

SOUTH ASIAN BASKETBALL Bangladesh start with a bang

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh started their Citycell South Asian Basketball Federation Championship campaign with an emphatic 89-44 win over Bhutan in the opening match at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday. Bangladesh dominated the first half 40-19 before adding 49 more points in the second half as Mithun caged 20 points while Rashed scored 17. However Galden of the Bhutan was the highest scorer of the match with his 22 points.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarker declared the five-team tournament open as chief guest while sponsor Pacific Bangladesh Telecom (Citycell) CEO Mehbub Chowdhury was present on the occasion.

The players of Bangladesh were Rasheduzzaman, Mithun Biswas, Hedayetul Islam, Ataur Rahman, Mithun Sarker, Tozzmael Haque, Morshed Alam, Arif Hossain, Khaled Mahmud Akash, Sheikh Tahmid Hasin, Mahmudul Hasan Shawon and Md. Ibrahim. Wasif Ali is guiding the team as the coach.

National badminton

SPORTS REPORTER

The quarterfinals line-up in the men's singles of the Qubee 32nd National Badminton Championships were completed yesterday at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium with five players from Bangladesh Railway moving to the last four.

Rais, Saif, Parash, Ayman and Tushar from Railway defeated Mukter of Munsiganj, Rana of Pabna, Mashrafe of Bogra, Zahed of Sylhet and Mijhaz of Shariatpur respectively while Lal Chand of Pabna beat Arif of Railway, Aman of Sylhet defeated Sazzad of Narayanganj and Javed of Narayanganj beat Tipu of Sylhet to confirm their semifinal berths.

In the women's singles, holder Shapla, Seema, Nabila and Rehana moved into the semifinals beating their respective rivals.

Musa no more

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Parguna of West Bengal in 1948 and earned a post-graduation degree on mass communication from Dhaka University in 1976. He emerged a sports commentator in 1977 at the Bangladesh Betar where he last served in the news section from 1982-86.

He flourished in the field along with noted sports commentators like the late Mohammad Shahajan, Abdul Hamid, Toufiq Aziz Khan and Ataul Haque Mallik.

Musa also delivered commentary during Bangladesh's first Test against India in 2000. He also wrote two science fiction books and two sports novels, Googly and Lorai.

The Bangladesh Sports Journalists Association, the Bangladesh Sports Press Association, the Bangladesh Sports Journalists Community, the Bangladesh Football Federation expressed their deep shock over the death of Mohammad Musa and prayed for the departed soul in separate messages.



PHOTO: STAR

Sathi Akhter of BKSP performs on the balance beam on the opening day of the National Age-Group Gymnastic Championships yesterday.

National gymnastics

SPORTS REPORTER

The Age-Group (6-14) & 32nd National Gymnastics Championships got underway at the National Sports Council Gymnasium yesterday with a total of 141 gymnasts taking part.

Some 41 gymnasts including 19 women are taking part in the senior section which has 10 events – six for men and four for women. As many as 105 gymnasts including 25 girls are participating in the age-group section which consisted of 31 events.

On the opening day, 11 events – four for senior and seven for age-group – were decided after Youth and Sports secretary Nur Mohammad declared the three-day meet open.

Serena skips injury

Resounding wins for Roger, Andy

AFP, Melbourne



Serena Williams survived a busted lip and Roger Federer and Andy Murray raced into third round on a day of ice-packs and sunscreen as temperatures soared at the Australian Open on Thursday.

Defending champion Victoria Azarenka toyed with the fourth "double bagel" of the women's draw as she went through 6-1, 6-0 at a scorching Melbourne Park, where the mercury nudged 41 degrees Celsius.

The top seed thumped Eleni Daniilidou to remain on course for a semifinal with the thundering Williams, who appeared unimpeded after rolling her ankle in round one as she demolished Spanish teen Garbine Muguruza 6-2, 6-0.

But Williams did not escape unhurt as she smashed herself in the mouth with her racquet during the first set, leaving her bleeding and fearing she had lost a tooth.

As tannoy announcements urged fans to seek shade, thousands donned hats and sunglasses and slathered themselves in sunscreen for the hottest day of the tournament so far.

However, organisers stopped short of closing the mechanical roofs on the two main courts, the Rod Laver and Hisense arenas.

