

The fallen giants

ANISUR RAHMAN

While traditional giants Abahani are going strong in the face of the rise of new powerhouses, one-time arch-rivals Mohammedan have found it hard to keep the same footing since the introduction of the professional football league. In its five editions, Mohammedan have failed to win a title. Sheikh Russel KC, Sheikh Jamal DC and Abahani spend a lot of money for the best possible recruits and take the dividends home regularly but Mohammedan, despite turning into a limited company, are still keeping faith in the young guns who have failed to deliver any domestic title in the last three years.

Mohammedan have roped in hardly any star players except for veterans Rajani Kanta Barman and Motiur Munna this season and this time too it would be unrealistic to hope for the league title from Mohammedan.

"Climbing the title of the Bangladesh Premier League will be very tough but it is not impossible," was the typical answer from Mohammedan coach Saiful Bari Titu ahead of the league, which starts tomorrow.

Mohammedan's performance in the Federation Cup may raise hopes among its supporters as they qualified for the semifinals before being knocked out by ultimate champions Sheikh Russel KC, but they have to put in consistent performances over the 16 rounds of matches to win the elusive title.

"Doing well in a cup tournament and a league is not the same thing. The league is a long, grueling run of games which is ultimately decided by players' fitness, injuries, suspension and form. If we can handle these things well, we can hope to play consistently in the league," believes the Mohammedan coach.

With good fitness levels and



Mohammedan coach Saiful Bari Titu (L) makes a point while his captain Motiur Munna looks on during a media briefing at the BFF House yesterday.

running ability, Mohammedan played good football in the season's curtain-raising tournament employing an attacking formation of 3-4-3/3-5-2 but the coach is set to shift his formation to 4-4-2/4-2-3-1 in the league to strengthen his backline.

"Actually I could not play with four defenders in the Federation Cup due to a shortage of wingbacks but it is important to protect ourselves first in the league matches," said Titu. "The inclusion of Cameroonian Baybeck Fombagne will certainly strengthen our backline."

Mohammedan is worried about not being able to protect a lead which happened twice in the Federation Cup against Team BJMC and Sheikh Russel KC. Titu believes it happened due to the immaturity of some players.

"Young players have a lack of mental toughness and we lost our commanding position despite taking the lead against Sheikh Russel. The coaching staff is working hard on this issue," said Titu.

But the situation is now better with the inclusion of proven foreign campaigners -- Nigerian duo Augustine Chibzoba and Damian Chigozie -- who helped Mohammedan finish third last season despite securing only nine points from their first ten matches.

This time, there are some positive

signs for Mohammedan, who appointed striker-cum-coach Alfaz Ahmed, former renowned defender Jewel Rana and former goalkeeper Nizam Majumder to fine-tune the striking, defence and goalkeeping zones which gives head coach Saiful Bari Titu, who has to divide his time between the club and the national team, some breathing space.

Titu believes the players' realisation that they could have done better in the Federation Cup would be key for their league campaign and time will tell whether Mohammedan will be able to break their 10-year title drought in the league.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Titumir Chowdhury Titu, Mamun Khan and Ahsan Habib Dipu.

Defenders: Rajani Kanta Barman, Mohammad Yeasin, Mezbaul Haque Sweet, Tapu Barman, Minthu Sheikh, Koli Ousman and Baybeck Fombagne

Midfielders: Imtiaz Sultan Jitu, Mamun Mia, Saidul Haque Sayeed, Emeka, Motiur Rahman Munna, Mobarak Hossain, Shariful Islam, Sohail Rana, Habibur Rahman Shohag, Maruf Ahmed, Anisur Rahman Manik, Augustine Chibzoba, Damian Chigozie and Mostafa Ibrahim.

Strikers: Wahed Ahmed, Alfaz Ahmed, Mohammad Robin, Iqbal Hossain and Osei Morrison.

Reefat in solo lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Grandmaster Reefat Bin Sattar maintained his solo lead in the Healthcare Pharmaceuticals Ltd 38th National 'A' Chess Championship at the close of the fourth round at the Media Centre of Bangladesh Olympic Association yesterday.

Reefat, with white pieces, defeated IM Abu Sufian Shakil in 44 moves to secure maximum four points from as many matches.

International Master Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar and FM Debaraj Chatterjee shared the second position with 3.5 points each as Sagar beat FM Mehdi Hasan Parag and Debaraj beat Sirajul Kabir.

GM Ziaur Rahman, GM Niaz Murshed and Golam Mostafa were in joint third position with three points each.

