

Spurs appoint Villas-Boas

Andre Villas-Boas has been named manager of Tottenham Hotspur, the Premier League club said on Tuesday. The Portuguese replaced Harry Redknapp, who was dismissed in June after nearly four years in charge at White Hart Lane. Tottenham finished fourth in the league last season under Redknapp but failed to qualify for the Champions League following Chelsea's victory over Bayern Munich in the final. Villas-Boas, 34, spent only nine months in charge of Chelsea before being sacked by Russian owner Roman Abramovich in March following a series of poor results



HEROES: Abahani's two young forwards Zahid Hossain (L) and Shakhawat Rony gave the Sky Blues their fourth Bangladesh Premier Football League title with decisive goals in a pulsating final match of the league against Mukhtijoddha at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

ROLL OF HONOUR		
SEASON	CHAMPIONS	RUNNERS-UP
2006-2007	Abahani	Mohammedan
2008	Abahani	Mohammedan
2009	Abahani	Mohammedan
2010	Sheikh Jamal	Muktijoddha
2011	Abahani	Muktijoddha

'Dev body flawed'

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Sirajuddin Mohammad Alamgir, the Bangladesh Cricket Board director, said yesterday that the board should take immediate action to boost the game development committee to make the talent pipeline run smoothly.

BCB president AHM Mustafa Kamal has given him charge of the Bangladesh Under-19 side recently after its Asia Cup debacle in Malaysia. After working for two days, Alamgir observed some major flaws in a committee that is vital to the country's cricketing future.

"I am trying to evaluate everything to find out the reason behind the Under-19 team's failure," he said. "What I feel is that the selection process is faulty. Everything is done chaotically in the development committee. We should take some immediate action so that this committee can work properly."

Alamgir, a director from Chittagong who heads the disciplinary committee and the BPL governing council secretary, didn't blame the selectors but said that the teams weren't done on a first-hand basis.

"I'm not blaming the selectors but the reality is that we have picked the players who were dropped from the national side, a team or academy side and sometime took feedback from the coaches over telephone.

"It should not be the way, so we have to think about the whole process," he added.

He also bemoaned the lack of human resources and the manner in which the officers keep track of the players around the country.

"The monitoring system is also very poor. The development committee has lack of manpower also. There are many other things here we should address to solve the problem in the development committee," he continued.

Alamgir said that he has a plan of making seven divisional under-19 teams from where the national under-19 team will be formed.

"An ex-national player will be appointed as a selector for each division who works with the local coach to find out the talent to form the team," he said.

He said that at this point there is no scope to bring any major changes in the Under-19 team which is going to take part in the ICC Under-19 World Cup to be held in Australia in August.

"There will be 4-5 changes in the team from the Asia Cup squad as some key players are all set to return to the team along with Anamul Haque who has also been relieved from national team duty," he said.

Alamgir also informed that they are planning to arrange enough matches for the team before the showpiece event. "We are trying our best to arrange some practice matches at home while the team will go to Australia early for playing some practices matches. So the lack of match practice will not be a big issue," he added.

Bangladesh were eliminated from the Asia Cup when they lost to Afghanistan by seven wickets in a Group B match last week.

Title Abahani's with thrilling draw

ANISUR RAHMAN

The famous Sky Blues of Abahani regained the coveted professional league title for the fourth time in five years after playing out an enthralling 2-2 tie against Mukhtijoddha Sangsad in their high-voltage, title-deciding Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League clash at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Yesterday's draw means that Abahani finished on 45 points from their 20 games which is just agonizingly clear of the 44 that Mukhtijoddha Sangsad have managed to compile through the course of the season. As such, Tuesday's riveting draw was vital and it came despite the best efforts from Mukhtijoddha's Nigerian striker Sunday Chizoba who struck twice only to see his strikes cancelled out by Abahani's Zahid Hossain and Shakhawat Hossain Rony.

In a way, it was apt that the denouement of a season where the Sky Blues and the Reds of Mukhtis have been neck and neck throughout, came through a virtual final between the two, mirroring last season's title-decider between Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club and Brothers Union.

And for what it was worth, the match

lived up to its eminent billing.

It was end to end football for the best part, the players making up in vigour what they lacked in technique, with the momentum swinging one way and another before Abahani showed the qualities that has made them repeat champions, coming back from behind twice to snatch the draw that they needed. It would not be a stretch to say that

Of joy and sorrow

ATIQUA ANAM

No less than a thousand fans from the Western Gallery stormed onto the pitch as the referee blew the final whistle on what had been an intriguing and entertaining end to a Premier League campaign. The supporters, some of them carrying the Sky Blue flag of Abahani Limited embraced their heroes who wrestled back the league, which has been one of theirs, to the Dhanmondi Club.

