

SPORT

Super Cup a new brand

SPORTS REPORTER



While football has generally seen dwindling attendances over the course of the last few years, one tournament that has at least caught the attention of spectators has been the Super Cup, ever since it's inception amid much fanfare in 2009.

The 'taka one-crore' tournament, as it became colloquially known, was supposed to be held once every calendar year since 2009. However, the game's governing body has failed to live up to that promise, with the tournament now virtually becoming a once every two year assignment.

That, however, has seemingly done little to dampen the modest enthusiasm among spectators, players and club officials, despite the curtailing of the prize money to more humble standards.

With this sort of interest sorely lacking in other forms of the game, can the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) cash in on its success by branding the Super Cup successfully across the country, in an attempt to restore football's former heady status?

"After holding three meets, it seems that the Super Cup has turned into a popular tournament and we will work with our consultants on how to cash in on the Super Cup," said BFF president Kazi Salahuddin. "We have no plans to reduce the foreign players in the coming season because we cannot reduce the standard of the football we have built up in five years but we may hold the next Super Cup without foreign players again."

The decision to cull foreign players from this meet was by circumstance rather than design, but it helped the local players, often restricted to bench roles during the league, to showcase their talents. And previously unherald names like Mohammedan's forward Wahed Ahmed, winger Mobarak Hossain, defender Tapu Barman, Brothers Union's striker Jewel Rana, Yousuf Sifat, Sheikh Russel KC's Nahidul Islam and Team BJMC's Omar Faruque Babu stepped forward to grab the chance with both hands.

Compared to other tournaments, the Super Cup proved to be highly competitive with unpredictable results. Top performers in the league did not make the semifinals while eventual winners Mohammedan only finished fifth in the league.

"I think the absence of foreign players had inspired the local players to shine in the Super Cup, which also may be considered a stage for hiking the price for the players ahead of the next season's players' transfer," said Mohammedan coach Saiful Bari Titu, who believed the Super Cup had turned into a brand for the country's football.



PHOTO: STAR

Mohammedan SC players are in high spirits as they celebrate with the Super Cup at their club tent in Motijheel yesterday, a day after beating Sheikh Russel KC in the final.

MSC a happy camp

SPORTS REPORTER



The Mohammedan Sporting Club tent in Motijheel turned into one happy family after a long time. One of the two most popular outfits of the country, which has been starved of success for four long years and was fraught with internal feud and players' unrest, found a reason to celebrate. The players partied through the night on Tuesday after their young brigade earned them the coveted Super Cup title.

The success seems to have wiped out the differences between the club management and the players, at least momentarily. On Wednesday, the players were rewarded with cash awards by the club's chairman Obaidul Karim. Tk 25 lakh from the prize money of the Super Cup and Tk

25 lakh bonus from the chairman's pocket were distributed among the squad and the coaching staff. The chairman also rewarded man-of-the final Mamun Khan with Tk 1 lakh; Mobarak Hossain, Mintu Sheikh and Wahed Ahmed with Tk 50 thousand each and Tk 2 lakh to the support staff.

Meanwhile, the due wages of the players, which ranges from Tk 1.5-Tk 2.5 lakh, will be paid as soon as possible, promised club officials. Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan, director of administrations of the club, vowed to build a stronger side in the next season so that they can compete for the league title.

"We needed to win this title after being without a title for a long time. This is a proud moment for us. This success will encourage us to give our best to become champions in the professional league," said a happy Lokman.

NCC second round from today

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After a rain-interrupted first round, the 33rd National Cricket Championship resumes today with eight districts battling it out in the second round of the competition.

Rangpur, Moulvibazar, Barisal and Narayanganj are in group A, where as, Pabna, Brahmanbaria, Faridpur and Jessore are in Group B. The one-day games will take place at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra and Dinajpur.

The champions of Groups A and B will play in the finals of the competition, scheduled to take place on July 5.

21-member U-23 squad announced

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The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has announced a 21-member preliminary squad for the Asian Cricket Council's

Emerging Nation's Cup which will take place in Singapore this August. As per the tournament's rules, it will be an under-23 side that will represent Bangladesh in the competition.

Junior teams from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka will also participate in the competition. On the other hand, Afghanistan, Nepal, UAE and Singapore will be allowed to field their first teams.

The Tigers have been placed in Group B, alongside Sri Lanka U23,

UAE and Singapore. They open the tournament with a game against hosts Singapore on August 17. The finals will take place on August 25.

The camp for the preliminary squad will take place at the National Cricket Academy from tomorrow.

