

## Warm-up in danger as Day 1 washed out

SPORTS REPORTER from Ctg

Consistent rainfall in the port-city yesterday led to abandonment of the first day's play of the three-day match between BCB XI and New Zealand and forced both sides to train indoors at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium (ZACS). The three-day match, scheduled to take place at the MA Aziz Stadium, is not likely to continue today either as officials do not expect the outfield to dry out in time.

It rained all day in Chittagong yesterday and with the weather forecast expected to remain the same till October 9, the chances of getting any sort of game time at the MA Aziz Stadium remain slim. The ZACS, however, which will host the first Test match from October 9 onwards, is a different story altogether.

According to the curator of the ground, the newly formed drainage system is capable of getting the field ready in 'no time whatsoever', no matter how much it rains.



"Even if it rains continuously till the ninth, all we need is an hour's break to get the field ready, since the new drainage system is really good. All we need is a clear sky for the first Test to go on. So even if it rains in the middle of the match, we can start off fresh after 30 minutes or so, the ground will face no problem," he remarked.

He, however, did not share the same confidence about the practice match at the MA Aziz stadium. "Personally I don't think there's any chance to get a game there. Even if it does not rain, the condition of the ground has been affected due to previous rainfall. The final call though is up to the officials," he said.

The plausible cancellation of the three-dayer is bound to affect both sides. For New Zealand, it was their only opportunity to get a sniff of what they can expect at the ZACS, while for Bangladesh it was a chance to finalise their line-up.



**Bangladesh vice-captain Mahmudullah Riyad (L) shares a joke with teammate Abdur Razzak at the indoor practice facilities of the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. (Inset) MA Aziz Stadium, the venue for the practice match between the BCB XI and New Zealand was waterlogged, forcing the first day of the match to be called off.**

PHOTOS: ANURUP KANTI DAS

## Robiul keeping it simple

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



With 15 wickets in the last Test series, Robiul Islam almost single-handedly carried the weight of Bangladesh's bowling attack against Zimbabwe. The manner in which he constantly beat the batsmen with his accurate out-swingers was a rare scene in Bangladesh cricket; perhaps only witnessed when Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was in his prime.

Five months on, Robiul's battles ahead of Bangladesh's first Test against New Zealand, are a bit complex. His first aim will be to recover completely from a quad injury that he has been nursing for the last month. And his second will be to excel on a wicket that is bound to assist the slower bowlers.

Robiul, though, is up for the challenge.

"I bowled today at the nets and I did not face any problems in my upper quads. So it's been good so far. But I need to bowl more," said Robiul.

The pacer admitted that his bowling role in this series may not replicate that of the one in Zimbabwe due to the conditions, but he stated that he will aim to do what he is good at: 'bowling consistently in the right areas'.

"A lot depends on the conditions. I could often bowl spells of up to 10 to 12 overs in Zimbabwe. It's possible here too, but the conditions here are expected to be a lot different," he said. "The main thing though

is to bowl in the right areas and from there everything is going work out."

On the positive side, it is likely that the bowler will face a lot less pressure this time around, with both Rubel Hossain and Al Amin Hossain, currently the highest wicket-takers in the Dhaka Premier League, among the wickets.

"I don't have any pressure because all the pacers are doing well now. Even in the last series I was supported by Rubel, Zia[ur Rahman] and Sajedul [Islam]. They were unlucky not to get as many wickets, and this time the attack will hopefully be better," said Robiul.

At a time when a number of pacers in the country are struggling to regain rhythm after their injuries, Robiul remains firm. His latest injury was due to a football accident and not due to over-stress. He credits his workmanlike spirit for his training routine.

"The more you bowl at practice the longer you can stay on the field and that's why I try to bowl a lot during training. And I think fitness is a mental thing. If you are fine mentally then everything will be okay," he said.

Perhaps the most noticeable feature about the 26-year-old is that he makes everything look simple. The hour-long spells, the accuracy and even his target for this series: "The most important thing is to bowl in the right areas until I get the batsman out."

While his mantra did work against Zimbabwe, only time will tell if it's going to have the same effect at home.



