



The players of Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra celebrate with the Federation Cup, their first silverware in domestic football, at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

# Russel write history

SPORTS REPORTER



It was billed as the battle between brothers. It was also billed as the battle between the two hitmen; Zahid Hasan Emily and Mike Otojari. And like brothers, Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club and Sheikh Russel equally battled tooth and nail deep into injury time of extra-time after the two respective hitmen had traded blows.

In the end, it was left to the irrepressible Sony Norde to crash a left foot volley into the back of the net with almost the last kick of the game and give Sheikh Russel their first top-flight trophy in history.

The blue and whites owe a lot to their Haitian recruit whose tireless running and brilliant play brought them back into the game after Mike Otojari had done what all good centre-forwards should do; give his side a barely deserved lead. The Nigerian giant had bossed the Russel backline in a commanding performance that will have left centre-backs Razaul Karim Reza and Mamun Miah sporting more than a few bruises. The big Nigerian more than compensated for the absence of compatriot Sunday Chizoba by handing Sheikh Jamal the lead five minutes into extra-time.

A lively first ninety minutes had ended

goalless with Russel coming the closest to breaking the deadlock. Their Moroccan forward Mohammed Aboukacem had beat Jamal goalkeeper Maksudur Rahman but saw his crisp left-foot effort rebound out off the left hand post. But with ninety minutes up no side had come closer to breaking the deadlock.

So when Jamal forward Chizubo Joseph had burst into the box but found his effort towards the bottom corner blocked by the diving Biplob Bhattacharjee, it seemed another case of being so close yet so far. But with the ball breaking free, Otojari shrugged off the attentions of Aminul Islam to turn inside the six yard box and crash an effort into the back of the net. It was his sixth goal of the tournament. The goal looked tough on Russel, after they had threatened to break the deadlock for most of the first ninety minutes but found themselves denied, either by their own profligacy or bad luck.

All Jamal had to do was hold on until the whistle and they would be assured of their second victory in three seasons. It looked just reward for the pragmatic approach of coach Joseph Afusi who had sent his team out in a 4-5-1 formation and advised them to use the height of Otojari at every possible opportunity. It was a good tactic that paid dividends for most of the game as Russel's nifty keep-the-ball-on-the-ground approach seemed much more

difficult to execute on a bumpy dustbowl at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

But sometimes, the nicer approach pays off and it did yesterday. Going a goal down seemed to have breathed new life into the nifty Norde. A wonderful run down the left towards the byline saw him cut the ball back to an unmarked Anwar Hossain who proceeded to crash the ball against a defender with the goal begging. From the resulting corner though, Russel struck the equaliser. Mamunul Islam's initial corner was cleared comfortably but the left-footed midfielder got a second bite at the cherry and his arching cross evaded the lanky Osagie Monday to find Emily. The national striker had been a phantom presence for almost the entire game, but he was there when it mattered most, heading emphatically into the bottom corner. It was his seventh goal in six matches. There was five minutes remaining and Russel had their tails up. They could smell a first trophy and aided on by the indefatigable Tarik El Janaby, they kept pouring forward. The denouement though, was aptly left for the brilliant Norde, as the midfielder found just enough room outside the area to crash an unstoppable left-footer into the corner of the net in injury time of extra time and send the Russel fans inside the stadium into raptures.



Sony Norde (L) was the architect of Sheikh Russel's Monday's glory while prolific striker Zahid Hasan Emily (R) struck a decisive goal, his seventh, in the Federation Cup yesterday.



PHOTOS: STAR

# Dhaka win with a day to spare

SPORTS REPORTER



Dhaka became the first team to win a match in the 14th National Cricket League (NCL) after they thumped reigning champions Rajshahi by 127 runs at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on the third day of the first-round matches yesterday. The day also witnessed the season's first double-centurion as Dhaka Metro youngster Marshal Ayub, who had an overnight score of 100, went on to surpass the double century mark against Chittagong towards the end of the day at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra.

