

## Players threaten league boycott

SPORTS REPORTER

In a sudden development yesterday, cricketers of all levels decided against participating in the Dhaka Premier League, scheduled to start on July 3. The decision, made a week before the players' transfer adds to the woes of the league which has already seen repeated delays this year.

The Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) stated that the players wanted to revert to the older form of payment in this year's league as opposed to the 'gradation system' expected to be introduced this year. According to the new system the players would be graded as per fixed values. The older form of payment did not have any payment ceilings.

They were also against the 'rotational policy', according to which each club would get a turn to buy a player. Payment of dues from the first and second editions of the Bangladesh Premier League is another issue that was raised by CWAB.

"The new systems will not only affect the players financially but will also not allow the players to play for the team of their choice," said former national captain Rajin Saleh at a press conference in Mirpur.

"Until and unless they meet our demands regarding the Dhaka league and the BPL, we will stick to our decision," said CWAB's secretary Debapratap Paul.

Paul further stated that the board had not officially met the players to discuss the new schemes to be placed this year.

Earlier, following an hour-long meeting between the national and local cricketers at Mirpur, it was decided that all the cricketers, including the centrally-contracted players, would not participate in the league if the demands were not met.

The question however, was whether the centrally-contracted players would be able to take such a step. BCB's CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury said, "As per the contract it depends on the board's policy. While there isn't a mention of the league in the contract, the players will have to follow the policy of the board."

The build-up to this year's Dhaka League has witnessed a rocky phase. There were a number of unofficial meetings between the boards and the players. The cricketers were initially against the grading system. They then announced that while they were okay with the grading system they were against the rotational policy and submitted their own values for the grades. CWAB's latest announcement though, takes the scenario back to ground zero.

## CITYCELL B'BALL Old DOHS win first match

SPORTS REPORTER

Promotees Old DOHS made a winning start in the Citycell Premier Division Basketball League which kicked off at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

They defeated Rangers Club by 63-55 points in the keenly contested match of the day. The first half of the match was tied at 29-29. Rahat scored highest 18 points for the winners while Nahid recorded highest 14 points for Rangers.

Earlier, Taslim Islam, head of corporate communications of Citycell, inaugurated the meet as the chief guest where general secretary of Bangladesh Basketball Federation and South Asian Basketball Association AK Sarker were present among others.

## De Kruif knows his players now

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh national football team coaches Lodewijk de Kruif and Rene Koster will leave Dhaka tonight, before taking on the job permanently from July 1, after having a close look at the available players and a better understanding of the team composition.

Head coach de Kruif, who watched eight matches of the Super Cup in the last four days, felt it gave them a good understanding of all the available players as they would pick the final squad for the national camp ahead of September's SAFF Championship.

"The Super Cup gave us a good chance to evaluate the players before deciding on the final squad which might be between 30 to 35 players. BFF [Bangladesh Football Federation] has provided us with a list of 33 players, but we will make some adjustments on the list," de Kruif told reporters at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

However the coach is still concerned about the fitness of some of the players as he was before the tour of Nepal in March for the AFC Challenge Cup Qualifiers. It was learnt that a few of the players on the BFF-provided list might not make the final squad due to injury as the coach had already expressed his tough stance on the fitness issue.

"Fitness is a concern as you saw [during the Super Cup matches] players had to limp off with cramps. Fitness needs to be improved and I have had a positive discussion with [Kazi] Salahuddin about hiring a trainer," informed de Kruif.

The Dutchman was however happy to see some new strikers evolving during this tournament as it gave him more options to choose from up front.



PHOTO: STAR

Mohammedan striker Wahed Ahmed takes a joy ride after scoring the all-important goal against Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club during a Super Cup match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

## MSC through, BU close in

SPORTS REPORTER



Two-time finalists Mohammedan made it to the semifinals of the Super Cup for the third time after defeating Sheikh Jamal DC 1-0 thanks to an eighth minute

strike from forward Wahed Ahmed in their Group B encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Two wins in two matches took the Black and Whites into their third tournament semifinal of the season, having made it in the Federation Cup and the Independence Cup.

