

SPORT

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Abahani and Muktijoddha players are engaged in a battle for aerial supremacy on the opening day of the Grameenphone U-16 Football Tournament at the BNS yesterday. The tournament marks a new beginning in the country's football as youngsters will, from now on, have a platform to perform and showcase their skills. In the opening day's matches, Muktijoddha won 2-1 while Mohammedan beat Arambagh by the same margin.

Diego's dream for his son

Diego Maradona dreams of seeing his newborn son Diego Fernando playing for Argentina with the offspring of Lionel Messi and Sergio Agüero, he said on Tuesday. Maradona's former girlfriend Victoria Ojeda gave birth to Diego Fernando in Buenos Aires last week. Messi's son is 3-1/2 months old while Agüero's boy was four on Tuesday. "One of them will have to play as a midfielder. I think Thiago (Messi) will command the others. Benjamin (Agüero) will play as a forward and Thiago will play alongside Dieguito Fernando," Maradona told a local radio station from



Inspired Jimmy slays China

SPORTS REPORTER

An inspirational performance from forward Rasel Mahmud Jimmy powered Bangladesh to an astonishing 3-2 win over world number 18 China in the second match of the World Hockey League (Rd-2) at Dhyanchand Stadium in New Delhi yesterday.

It represented Bangladesh's second success over China in their history, and the first in almost two decades. The last victory for Bangladesh against the populous nation came at the Asian Games in 1993.

Pushkor Khisa Mimo got the crucial goal in the 50th minute, sliding onto the pass from Jimmy, whose lightning pace was a critical factor throughout.

Like in the previous match, Bangladesh were the first to score when Mamunur

Rahman Chayan whipped a brilliant penalty corner flick into the top corner in the fifth minute. China however levelled the margin six minutes later through Yubo Na and went in front in the 27th minute when skipper Mi Ji converted a penalty stroke.

Bangladesh did not drop the intensity, though, and were level when a determined Moinul Islam Koushik fired home while others hesitated in the circle.

China failed to capitalise on a couple of chances early in the second half before Mimo got the winner in stunning fashion. Jimmy tore down the right flank, outstripping the left back and while in full flow, lay on the perfect pass for his strike-partner.

From there on, China found it impossible to break through the defence marshalled by Chayan and Bangladesh looked the more likely to extend the lead from a string of counter-attacks. No more goals

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Shakib goes down under

SPORTS REPORTER

Star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan was scheduled to leave for Sydney last night for a check-up of his injured shinbone.

And only after the check-up and opinion of the Sydney physician, it can be determined whether the inspirational all-rounder can play the entire series in Sri Lanka next month. Shakib will return home on February 26 and the Bangladesh team leave for Colombo on February 28 to play two Tests, three ODIs and a T20I.

"He [Shakib] has an appointment on February 22 with a specialist in Sydney. The board sent him for a second opinion as the nature of the injury is multifaceted. He may need an examination to be done there as it was not

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Money talks in 2nd BPL

NAIMUL KARIM



At the end of the day when one looks back at the month-long Bangladesh Premier League, it can be safely put that the competition with all its glitz, money and exposure, was more than just cricket. Intertwined with the tournament were so many parallel issues that they often threatened to outweigh the extent of coverage given to the on-field events.

The players-payment issue was a problem that engulfed the second edition of the tournament right from the very beginning and stuck firmly throughout it cropping up during the matches. The severity of it came to the fore when a number of foreign players almost boycotted some of the games in the tournament while the outburst from Duronto Rajshahi's captain, Chamara Kapugedera, was another such example.

The players' distrust over the board was fuelled mainly due to the negative reputation that the inaugu-

ral edition of the competition had received. The issue was so pressing that some of the foreign players compelled the franchises to make direct payments rather than following the normal procedure of going through the board. While payment issues still remain, players though are a bit more confident this time as the franchises have signed contracts with the board and are answerable to them.

The Pakistan Cricket Board's unwillingness to send their players to the competition was another highlight. The PCB's decision led to a new low in the PCB-BCB relations. President Nazmul Hasan Papon's statement at a press conference in the eve of the competition, where he claimed that 'Bangladesh were not bothered much about touring Pakistan anymore' best described the state of the boards' relations. The president's fiery reply however, did not go too well with last-placed, Khulna Royal Bengals who had seven Pakistani players in their side and suffered the most.

