

PREMIER LEAGUE CRISIS All eyes now on Papon

SPORTS REPORTER



The Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) was looking to Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon to come up with a solution after cricketers had decided against participating in this season's Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League.

CCDM chairman Jalal Yunus said yesterday that they were hopeful of holding of the players' selection as scheduled on June 23 and he also believed they will be able to start the league from July 3.

"We are hopeful. I hope the crisis will be solved once our board president (Papon) meets with the stakeholders. Both the clubs and the players have to come forward to solve the crisis. As we have already fallen into big trouble with this year's league, both parties have to be ready to compromise. Whatever compromise we arrive at, it will only be for this season," said Yunus.

Debrabrat Paul, general secretary of the Cricketers' Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB), also said that they were looking forward to the BCB president's intervention in solving the current crisis surrounding the league, which is the main source of income for a majority of cricketers in the country.

BCB boss Papon was however not available for comment on the issue.

In a sudden development on Monday, the cricketers under the banner of CWAB demanded for the reinstatement of the older form of payment as opposed to the 'gradation system' proposed by the board and the clubs this year, and threatened to boycott the league if their demand was not met.

Mahela waits for India

PTI, London

Veteran Sri Lankan batsman Mahela Jayawardene was already looking forward to the semifinal against India after guiding his team to a 20-run win over Australia and a place in the last-four stage of the ICC Champions Trophy on Monday.

"We are looking forward to another tough match in the semifinal," Jayawardene, who was adjudged the player-of-the-match for his unbeaten 84, said.

A disciplined Sri Lanka set up a semifinal date with India as they knocked out holders Australia, with Jayawardene and Nuwan Kulasekara playing key roles.

During the course of his innings, the elegant Jayawardene crossed 11,000 runs in this form of the game.

"It felt really good (to complete 11,000), but winning this was the icing on the cake. We are playing hard and passionate cricket, but we need to enjoy the cricket."

"That has been the mantra of our success in the past and hope it continues in the future. Seniors have a responsibility and it is our job to help Angi [skipper Angelo Mathews] out, that makes us a happy camp," Jayawardene said.

After setting a target of 254, Mathews said he knew it was going to be tough as Australia managed 233 before being bowled out. "We knew it was going to be tough, defending 253," said Mathews.

"Thirumal and Jayawardene batted well to get us to that score. I have never seen a crowd like this in the Oval before, and it was good to have the support. Our first target was the semi. Will enjoy tonight and see how it goes after that," he added.



South Africa pacer Ryan McLaren does some stretching exercises with a medicine ball at The Oval yesterday, ahead of their ICC Champions Trophy first semifinal against England today.

PHOTO: INTERNET

Mayhem as Abahani lose out once again

SPORTS REPORTER



Mayhem descended upon Bangabandhu National Stadium and its press box yesterday as defending champions Abahani made an ignominious and unsavoury exit from the Super Cup. The two-time finalists were held 0-0 by favourites Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra in their last match of Group A that resulted in their meek bow out from the money-spinning tournament.

The impending outcome did not go down well with the Sky Blues faithful as they created havoc midway through the match, hurling stones, brickbats, chairs and sticks towards the ground. But it was not the players and match officials only that bore the brunt of the mayhem, the media people also came under severe attack. The hollow frontier of the press box, still bearing the marks of the May 5 devastation by Hefajat-e-Islam, became an easy opening for the angry Abahani supporters to vent their frustration and anger, targeting the hapless journalists. The police looked through all these nonchalantly, either 'unable or unwilling' to stop the rampage. As the mediamen took shelter in the other corner of the press box to avoid the onslaught, one TV cameraman received injuries to his face.

The incident took place in the 52nd minute of the match when Abahani, still in search of a goal and looking at possible exit,

saw their striker Enamul Haque along with Sheikh Russel defender Mamun Mia receive the marching orders for an aerial tussle. Enamul had seemed to use his elbow against Mamun, while the defender retaliated by kicking him on the feet. Enamul's was a straight red card while Mamun's marching orders came for his second yellow.