Djokovic in final

AFP, London

Novak Djokovic cut giant Argentine Juan Martin del Potro down to size as the world number one battled into the final of the ATP Tour Finals with a 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 victory on Sunday.

Djokovic will play defending champion Roger Federer or third seed Andy Murray in Monday's final after coming from a set and a break down to topple the 6ft 6in former US Open champion in a gruelling semi-final clash lasting two hours and 11 minutes at London's O2 Arena.

After another impressive season, which will end with Djokovic the world's top ranked player for the second successive year, the Serb now has a chance to cap his campaign by taking the title at the season-ending event for the second time.

The 25-year-old won the Tour Finals in 2008 in Shanghai and he looks in the mood to emulate that success after moving into the final with four consecutive victories -- the only unbeaten run of the eight competing players -- taking him to 74 match wins in 2012, a record that only David Ferrer has equalled over the last 11 months.

Djokovic had won six of his previous eight meetings with del Potro, but he had to draw on all his remarkable reserves of energy and determination to beat the sixth seed.

Chelsea held at home

AFP, London



John Terry scored a goal on his comeback but went off injured as Chelsea drew 1-1 with Liverpool on Sunday, allowing Manchester City to go second in the Premier League by beating Tottenham Hotspur.

Terry was making his return after a four-game domestic ban for racially abusing Queens Park Rangers defender Anton Ferdinand last season, and he broke the deadlock against Liverpool with a 20th-minute header.

However, 19 minutes later he left the fray on a stretcher, his head in his hands, following a collision with Luis Suarez, who added insult to injury by scoring the visitors' equaliser with 17 minutes to play.

The result left the European champions three points behind leaders Manchester United and one point below City, who came from behind to win 2-1 at home to Spurs thanks to an 88th-minute winner from substitute Edin Dzeko.

At Stamford Bridge, Terry glanced home Juan Mata's corner to break the deadlock and claim his 50th goal in Chelsea's colours, but the former England defender did not make it to half-time.

His right knee buckled after Suarez fell on top of him, prompting an anguished cry that was picked up by television microphones and necessitating five minutes of treatment before he was carried off by medics.

Chelsea came close to extending their lead on several occasions, most notably when Mata fired over late in the first half and when Liverpool goalkeeper Brad Jones produced a reflex save to block Fernando Torres' second-half header.

Suarez had been having a quiet game but in the 73rd minute he popped up to claim the equaliser, nodding in from close range after Jamie Carragher flicked on Suso's corner to record his eighth league goal of the campaign.

It was Liverpool's third consecutive draw and left Brendan Rodgers' side in 13th place.

Fortress Gabba under fire



AFP, Brisbane

South Africa were on track to end Australia's unbeaten 24-year Test run at the Gabba after dominating the third day's play in the opening Test on Sunday.

The world's number one team amassed a formidable 450 in their first innings and then had Michael Clarke's Australians under pressure at 111 for three at stumps.

Clarke was at the crease on 34 with opener Ed Cowan not out 49 in an unbroken 71-run stand.

The Australians last lost at the Gabba against the West Indies in 1988, but the Proteas' first innings total was the best by a touring side at the ground since England's winning 456 in 1986.

Jacques Kallis had a memorable day, making his 44th Test century -- he is second on the list of all-time century makers, behind only India's Sachin Tendulkar -- and his fifth against Australia.

His 147 was the highest score by a South African in a Brisbane Test since Eddie Barlow's 114 in 1963.

The star all-rounder also chipped in with two catches at second slip to help put the skids under the Australians.

The home side's thoughts turned to saving the match after three wickets tumbled inside the opening 10 overs.

David Warner lasted 15

balls before Dale Steyn slanted a delivery across him. He poked it straight to Kallis at second slip to depart for four.

Debutant Rob Quiney fell to a spectacular juggling catch on the fine leg boundary rope by Steyn for nine off Morne Morkel.

Steyn tossed the ball into the air, realising he was going over the rope. He had the presence of mind to step back into the field of play and take the catch.

Senior batsman Ricky Ponting lasted just five balls before he edged Morkel to the safe hands of Kallis for a duck to leave the home side wobbling at 40 for three.

Kallis and Hashim Amla earlier hit centuries as South Africa dominated Australia's bowling with a formidable first innings of 450 off 151.4 overs.

Australia removed Kallis shortly after lunch when Quiney took a high two-handed chance in the gully off James Pattinson to end the all-rounder's 349-minute stint at the crease.