## Afghanistan in 2015 WC

AFP, Sharjah



Afghanistan reached the World Cup for the first time on Friday, completing a remarkable journey from refugee camp cricket to rubbing shoulders with the sport's superpowers.

The team who were playing in the fifth-tier just five years ago, and are forced by the precarious security situation in their country to stage home matches in the Gulf, swept past Kenya by seven wickets to secure an historic spot in the 2015 showpiece.

After dismissing Kenya for just 93 in the 44th over at the Sharjah Cricket Ground, Afghanistan reached their target in the 21st over when captain Mohammad Nabi hit Shem Ngoche for a boundary through midwicket.

They had to endure a brief moment of worry before romping to victory when they were reduced to 34 for 3.

But Nabi, who finished on 46 not out, and Hashmatullah Shaidi, put on 62 for the fourth wicket to bring their side home with 175 balls to spare.

Nabi smashed two huge sixes and three fours to assure his team of second place in the World Cricket League behind runaway winners Ireland who have also qualified for the World Cup.

Afghanistan will play in Pool A at the World Cup in 2015 along with co-hosts Australia and New Zealand as well as Bangladesh, England, Sri Lanka and another qualifier.

Netherlands, UAE, Scotland, Kenya, Namibia, Canada, Uganda, Hong Kong, Nepal and Papua New Guinea will now compete for the last two World Cup berths at the final qualifying event to be staged in New Zealand in February next year.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KENYA: 93 all out in 43.3 overs (Ouma 39, Patel 18; Hamza 3-19, Nabi 2-10, Sadiq 2-10, Hamid 2-11) AFGHANISTAN: 96 for 3 in 20.5 overs (Mangal 19, Nabi 46 not out, Shaidi 13 not out; Ngoche 2-30) Result: Afghanistan won by seven wickets.

## Siddikur up at fourth

SPORTS REPORTER

A late flurry of birdies propped Siddikur Rahman up to joint fourth position after the second day of the Mercuries Taiwan Masters at the Taiwan Golf and Country Club yesterday. Starting the day on seventh position, Siddikur looked like heading out of the top ten when he scuffed three bogeys after a single birdie on the front nine. But three consecutive birdies on the back nine resurrected his game and put him on one-under-par (71) for the day and one-under-par (143) on aggregate.

That keeps Siddikur in with a realistic chance of having a go at the 1,20,000-dollar top spot, which is currently occupied by Sam Cry of United States at five-under-par (139).

The American returned with a three-under-par (69) to snatch the second round lead from Australia's Scott Hend.

The halfway cut was set at five-over with 51 players making it into the weekend rounds.

## 'I hope they are rusty'

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong

Despite the loss of play on Day 1 of the scheduled three-day practice game, both Bangladesh and New Zealand had a good workout during their respective training sessions at the indoor facilities of the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium (ZACS) yesterday.

For New Zealand it was their first training session, albeit indoors, since their arrival and a majority of their players were working on getting back to their rhythms. In the case of Bangladesh, the rains denied them a possible session at the centre wicket of the ground, which would have proved very useful as the wickets at the ZACS have been relaid and are yet to be played on.

In spite of the missed opportunities, both teams seemed satisfied with the day's session and expressed confidence ahead of the first Test.

"We have all been playing one-day cricket in the Dhaka Premier League in the last one month, so this three-dayer would have helped switch to playing with the red ball to a certain extent. Unfortunately, there's nothing much we can do about it now," said Mahmudullah Riyad, the captain of the BCB XI.



Both teams in the series have a disappointing track record in Tests. In the last seven Test series the Kiwis have won just one Test. The scenario is worse for the Tigers, who lost a Test to Zimbabwe in their last series, which dropped them to the bottom spot in the Test rankings.

The team management however is not concerned about the recent changes.

"We are not thinking about the ranking, but yes, we need results. We played well in the last few Tests but the results were not on our side, so we basically need wins," said Riyad.

With regards to his personal goals, the national vice-captain admitted the need for him to step up in the longer version of the game having scored only 34 runs in his last six Test innings.