Abahani's Iranian coach Ali Akbar Pourmoslemi burst into tears after the win as he dedicated this win to former Iranian coach of Bangladesh Naser Hejazi.

this was the best match of the league season so far, played in a rain-soaked pitch at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Abahani needed only a draw to retain the title, but they Sky Blues never played for one, concentrating instead on imposing their own style on a Mukhtijoddha side who had come into the game on the back of four consecutive wins.

The attacking approach from the Sky

"This is for Naser Hejazi. If he were alive today, he would have been very happy," said Akbar as he wiped away the tears.

The centre of attention of the fans were -- Shakhawat Rony and Zahid Hossain -- the two forwards who got Abahani back in the match and eventually won them the title. Rony, who was a regular player in the last season, became a substitute this time as he kept missing chances, but when the team needed a goal last evening, the Chittagong boy came up with the most vital goal of his career.

"This was the best goal of my career. I have been benched for most of the league,

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Blues nearly paid early dividends with both Twum Frank and Awudu Ibrahim spurning presentable opportunities inside the first fifteen minutes. Mukhtijoddha gave as good as they got however and with their midfield trio of Souza Lima, Maruf Ahmed and Mamunul Islam working hard, there were intermittent opportunities for the dangerous Sunday. The first of these was a stinging right-foot shot that tested the Abahani goalkeeper Ziaur Rahman.

Sunday's shot was a fair warning because with his next effort he put the Reds ahead. Defender Ariful Islam cut back a Lima corner from close to the byline and Sunday showed his predatory instincts to strike from inside the six-yard box and silence the Abahani crowd.

The lead served to coat over the loss of defender Ariful through a thigh strain midway through the half for Mukhtijoddha and Abahani responded by putting pressure through their forwards, but goalkeeper Mostak held firm as Abahani ended the first-half a goal down and staring at the possibility of conceding the title.

Forced into action, the Sky Blues rang the changes Shakhawat Hossain Rony coming on

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Medals locked up in Tower of London

AFP, London

The medals for the 2012 Olympic Games were locked up on Monday in a vault at the Tower of London, where Britain's Crown Jewels are kept under armed guard.

The 4,700 gold, silver and bronze discs will not be seen in public again until they are hung around the necks of the winning athletes at the Games, which open in the British capital on July 27.

London Games chief Sebastian Coe took the medals down to the vaults, where they will stay until they are due to be awarded.

"For an athlete, winning an Olympic or Paralympic medal represents the conclusion of thousands of hours of training and reaching the highest level in sport," said Coe, who is himself a two-time Olympic 1500-metre gold medalist.

"The victory ceremonies then provide the moment they can truly celebrate their success."

The medals were greeted by a fanfare, as the tower's Yeoman Warder guards -- commonly known as Beefeaters -- watched with 150 schoolchildren from east London.

The first medals will be awarded on July 28, in the women's 10-metre air rifle

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PHOTO: REUTERS

Serena Williams of the US hits a forehand return to Petra Kvitova of the Czech Republic in London yesterday.

Williams blows champion away

INTERNET, undated

Serena Williams was at her brilliant and brutal best on Wimbledon's Centre Court yesterday as she sent defending champion Petra Kvitova home at the quarterfinal stage.

Without a Grand Slam title since her fourth Wimbledon two years ago her 13th in total she is in London with a point to prove and sent out a clear warning sign of her intentions with a 6-3 7-5 win.

The American served up 13 aces and hit 27 winners in the process, leaving Kvitova with little hope or chance of continuing her title defence.

Williams took control of her eagerly-anticipated quarterfinal with defending champion Petra Kvitova, winning the opening set in just 30 minutes.

The four-time winner was at her punishing best as she pressed towards what would be an eighth Wimbledon semifinal, unleashing a barrage of winners 17 in total and keeping her fancied opponent with some brutal

Although not supplanting number of vacant Court, a high-expected between

won five Wimbledon singles titles between them, and that proved to be the case for the opening point.

Kvitova took it with a volley after an eight-shot rally and, when she smashed to 0-30, she had an early window of opportunity. Williams served her way out of trouble, though, sending down the first of seven first-set aces on her way to taking the game.

Taking confidence from that early escape, she was almost unplayable on serve in the subsequent games, hitting winners that were pinned to the lines when not blasting Kvitova off the court with her first shot.

The break she needed to cement her dominance duly arrived in the sixth game a wide backhand validating the second of three break points and she duly held serve twice more herself to see the set out.

Such had been Williams' dominance that her first genuine error did not arrive until the 11th game when she wildly sent a forehand volley off-court when 30-15 behind.

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