

KFC WOMEN'S FOOTBALL Ansar & VDP keep women's crown

SPORTS REPORTER

A brace from Aungmra Ching Marma helped Bangladesh Ansar & VDP retain the title of the KFC National Women's Super League with a convincing 4-0 win over Jessor in the final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Bangladesh Ansar & VDP, who faced a stiff challenge to record a 1-0 win over Jessor in their group-phase match, took only eight minutes to take the lead through Aungmra Ching Marma, who doubled the lead in the 15th minute to tighten their control of the match.

Just one minute later, Nubai Ching Marma widened the margin and took the game away from Jessor to go to a comfortable 3-0 lead in the first half.

Rawsan Ara Bulu sealed the victory scoring the fourth and last goal in the 71st minute.

Aungmra Ching Marma received the award of highest scorer having struck 14 goals while Mainu Marma from the same team was adjudged player of the league.

Bangladesh to play Dinamo Minsk

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The Bangladesh national football team will play a friendly match against a Belarusian Club -- Dinamo Minsk in November at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The match is scheduled to be held on November 12 to mark the four-day visit of Belarus president, who is also expected to watch the game from the gallery, said BFF member Satyajit Das Rupu yesterday.

Rupu, also a member of National Teams Committee, said that they are thinking of running a short camp for the national teams after the completion of Federation Cup.

ECB suspends Rehman for 12 weeks

AFP, London

Pakistan and Somerset bowler Abdur Rehman has been suspended for 12 weeks after testing positive for cannabis, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced on Wednesday.

The 32-year-old spinner failed a drugs test on August 8, following the County Championship game against Nottinghamshire and will now be out of action until December 21, meaning he will miss Champions League Twenty20 matches with Sialkot.

"Somerset County Cricket Club fully supports the action taken by the ECB," said Somerset chief executive Guy Lavender.

"The club does not condone the use of illegal drugs in any circumstances and all Somerset players are made fully aware of this policy on a regular basis."

Rehman took 19 wickets in three Test matches against England last January when Pakistan swept the series 3-0 in Dubai and has a career haul of 81 wickets at an average loss of 28.

Prime Bank

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threatened the league's timely beginning. The league fixtures are yet to be finalised.

Earlier this year, the BCB had decided to conduct the 14th NCL on a franchise basis in order to make the league more competitive. Of the eight teams participating in the league, six are expected to get sponsors. The rest will be run by their respective divisions.

Pakistan look

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surprises on big occasions, so the question was what kind of surprise they have in store?

"T20 itself is always a game of surprises. Our main target is to enjoy the game and play good cricket," said Hafeez.

The Pakistan skipper also hoped that the crowd will appreciate good and exciting cricket today when they take the field against the home side.



Players and officials of Bangladesh Ansar & VDP celebrate with the trophy after beating Jessor in the KFC National Women's Super League final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Calls for Dhoni to quit

AFP, New Delhi



India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni faced calls to quit Wednesday after his team's exit from the World Twenty20, with pundits lining up to condemn his tactics as well as the misfiring top-order.

"Every captain's term has a shelf life and after five years at the helm, Dhoni's seems to have come to an end," said the Mail Today in a blistering review of his "mind-boggling decision-making" during Tuesday's game with South Africa.

"The entire match was littered with his mistakes," it added.

Although India scraped a one-run victory over the Proteas in Colombo, they fell well short of the run rate required to reach the semifinals.

Much of the criticism levelled at the captain revolved around the dropping of spinner Harbhajan Singh, who had been the team's most economical bowler.

The Times of India accused him of committing "a major captaincy gaffe" by dropping a player who finished with figures of 4-12 when India crushed England in the opening round.

"Dhoni will have much answering to do about why he didn't play veteran off-spinner Harbhajan Singh on a wicket on which Pakistan played four spinners against Australia with much success," said the paper.

"The Proteas are as bad players of spin as

anybody in the world."

Dhoni has been one of the most successful captains in Indian history, leading the team to victory in the inaugural World Twenty20 in South Africa in 2007 and at last year's 50-over World Cup. He also steered them to the top of the Test rankings.

However, the team has slipped to number five in the Test rankings and India have failed to reach the final stages of the past three Twenty20 tournaments.