Kallis shared in a 165-run partnership for third wicket with Amla, who reached his third century in four innings against Australia and his 17th overall before he given out lbw to Peter Siddle for 104.

Amla was struck high and TV replays suggested the ball was going over the stumps. Surprisingly, he did not refer Asad Rauf's decision to the third umpire.

The world number two

batsman in Tests became South Africa's first triple centurion with an unbeaten 311 against England at The Oval in July.

The Australian bowlers, who took just two wickets on Friday's opening day, had their best spell with four wickets in the middle session.

SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings (255 for 2 overnight)

Smith lbw b Pattinson	10
Petersen c Hussey b Lyon	64
Amla lbw b Siddle	104
Kallis c Quiney b Pattinson	147
De Villiers c Warner b Pattinson	40
Rudolph c Quiney b Lyon	31
Philander c Clarke b Siddle	11
Steyn c Wade b Hilfenhaus	15
Kleinveeldt not out	17
Morkel c Siddle b Hilfenhaus	0
Duminy absent hurt	0

Extras: (b-1, lb-1, w-3, nb-6) 11

Total: (For 9 wickets in 151.4 overs) 450

Fall of wickets: 1-29, 2-119, 3-284, 4-374, 5-377, 6-403, 7-426, 8-446, 9-450.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hilfenhaus	32.4	9	73	2
Pattinson	34	6	93	3
Siddle	36	6	111	2
Lyon	37	4	136	2
Hussey	4	0	21	0
Quiney	7	3	10	0
Clarke	1	0	4	0

AUSTRALIA: First innings

Cowan not out	49
Warner c Kallis b Steyn	4
Quiney c Steyn b Morkel	9
Ponting c Kallis b Morkel	0
Clarke not out	34
Extras: (lb-8, nb-7)	15
Total: (For 3 wickets in 26 overs)	111
To bat: M Hussey, Wade, Lyon, Siddle, Pattinson, Hilfenhaus.	
Fall of wickets: 1-13, 2-30, 3-40.	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Steyn	8	2	27	1
Philander	8	0	24	0

Hockey team

FROM PAGE 16

India," said Haroon on the eve of their departure at a press conference at the BOA auditorium yesterday.

Bangladesh will play against Air India, Panjab National Bank, ONGC in the second round of Nehru Cup and two victories in three matches will put them through to the semifinal.

In the Lal Bahadur Shastri Hockey Tournament, Bangladesh will have to play against two clubs from Pakistan and Malaysia, Oman national team and four local clubs.

Meanwhile, Rahim-Afroz, Nitol-Niloy and Farr Ceramics are sponsoring the national teams for both tournaments.

SQUAD

Zahid Hossain (captain), Rafiqul Islam, Imran Hasan, Tapash Barman, Assaduzzaman Chandan, Kamruzzaman, Sheikh Mohammad Nannu, Rasel Mahmud Jimmy, Krishna Kumar, Jahid Bin Talib Shuvo, Irfanul Haque, Iqbal Nadir Prince, Pushkar Khisha, Hasan Jubair Niloy, Sarwar Hossain and Abdul Malek.

Officials: Kazi Moinuzzaman (manager), Jafrul Islam (asst manager), Mahub Haron (coach) and Jahirul Islam Mitul (asst coach).

Shakib wins

FROM PAGE 16

missing at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur during the Tigers' training session. Ensuring that a player can concentrate on preparations fully ahead of such an important series is very important.

Shakib did later come to the venue for a thorough training session after his teammates finished theirs.

'Short stuff an option'

FROM PAGE 16

was bogged down by injuries in the early stages of his career, which made many sporting pundits doubt the bowler's ability to compete in international cricket. He however announced his comeback in style in the home series against Pakistan last year, where he troubled the visitors with the new ball and picked up eleven wickets in the series. He was subsequently selected for the series after that and ever since has been a regular member of the team.

Only time can reveal the extent of the damage that Rampaul can inflict with his swing in this series. The bowler however, to no one's surprise, claimed that the short ball would also be decisive against Bangladesh. "As a bowling unit we tend to look at the batsmen and look at their weakness, if the short ball is one of their weaknesses then we will exploit that," said Rampaul.

He further stated that the West Indies pace attack was top-notch despite Roach's injury. "Fidel (Edwards) is a fairly experienced Test cricketer. We have a fairly all-round bowling unit and that will do the bowling job for us," he said.

"We came out on top last year, in both the one-day series and the Test series. We are looking to do the same thing this year. We just have to keep believing in ourselves," added Rampaul.

