

SPORT

Prime Bank take Victory crown

Beat UCB-BCB XI by 55 runs in final

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The Victory Day T20 Cup came to an end yesterday with Shakib Al Hasan's Prime Bank Cricket Club (PBCC) being crowned champions after comprehensively beating Tamim Iqbal's UCB-BCB XI by 55 runs in the final at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

The short tournament, organised by the Bangladesh Cricket Board to provide the national players some T20 practice ahead of the ICC World Twenty20 next year, had a number of highlights, most noticeable among them being the grand response that the competition received in Sylhet.

The national team has been struggling to find an opening partner for Tamim and fortunately for the selectors a number of openers performed well in the competition. Prime Bank's Anamul Haque, with 325 runs and 13 dismissals as wicketkeeper, was adjudged the man of the tournament. Jahurul Islam of Mohammedan too hit form -- his whirlwind 31-ball 80 against UCB-BCB XI will surely have roused the selectors' interest.

Amongst the uncapped players it was Sabbir Rahman who made the best impression. His 293 runs in the tournament came almost at an average of 50 and he was a livewire in Shakib's side. Among the bowlers it was Al Amin Hossain from BCB XI with 16 wickets -- including four wickets in four balls against Abahani -- who seemed to trouble the batsmen most on pitches that had very little on offer for the bowlers.

He performed in the finals as well, finishing with figures of 3 for 31. However, despite his good spell, Prime Bank managed to put on a decent 174 for 6 after electing to bat first.

Prime Bank were boosted by Liton Kumar's first-half century of the tournament. Liton hit two sixes and six fours in his 39-ball 62 and was the mainstay of the first innings. While Liton did not follow an overtly aggressive method he did find the gaps with precision. He used his feet cleverly against the spinners and drove the pacers through the gaps.

The rest of the batting order however failed to take Liton's cue and wasted good starts.

In reply, BCB XI's chase began on a rough

note as they lost their skipper and key batsman Tamim in the second over of the innings. Tamim came down the track to Shohag Gazi but played a defensive shot, and the ball seemed to hit the pad and go back to the bowler who took a low catch, after which the umpire sent Tamim on his way. The left-hander was visibly unhappy with the decision and took some time to walk back to the gallery. He later stated that the ball was nowhere near his bat. He was fined Tk 10,000 by the match referee for breaching the code of conduct.

Rony Talukdar (32 off 24) seemed in good touch and played a few good-looking drives against Shakib and Gazi. He hit one six and four fours but failed to carry on and was caught at mid off in the seventh over. They lost regular wickets after that and halfway through the innings were struggling at 76 for 5. The hard-hitting Muktar Ali, the team's last hope, came in at number seven only to be sent back by a brilliant diving catch at the edge of the long off boundary by Rubel Hossain in the 15th over. Faced with a ballooning asking rate, the chase then fizzled

PRIME BANK CC: 174 for 6 (Liton 62, Anamul 27, Sabbir 25; Al Amin 3-31, Muktar 2-31)
UCB-BCB XI: 119 for 8 (Rony 32, Imrul 23; Tajjul 2-21, Rubel 1-19)
Player-of-the-match: Rubel Hossain.
Player-of-the-tournament: Anamul Haque.

TOP FIVE WICKET-TAKERS

Bowler	M	O	R	W	BBF
Al-Amin	7	25	192	13	5/17
Shakib Al Hasan	6	22.4	145	11	6/18
Tajjul Islam	7	25	164	11	2/21
Dewan Sabbir	5	20	185	11	4/22

TOP FIVE RUN-SCORERS

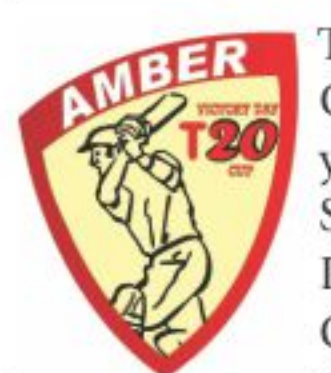
Batsman	M	R	SR	6s	Avg	50s	100s	HS
Anamul Haque	7	298	142.6	13	42.57	1	1	105
Tamim Iqbal	7	275	126.1	8	39.29	1	1	130
Sabbir Rumman	7	268	133.3	7	53.60	3	0	84*
Soumya Sarkar	6	179	116.2	9	29.83	2	0	55
Jahurul Islam	6	178	158.9	8	35.60	2	0	80



Players and officials of Prime Bank Cricket Club rejoice with the Victory Day T20 Cup trophy after they beat United Commercial Bank BCB XI in the final at Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on Tuesday. PHOTO: STAR

Opposing views on its value

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The Victory Day T20 Cup, which ended yesterday with Shakib Al Hasan's Prime Bank Cricket Club being crowned champions, was the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) attempt to replace the third season of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20 that was scheduled to take place during this time of the year. It was also an opportunity for the players to garner some T20 practice ahead of the ICC World Twenty20 at home next year.

