



Shakib makes it 3 in 3

SPORTS REPORTER from Khulna

An all-round performance from Shakib Al Hasan and a fluent half-century by Luke Wright at the top of the innings gave the Dhaka Gladiators a 13-run victory over Durgam Rajshahi in their Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20 match at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna yesterday. Shakib, who scored a quickfire 37 off 21 balls in his team's first innings total of 156 for eight, and finished with figures of 1 for 18 at the end of four overs with the ball, was adjudged the man-of-the-match.

The victory puts Dhaka at the top of the table with six points.

With 75 required in the last eight overs and with eight wickets in hand, Rajshahi needed to up the rate and while attempting to do so lost the crucial wicket of Tamim Iqbal, caught behind off Shakib. Tamim's wicket dried up the boundaries and the required run-rate continued to mount. In the last five overs Rajshahi needed an improbable 63 runs to win with the batsmen at the crease, Ziaur Rahman and Simon Katich, struggling to put bat to ball.

Some fireworks in overs 17 and 18, which yielded 25 runs, brought the equation down to 32 required of 12 balls. However, Shakib conceded only seven runs in the penultimate over which meant that Rajshahi required 25 of the last over. They could manage only eleven of those.

Earlier, Dhaka began their innings with a flurry of boundaries as opener Luke Wright

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Shakib laments sparse crowds

SPORTS REPORTER from Khulna

With empty seats becoming almost a regular feature of the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), both Tamim Iqbal and Shakib Al Hasan have stated the need for a proper intervention from the BPL's governing council in order to make the competition more crowd-friendly.

Star all-rounder Shakib said that apart from the price of tickets, spectators have to incur other expenses, such as meals, that drive up the total cost of going to the match. "It's a little difficult to say, really. For instance, I ate biriyani at a hotel today for Tk 276 and the ticket here costs 200. I think the public would have been double had the cost been around Tk 50 to Tk 100."

"When a student comes to watch a game, he'll think twice before

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Deadlines turning into lifelines

SPORTS REPORTER

The second edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20 rolled into action despite all the difficulties, although the lack of crowds at the matches has emerged as a headache for the organisers. The major concern however remains the same -- the issue of nonpayment. There seems to be no end to the issue as the game of 'setting deadlines' between the governing council of the BPL and the franchisees continue unabated. The franchisees had been asked to resolve all the pending payment issues by January 16, but the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) once again had to relinquish their tough stance with yet another deadline.

"Really we are in a spot of bother with some payment issues, but one thing is

Deadline for resolving payment issues postponed to January 31.

Players yet to receive 25 per cent of their wages, which was supposed to be paid

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Four down for Wasfia

SPORTS REPORTER

Polar temperatures, freezing winds and the extra effort involved in hauling a sledge made Mount Vinson, in some ways, an even tougher challenge than Mount Everest. These were the words of Bangladeshi adventure Wasfia Nazreen who was speaking to the press upon her return to Dhaka yesterday after conquering the highest point of the Southern continent on January 4, 2013.

"Vinson was a different challenge," said Wasfia. "Normal average temperatures in Antarctica were around the same as what you experience in the summit of Mount Everest," she said, reflecting on her expedition to the world's most southern continent. "The wind also made it more difficult to climb and you also have to haul your sledge behind you at all times," she added.

Following a flag-off ceremony early in November last year, Wasfia had set off for an



Wasfia Nazreen conquering another peak; this time it was Mount Vinson -- the highest point of Antarctica -- on January 4, 2013.

intensive two-week training camp in the winter wilderness of Canada to prepare for the challenge of climbing Vinson.

In Canada, Wasfia spent time in British Columbia and Alberta training with and under the famous Patrick Morrow, the first person in the world to have successfully completed the Seven Summits.

"There were a lot of different training regimens I had to undertake. Each mountain presents different challenges and for example, for Vinson, I had to undertake a number of special trainings like crevasse rescue and how to avoid avalanches," said Wasfia.

After her training camp in Canada, Wasfia made her way to Chile from where she travelled to Antarctica on the 29th of December 2012, after her original trip had to be suspended because of inclement weather.

She conquered Vinson less than a week later. With the summit of Vinson, Wasfia has now

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Empty stands at Khulna too

SPORTS REPORTER

Empty stands at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium (SANS) in Khulna stuck out like a sore thumb during the two matches of the first day of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20's Khulna leg yesterday.