"I did not bat well in the last few Test matches. I got out early and I could not get set early in the game. However, I scored two 50s in the

wear the Sheikh Jamal DC jersey for the upcoming season.

It has been learnt that Sheikh Russel are searching for quality players from Haiti, Jamaica, Uruguay and Nigeria and a number of players including a couple of national players from Haiti and Jamaica are expected to arrive in Dhaka after the Eid-ul-Azha for a trial.

The departure of skipper Mamunul Islam was also a big loss for the club and coach Maruful Haque believes Maumunul is hard to replace.

"It is not possible to replace Mamunul with another local player and we will have make up for the loss with a foreign player," said Maruful. "It is too early to say whether we will be able to defend our titles, but I think it will depend on the collection of our foreign

players."

The successful coach, who has recently completed first part of Uefa A license course, believes that Sheikh Russel are going to be a better side compared last season after the inclusion of Shakil Ahmed, Hasan Al Mamun, Rajani Kanta Barman, Mohammad Robin, Jewel Rana and a few other promising players.

Sheikh Russel, however, have a cause for concern with four players – Zahid Hossain, Nahidul Islam, Mamun Mia and Shakil Ahmed – who reportedly took money from two different clubs. The football federation has incorporated a clause of punishment for the players who would be found guilty of taking money from two clubs before the transfer season and it may be a big worry for the club if these players face suspension for any period.

## Rain forces 6th round into reserve day

SPORTS REPORTER

All three of yesterday's scheduled Dhaka Premier League sixth-round matches will be played on the reserve day today as rain played foul at three different venues across the country.

Not a single ball was bowled in the match between Brothers Union and Kalabagan Krira Chakra at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium while in the 34-overs-a-side match at BKSP, Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club could only finished their innings with 205 for 8 against Kalabagan Cricket Academy, thanks to yet another blazing knock from Afghanistan batsman Gulbadin Naib, who hit an unbeaten 99 off 68 balls with six fours and eight sixes.

At the Shahid Chandu Stadium in Bogra, rain stopped play with Cricket Coaching School (CCS) on 99 for five in 24.1 overs against Khelaghor SKS. The match was reduced to a 40-overs-a-side affair.

## Rakib still leads

SPORTS REPORTER

GM Abdulla Al-Rakib maintained his solo lead in the Berger Paints 39th National Chess Championship at the close of the 12th round at the Media Centre of Bangladesh Olympic Association yesterday.

Rakib drew against GM Niaz Murshed to earn 10 points from 12 matches while Niaz shared the forth position along with FM Nasir Ahmed with seven points each.

GM Ziaur Rahman was in second position with 9.5 points after beating IM Abu Sufian while IM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar was in the third position with nine points. Sagar drew with FM Debaraj Chatterjee.



Treble-winners Sheikh Russel KC are planning to rope in a group of quality foreign players to replace the ones that left in the summer including Haitian forward Sony Norde.

Sheikh Russel, who started their pre-season training camp at the BUET ground last Saturday, lost much of its strength after striker Zahid Hasan Emily, midfielder Mamunul Islam, defenders Ashraf Mahmud Linkon, Uttam Kumar Banik and winger Rajon Mia left for Mohammedan SC and Sheikh Jamal DC for the upcoming season.

However, their biggest loss was Sony, the architect of their treble triumph, who is set to



**FUTURE JOHNNY WILKINSONS? Budding rugby players of Dhaka showcase their skills during a match between Shahid Nabi High School and Shegunbagicha High School in the Cooline School Rugby Competition at the Paltan Maidan yesterday.**

PHOTO: STAR

## Sammy to skipper India Tests

IAN'S, St. John's

Darren Sammy will lead the West Indies in the two-Test series in India next month.

The West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) has announced a 15-man squad for the series, starting with the first Test on November 6. The second Test will be played from November 14-18, reports CMC.

The West Indians will begin the tour October 27 with a three-day warm-up match. They will also play three one-day internationals (ODIs) on November 21, 24 and 27 but the venues are yet to be decided.