Braving the heat, US Open champion Murray maintained his Grand Slam winning streak with a quickfire 6-2, 6-2, 6-4 destruction of Portugal's Joao Sousa -- and then headed straight for the Melbourne Park ice baths.

Former finalist Jo-Wilfried Tsonga booked his place in the next round with a straight-sets win over Japan's Go Soeda, and Lithuanian qualifier Ricardas Berankis stunned German 25th seed Florian Mayer.

Big-serving Canadian Milos Raonic downed the Czech Republic's Lukas Rosol, and Germany's 17th seed Philipp Kohlschreiber had a straightforward win against Amir Weintraub of Israel.

France's Gael Monfils inexplicably double-faulted four times on match points before finally clinching an erratic, five-set win against Lu Yen-hsun, and sixth seed Juan Martin Del Potro beat Germany's Benjamin Becker.

In the showpiece evening match, Federer blew Nikolay Davydenko away 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 to extend his record to 18-2 against the Russian, and set up an encounter with brash Australian Bernard Tomic, 20.

Azarenka had watched 6-0, 6-0 whitewashes by Williams and Maria Sharapova (twice), and she was similarly dominant as she floored Daniilidou of Greece for the loss of just one game.

2nd BPL rolls out today

FROM PAGE 16

On paper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza-led Dhaka Gladiators are well ahead of their opponents but Khulna skipper Shahriar Nafees promised a good fight with their limited resources.

"With our English cricketer Riki Wessels, the playing eleven is confirmed. It's not easy to make replacement of so many players but our management is trying their best to make up the loss with good and quality players. Now we have to keep faith on the local players," said Nafees.

"True, we are now in a very difficult position but no one can dismiss any team in T20 cricket," he added.

On the other hand Mashrafe was not ready to take anything for granted.

"Its unfortunate but I don't think the tournament will lose its charm due to the absence of the Pakistani players. There are a good number of quality players in the tournament. I'm very much hopeful that people will enjoy it like they had in the first edition," said Mashrafe.

"We probably have the best local cricketers possible which include Shakib (Al

Hasan), Bijoy (Anamul Haque), Ashraf (Mohammad), Rubel (Hossain), Saqlain (Sajib) and the foreigners are also strong -- so yeah, it is very much possible to get positive results in the matches if we can give our best on the field. But we are not taking any team lightly because it's a T20 game where nobody is favourite," the Narail Express added.

Bangladesh and Sylhet Royals captain Mushfiqur Rahim also expressed optimism over the success of the tournament and said that they were not facing any problem following PCB's refusal to release its players for the tournament.

"There wasn't any high profile Pakistani player in our side and for that we are not facing any problem. Well, last season the result was not that impressive though the team was strong on paper. This year, we are focusing on match by match progress. We may lose the balance in absence of Tino Best and Andre Russel but the management is out to look for their best replacements and we hope, if everything goes well, we may kick off the tournament on positive note," said Mushfiqur.

No turning back from T20

FROM PAGE 16

lamented the lack of fast bowlers in the game today.

"What I find is that bowlers are pulling away from Test cricket because of the amount of work and the balance of income, which is inclined more towards T20 cricket. So you find a lot of players reserving themselves for that form of the game so they are going to lose a little bit, but all in all I think Test cricket is very strong, and a tournament or a version like this can only create more excitement for it in the coming five years," he added.

Lara, who has been away from the game for six years now, believes that Bangladesh cricket was 'headed the right way' and that the recent series victory over the West Indies proved that.

"They showed a lot of character to come and win the last game against the West Indies. But I want to see them traveling out of Bangladesh. I would like to see Bangladesh be more competitive. My understanding of Bangladesh cricket is that it is heading in the right direction," said Lara.

Hooper's

FROM PAGE 16

last year. ESPNcricinfo understands that Hooper's agent had contacted the BCB.

However, Hooper said he would rather be interested in other options, especially because he would always put his family first in these matters. "I know there are a few things that might come up in South Australia or the Caribbean. My kids are settled here so I want to stay here if I can.

"There's a lot of stuff in the air with SACA [South Australia Cricket Association] and the clubs."

BJMC see off Arambagh

SPORTS REPORTER



Team BJMC notched their third victory in the Grameenphone Bangladesh League with a 2-0 win over Arambagh KS at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Henry Chindo and Ismael Bangoura struck one goal each in the keenly contested game. With the triumph, Team BJMC stuck to their previous sixth position with 11 points from eight outings, six points behind leaders Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club.

