

Star SPORT

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Hulk learning Russian

Brazilian striker Hulk says he is learning Russian to improve his relations with team-mates at Zenit St Petersburg after a turbulent start to his career at the club. Hulk arrived at Zenit from Porto in September on a reported transfer fee of 60 million euros to spearhead the club's European campaign, but he has yet to fully justify his price tag. "This pre-season training camp is very important for me," the 26-year-old striker said in an interview with the Zenit official site from the champions'



Burners win thriller

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

Mahmudullah Riyad excelled after Brendan Taylor's stroke-filled half-century but their effort was not good enough to make the local fans happy as Chittagong Kings suffered a six-run defeat to Barisal Burners at the MA Aziz Stadium last night.

Last year's runners-up Barisal avenged their 21-run defeat to Chittagong at

Khulna and upgraded their position with their second win while the second successive defeat in front of a cheering home crowd ensured Chittagong's place at bottom of the points table.

In chase of a 183-run winning target, Kings were in a good position through scintillating batting from Zimbabwean Taylor, who smashed five fours and two sixes during his 42-ball 51. Left-arm spinner Elias Sunny however suddenly turned the tide in favour of Barisal Burners, taking the wickets of Taylor and Ryan ten Doeschate before Chittagong skipper Riyad revived hopes by hitting boundaries all over the park.

Kings needed 61 runs from the last five overs with Riyad and Aftab Ahmed at the crease. Fireworks were exploding from Riyad's end but still the pressure mounted as the once-brilliant stroke-maker and local boy Aftab, who was playing in front of such a big crowd after a long break, even struggled to get bat on ball. Aftab was finally trapped in front by Pakistani Azhar Mahmood, but the 12-ball 9 ultimately proved costly for his team.

Riyad fell victim of a run-out in the

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Barisal Burners batsman Sabbir Rahman sweeps during his 27-ball 40 against Chittagong Kings at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

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SCORES IN BRIEF

BARISAL BURNERS: 182 for 5 (Hodge 21, Sabbir 40, Azhar 35, Mustard 23, Kapali 29 not out, Kabir 10 not out, extras 19; Rubel 1-24, Tait 1-37, Cooper 2-27).
CHITTAGONG KINGS: 176-6 (Naeem 14, Taylor 51, Doeschate 24, Riyad 45, Cooper 14 not out, extras 9; Azhar 2-36, Sunny 3-24).
Result: Barisal Burners won by six runs.

BFF to decide on Barca soon

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) will soon sit in an emergency committee meeting to decide whether to host FC Barcelona in August this year after the four-time European champions offered the game's governing body of Bangladesh a chance to do so on Tuesday.

"Following the strike in the capital, I could not sit with my colleagues to discuss the matter of the Barcelona offer but I think we will sit in a meeting on Saturday or Sunday to decide whether we will go ahead," said BFF president Kazi Salahuddin yesterday.

The BFF boss said that it would be easier to take a quick decision if the amount could be Tk 7 to 8 crore but the huge amount around Tk 50 crore has forced them to take some time before

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Rope extended once more

BISHWAJIT ROY from Chittagong

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) once again extended the deadline, till February 5, for the franchises to resolve all pending financial issues. Yesterday was the last day for the franchises to complete the 25 per cent of the players' fees but only Dhaka Gladiators and Khulna Royal Bengals complied with the deadline, according to the BPL governing council.

While the BPL governing council chairman Afzalur Rahman Sinha expressed his frustration over the players' non-payment, an issue that is tarnishing the image of the country's cricket, member secretary IH Mallick however said that the matter will be solved by next Tuesday as per the latest deadline.

"Dhaka Gladiators paid their money and they also sent the players' contract documents through courier service while Khulna also gave their amount and contract documents, so their players will get their money within the next three-four working days. But the rest of the franchises are yet to pay their fees and as per their request we extended the date till Tuesday. We are hopeful. There is no reason to be worried about the payment because BCB is the guarantor," said Mallick.

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New deadline for resolution of BPL financial issues set for February 5.

Dhaka Gladiators and Khulna Royal Bengals the only two franchises to meet

U-18 cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The third and final day of the fourth round of the Young Tigers U18 National Cricket competition saw results in all of the matches except the Khulna-Chittagong bout at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday.

At the Cricket Garden in Rangpur, Rajshahi emerged victors by beating Dhaka North, who folded for just 70 in chase of 155. Barisal failed to chase down a mammoth 366-run winning target, leaving Sylhet victors by 147 runs at the Dinajpur Stadium. Away at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra Dhaka South beat Rangpur by 99 runs after setting them a winning target of 223.

