

Star SPORT

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Mark keeping rhinos safe

Former South African wicketkeeper Mark Boucher, after sudden departure from all forms of cricket due to an eye injury, has replaced his love of cricket with his passion to save the rhinos, sports24 reports.

According to the report, Boucher said he was enjoying his golf far too much to miss playing cricket and had transferred his passion for the game into working towards saving the rhino, the report said. He was working in partnership with SA Breweries to tackle the problem and their non-profit organisation aimed to raise enough funds to register South



Rain defers semifinal

Sylhet, Chittagong play today

SPORTS REPORTER

Incessant rainfall in the city compelled the Bangladesh Premier League's (BPL) governing council to postpone the second semifinal match between the Chittagong Kings and the Sylhet Royals yesterday. The game will take place at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today and is scheduled to begin at 6:00 pm.

It was also informed that the spectators who had bought tickets for yesterday's game would be able to enter the ground with the same tickets today.

"We waited till 8 pm for the start of the game. Our match referee and umpires repeatedly visited the ground. We decided, after talking to the franchises, that since there is a rest day tomorrow (Monday), it will be used as a reserve day," said IH Mallick, member-secretary of the BPL governing council in a press conference after the decision was taken to postpone the game.

"If rain interrupts the match on Monday as well, then we will try to play at least a five-over-a-side game. If that's not possible then we will try to play an eliminator (one-over-a-side). If there's no play possible on Monday then the teams' fate will be decided upon a coin toss," he added.

A reserve day has also been added for the final match of the competition. "If the game on the 19th can't be started due to the rain, we will complete it on the 20th," said Afzalur Rahman Sinha, chairman of the BPL

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2



Abahani players, sporting sky blue shirts, run for joy after their veteran Ghanaian forward Awudu Ibrahim (4th from L) struck the equaliser deep into injury time in a crucial Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League match against Sheikh Russel KC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Awudu denies Sk Russel

SPORTS REPORTER



Abahani's veteran Ghanaian forward Awudu Ibrahim struck deep into injury time to give his side a precious 1-1 draw against Sheikh Russel KC yesterday which maintained their two-point lead in the Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League.

On a rain-soaked Bangabandhu National Stadium pitch, Mithun Chowdhury had given Sheikh Russel the lead in the 12th minute with a clever tap-in, and for most part of the match, the goal looked like it would be enough to earn them all three points.

However, Ibrahim had other ideas as he conjured up an angular back-heel in the fifth minute of injury time to keep the defending champions on course for a fifth professional league title.

With 28 points from 13 outings, Abahani have three more hurdles remaining - in the form of Muktijoddha Sangsad, Mohammedan

and Team BJMC.

Sheikh Russel, who have 26 points from 12 matches, have comparatively easier fixtures, against Brothers Union, Feni Soccer Club and Arambagh KS as well as title-contenders Sheikh Jamal DC. The draw also kept Sheikh Jamal firmly in the hunt as they have 25 points from 12 matches.

The draw left Sheikh Russel coach Maruful Haque bitterly disappointed, but his frustration was aimed more at the match-officials rather than his own players.

"It was bad luck for us, one which was made by the referees. The six minutes of added time was just not realistic," said Maruful at the post-match press conference. "Now we have little chance of winning the title as I believe there is a big game being played on behind the scene, but we will fight against all that on and off the field."

Sheikh Russel had strengthened their backline by fielding two foreign defenders for the first time and they adopted a counter-

attacking approach which paid off as they took the lead in the twelfth minute. Mamunul Islam had played a long-ball on the right side to winger Zahid Hossain, who raced past Abahani defender Wali Faisal before laying a square-pass for an unmarked Mithun, who chose the right side of Abahani goalie Shahidul Alam Shohel to find the net.

Abahani seemed lacking in purpose with sporadic attacks and miss-passes that hardly troubled Sheikh Russel defenders. However, the Sky Blues found an opening in the 26th minute when Abdul Baten Komol delivered a cross for Awudu, whose side-volley floated over the crosspiece.

In the 51st minute, Sheikh Russel's Haitian forward Sony Norde advanced into the Abahani box availing a fumble from defender Wali Faisal but goalkeeper Shohel intervened timely to deny Sony on that occasion.