SQUAD

Liton Kumar Das, Mizanur Rahman, Myshukur Rahman, Soumya Sarker, Roman Ahmed, Md Mithun, Asif Ahmed, Nurul Hasan, Alauddin Babu, Mahmudul Hasan, Nur Hossain, Taijul Islam, Nazmul Hossain Apu, Dewan Shabbir Ahmed, Muktar Ali, Shuvashish Roy, Abu Jayed Chowdhury, Al-Amin Hossain, Rony Talukder, Sabbir Rahman, Sanjamul Islam.

Premier b'ball

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Flame Boys defeated Bakshibazar Basketball Club by 54-48 points in the CityCell Premier Division Basketball League at the Dhanmondi Indoor Basketball Stadium yesterday. Flame Boys led the first half by 27-20 points.

Uttam scored 15 points and Habib netted 12 points for the winners while Tanvir caged highest 27 points for the losing side.

Earlier on Tuesday night, Rangers earned a 72-54 victory over Hornets SC while The Gregarious outplayed Bakshibazar BC by 107-39 points.

Kiwis draw first blood

AFP, London

New Zealand won the first Twenty20 International against England by five runs at The Oval on Tuesday to take a 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

England, chasing 202 for victory, finished on 196 for five. The margin of defeat was exactly the same as England went down by against India in a Champions Trophy final reduced to 20 overs per side by rain at Edgbaston on Sunday.

Earlier New Zealand, who lost the toss, made 201 for four with Black Caps skipper Brendon McCullum top-scoring with 68 and sharing 114 for the second wicket with opener Hamish Rutherford, man-of-the-match for his dashing 62.

The series concludes at The Oval on Thursday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: 201 for 4 in 20 overs (Rutherford 62, McCullum 68, Taylor 32 not out, Latham 22; Wright 2-31)

ENGLAND: 196 for 5 in 20 overs (Lumb 29, Hales 39, Wright 52, Bopara 30 not out)

Result: New Zealand won by five runs.

Player-of-the-match:

Hamish Rutherford.



PHOTO: AFP

Canada's Eugenie Bouchard pumps her fists in celebration of her victory over Serbia's Ana Ivanovic in the second round of Wimbledon yesterday.

Conqueror conquered by injury!

Azarenka goes too

REUTERS, London

Steve Darcis's joy at knocking Rafa Nadal out in the first round at Wimbledon turned to despair on Wednesday as the lowly-ranked Belgian withdrew from the championships with a shoulder injury.

The 29-year-old's stunning victory over the twice former champion went down as one of the tournament's greatest shocks and elevated the journeyman player into the limelight.

Meanwhile, Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka also pulled out of her second round match against Italy's Flavia Panetta at Wimbledon on Wednesday after failing to recover from a knee injury she suffered two days ago.

Murray thru', Maria falls

AFP, London



7-5 win over Taiwan's Lu Yen-Hsun.

Murray was never threatened by Lu's lightweight game and the US Open champion breezed through in two hours, in the process avenging an embarrassing defeat against the world number 75 at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

While Murray would never admit it publicly, he would also have been pleased with the news from the Wimbledon treatment table, with French sixth seed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga and Croatian 10th seed Marin Cilic among the victims of an incredible run of injury withdrawals on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, third seed and 2004 champion Maria Sharapova crashed out of Wimbledon, losing 6-3, 6-4 in the second round to Portuguese qualifier Michelle Larcher De Brito, the world number 131.

Sharapova's defeat came just hours after second seed Victoria Azarenka withdrew from the tournament with a knee injury.

But it was a controversial exit for

Sharapova who twice slipped and fell on Court Two.

She needed a medical timeout to treat her left hip after the eighth game of the second set and complained to the umpire that the surface was dangerous.

Larcher De Brito had hit the headlines in 2009 when, as a precocious 16-year-old, she was widely-criticised for her on-court grunting which some rivals condemned as unsporting.

The controversy did her career little good as she virtually disappeared off the radar and her ranking slumped.

But honing the skills and screams she perfected at the same Bollettieri academy home of Sharapova, she capitalised on her famous rival's obvious discomfort at having to play on Court Two.

The Russian pleaded that the conditions were too treacherous but the match continued.

"I saw how she fell pretty hard and I know these grass courts can be really slippery and can be quite dangerous," said Larcher De Brito, who took victory on a fifth match point.

"There's a lot of grass that's been cut that didn't get swept off so there's a lot of dead grass on the top and it made it quite slippery."

Larcher De Brito goes on to face Karin Knapp of Italy for a place in the last 16.

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