In a match which lacked much goalmouth action, Wahed ensured all three points for the Motijheel outfit by rounding off the Sheikh Jamal keeper, after availing a defensive fumble, on a cross from fellow striker Mobarak Hossain.

The win put Mohammedan atop Group B with six points, two clear of Brothers Union who had earlier in the day defeated Team BJMC 2-1. Sheikh Jamal risk humiliation as they stand on one point, with a must win match against BJMC on Wednesday. Even a win may not be enough for the Dhanmondi side if Brothers manage a draw against Mohammedan on the same day.

And it seems very much likely that Brothers can draw that match or do better, given their performance yesterday, thanks to a 19-year-old borrowed striker named Jewel Rana.

Rana, on loan from second-tier club Wari, was



Jewel Rana .... a Super find?

the toast of Brothers Union as he struck two goals in their 2-1 victory over Team BJMC. The lanky forward, who had scored the only goal in their 1-1 draw against Sheikh Jamal on Saturday, scored either side of a goal by BJMC striker Toklish Ahmed to send the opponents out of the meet.

The Jhenidah native thanked his coach for giving him the chance to play, which he grabbed with both hands. "I thank the coach for giving me the chance in the starting eleven and I am very happy to find goals in both matches," said Rana

after his exploits yesterday.

While Rana's heroics dumped BJMC, it also took his side to four points, three clear of Sheikh Jamal, with one round of matches remaining. A draw on Wednesday against Mohammedan will be enough to see the Oranges in the semifinals, a stage they reached in the inaugural edition in 2009.

Rana gave the Gopibagh outfit a deserved lead in the 14th minute, having dominated early possession and attacks, by turning in a glancing header on a well-judged cross from forward Yousuf Sifat.

National striker Toklish hit the equaliser in the 41st minute with a slapped attempt from inside the box, and just when the match looked headed towards a stalemate, Rana made the difference in the 82nd minute, flicking in a square pass from Komol Islam, to seal the victory.

Rana, who started playing football in inter-school tournament, made his presence felt in Dhaka football in the Second Division and then joined First Division side Mohakhali Ekadash where he scored eight goals. He then moved to Wari Club for the Bangladesh Championship League and scored only three goals before Brothers hired him for the money-spinning Super Cup where he has already made a name.

"My dream is to secure a place in the national side," said Rana. "I don't know if I could draw the attention of the national coach, but I will continue with my efforts until I am noticed."

## Sri Lanka through to semis

AFP, London



Sri Lanka barged into the Champions Trophy semi-finals with a 20-run victory over holders Australia in the last league match at the Oval in London on Monday.

The Islanders, who needed a win to remain in the competition, rode on aggressive half-centuries from Mahela Jayawardene and Lahiru Thirimanne to score 253-8 after being sent in to bat.

Seamer Nuwan Kulasekara then picked up three wickets, effected a run-out and took a catch as the Australians were bowled out for 233 in 42.3 overs.

Sri Lanka and England finished level with four points each, but the hosts topped the group due to a superior net run-rate and will meet group B runners-up South Africa in Wednesday's semi-final at the Oval.

Sri Lanka will clash with group B winners India in the second semi-final in Cardiff on Thursday in a repeat of the 2011 World Cup final in Mumbai which the Indians won.

The final is scheduled to be played at Edgbaston, Birmingham on Sunday.

Jayawardene, who became the eighth batsman to complete 11,000 one-day runs when he reached 62, anchored the middle-order with an unbeaten 84 off 81 balls.

Australia, who needed to win in 29.1 overs to qualify, made a brave bid to force their first victory in the tournament with belligerent batting led by Adam Voges' top score of 49.

The Aussies were 192-9 when the last-wicket pair of Clint McKay and Xavier Doherty gave Sri Lanka a fright by adding 41 amid mounting tension.

Tillakaratne Dilshan ended the drama with a spectacular return catch to dismiss McKay, who made a career-best 30. Doherty



Sri Lanka batsman Mahela Jayawardene jumps to negotiate a rising delivery on way to an unbeaten 84.

PHOTO: AFP

remained unbeaten on 15.

The fightback would have been followed keenly by New Zealand, who would have joined England in the semi-finals if the last pair had scored the remaining runs.