The question that lingers is the extent to which the tournament, which unlike the BPL featured only local players, achieved its desired aims. The two finalists were fittingly led by the two biggest cricketers in

the land, and interestingly, Prime Bank's Shakib and UCB-BCB XI's Tamim Iqbal had opposing views on the tournament's value.

According to Tamim Iqbal, the national opener and captain of runners-up UCB-BCB XI, the inaugural competition was a grand success and was even good enough to replace the BPL.

"This kind of tournament should not stop after just one year. Yes, the BPL is very important, but here the focus is completely on the locals and they are the ones who have to take the responsibility to win matches. If they play regularly, they will have an idea of how to win matches for us in the international arena," said Tamim after the final, which his team lost by 55 runs.

"It's not the case that we don't enjoy BPL, but I think the players

enjoyed this tournament a lot and they took it very seriously. Take the case of Rumman (Sabbir Rahman). He performed well in front of a good crowd in Sylhet and this will definitely help him play in pressure situations in the future if he plays for the national team. This tournament should only be for the local players," he added.

Ace allrounder Shakib Al Hasan, who had earlier stated that winning the tournament would not mean much, stated the importance of the presence of an 'international flavour' in such contests.

"It is a different experience playing international cricket. The pressure is different. There was almost everything here. The only difference between BPL and this tournament was that there was pressure in every match in the BPL," said Shakib.

He however stated that the tournament had given him a better idea of his performance levels.

"As far as my performance is concerned it was alright as I started playing this tournament without any practice. But there are a lot of things that I need to start working on, right from fitness to other areas," he said.

Having played in leagues in the West Indies and England, Shakib's cricketing activities this year has been dominated mostly by T20 cricket. He however missed out on the tour to Sri Lanka and a crucial ODI series against New Zealand through injury. It's a trend that he wants to change next year.

"Personally the performance in 2013 was never close to my liking as I missed a lot of matches. I hope I can participate in all the available matches next year by remaining fit,"

BCB delegates meet SL high commissioner

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A delegation from the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday made a courtesy call to the Sri Lankan high commissioner in Dhaka, W. A. Sarath K. Weragoda, to apprise him of the preparations for the Sri Lanka cricket team's tour of Bangladesh this month.

BCB director Mahbubul Anam, who along with BCB's acting CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury visited the high commissioner, said that it was just a courtesy call to inform Weragoda of the preparations for the series.

BCB took the initiative as there have been reports regarding Sri Lanka Cricket's concern over Bangladesh's current political unrest.

BCB media committee chairman Jalal Yunus informed that they have got a positive response from the Sri Lanka High Commission in Dhaka.

Sri Lanka will arrive in Dhaka on January 24 to play two Tests, three ODIs and two T20 matches.

Sharapova into qtrs

AFP, Brisbane

Australian teenager Ashleigh Barty has withdrawn from the Brisbane International tennis tournament with a tear in a left abductor muscle.

Barty was scheduled to play third seed Maria Sharapova in the second round on Wednesday.

Sharapova will now advance to the quarterfinals, where she will play 2012 champion Kaia Kanepi of Estonia.



Mohammedan SC's new Portuguese coach Rui Jose Capela Batista (R) gets to know his players after his arrival at the club tent in Motijheel yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Capela takes over at MSC

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Mohammedan SC yesterday flew in Portuguese coach Rui Jose Capela Batista as their eighth foreign coach to guide the Black and Whites in the ongoing season after local coach Saiful Bari Titu had decided to join the Bangladesh Football Federation.

With the appointment of Capela, Mohammedan are expecting to grab their first-ever title in the seventh edition of the professional football league. However, the 44-year old coach himself did not give any such promise, but said he would help the Black and Whites make improvement from their last year's position, which was fifth-place finish.

The UEFA level-2 licensed coach's last job was as the sporting director of the U-18 side of Paraguay's second division side Club Atletico 3 de Febrero, according to the information available on the internet. Batista was associated with the club from 2011 to 2013 while he had also worked with Portuguese clubs like Esperanca de Lagos, Portimonense, Grupo Desportivo de Lagoas and Quarteimense.