Ticket prices of the Western and Eastern Stands of the stadium, despite being decreased to Tk 200 from the original Tk 350, failed to attract spectators to the ground.

Gaping spaces at the SANS, which can accommodate more than 15,000 people, was also rued by players who played yesterday evening. "I thought there would have been fans watching, we know how much people love the game here and we hope it improves in the coming games," said Chittagong Kings batsman Brendan Taylor. His opponent,

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Transfer window closes today

SPORTS REPORTER



Title contenders Sheikh Russel KC were the only team to have signed up a player in the mid-season players' transfer window of the Bangladesh Premier League so far. The other teams were mulling the option whether to bring changes to their squads or to keep faith with their old guard ahead of the final day of transfers today.

The player Sheikh Russel signed up is no other than well-known Nigerian hitman Alamu Bukola, who played for the same club last season, but wasn't offered a new contract in the pre-season window. Bukola, who played for Muktiyoddha Sangsad earlier and was the highest goal-getter for Mohammedan SC in the second edition of the professional football league, remained without a club in the last few months.

While Sheikh Russel have strengthened their striking zone with the inclusion of Bukola, other clubs were waiting for the last day to make a perfect choice. However, a few clubs have already released a couple of foreign players.

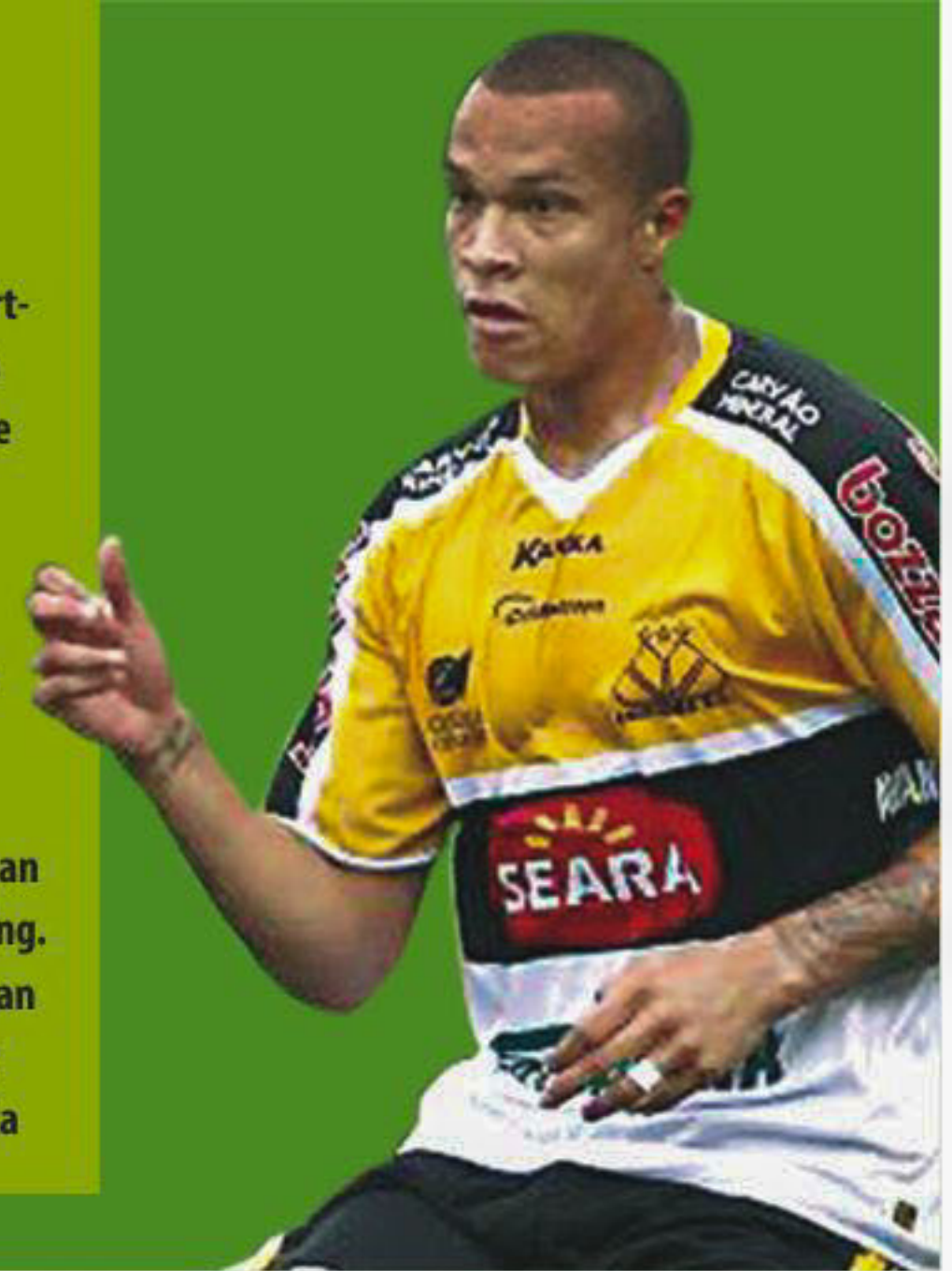
Sheikh Jamal DC, who are in second position in the nine-team table, have already released Nigerian striker Kester Akon due to poor form and his compatriot Mike Otorjeri due to injury even though they haven't confirmed any replacement.