SCORES IN BRIEF CHITTAGONG: First innings 241 for 8 in 90 overs and Second innings 203 for 5 in 66 overs (Ashfaq Ahmed 83,

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Nazmul takes Sylhet home

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

Nazmul Hossain made some notable contributions in some previous matches but the right-hander yesterday was integral in guiding Sylhet Royals back onto the winning track with a five-wicket victory against Rangpur Riders in a low-scoring Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) match at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday. Sylhet suffered their first defeat in the tournament against Dhaka Gladiators in the previous game, but secured their sixth win in seven matches while Rangpur, who won their previous game against Khulna Royal Bengals, suffered their fourth defeat in six games.

Nazmul, known for his big-hitting ability in the domestic circuit, hit an unbeaten 36-ball 45 with the help of five fours and a six as Sylhet Royals chased down their opponent's 122 runs with three balls to spare.

"I'm focusing on consistency because I know without that I will not be able to prolong my career," said man-of-the-match Nazmul, who is popularly known by his nickname Milon, when asked about his consistent performance in the tournament.

Nazmul took the responsibility when players like West Indies stalwart

Shivnarine Chanderpaul and captain Mushfiqur Rahim fell after another West Indian, Dwayne Smith, got Sylhet off to a good start with a 22-ball 31.

Earlier, the Sylhet bowlers did a good job to restrict Rangpur for a small total. Opener Shamsur Rahman made his third half-century of this season's BPL but his effort went in vain as his team lost nine wickets for 21 runs.

Shohag Gazi and Smith picked up three wickets each to speed Rangpur's demise.

Rangpur skipper and left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak said that the bowlers got assistance from the pitch. "As the weather is changing, the pitch has also started to favour the bowlers. So, low-scoring matches are not unexpected," said Razzak.

SCORES IN BRIEF

RANGPUR RIDERS: 122 all out in 19.3 overs (Shamsur 52, Hyatt 17, Borgas 28, extras 10; Nannes 2-18, Smith 3-23, Nabi 1-14, Gazi 3-20).

SYLHET ROYALS: 126-5 in 19.3 overs (Smith 31, Chanderpaul 11, Mushfiqur 17, Nazmul 45 not out, Chigumbura 10 not out, extras 5; Edwards 1-22, Nasir 2-19, Razzak 1-24, Taposh 1-25).
Result: Sylhet Royals won by five wickets.

'Non-payment a distraction'

SPORTS REPORTER from CTG

"It's natural that the non-payment issue is a distracting influence in the performance of the players," said Rangpur Riders captain Abdur Razzak after his side's five-wicket defeat against Sylhet Royals in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) match at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday.

The non-payment issue is currently the talk of the tournament as the players are yet to receive any amount, though it was promised that they will get 25 per cent of their fees before the start of the second edition of the competition.

"The players are talking about the issue because we are now playing free of cost. The foreign players especially are feeling insecure with the way things are progressing, which is not good for us. This kind of situation always hampers performance," said Tigers left-arm spinner Razzak.

"We haven't even signed the contract sheet. Our owner however assured us that we will get the money when we go to Dhaka," he added.

Viqarunnisa storm off the blocks

SPORTS REPORTER

Viqarunnisa School and College got off to a winning start in the Friendship School Handball Tournament with a 29-3 win over Brihaspati Biddya Sadan School in Kathmandu, Nepal yesterday.

Viqarunnisa School dominated the first half 14-0 and added 15 more goals in the second half to beat the opponents comfortably. Fatema, Nabila and Saba scored seven, and four goals respectively.

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PHOTO: STAR

Belgian coach Mike Keenan observes the Bangladesh hockey team's practice session at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. Keenan is in Dhaka as an FIH-provided expert and will be working with the national team till February 8.

Hockey might get two astroturfs

Hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

International Hockey Federation (FIH) president Leandro Negro responded positively following the Bangladesh Hockey Federation's prayer for help to the FIH president yesterday.

Negro arrived the capital yesterday for a two-day visit and met the sports minister Ahad Ali Sarker and Bangladesh Olympic Association president and Army Chief General Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan before attending a dinner arranged by few hockey patrons and former hockey players.

"We have sought two astro-turf for free as well as the installation of floodlights at the hockey stadium. He (Negro) assured us that he would try to provide two synthetic turfs, which must be under control of the hockey federation and install those in places where the federation can host international matches," said BHF general secretary Rahmatullah adding that Bangladesh would have to bear the carrying cost as well as government taxes.

If the BHF gets free turfs from the FIH president, they would install those in Savar BKSP and Dinajpur BKSP, places where the federation would be able to maintain the turfs as well as host international matches with accommodation facilities.