And that was reason enough for the Abahani supporters to turn ugly, as they were apprehending the worst since anything but a win would see their side miss the qualifying spot. Their worst fears came true as the match ended goalless and Abahani, having failed to make it to the Federation Cup and Independence Cup knock-out stages and finishing only third in the Premier League, made another humiliating exit. The fallen heroes had to wait for almost an hour in police cordon before they could make their way towards the dressing room, to avoid the wrath of their fans.

But their job was made all the more harder after Muktijoddha Sangsad raced to a 2-0 win over Feni Soccer Club earlier in the day, thanks to a 48th minute strike from midfielder Zahed Parvez Chowdhury and a stoppage time goal from Mohammad Ibrahim.

Muktijoddha qualified as runners-up from Group A with four points while Sheikh Russel topped the group with 7 points.

Group B has already found a qualifier in Mohammedan while the other semifinalists, either Brothers Union or Sheikh Jamal DC, will be decided after the two matches today.



Muktijoddha Sangsad midfielder Zahed Parvez (2nd from L) celebrates after scoring the first goal against Feni Soccer Club during their Super Cup match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Looking to lady luck!

England-S Africa first semifinal today

AFP, London



England and South Africa will hope lady luck does not desert them when they clash in the Champions Trophy semifinal at The Oval in London on Wednesday.

Both sides, aiming to end a frustrating wait for a major one-day title, are fortunate to make the last four in the eight-nation tournament, saved either by the weather or their rivals' bad luck.

South Africa sneaked a tie -- and gain a valuable point -- at Cardiff last week when rain forced the game to end with the West Indies on the exact Duckworth-Lewis par score of 190-6 in 26.1 overs.

If Keiron Pollard had not been dismissed off what turned out to be the last ball of the match, the West Indies would have won the game and qualified for the semifinals after being ahead of the DL target at that stage.

England were lucky the weather favoured them in Cardiff on Sunday as the hosts squeezed out a 10-run win over New Zealand in a game reduced to 24-overs-a-side due to rain.

A washed-out match or a defeat would almost certainly have knocked England out of the race and lifted the Black Caps into the semifinals along with either Sri Lanka or Australia.

Eventually, England topped group A by virtue of a superior net run-rate over Sri Lanka, who drew level on four points following a 20-run win over defending champions Australia at The Oval on Monday.

Last year, England and South Africa drew a one-day series 2-2 after the Proteas came

back from a 2-1 deficit to win the final game at Nottingham by seven wickets.

South African captain AB de Villiers said he expected another close contest between two "world-class" sides.

"England will be the favourites because they are playing at home and know the conditions well," de Villiers said on Tuesday. "But I think it is pretty much 50-50."

"It's up to the team which rocks up with the right attitude that can take that momentum early on and run with it. We'll be looking to do exactly that and adapt to conditions as quickly as possible."

"England are a world class team and so are we. It's going to be a great game."

The South African captain said the only way his team can get rid of the label of 'chokers' was to win the tournament.

"I believe all teams choke in certain situations," he said. "It's just that somehow we managed to get that tag behind our names. Unless we win this tournament, people will continue to say we are chokers. But it is not something that bothers us."

De Villiers said premier fast bowler Dale Steyn, who missed two of the three games due to a side strain, was "close to 100 per cent" fit, but insisted his team can win even without him.

England skipper Alastair Cook said his team was excited about playing in a major semifinal.

"It's such an exciting place for a player to be," he said. "We have come here to try and win the tournament. We have got an amazing opportunity to try and do that and both sides will be excited about that."

"It's another day tomorrow. It's another game. What's gone on in the past has no relevance."

Biplab back, 3 new faces on de Kruif's list

SPORTS REPORTER

Veteran goalkeeper Biplab Bhattacharjee has seemingly got a new lifeline as the Sheikh Russel custodian, along with three fresh faces, was included in a 32-man preliminary squad for the SAFF Championship chosen by national team's head coach Lodewijk de Kruif.

The Dutchman and his compatriot assistant coach Rene Koster handed over the list to Bangladesh Football Federation before their departure for Netherlands last night, having watched nine matches in the ongoing Grameenphone Super Cup.