"Ultimately, Dhoni can't escape scrutiny. He has been a remarkable leader on many accounts. But some of his selections and tactics on the field have been perplexing," wrote Samit Bal on the Cricinfo website.

"Tough questions and tough decisions can't wait forever."

Dhoni, whose top score in the tournament was just 23, was one of host of big-name Indian batsmen who failed to spark in Sri Lanka.

Apart from Virat Kohli, the entire Indian team only managed one half century in the whole tournament. Openers Gautam Gambhir and Virender Sehwag once again flopped against South Africa as the team slumped to 36-3.

"India's batting not for the first time in the tournament struggled to make an impact," said the Indian Express.

In his post-match press conference, Dhoni acknowledged his team's batting failures.

"It was tragic to see India crash out despite the batting line-up that they possess," said The Times of India, adding that they only "had themselves to blame".

U-15 team to play in India

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh U-15 national school football team will finally fly abroad to play three friendly matches after their originally scheduled tour of Denmark in July was cancelled due to unavailability of visa.

The National U-15 squad comprising of the players from the National School Football Championship will now play three matches in India against Kolkata-based G Group Football Academy in Kuchbihar, Mathavanga and Kolkata on October 10, 11 and 14 respectively.

The 24-member squad is scheduled to leave here for Kolkata on October 7.

Though the tour of Denmark was cancelled due to unavailability of visa, the reality was that the BFF had started the visa procedure too late after an alleged competition among its officials to be part of the squad.

Women's handball

SPORTS REPORTER

Holy Cross College, Mirpur Girl's Ideal Laboratory Institute and Central Women's College won their respective matches in the 15th Delta Life Women's College/University Handball Tournament at the Shaheed M Mansur Ali National Handball Stadium yesterday.

Holy Cross thrashed Lalmati Women's University College 12-0 after leading the first half 8-0 while Mirpur Girl's Ideal recorded a single goal win over Ahmed Bawali School & College. Central Women's College routed Mirza Abbas Women's Degree College 7-1 after taking a slim 2-1 lead in the first half.

Consistency key for hosts

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"We are still two games away from getting to that title. We are extremely proud to be a part of a group that has been consistent throughout the tournament. When you look back, even though we haven't won, for us to be in those situations and push hard is great. That's why we have been very consistent. You can take a lot of positives that we have done well in big tournaments. Yes we haven't won any of those and it's a bit of a disappointment. But we have to be in those big tournaments and if we keep getting there we will win," said Mahela when asked about their good performances in ICC events during a pre-match press conference at Premadasa yesterday.

The Sri Lankan skipper was quite confident despite the fact that their opponents have an edge against them. Pakistan have won six matches out of nine T20I clashes against Sri Lanka and they are well accustomed to the conditions at Premadasa where the home side is yet to play a match in this tournament. And the venue has not been a happy hunting ground for the home team in T20Is -- they have lost all four of their matches here, one each against India and Pakistan and two against New Zealand.

"We have played different opponents actually. In some of those T20s we tried new players and new combinations. Kumar (Sangakkara) and I didn't play a couple of those games. So it's hard to read into something like that. We played good cricket in the tournament and right now we don't have to cast our minds back so long. We need to take the positives out of the last few games and approach a semifinal. Those are the thoughts that will be in the players' minds. I am

proud to lead a team like this. We have a good blend and hopefully we will keep improving," assured the soft-spoken Lankan captain, who defended his decision of sending Sangakkara to lead the team against England in the last Super Eights match at Pallekele (because Jayawardene wanted to avoid suspension in case of being charged with a slow over rate) and hinted that it may happen today again to avoid suspension in the next match.

Mahela hoped that it will be an exciting contest between the teams, who are equal in strength be it in the bowling or batting department, and he was also not ready to consider anybody as mystery spinner whether it is Ajantha Mendis or Saeed Ajmal.

"We have played each other quite frequently and there have been good contests. We have some quality spinners and we play spin quite well. We need to make sure that we execute certain things properly as well. It's going to be an exciting semifinal against a quality opposition," opined Mahela.

"Saeed Ajmal and Ajantha Mendis have been playing for five, six years now and I am not too sure whether there's any mystery left. A lot of the guys have played them. They are quality spinners. People have seen videos of them and the important thing is that it is a big game for everyone, not just for those two guys," he added.