On the other hand, Arambagh KS suffered their seventh defeat, their fifth in a row and stuck glued at the bottom of the nine-team table with three points from eight matches, equal to Feni Soccer Club and Brothers Union, who both however have one match in hands.

Arambagh, who are in red zone of relegation, looked determined to turn the tables against BJMC, who recovered from some initial sloppy play to take the lead in the 28th minute as the Nigerian Chindo headed in a Taklish Ahmed cross from

inside the box.

Two minutes later, Elita Kingsley showed his dribbling skill to come close to doubling the lead but the former Arambagh striker saw his left-footer narrowly miss the target.

Afterwards, Arambagh stepped up the attacks and produced a few scoring chances but it was BJMC goalkeeper Aminul Haque, who disappointed Arambagh after thwarting at least three scoring chances.

One minute from time, Aminul foiled an effort from Uzumefon Joel and one minute into the second half, Aminul came out of the danger zone to clear a dangerous cross from Dalim with a header.

With three minutes left of regulation time, Arambagh saw their last chance to level the margin evaporate as Idris Kasiry failing to beat BJMC goalkeeper Aminul in a one-on-one situation.

BJMC rather doubled the margin in the stoppage time through Bangoura, who after availing a long-ball from goalkeeper Aminul raced past two defenders and placed it to the left of advancing goalkeeper Mitul Hasan.

Niaz leads Chennai

chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Niaz Murshed moved up in the Chennai Super Kings 5th International Grand Masters Chess Tournament but GM Ziaur Rahman slipped from his overnight joint lead at the close of the third round held in Chennai, India yesterday.

Niaz beat Indian Ajoy Krishna to move up to second position along with 23 more players with 2.5 points from three matches while Zia stuck to two points from three matches after conceding defeat against Indian Vikramjit Singh.

Kazi Taherul Islam and SM Sharon achieved two points each. Taherul beat Prabhat Koutha and Sharon beat Vignesh.

Tasin Hasin, Partex win

SPORTS REPORTER

Mona made a half-century after Rahatul's five-wicket haul as Tasin Hasin Cricket Academy posted a four-wicket victory over Indira Road Krira Chakra in the Super League of the First Division Cricket League at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

In the day's other match, Partex Sporting Club rode on Tarek Ahmed's half-century to secure a 12-run victory over Magnum Cricketers at BKSP.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIRA ROAD KRIRA

CHAKRA: 158 all out in 46.1 overs (Aijal 43, Tushar 31, Mehedi 30, Sadman 26; Rahatul 5-33, Hossain Rony 2-43)

TASIN HASIN CRICKET ACADEMY: 162-6 in 31.5 overs (Mona 52, Raihan Uddin 39, Sajib 28; Nasum 3-47, Sohag 1-36)

Result: Tasin Hasin Cricket Academy won by four wickets.

PARTEX SPORTING CLUB: 196-9 in 42 overs (Tarek Ahmed 57, Salauddin Pappu 40, Rabiul Karim 34; Ali Akbar 4-42, Ashraf Hossain 3-34)

MEGNUM CRICKETERS: 184-9 in 42 overs (Irfan Sukur 85, Sohail Rana 31, Monirul Islam: 2-6, Towhid 2-31, Jahangir 2-39)

Result: Partex Sporting Club won by 12 runs.

Pak players not happy

PTI, New Delhi



Pakistani players, who were supposed to take part in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), are disappointed with Pakistan Cricket Board's decision to not issue NOCs (No Objection Certificates) to them for the Twenty20 tournament starting on Friday.

Some of these players were understandably reluctant to speak on record but those who had contracts to play in the league feel that the PCB should have at least allowed those players who have yet to play international cricket.

"The PCB could have reached a solution by holding back the star players to register its protest with the BCB for not sending its team to Pakistan but allowed those players who are only playing domestic cricket to go and earn some good money in the league," one player told this news agency.

He pointed out that Pakistan was one of those Test playing nations where domestic players were paid very little.

"This was a good chance for around 25 to 30 players to go and earn some good money but apparently the PCB felt otherwise," he said.

