

## Abahani in last four

SPORTS REPORTER



Eight-time champions Abahani set-up a semi-final clash against pre-tournament favourites Sheikh Jamal DC after beating Feni Soccer Club 2-0 in the second quarterfinal of the Walton Federation Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. A wonderful freekick by makeshift left-back Atiqur Rahman Meshu early in the second-half and an injury time strike from Ghanaian striker Osei Morrison made sure the Sky Blues were through to the last four of the football season's curtain-raising tournament, having bowed out from the quarterfinal stage of this tournament last season.

The first half was quite an even affair as neither side managed to create a goalscoring chance. The first shot in anger came in the 31st minute, from an unlikely source, when Feni Soccer defender Alauddin unleashed a powerful shot from thirty yards out, only to be tipped away for a corner by the Abahani goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel.

Abahani, who were mourning the death of their veteran left-back Wali Faisal's newborn child (who opted out of the match because of the tragedy), did not look the same side that beat Mohammedan so convincingly five days ago. Abahani's defensive woes compounded when skipper Mohammad Sujon limped off in the 39th minute after aggravating a groin injury. Going forward, Abahani hardly made a dent in the Feni Soccer backline.

But things changed after the breather when Abahani were awarded a free-kick right from the edge of the box when Morrison was brought down by Feni midfielder Ajmal Hossain Bidyut. Meshu, who has a terrific left foot, curved the ball over the wall and at the left corner of the net, with the best effort from Feni 'keeper Mohammad Nehal coming to nothing. The goal gave Abahani a kick that they needed and they started to find more openings at the Feni backline, which was now stretched as they themselves looked for an equaliser.

Abahani almost had a second goal when Abdul Baten Komol chipped the ball over an onrushing Nehal, only to be denied by the goal-line clearance from Alauddin. Abahani players claimed that the ball had crossed the line, but the linesman stuck to his decision.

Feni were denied by the woodwork in the 86th minute when Wassio Oladikpiko's powerful header, on a freekick from Ali Hasan, hit the crossbar after brushing the fingertips of Abahani goalie Sohel.

Abahani coach Amalesh Sen felt his side could not play their natural game in the first half as Feni allowed little space for their forwards to manoeuvre as well as not having Wali in the lineup and the injury to Sujon.

"We did not play well in the first half as we had shortages in defence while our forwards were not provided with enough assistance from midfield. But we played better in the second half and were unlucky not to have won by a bigger margin," said the veteran coach.



**Abahani's Atiqur Rahman Meshu (R) scored a beauty from a magnificent freekick yesterday in his side's 2-0 quarterfinal win against Feni SC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. However, the match started with a sombre tone as the players (inset) of both teams observed a minute's silence over the death of the new-born son of Abahani's left-back Wali Faisal, who celebrated the birth of his child during the match against Mohammedan last Monday.**

PHOTOS: STAR



## Siddikur at 8th

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Siddikur Rahman moved up to joint 8th position at the end of Round 3 of the Indonesian Open yesterday with an aggregate score of eight-under-par (205). The two-time Asian Tour winner, who was stranded at 13th position on the previous day having played 16 holes of round two, returned early in the morning at the Pantai Indah Kapuk course to finish the last two holes with two birdies. That took him up to 8th position at the start of round three. The 29-year-old started the third round brilliantly by birdying the second and third holes before bogeying the fourth and the sixth. However, Siddikur bounced back, trading three more birdies for one bogey at the back nine to end the round at two-under-par (69) for a share of the eighth position.

Siddikur will start the final round with a five-shot deficit from joint leaders Gaganjeet Bhullar of India and Jazz Janewattanond of Thailand, who are at 13-under-par (200). Bhullar finished the day with a two-under-par (69) while Jazz carded three-under-par (68).

## DPL: A mixed package

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As a Mahmudullah Riyad-led Gazi Tank Cricketers lifted Bangladesh's premier one-day domestic trophy—the Dhaka Premier League—on Friday, it finally marked the end of a competition that for most part of this year was in danger of being postponed.

Thankfully, for the many cricketers who depend upon it for their livelihood, the League did take place—albeit with a number of firsts. The DPL this year, in a sense, resembled a mixed package with its share of new rules, controversies and good performances.

### PLAYER-BY-CHOICE

The most highlighted aspect was the introduction of the player-by-choice system, where each of the twelve clubs were allowed to buy players—whose prices were fixed—turn by turn as opposed to the traditional system of the players negotiating directly with the club of their choice.

The changes that the new system brought about were readily visible as two teams – Gazi Tank and Prime Doleshwar—who had never won the competition before, upstaged the form book this year.

The new system also compelled clubs to rope more foreign players in an effort to bolster their line up. As a result, the League witnessed a record 82 foreign players.

### RECORD FOREIGN RECRUITS

The inclusion of top quality foreign players was much needed, in a tournament where the clubs could not get their desired local players. At the end of the day, Gazi Tank, who had spent a great deal on the likes of Ryan Ten Doeschate, Eoin Morgan and Jacob Oram went on to win the title. Ten Doeschate finished with an average of 176 in four matches, whereas Morgan's 84 in the last innings helped Gazi win the trophy.