Abahani's best chance to equalise came in the 67th minute when Wali Faisal whipped in a

SEE PAGE 17 COL 8

25 shortlisted for SL tour

SPORTS REPORTER

A 25-member preliminary team for Bangladesh's tour of Sri Lanka was submitted to the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) cricket operations committee by the selectors a few days back. While the list has not yet been disclosed to the media, the national selectors have said that major changes in the team from the one that played against West Indies in November-December last year were unlikely.

"The core of the team will remain the same as we decided not to make too many changes. We will announce the final side after observing the players in the upcoming final of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL)," said chief selector Akram Khan.

"We want to wait for a while because we have time and we want to observe the fitness levels

SEE PAGE 17 COL 4

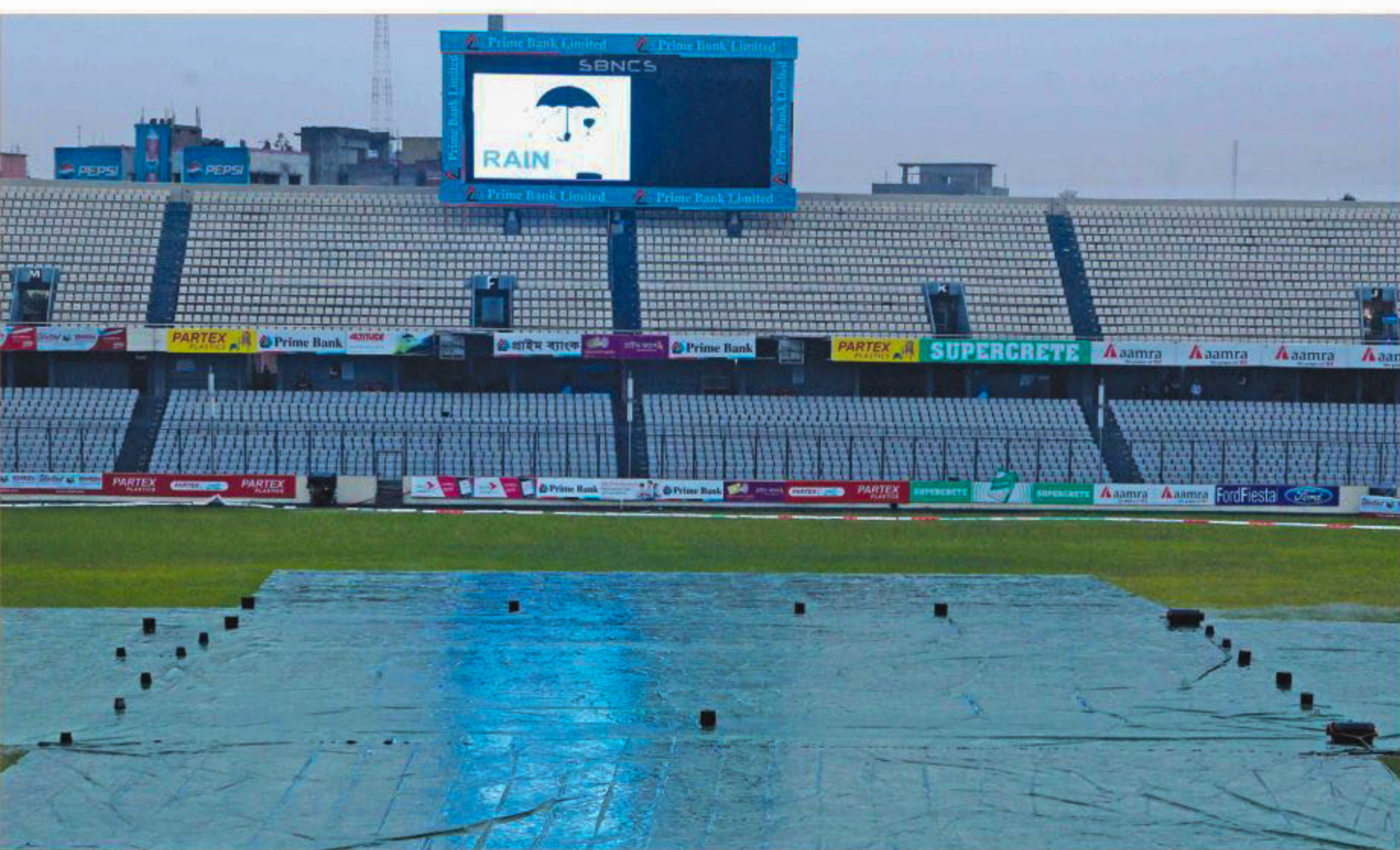
Goalless draw in C'ship League

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka United Club played out a goalless draw against Uttar Baridhara in the Premier Bank Bangladesh Championship League at the Birshrestha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. The draw left both clubs with two points from two matches.