"They have handed over a list of 32 including 21 players from the AFC Challenge Cup squad. The list also includes some of the players who were out of the squad due to injuries. There are a few new faces on it, and veteran keeper Biplab is a new inclusion," said BFF vice-president Tabith M Awal, who is a member of the National Teams Committee.

Biplab was out of the national squad since the 2011 SAFF Championship, where he was just a part of the squad, but never made it to the playing eleven.

Apart from Biplab, Mohammedan striker Wahed Ahmed, Sheikh Russel defenders Uttam Kumar Bonik and Nahidul Islam are the fresh faces.

Tabith also informed that a physio-cum-trainer, to be chosen by de Kruif, is expected to arrive on June 28 while the coaches return on July 1 to conduct the training camp from the same day.

"After 10 days of training in Bangladesh, the national squad will leave for Thailand on July 10 for a ten-day conditioning camp and will play a friendly match against the Thai national side on July 19 before returning home the next day," added Tabith.

Shah pleads for lighter sentence

SPORTS REPORTER

Former international umpire Nadir Shah, who was slapped with a 10-year ban by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) in March this year has submitted a letter to the BCB requesting the board to reduce the length of his sentence.

Shah was accused of agreeing to doctor decisions in lieu of money in a sting operation conducted by India TV last October and a three-member committee formed by the BCB found him guilty.

"I submitted a letter asking for forgiveness. I requested them to reconsider their decision," Shah told reporters at Mirpur yesterday. "Even if they don't cancel the punishment they should at least minimise it considering my contribution to cricket. That way I can perhaps make a comeback to cricket," he added.

Shah has officiated in 40 ODIs, three T20Is and six Test matches as TV umpire.

Zia atop

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman maintained his solo lead in the Prime Bank 16th International Rating Chess Tournament at close of the eighth round at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room yesterday.

Zia beat Delwar Hossain to jump to 7.5 points from eight matches. IM Abu Sufian Shakil was in the second position with seven points while GM Abdullah Al-Rakib, FM Aminul Islam and Mehdi Hasan Parag shared the third position with 6.5 points each.

Eagles rout Flame Boys

SPORTS REPORTER

Eagles Club defeated Flame Boys by 57-31 points in their Citycell Premier Division Basketball League match at the Dhamondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

The winners led the first half 28-10. Khairul scored highest 12 points for Eagles while Rocky scored six for Flame Boys.

The Gregs pull out

SPORTS REPORTER

First Division champions the Gregs have pulled out of the Citycell Premier Division Basketball League alleging the tournament committee of favouring the stronger teams.

The newly promoted club sent a letter to the Bangladesh Basketball Federation (BBF), confirming they would no longer be taking part in the meet.

The Gregs complained, as per tradition they should have played against last year's runners-up the Gregarious and champions Europa Youth on the first two days of the meet. They said they would have had a great chance against these sides had they met them earlier because they had the foreign players already in the side while Gregarious and Europa were only beginning foreign recruitments now.

The BBF however denied the accusation saying that the schedule was prepared in a way so that the big teams would face at a later stage so that the competitiveness stayed till the end.

'Aus lacking confidence'

THE GUARDIAN, London

Australia are heading towards next month's Ashes series with "not a great deal of confidence" according to their stand-in ODI captain, George Bailey.

Bailey, who has a reputation as a refreshingly candid cricketer, was speaking after the defeat by Sri Lanka that saw Australia eliminated from the ICC Champions Trophy with two defeats and a washout in Group A, all completed without the injured Michael Clarke.

"There is probably not a great deal of confidence there," Bailey said in a pre-Ashes statement of intent slightly lower down the scale of Australian bravado from Glenn McGrath's familiar 5-0 whitewash predictions. "But it's just a very different mindset, going from a one-day tournament to a Test series. The Ashes tends to bring out something special in both sides. Whatever can be written and said leading up into those games but until that first Test and the result of that first Test, that will dictate how the summer plays out."

If Bailey's words could be most favourably interpreted as a pre-Ashes rope-a-dope strategy, there was a hint of better news - just about - for Australia in his suggestion Clarke would indeed be fit for the first Ashes Test in three weeks' time.