In the end, the Black Caps were stranded on three points, one behind both England and Sri Lanka. Australia finished with just one point through a rain-affected game.

### SL-AUS SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA				
Perera lbw b Johnson	4			
Dilshan c Watson b Doherty	34			
Sangakkara c Maxwell b McKay	3			
Thirimanne c Watson b Johnson	57			
Jayawardene not out	84			
Mathews b Faulkner	32			
Chandimal c Hughes b Johnson	31			
Kulasekara run out	6			
Herath run out	2			
Malinga not out	2			
Extras (b-5, lb-7, w-4, nb-2)	18			
Total (For 8 wickets in 50 overs)	253			
Did not bat: Eranga.				
Fall of wickets: 1-8, 2-20, 3-92, 4-128, 5-159, 6-224, 7-233, 8-244.				
AUSTRALIA				
Watson b Kulasekara	5			
Hughes c Sanga b Kulasekara	13			
Maxwell b Malinga	32			
Bailey run out (Kulasekara)	4			
Voges c Eranga b Herath	49			
Marsh b Mathews	4			
Wade c Dilshan b Kulasekara	31			
Faulkner c Sangakkara b Herath	17			
Johnson c Kulasekara b Eranga	4			
McKay c & b Dilshan	30			
Doherty not out	15			
Total (all out; 42.3 overs)	233			
Fall of wickets: 1-9, 2-45, 3-59, 4-69, 5-80, 6-127, 7-163, 8-168, 9-192, 10-233				
Bowling				
	O	M	R	W
Eranga	8	1	40	1
Kulasekara	9	0	42	3
Malinga	9	0	60	1
Herath	10	0	48	2
Mathews	3	0	21	1
Dilshan	3.3	0	11	1
Result: Sri Lanka won by 20 runs.				
MOM: Mahela Jayawardene.				

## All the power, very little pride

BISHWAJIT ROY



As a rule the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) should dictate terms regarding all cricketing affairs in the country. But when it comes to the Dhaka Premier Cricket League, the game's governing body unfortunately assumes the role of a subordinate to the mighty clubs.

The events surrounding this year's league, currently the lone 50-over competition in the country, has painted a sordid picture of cricket in the country. This has been a perennial cat-and-mouse game between the clubs and the board every season.

Every season the clubs seem to come up with ways to hamper the progress of the competition. This season, they said that they will not play the league without the national players, which delayed the start of the league. Then they said that they do not want to play under the old payment system, which led the board to come up with a new payment plan, after which the clubs decided that they want to devise their own payment scheme.

True, once club cricket was the main attraction and the devoted

club officials played a big role in keeping the game alive in the country. Due credit must be given to them for the progress of cricket but the reality is that those golden days are gone. Times have changed but unfortunately we have persisted with the old, often flawed, way of conducting domestic cricket.

Even today it is the club officials who dictate terms on how the country's most popular game will be

*Times have changed but unfortunately we have persisted with the old, often flawed, way of conducting domestic cricket.*

run. And now the clubs are also claiming much bigger stakes with demands to double their councilorship rights. This should not have been the case but still it is happening as the decentralisation of cricket is a distant dream. If not their professional obligation, then it is a moral obligation for the clubs to ensure their smooth participation in the league. The formation of their own teams before the league

season begins is now their only contribution to cricket -- a contribution of diminishing importance, in an expanding Bangladeshi cricket horizon, which has allowed them disproportionate influence.

The most pathetic and shameful fact is that the board has been paying money to the clubs as a 'grant' to participate in the league. This season, that grant will be almost double that of the last season if the board is able to host the league at all this year. It is simply a ridiculous state of affairs.

We never hear ideas about how the clubs can make the tournament more attractive and commercially viable; instead they only create problems as the season approaches.

The board however cannot shy away from its responsibility of making sure that the 50-over competition is run in the proper way. And if they have to grant money to the clubs to get the league off the ground, it stands to reason that the BCB be allowed to run it on their own terms. In that case they must think about how they can make the National Cricket League's one-day format a competitive one that can fulfil the needs of the players. Ceding the high ground to the short-sighted clubs is certainly not the way.