SL clinch ODI series

AFP, Hambantota

Jeevan Mendis grabbed three wickets as Sri Lanka clinched the one-day series against New Zealand with a comfortable seven-wicket win in the fourth match in Hambantota on Saturday.

Sri Lanka achieved a rain-revised target of 131 off 32 overs with more than five overs to spare to take an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match series. The opening one-dayer was called off without a ball being bowled due to rain.

It was Sri Lanka's third successive win under the Duckworth-Lewis (D/L) method in the rain-hit series.

Metro win in a canter

FROM PAGE 16

as he scored an unbeaten 127 and took his team to a winning position. Meanwhile Abdur Razzak added two more wickets to his nine-wicket haul in the first innings and took his match tally to 11.

Dhaka put up a much better performance in their second innings against Sylhet and finished the day on 289 for 8 at the Sylhet Divisional Stadium. However, their first innings debacle -- being bowled out for 84 -- means that they still trail Sylhet by 17 runs.

At the Rangpur Cricket Garden, the home team ended the day in a tricky position, losing two quick wickets in pursuit of 359. Rajshahi skipper Forhad Reza scored an unbeaten hundred as the defending champions piled on the runs. Rangpur's Sajedul Islam on the other hand, took four more wickets in the second innings to take his overall tally to eight.

BARISAL v DHAKA METRO

Barisal, who had an overnight second innings score of 28 for 5, were bowled out for 138 early in the day as spinners Arafat Sunny and Mohammad Ashraf took three wickets each. With 139 runs to win, Dhaka were off to a flier as they scored 81 runs in the first 10 overs of the second innings. Shamsur Rahman, who had scored a duck in the first innings, brutally punished the Barisal bowlers. They reached the total comfortably with 7 wickets in hand.

DHAKA v SYLHET

Half-centuries from Shuvagata Hom and Mosharraf Hossain led a much better performance from Dhaka in the second innings. Enamul Haque was amongst the wickets as he ended the day with three wickets. The game however, is almost done and dusted for the visitors as it's highly unlikely that they can set a good target for the hosts with just two wickets in hand and trailing by 17.

KHULNA v CHITTAGONG

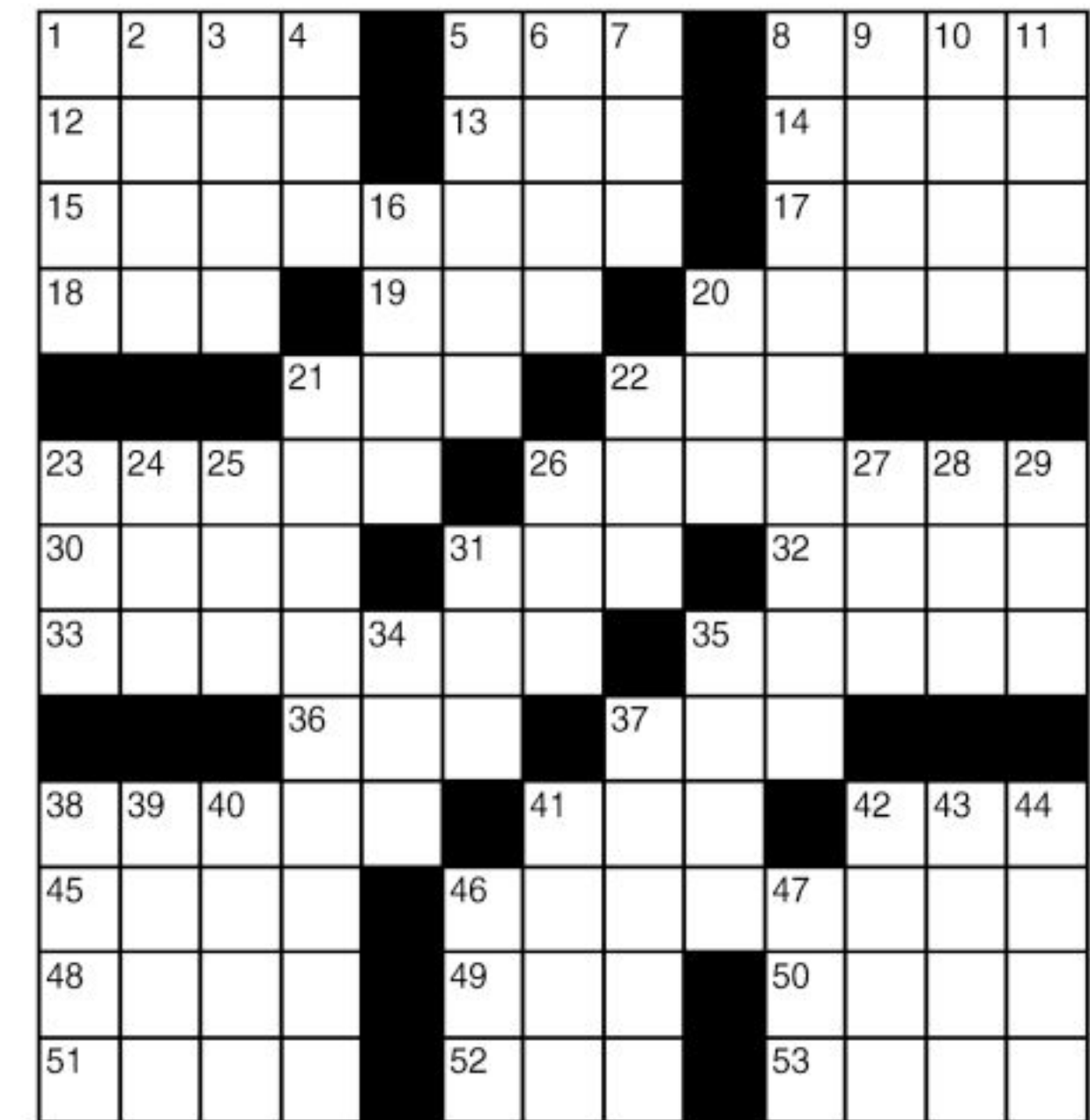
Khulna's batting lineup piled on the runs as Imrul Kayes, Ziaur Rahman and Mohammad Mithun scored half-centuries. Anamul scored his second century in as many games as Khulna posted a mammoth target. In reply Chittagong lost 3 wickets for 40 by the close. The port-city will want to keep their wickets and play for a draw on the last day of the game.