Away at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna, Barisal's Shohag Gazi picked up seven wickets against Khulna, single-handedly demolishing the hosts. Meanwhile, the game at the Cricket Garden in Rangpur continued at a steady pace as the home team ended the day trailing Sylhet by 18 runs in their second innings.

**DHAKA vs RAJSHAHI**  
Beginning the day on 295 for 7, Dhaka added another 27 runs and set Rajshahi a target of 260. The reigning champions though were in strife from the start of the chase, losing their first five wickets for 61 runs. They were finally bowled out for a paltry 133.

Captain Mushfiqur Rahim, who earlier did not bat on the second following a minor injury suffered from an on-field collision with teammate Saqlain Sajib, tried to resist but was caught behind in the 33rd over while trying to play a leg glance off Dhaka captain Mahmudullah Riyad.

The latter became an unlikely bowling hero for the hosts ending with figures of 4 for 29. Mosharrarf Hossain

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SCORES IN BRIEF	
<b>DHAKA:</b> First innings 116; Second innings 322 all out in 91 overs (Mosharrarf 69, Nurul 62; Sanjamul 5-129, Reza 2-68)	<b>DHAKA METRO:</b> First innings 509 for 5 in 151 overs (Ayub 209, Mehrib Jr 122; Kamrul 2-51, Nur 2-129).
<b>RAJSHAHI:</b> First innings 178 dec; Second innings 133 all out in 42.2 overs (Mushfiqur 26, Shafiu 44; Mahmudullah 4-29, Shahadat 2-24)	<b>RANGPUR:</b> First innings 295; Second innings 10 for no loss.
<b>Result:</b> Dhaka won by 127 runs.	<b>SYLHET:</b> First innings 323 all out in 147 overs (Rumman 75, Kapali 70; Ariful 3-51, Babu 2-58).
<b>Man-of-the-match:</b> Mosharrarf Hossain Rubel.	<b>KHULNA:</b> First innings 314; Second innings 220 all out in 70.3 overs (T Ghosh 76, Dollar 41; Shohag 7-79, Monir 2-22);
<b>CHITTAGONG:</b> First innings 411	<b>BARISAL:</b> First innings 278; Second innings 95 for 2 in



The slip cordon of Dhaka exult after the dismissal of Rajshahi captain Mushfiqur Rahim (L) on the third day of their National Cricket League match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

# 'Crucial to switch to Test mode'



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim has said that the national players are aiming to make the most of the two rounds of the National Cricket League (NCL) that they will get to play before they get busy with their preparations for the series against the West Indies.

"We are playing Test cricket after a long time. We need to practise hard. I think if we can play well in both these matches, while it may not be good enough, we can still go into the Test series with some good confidence," said Mushfiq.

The fact that the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) hasn't yet planned a national camp for a series that begins early next month, didn't bother the captain. "I think the player is tested the most during a match. These matches will make us more ready for the series as compared to the camps," he said.

The NCL so far has seen 6 centurions, only one of which has been scored by a current national team member (Tamim Iqbal's 192 for Chittagong against Dhaka Metro). The reason behind this worrying statistic, according to Mushfiq, is the lack of games played by the national players in the longer format.

"It's not a big problem, but people who play in the national team have to set examples. The ball used here is a little different too. It swings more. It took me time to adjust as well. On the whole, we have to shift from a T20 mood to the Test mood as soon as possible," said the captain.

Mushfiq, whose side Rajshahi lost to Dhaka in their

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# Ayub basks in double-ton glow

SPORTS REPORTER

It was a moment to cherish for the young Marshal Ayub, who clawed his way to his first ever double-century against Chittagong at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra during the third day of their first-round National Cricket League (NCL) match yesterday. It took the 23-year-old eight hours and 45 minutes and 395 balls to reach his memorable score of 209. The score surpasses his previous best of 181 in first-class cricket.

Ayub, who also bowls decent leg-spinners, resumed the day on 100 and batted on till he got out in the last session of the third day.

"The wicket was really good. My initial target was to reach 150 and once I did that I knew that getting a double-century was possible," said Ayub after

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