Whatever happens today one thing is for certain -- Mahela's men will get partisan support from the crowd who are madly in love with its cricketers and who, like Jayantha Silva, will be rooting for a success they last tasted in 1996.

Partying Gayle caught

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Twenty20 event, with a victory over New Zealand on Monday earning them a semifinal slot against Australia on Saturday.

"Ministerial Security Division [MSD] guards assigned to protect the players carried out the arrest and the three women were handed over to the Kollupitiya police station," the police statement said.

The women, who were not charged, were later released on bail, said a police official who declined to be named.

"There was no wrongdoing on the part of the players or the women and we are surprised at the police action," a hotel source told AFP. "It is not against the law to be a guest of a player."

Gayle, 33, is famed for his extrovert attitude as well as his hard-hitting batting, and he drew admiration for his dance-style celebrations after dismissing England's Jonny Bairstow earlier in the tournament.

"If you want to see Chris Gayle, stripped to the waist, performing his gangnam dance, get to our

hotel now. Serious Windies party," tweeted BBC commentator Jonathan Agnew on Tuesday.

The left-hander is one of the most feared batsmen in all formats of the game with a penchant for big hits against both pace and spin.

His 117 off 57 balls against South Africa in the inaugural World Twenty20 in 2007 was the highest individual score in the competition until Kiwi Brendon McCullum hit 123 off 58 balls against Bangladesh in the current edition.

West Indies management and the International Cricket Council (ICC), organisers of the World Twenty20, both confirmed the hotel incident but declined to comment further.

Officials said the British High Commission (embassy) in Colombo had also been informed about the arrests.

Hotel security has been a key issue at international cricket events since then-Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer was found dead in his room during the World Cup in Jamaica in 2007.

His death was initially treated as murder before police concluded he died of natural causes.

ECB takes Kevin back

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Axed England batsman Kevin Pietersen is set to play international cricket again after reaching an agreement with the England and Wales Cricket Board, the ECB said on Wednesday.

"The ECB and Kevin Pietersen confirm that agreement has been reached concerning a process for his re-integration into the England team during the remainder of 2012," the ECB said in a statement.

"Upon completion of the programme, the England selectors will consider Kevin for future matches."

The 32-year-old star batsman was cast into international exile in August after sending text messages to touring South Africa players that contained criticism of then England captain Andrew Strauss during the Test series.

He missed out on England's failed World Twenty20 title defence in Sri Lanka and was not also selected for the upcoming tour of India.

"I am committed to completing the re-integration process we have agreed over the coming weeks and resuming my England career in all formats, hopefully until the World Cup in 2015 and as long as my body allows."

"I want my son growing up seeing me playing for England and I hope one day he will put an England shirt on himself."

"I'd like to take this opportunity to apologise to my team-mates, all England supporters and the ECB for the situation that has arisen over the last couple of months. Thankfully we have drawn a line under it and can move forward."

Pietersen, born in Pietermaritzburg in South Africa, has played 88 Tests, 121 one-day matches and 36 Twenty20 internationals for England since his debut in November, 2004.

The accomplished batsman has scored 7,076 Test runs at an average of 49.48 with 21 centuries and 27 half-centuries.

He also has 4,184 one-day runs with nine hundreds and was man of the tournament when England won the World Twenty20 in the Caribbean in 2010.

Flower, asked on Monday if Pietersen had been missed in Sri Lanka, said: "Of course, but he wasn't available for this tournament when we selected the side."

Weakened Abahani

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"Professional league title, we have formed a strong team this time too," said Rupu during the players' registration formalities at the Bangladesh Football Federation where some hundred Abahani supporters accompanied the players.

"Look at the last five seasons, we always tried to maintain our base after retaining the service of most of the old guys and it is a tradition that some players will leave each season and some will fill that vacuum," said Rupu. "I think our strength remains same like last season and the players will have to prove themselves on the pitch."

On paper, the departure of three defenders looks likely to harm Abahani the most. They have managed to retain the services of Mohammad Sujan and Wali Faisal and Rupu was adamant that there would be little or no impact since those who had left were not regular starters in any case.

While title contenders Sheikh Russell and re-organised Sheikh Jamal DC almost ensured their foreign players ahead of the season cur-



Abahani footballers are on their way to the BFF House to complete their registration formalities for the upcoming season yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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