The list of the category B and C players who were hired by franchises in the BPL included Fawad Alam, Mohammad Sami, Khuram Manzoor, Awais Zia, Azeem Ghuman, Shahzaib Hasan, Umar Amin, Asad Ali, Zulfiqar Babar, Sharjeel Khan, Anwar Ali, Babar Azam, Bilawal Bhatti, Hammad Azam, Khalid Latif, Monsoor Amjad, Junaid Zia, Reza Ali, Rahat Ali, Adeel Malik, Ali Khan, Saad Anwar, Samiullah Niazi and Shakeel Ansar.

The franchises had put up a total sum of around 1 million dollars for the category players like Imran Nazir (280,000 dollars), Shahid Afridi (275,000 dollars), Kamran Akmal (75,000 dollars), Shoaib Malik (85,000 dollars), Abdul Razzaq (92,000 dollars), Wahab Riaz (65,000 dollars) etc.

Pakistan's former captain, Rashid Latif also didn't agree with the decision

of the PCB.

"The board should have allowed the players to go and play in the BPL. Most of them only get a chance to play domestic cricket and they don't earn much at that level," Latif said.

"The players who are playing for Pakistan are well off but it is not the same with the domestic level players. Some of them have to support joint families. The PCB needed to understand this," he said.

Latif also felt that there was no reason for the PCB to push the BCB to tour Pakistan.

"Tell me even if Bangladesh had come or comes what difference will it make to Pakistan cricket. Will other teams follow the example of Bangladesh in these conditions," he said.

The former wicketkeeper-batsman hoped that the PCB is able to launch the Pakistan Super League as promised. "Because now this is the only avenue available to our players who play domestic cricket to earn some good money."

He also noted that the PCB was not helping its image by repeatedly saying it had always supported Bangladesh cricket.

"If we did something good forget about it. But it is not right to try to pressurize Bangladesh into coming to Pakistan.

And the PCB should have only accepted Bangladesh's promises in writing," he said.

Katich named Rajshahi's captain

SPORTS REPORTER

Simon Katich, the former Australia player, has been named captain of the Duronto Rajshahi in the Bangladesh Premier League. Dashing Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal has been named his deputy.

Katich, the captain of the Big Bash team Perth Scorchers, will join with the team after the end of the Big Bash Final and will miss first two matches of Rajshahi, against Chittagong Kings on January 19 and Sylhet Royals on January 20.

Tamim will lead the side in the first two matches.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Bean curd
5 Scot's chapeau
8 Read bar codes
12 Portent
13 Gorilla
14 Exam
15 Body powder
16 Coffee holder
17 Egyptian cross
18 Catch in a snare
20 Norway's capital
22 Outrageous
26 "----"
28 Foolish Things"
29 Call-day link
30 Carte lead-in
31 Enervates
32 Holly-wood trickery, for short
33 Whirl
34 Muham-mad or Laila

DOWN

1 Carry
2 Mideast nation
3 Touched
4 Straight-ener, as one's legs
5 Hosiery shade
6 Spring mo.
7 "Amahl and the Night Visitors" composer
8 Trite
9 Tomb
10 Inquire

11 To the -- degree
19 Rd.
21 -- Na Na
23 Correct
24 Hodge-podge
25 Glass sheet
26 Autocrat
27 Head light?
28 Gourmets
32 Lice, slangily
33 Needle-point creation
35 Japanese sash
36 As well
38 Piece of cutlery
39 Sandal type
42 Macadamize
43 Arden and Plumb
44 Carry on
45 Opposite of "post-"
46 Wet wriggler
48 1950 "who murdered me?" movie

Solution time: 25 mins.

T	O	W	G	S	A
S	A	R	I	M	E
P	R	O	F	E	S
Y	E	T	M	A	T
P	E	N	S	R	E
S	K	U	N	K	V
A	D	O	L	I	V
C	O	N	F	E	S
M	O	R	A	L	E
R	I	V	E	T	E
G	I	E	T	R	I

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53					54				55		

CRYPTOQUIP

TEHVPNMS CEVKF, N ERTEDF
CIUH QIC HPK IMK TPI'F E
OKOUKC IQ HPK VRKCS D.
OED HPK URKFH OEM TNMI

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF SOME INK-SHOOTING MOLLUSKS HOLD EACH OTHER IN THEIR MANY ARMS, I GUESS THEY'RE CUDDLE-FISH.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: I equals O