Capela has also experience as a scout for SL Benfica from 2004-06 and Porto FC from 2007 to 2010, played for the U-16 and U-18 national Portugal team. He called his time on his playing career in 2001.

"I have a long experience of coaching in Portugal and Paraguay and I want to utilise that here. I like good football and it is very important for me to coach Mohammedan, who are a major club in Bangladesh," said Capela, who was seemingly tired following a long trip from Lisbon to Dhaka via Turkey.

Capela came straight to the club tent in Motijheel after arriving in the afternoon and briefed the media, through his poor English skills and later met the players for a few minutes. "I have coaching experience in Europe and South America and this time I have chosen to gather some experience in Asia and I'm taking the challenge," said the coach adding that he has little idea about Mohammedan, its players and the football of Bangladesh.

During a short briefing to the players on the club premises, the Portuguese emphasised on three aspects -- discipline, intensity and organisation of play.

The 44-year old coach, who is a follower of his more illustrious compatriot Jose Mourinho, prefers the coaching style of Pep Guardiola and claimed that Portuguese superstar Luis Figo is a friend of his and he often speaks to Figo over phone since both of them played at the national age-group teams. Capela also claimed to have played with former Portuguese goalkeeper Vitor Baia at the age-level.

Capela has been appointed for a six month tenure, informed director-in-charge of Mohammedan SC Ltd Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan.

"We have yet to win the professional football league but this time we will take all necessary steps in line with Batista's recommendations such as recruiting foreign players in the mid-term transfer window. We are hoping to put an end to

BPL resumes today

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The 7th Bangladesh Premier League resumes today through the match between Abahani and Brothers Union at the Bangabandhu National Stadium after a three-day break following unavailability of the security personnel at the premier football venue.

The Bangladesh Football Federation was forced to suspend the league just two days after it started as authorities failed to ensure the security at the big bowl following the 'March for Democracy' programme called by the 18-party opposition alliance.

"After getting assurance of deployment of security personnel at the stadium, we decided to resume the league from tomorrow (Wednesday)," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag.

Premier hockey from Jan 18

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The Dhaka Premier Division Hockey League will get underway from January 18, two days after the completion of season's curtain-raising tournament Club Cup.

"A meeting of the League Committee decided to start the Club Cup from January 7 and Premier Division Hockey League from January 18," said Bangladesh Hockey Federation general secretary Khaza Rahmatullah yesterday.

"The first-leg of the seven-team league will be followed by Super Four to decide the title," said Rahmatullah adding that each of the clubs would be allowed to play four foreign players against five registrations.

BD U-19s exit Asia Cup

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Bangladesh Under-19s once again failed to qualify for the semifinals of the Asia Cup following a two-wicket defeat to Sri Lanka Under-19s in the last group match in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

But it was again Afghanistan Under-19s, the team that eliminated Bangladesh from the group stages in the last event in Kuala Lumpur, who played a major part in breaking the hearts of the Junior Tigers as the Afghans bulldozed Malaysia by 10 wickets to qualify for the last four by virtue of a better run-rate than Bangladesh. Afghanistan shot Malaysia out for 40 runs and then achieved the target in only 3.2 overs.

Bangladesh Under-19s, who won their first two games against Malaysia and Afghanistan, could manage only 203 runs for six wickets after deciding to bat first in

their last group game. Nazmul Hossain top-scored with 62 off 88 with the help of six boundaries.

Sri Lanka reached the target with eleven balls to spare, riding on a hundred from Kusal Mendis and an unbeaten 62 from Priyamal Perera.

A 108-run fourth-wicket stand between Mendis and Perera put Sri Lanka in a comfortable position at 180 for three, but they lost their next five wickets for 13 runs, before Perera and AK Tyrone got the required runs.

BANGLADESH UNDER-19S: 203-6 (Shadman 27, Mosaddek 32, Nazmul 62, Yasir 33; Mendis 2-22)
SRI LANKA UNDER-19S: 206-8 in 48.1 overs (Mendis 100, Perera 62 not out; Nihaduzzaman 2-27, Mehedy 2-38)
Result: Sri Lanka Under-19s won by two

HASTINGS INT'L CHESS Zia shares 2nd position

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman shared the second position in the Masters event of the 89th Hastings International Chess Congress at the close of the third round held at the Horntye Park of East Sussex, England yesterday.

Zia beat Prosvirnikov Vladimir of USA in the third round to earn 2.5 and share the second position along with seven other players. Zia was scheduled to play against German FM Stewart Neil last night.

Some 94 players, including 12 GM, 12 IM from 23 countries are taking part in the tournament.