"Two Nigerian strikers, who are now playing in China and Vietnam, are supposed to arrive here tonight

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Franca comes up short

Hanover 96 were feeling a little short-changed with new signing Franca as the Brazilian does not quite measure up to the towering midfielder the Bundesliga club had expected. The 21-year-old left Brazilian first-division club Coritiba after signing a deal to 2016 but after arriving in Germany, coach Mirko Slomka discovered Franca was far shorter than the 1.90m man he had been expecting. In fact he is nine centimetres less than what the club's sports director Joerg Schmidtke had talked about, Slomka



Shamsur, Nasir win it for Rangpur

NAIMUL KARIM from Khulna



It was an all-round performance from the Rangpur Riders that led the newest team in the Bangladesh Premier League to a six-wicket victory over the Chittagong Kings at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna yesterday.

Some good bowling by the Riders restricted the Kings to a below-par total of 132. Recovering from early losses, Rangpur rode on a half-century fourth-wicket stand between Nasir Hossain (45 not out off 33 balls) and Shamsur Rahman (52 off 45 balls). The aggressive partnership led to Rangpur needing just 37 off the last five overs, a task which they completed with relative ease despite Shamsur departing in the last ball of the 18th over with ten still needed. Nasir hit the winning runs off the third ball of the last over bowled by Jacob Oram.

Rangpur began their chase in the worst possible way when Imrul Kayes was caught behind off Shaun Tait in the very first over. They slumped to 55 for 3 after 10 as both the O'Brien brothers, Niall and Kevin, were dismissed while attempting to up the rate.

What followed was a well-measured stand, 68 off 49 balls, for the fourth wicket between Nasir and Shamsur. While Shamsur dispatched the slower bowlers,

Nasir took on the faster bowlers. The latter's eye catching front foot hit off Shaun Tait over long off in the 14th over was easily the best shot of the day.

Earlier, Chittagong, after starting slowly recovered to post a respectable total courtesy of an unbeaten 51-ball 65 by Brendan Taylor. His 73-run stand with skipper Mahmudullah Riyad for the fourth wicket lifted the team from a nervy 21 for 3 after 6 overs.

Taylor was the only batsman for Chittagong who looked settled and he consistently dispatched the bowlers to all corners of the park. From pulling the pacers to the fine-leg region to a reverse sweep through point for 4, he employed a wide array of shots. The highlight of his innings though came in the last over, as he smacked Dimitri Mascarenhas for two huge sixes down the ground.

Rangpur looked good on the field as they plugged the runs and took their

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SCORES IN BRIEF

CHITTAGONG KINGS: 132 for 5 (Mahmudullah 34, Taylor 65 not out, Oram 12; Edwards 1-24, k O'Brien 1-18)
RANGPUR RIDERS: 135 for 4 (Shamsur 52, N O'Brien 21, Nasir 45 not out; Oram 2-21)
Result: Rangpur Riders won by six wickets.

Dutch duo coming in February

SPORTS REPORTER

Dutch coaches Lodewijk de Kruif and Rene Koster have agreed to take charge of the Bangladesh national football team ahead of the AFC Challenge Cup qualifiers which will be held in Nepal from March 2 to 6.

Bangladesh will compete against Palestine, Nepal and Northern Mariana Islands in the qualifiers.

"They are coming here in February and will leave after the completion of the AFC Challenge Cup Qualifiers. They are expected to arrive around February 20," said Kazi Nabil Ahmed, chairman of the BFF National Teams Committee.

"The amount of payment to the coaches is not a concern for us, what is important is their involvement with the national

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