England's Ravi Bopara played just 10 matches for Prime Bank Cricket Club and with 670 runs was the highest run-scorer of the League. He performed with the ball as well, taking a total of 16 wickets.

Zimbabwe's Elton Chigumbura was involved in a world record when he compelled Abahani's Alauddin Babu to leak 39 runs in an over—the highest ever in List A cricket. He hammered four sixes and two fours, with the rest of the runs coming from extras.

### LOCAL BOYS SHINE

Amongst the local players, Bangladesh's captain Mushfiqur Rahim was the stand out performer. He scored 624 runs at an average of 69.33 and led Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club to second place. The League also saw a number of former national players getting into rhythm. Imrul Kayes with 655 runs was the second highest run-scorer of the event. Rakibul Hassan played a few match-winning

innings in the Super League for Gazi. Opener Nafees Iqbal too had a good run, scoring 430 runs at an average of 71.67. Young Mosaddek Hossain, who scored 435 at a 50plus average, seems to be a good prospect for the future.

While the slow-left arm bowlers did end up getting majority of the wickets this year, it was the pacers who impressed the most. Rubel Hossain and Al Amin Hossain, picked up 25 and 20 wickets at an average of 14.56 and 14.90 respectively.

### A DELAY WITH PURPOSE

The DPL this year has been amidst controversies right from the very beginning with the starting date shifted at least five times. Many believe that the League was delayed on purpose, as it would provide the top six clubs from last year an advantage during the BCB elections. On the field too, there were complaints that a powerful club had allegedly influenced the umpires in order to avoid relegation.

### UNSPORTING

Mahmudullah Riyad may have just escaped with a TK 5,000 fine in the unofficial final for inappropriate gestures towards the gallery during the match, but that sort of behaviour is not something one would expect from a national vice-captain. The same goes for Khaled Mahmud—now a board director -- who was similarly penalised losing his cool during a match involving his team, Prime Bank.

## Coach's focus on T20

SPORTS REPORTER



The national cricketers are going to enjoy a week's break after the completion of Dhaka Premier League (DPL). And when they get back to business, they will have to shift gears for T20 cricket as head coach Shane Jurgensen feels this format needs more attention.

Recently Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hasan Papon, after a board meeting, informed that they were going to arrange a four-team T20 domestic tournament to help the team prepare for next year's ICC Twenty20 World Cup at home. But the cricket operations committee ultimately endorsed Jurgensen's plans.

The Australian has favoured a competition between the national team and A team. He proposed three matches on December 10, 12 and 14 as he wanted a quality competition. But the current political turmoil and the plan of starting the National Cricket League in the last week of this month have forced the BCB to hold back the initial plan.

"Yes, we are now planning to arrange three T20 matches between two teams," confirmed Akram Khan, new chairman of the cricket operations committee.

Bangladesh fared as a very competitive team in the 50-overs format; they are making steady progress in the five-day game, but they are yet to know the craft of the shortest version of the game and that is why Jurgensen wants to take the opportunity to tune his boys for this format in

the off time.

"At the moment we are just waiting to finalise specific details but we are also looking to do some work on our T20 game, some of the guys are playing in the Chittagong T20 tournament, we sort of felt that there is an opportunity for the national team to practise T20 cricket," the coach told The Daily Star Sport yesterday when asked about what was the team's next plan of action after the DPL.

"We will get to the deep of T20 cricket after we play some matches. We just feel we need to do a little bit of work in this area and with a fully fit group of players to be selected for. It will be an intense sort of battle, that's what we are after. The team balance and structure that we want for the T20 team," he added.

He said he has another important area which is to work with the pace bowlers with a long-term plan.

"The other thing that we are looking to do is pick upto 15 fast bowlers. These fast bowlers will be monitored quite intensely. It's all for the preparation of the coming series in the next year. We want this group of fast bowlers to be ready at any stage," said Jurgensen.

"The players will get selected over the next week or so and then will probably start practising from the 8th or the 14th December and it will go on till April 6. Some players will not be focussing apart from Test cricket. We need to make sure that all our back up options is ready," he continued.

He was excited with the extension of Mushfiqur Rahim's tenure as the national skipper till the World Cup in 2015.

## ICC WORLD TWENTY20 Tigers, Afghans, Nepal & HK in same group

SPORTS REPORTER



The ICC World Twenty20 will kick-start with hosts Bangladesh taking on Afghanistan on March 16, in an important clash of the first round at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur. The Tigers who are placed in group A, will also face Nepal and Hong Kong.

The groupings were confirmed after the completion of the ICC World Twenty20 qualifiers in UAE last night -- following a media release from the ICC -- which saw Ireland clinch the title by beating Afghanistan in the finals. Nepal finished third whereas hosts UAE were fourth. The Netherlands beat Hong Kong to get the fifth position and the latter finished sixth.

On the other hand, Ireland, UAE and the Netherlands have been placed in group B alongside Zimbabwe. The toppers of both the groups will qualify to the 'Super 10' to meet the top ranked eight teams.