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The otherwise bustling Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium wore a deserted look yesterday after rain spoiled the scheduled BPL T20 semifinal between Sylhet Royals and Chittagong Kings. Weather permitting, the match will take place today.

PHOTO: STAR

Siddikur off to Myanmar

Golf

SPORTS REPORTER

Golfer Siddikur Rahman left for Myanmar last night for the opening event of the 2013 Asian Tour, the Zaykabar Myanmar Open, which begins in Yangon on Thursday. Bangladesh's maiden winner on the Tour, who finished the 2012 season on 17th position in the Asian Tour Order of Merit, was hoping for a good start to the new season as he left for the Myanmar capital Yangon last night.

The 2010 Brunei Open winner will have two days to acclimatise to the conditions before the event tees off at the Royal Mingalardon Golf and Country Club on Thursday.

The 300,000 dollar event will feature some of the best golfers of the region, including last year's Order of Merit winner

Thaworn Wiratchant of Thailand, Rikard Karlberg of Sweden, defending champion Kieran Pratt of Australia. Another Bangladeshi golfer, Jamal Mollah, is also expected to participate in the event.

Siddikur, who recently appeared in the inaugural Pearls Indian Premier League -- the franchise-based team competition, felt he has been in good form recently and was looking for the challenge in Myanmar.

"I won a few tournaments at home of late. So, I'm in pretty confident mood. Hope I can do better than last year in the Asian Tour," said Siddikur over phone. "I'll be taking part in a few events on the stretch, and I feel physically fit for the challenge ahead."

The Myanmar Open will be followed by the Open Championship Qualifying in Thailand, the SAIL-SBI Open in India, the

SEE PAGE 17 COL 3



SIDDIKUR RAHMAN

BCL final Feb 22

SPORTS REPORTER

The final of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) between BCB North Zone and Walton Central Zone will be held from February 22-26 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The final of the newly-designed franchise-based first-class competition will mark the debut of the day-night first-class match and the introduction of the pink ball for the first time in the country. The match will start at 1pm and the new ball can be taken after 70 overs.

After end of the league matches on January 11 this year, the competition took a long break before the final to accommodate the ongoing Bangladesh

SEE PAGE 17 COL 4

WORLD HOCKEY LEAGUE Bangladesh meet Ireland today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's bid for the Hockey World Cup qualification kicks off today as they face mighty Ireland in one of three matches of the World Hockey League (Round-2) on the opening day at the Major Dhyhan Chan Hockey Stadium in New Delhi, India.

Bangladesh are the fourth-strongest side in the group on paper, after India, Ireland and China and are just ahead of lowly Fiji in the six-team group from which the top two teams will qualify for the semifinal round.

Bangladesh, ranked 40th in the world, will be the underdogs against Ireland, who are ranked 15th, and even a draw against the European side will be considered an excellent result before they take on other favourites China and India.

Bangladesh had qualified for Round-2 by becoming undefeated champions in Round-1 in September, 2012 where they beat Singapore, Thailand and Hong Kong. Buoyed by that success, and two months of preparation, Bangladesh set their sights on an upset, either against Ireland or China, before they left for India five days ago. Apart from the big three -- India, Ireland and China -- Bangladesh will be the favourites against Fiji who are

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1

Serena at her best

AFP, Doha

Serena Williams celebrated her recapture of the world number one ranking with her best performance of the year in a 6-3, 6-2 trouncing of Maria Sharapova to reach the Qatar Open final on Saturday.

Spectacularly heavy hitting carried the 15-time Grand Slam title-winner into Sunday's final against top seed and defending champion Victoria Azarenka.

Saturday's defeat for French Open champion Sharapova was the Russian's first in Doha where she had won the title in both her previous appearances.

Williams showed few signs of the back and ankle injuries or of the cold which had been

SEE PAGE 17 COL 5

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