RAJSHAHI v RANGPUR

Starting from an overnight score of 77 for 2, Rajshahi rode on a ton from Forhad and took their lead past 350. The visitors, however, found themselves in trouble early in the second innings when they lost five wickets with just 100 on the board. Skipper Reza then guided the team through to a formidable total. In reply, Rangpur lost two quick wickets before the end of the day. They'll most likely be playing for a draw on the last day.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS**
- 1 Creche
 - 5 Impress greatly
 - 8 Rhett's last word
 - 12 Terrible guy?
 - 13 "Holy cow!"
 - 14 Toast
 - 15 Collapse
 - 17 Existed
 - 18 Squid's protector
 - 19 Cover
 - 20 Prepare to propose
 - 21 Enthusiast
 - 22 Icemen's org.
 - 23 Dawdle
 - 26 Rocket launcher
 - 30 Lotion additive
 - 31 Moonshine
 - 32 Desertlike
 - 33 Adorned with gems
 - 35 "Golden Boy" playwright
- DOWN**
- 1 Calf-length
 - 2 Shake-speare's river
 - 3 Stare stupidly
 - 4 Hostel
 - 5 Once more
 - 6 Join with a blowtorch
 - 7 Slithering swimmer
 - 8 Transfers on a PC
 - 9 Sheltered
 - 10 Unembellished
 - 11 Yuletide refrain
 - 16 TV chef
 - 20 Fre-quency meas.
 - 21 Mooches
 - 22 Gripe constantly
 - 23 — Mahal
 - 24 Milwaukee product
 - 25 Queue
 - 26 Unopened flower
 - 27 Raw rock
 - 28 Set of equipment
 - 29 Commercial
 - 31 Lustrous black
 - 34 Depressed
 - 35 Seep slowly
 - 37 Colander
 - 38 Just one of those things?
 - 39 Crosby's longtime pal
 - 40 Deli loaves
 - 41 Make
 - 42 Bargain
 - 43 Advertise
 - 44 Charitable donations
 - 46 To and —
 - 47 "Terrific"



CRYPTOQUIP

O H W C G V D O B G I H V P C O V R
C H P D H E P D I O E C O H V P X Z
W T V I F H O B V H S N Z N H V G Z
O F R H O V R C H P S H X I Z E P T F G .

Yesterday's Cryptogram: RETAIL STORE OFFERING MANY SNAPPY GADGETS FOR HIMALAYAN MOUNTAIN GUIDES; THE SHERPA IMAGE.

Today's Cryptogram Clue: F equals S