

Star SPORT

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It's an old man's game

Former Brazil and Barcelona midfielder Rivaldo, 40, scored on his debut for Sao Caetano in a 2-2 draw with Corinthians in the Paulista championship on Saturday.

Sao Paulo goalkeeper Rogerio Ceni, another 40-year-old, was also on target in his team's 2-1 win over Guarani, scoring the winner with one of his characteristic free kicks.

The much-travelled Rivaldo, who in the last few years has played for clubs in Greece, Uzbekistan and Angola, opened his account for his latest employers with a header early in the second half.



Bangladesh national cricket team captain Mushfiqur Rahim, chief selector Akram Khan and pace ace Mashrafe Bin Mortaza get lost in the human sea at the Projonmo Chottor at Shahbagh yesterday. Availing a day-off in the ongoing BPL, the players and officials of the cricket board made time to visit the non-stop mass movement and express their solidarity with the demand of capital punishment to Kader Mollah and all other on-trial war-criminals.

PHOTO: STAR

TIGERS ROAR

at Projonmo Chottor

SPORTS REPORTER

The demonstrations at the Shahbagh intersection, now popularly known as the 'Projonmo Chottor', was notched up by a few degrees yesterday afternoon when various members of the national cricket team along with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president and other members paid a visit to showcase their support.

Thousands of people cheered relentlessly as the cricketers, led by national captain Mushfiqur Rahim took the podium at the intersection at approximately 1:30 pm. Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Abdur Razzak, Mohammad Ashraful and Nasir Hossain joined Rahim at the podium. The presence of the national heroes audibly lifted spirits and the focus of the entire crowd shifted to them as they showed solidarity with the movement.

The cricketers could not speak to the crowd in Shahbagh but they joined in the chanting of upbeat slogans for thirty minutes to acknowledge the undying support of the people towards the movement.

Addressing the crowd, BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon, said "We stand here today for the country. There were some of us who couldn't join today due to various personal reasons, but I assure you that we are all for the movement."

Several cricketers had announced their interest to visit Shahbagh during the initial phase of the demonstrations which completes a week today. And ever since then thousands at the 'Projonmo Chottor' had been waiting for their arrival. The beaming faces amidst the crowd, on the cricketers' arrival perhaps best described the emotions that poured in yesterday afternoon.

"There were so many eminent people who came here to express their support. But for me, I was the happiest when I saw the national cricketers join us," said Shariful, a student of Mirpur College.

"Till yesterday they were our heroes on the cricketing turf, but the fact that they came here, amidst the chaos and the crowd on their rest day, just to support us, has made them more than that," said Ashfaque Chowdhury, a student of AIUB.

Players and BCB officials who spoke to The Daily Star upon their return from Shahbagh were mostly overwhelmed at the scenes at the Projonmo Chottor.

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Siddikur's team sixth

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman's team Tamilnadu Pullees finished sixth in the inaugural Pearls Golf Premier League which concluded at the Aamby Valley Golf Course in Pune, India yesterday. The three-day event, styled after cricket's box-office hit Indian Premier League, featured eight teams of four players each who played 54 holes over the three days.

Uttarakhand Lions clinched the title scoring 34-under-par and grabbed 200,000 US dollars. Siddikur's team Tamilnadu Pullees finished out of earnings position with a score of 18-under-par. Team Colombo, the only non-

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U-18 CRICKET Ctg & Khulna in final

SPORTS REPORTER

An all-round performance from Mohammad Saifuddin on the third and final day of the semifinal of the Young Tigers U18 National Cricket Competition led Chittagong to a five-wicket win over Rajshahi at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday. Rajshahi, who had an overnight score of 96 for five, were bowled out for 148 and set a target of 216, which Chittagong overhauled in 38.4 overs.

The Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi was the site of another fine all-round performance as Khulna's Mehedi Hasan followed his 81 with a five-wicket haul to lead his side to a 7-wicket victory over Sylhet

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Dutch duo set new conditions

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Dutch coaches Lodewijk de Kruij and Rene Koster have left the Bangladesh Football Federation in a quandary by attaching some preconditions to their interim stint in charge of the national team during the AFC Challenge Cup Qualifiers, which will be held in Nepal from March 2 to 6.

The two were supposed to take charge of the national team on February 20 and conduct training before flying for Nepal on February 25 to compete against hosts Nepal, Palestine and Northern Mariana Island but some preconditions they attached has made BFF have a second thought about them.

"When we spoke with their agent the day before yesterday, everything seemed settled. But yesterday (Saturday) they attached some new conditions where the coaches will have the right to cancel the agreement while the federation will have no such right. Another major concern is that they may send a third coach in case neither of them can come. Furthermore, they have demanded that they will have to be paid by February 12," said BFF president Kazi Salahuddin yesterday.

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Crucial phase from today

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) will enter its most crucial segment today with just four more days to go before the next round of the competition, officially known as the Race to the Final. The way things stand at the moment, Dhaka Gladiators and Sylhet Royals with 14 points each, have already confirmed their progress to the round and will most likely end up maintaining the first and second positions on the table.

The Race to the Final will be a round featuring three matches; the winner in the match between the group phase leaders and runners-up will go to the final, while the loser will take on the winner of the match between the 3rd- and 4th-placed teams in the semifinal.



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STANDINGS

Teams	Mat	Won	Lost	Tied	Pts	NetRR
Dhaka	9	7	2	0	14	+1.308
Sylhet	10	7	3	0	14	-0.232
Chittagong	10	5	5	0	10	+1.385
Rajshahi	10	5	5	0	10	-0.407
Rangpur	10	4	6	0	8	-0.573
Barisal	9	3	6	0	6	-0.493

It'll be a tussle for the two other qualifying spots between the Chittagong Kings, Duronto Rajshahi and Rangpur Riders. Barisal Burners on the other hand will have to win all of their last three games in order to make it through.

Dhaka will try to extend their lead at the top of the table when they face Khulna Royal Bengals in today's first game, and Duronto Rajshahi will take on the Rangpur Riders in the evening in a must-win match for both teams.

It was an eventful week at the BPL. From Shamsur Rahman's brilliantly made

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Championship League kicks off today

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

The Premier Bank 2nd Bangladesh Championship League gets underway today at the Bangabandhu National Stadium where eight teams will be fighting it out for two places of the Bangladesh Premier League.

Farashganj SC, who were relegated from the Bangladesh Premier League last season, will start their bid to return to the top flight by taking on Chittagong Abahani in the opening match.

Apart from Farashganj, Chittagong Abahani, Rahmatganj MFS, and Dhaka United SC, formerly known as Beanibazar SC, will be trying to get back to the top-tier but will have to face some challenge from other four teams - Victoria SC, Wari Club, Uttar Baridhara Club and Agrani Bank SC, who are also considered good sides regarding their last season's results.

"This time the clubs have found a lot of players from the Senior Division League,

Pioneer League and BFF Development program and we hope the league will be very competitive like ongoing Bangladesh Premier League," said BFF senior vice president Abdus Salam Murshedy at a press conference at the BFF House yesterday.

Except for Chittagong Abahani, all seven clubs selected Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur as their home venue as the league will be run on home and away basis.

Salam informed that top two finishers of the league will be promoted to the Bangladesh Premier League while one team will be relegated to their respective league they came from.

Sponsors Premier Bank will provide Tk 20 lakh, all of which will be distributed among the participating teams. According to the BFF calendar, the Bangladesh Championship League was supposed to be completed by February 25, but the BFF deferred the league numerous times citing different reasons.



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