhaps

54 Hostel

55 Surround

56 Sticky stuff

57 Encountered

Solution time: 24 mins.

58 Uses a swizzle stick

59 Rhyming praise

DOWN

16 — and downs

20 Pay attention

21 Rock band's gear

22 Bar

23 Just beginning

27 Explosive letters

29 You

30 Coaster

32 Undo a dele

34 Graffiti writer, e.g.

37 Masters, in old India

39 West

42 Doctrine

44 Scot's chapeau

45 Caprice

46 Mysterious character

50 Vegas-based crime show

51 Swelled head

52 Agree silently

53 Part of the foot

1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8		9	10	11
12				13						14		
15			16							17		
			18				19		20			
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25				26		27		28			29	30
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48				49		50				51	52	53
54				55						56		
57				58						59		

CRYPTOQUIP

Q K E T N K G D O F G N G W U E F

G J Q D O Q T Y E X K Q R O

Y E T R O K U A E L X . E Q ' T U T O F E O T

G W J L W G F Q J L U Q O A O L Q T .

Saturday's Cryptoquip: IF I SCOFF AT A PERSON WHILE I'M STANDING ON OAK OR MAPLE FLOORING, AM I MOCKING ON WOOD?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Q equals T