Away from the off-field contro-

versies though, the BPL did see a number of local players rise up to the occasion. The way young Taskin Ahmed bowled Tillakaratne Dilshan in the final with an in-swinging delivery, was enjoyed by even the most sceptic BPL spectators. While he will not be touring Sri Lanka in March, he does have the potential to break through a pace-starved national bowling line up.

Shamsur Rahman's sudden return to form, which saw him score six 50s and earned him a call in the preliminary squad for Bangladesh's tour of Sri Lanka was another positive. The batsman believed that his performance in the BPL put his cricketing career 'ahead by two to three years' and hopes to make debut soon.

While the youngsters excelled, a number of national players hit form as well. Mushfiqur Rahim's performance in particular was exceptional. He almost single-handedly carried Sylhet to the finals of the tournament. There were in fact many who felt that Rahim with his

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New coach on the block

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

There was a new face at the National Cricket Academy at Mirpur yesterday alongside the dozen cricketers who were attending the first day of their national camp for the tour of Sri Lanka. Cutting and edging the red ball towards a long line of fielders at the NCA, Corey Richards—the new fielding coach of the national team—was having his first look at the group of players he was most likely to spend the next two years training.

One of the men behind the Sydney Sixers' triumph at the Champions League last year, Richards was an assistant at the franchise when they qualified for the tournament but was promoted to the head coach's position soon after. He also worked as a batting coach for the New South Wales Blues.

The 37-year old who reached the country on Tuesday was hopeful of making a positive impact in the international stage as well. "I know the Australian contingent here in the coaching staff very well. So, I know the players' background and what their strengths are and what their areas of development are," said Corey at the NCA yesterday.

"I am looking forward to the training in the coming week. And then when we get to Sri Lanka, we need to work hard. First we



Corey Richards ... Tigers' new batting and fielding coach

PHOTO: STAR

Wales team and the Sydney Sixers. I think I have got the requirement and the experience to hopefully do a good job with the side," he added.

Corey believed that the key to improve a side's fielding ability was to make the training sessions 'enjoyable'. "The time when fielders may get bored or lazy with fielding is when there's no intensity or you don't mix it up. I am looking forward to working with the players, sitting down with them and telling them what my expectations are on the field," he said.

The Australian who is in Bangladesh for the first time hopes to make steady progress in the coming months. "I have been to

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Booters bank on fighting attitude

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

National booters believe that the increased competition in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) will foster a fighting attitude that will help them in the AFC Challenge Cup qualifiers, as the residential camp of the national team got underway at the BFF artificial turf yesterday.

The title race of the sixth edition of the professional football league is mainly confined to three teams – Abahani, Sheikh Russel and Sheikh Jamal KC. And 23 players out of the preliminary 33-member squad came from these three teams.

"To be truth, the fighting attitude of the players has increased due to the nature of the ongoing football league and I am sure you will see that reflection in our international matches," said Abahani midfielder Pranotosh Kumar Das on the verge of the training.

Pranotosh said that they have shifted their focus to the AFC Challenge Cup from the Bangladesh Premier League. "If you look back to our (Sheikh Russel) league matches, we fought back from behind on a few occasions and even won the game scoring in the dying moments and it was possible because of the fighting tendency of the players," said Sheikh Russel midfielder Mamunul Islam. "Besides, the temperament, stamina and understating between players have increased a lot due to the competitive league."

Mamunul said that all their players have put the sights on the AFC Challenge Cup from the professional football league and all are determined to bring some good results for the nation.

Defender Atiqur Rahman Meshu believes the overall standard of country's football has improved thus the standard of the local footballers have also increased.

"We are taking the AFC Challenge Cup seriously as the football federation has already declared it as part of vision 2012," said Abahani defender Meshu.

However, Bangladesh's mission to the AFC Challenge Cup may get a jolt even before they travel to Nepal on February 25. Goalkeeper Mustakur Rahman and defender Rezaul Karim have already been ruled out due to their injuries while striker Zahid Hasan Emily, wingers

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২১ ফেব্রুয়ারি
আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবস

অ ভে - অক্ষর
আ ভে - আলো

সবার জীবন অক্ষরের
আলোয় আনোবিশ্ব করে
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সংশ্রামীদের...

বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড
(একটি স্বাধীন মালিকানাধীন ব্যাংক)

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