In the T20 world rankings Afghanistan are placed ahead of Bangladesh and will be posing the main threat. After facing Afghanistan on March 16, Bangladesh will face Nepal at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium at Chittagong on March 18 and will end the first round by playing Hong Kong at the same venue on March 20.

## Big changes coming in new IPL

INTERNET, Mumbai

Changes were expected and the 7th season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) will see some big changes. From player retention to a reduction of salary cap, the governing council of the tournament has started to ring in the changes for the next edition to be played in April 2014.

According to reports, the new edition will see a reduction of the salary cap and the players will be paid in Indian rupees as opposed to US dollars. The new proposed salary cap for this season is 60 crore rupees, which is significantly lower than what was there in the last edition.

In 2013, the teams could spend up to an amount of 12.5 million dollars on salaries which roughly came to 78 crore rupees as per the current exchange rates. However, there would be an increase of five per cent in the salary cap every year.

## Solace for South Africa

AFF, Centurion



Vernon Philander led a strong performance by South Africa's bowlers to set up a four-wicket consolation win for the hosts in the third and final one-day international against Pakistan at SuperSport Park on Saturday.

Philander took three for 26 in a Pakistan total of 179 all out. South Africa made heavy weather of the chase but won with 68 balls to spare, steered home by an unbeaten 48 from captain AB de Villiers.

Pakistan's Misbahul Haq also played a captain's innings, making 79 not out. But no other Pakistan batsman scored more than 25.

Philander, recently recalled to the one-day side after starring for the South African Test team, struck with the fourth ball of the match when Ahmed Shehzad was caught at first slip without scoring. Shehzad made a century when Pakistan clinched the series by winning the second match in Port Elizabeth on Wednesday.

Fellow new ball bowler Lonwabo Tsotsobe had Asad Shafiq caught behind in the fourth over and Pakistan were unable to build any significant partnerships against hostile bowling on a pitch which offered good bounce.

The best stand of the innings was 51 for the eighth wicket between Misbah and Abdur Rehman (22).

South Africa made a fast start, with Quinton de Kock and Hashim Amla putting on 39 on 35 balls for the first wicket before De Kock mistimed a hook against Bilamal Bhatti

and was caught at backward square leg.

The momentum slowed as new cap Henry Davids was tied down by Saeed Ajmal before being stumped off the off-spinner after struggling to seven off 18 balls. Davids was a late replacement for Graeme Smith, who was absent because of a family bereavement.

Amla made 41 before being run out after a superb stop and quick throw by Umar Amin at backward point.

In contrast to his dazzling 74 off 45 balls in Port Elizabeth, where he played one big shot too many and was out before South Africa "crossed the line", in his words, De Villiers played a risk-free innings to ensure that South Africa successfully chased down a target for the first time in eight recent attempts, facing 63 balls and hitting only three boundaries.

Ajmal was again the best Pakistan bowling, taking two for 34 in 10 overs.

With the series decided, both sides showed several changes.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**PAKISTAN:** 179 all out in 46.5 overs (Misbah 79 not out, Amin 25, Maqsood 25, Rehman 22; Philander 3-26, McLaren 2-28, Tsotsobe 2-38, Tahir 2-56)

**SOUTH AFRICA:** 181 for 6 in 38.4 overs (De Villiers 48 not out, Amla 41, Miller 24; Ajmal 2-34, Bhatti 1-35)

**Result:** South Africa won by 4 wickets and Pakistan won the 3-ODI series 2-1.

**Player-of-the-match:** Vernon Philander.

**Player-of-the-series:** Saeed Ajmal.

## Sony to be fit for semi

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Jamal DC's prolific striker Sony Norde will be fit to play in the Walton Federation Cup semifinal against Abahani on Wednesday, confirmed a source within the club. The Haitian forward, who has already scored five goals in the tournament including two in the quarterfinal against Mohammedan on Friday, was cynically fouled by the Black and Whites defender Sesan Idowu. The off-the-ball stamping on Sony's Knee forced the striker to leave the field on a stretcher and was taken to the hospital for further inspection. However, the club's Argentine trainer Ariel Coleman confirmed that the injury is not serious and the player will be back in time for the semifinal.

"This sort of injury is not severe. Unless any further complication arises, Sony will be fit within 2-3 days and in time for the semifinal," said Coleman.

## 'Keep your moustache'

ANI, Sydney

Former Australian Test great Merv Hughes has advised pace spearhead Mitchell Johnson not to 'mess' with his moustache as he believes that the 'mo' has been a game changer for Johnson, who was the player of the match in Brisbane after blasting Australia to a 381-run first Test victory.

With Movember officially over on Saturday, Johnson is considering whether to shave off the imposing handlebar unless he raises 50,000 dollars for men's health.

However, news.com.au reports that Hughes, who still sports the biggest moustache among cricketers, urged Johnson to keep his moustache if his performance, which took him to 214 wickets (passing Hughes's own 212), is going well for him.

Hughes further said that sportsmen are very superstitious, adding that they often view anything they do, either on or off the field, with superstition.

There is an unbroken line of imposing moustaches from 1970, when Dennis Lillee began, to 1994, when Hughes finished, gathering 567 wickets between them, the report added.