

Mashrafe given BCL spot

SPORTS REPORTER



Going by pacer Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's desire to make one more try at returning to Test cricket, the national selectors have included him in the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL), a four-day domestic tournament scheduled to begin on January 12.

Mashrafe, whose susceptibility to injury has kept him out of the longer version for a majority of the last four years, in a recent interview had stated his eagerness to make one last attempt to reignite his Test career by participating in a domestic four-day competition.

The pacer was initially supposed to sit out the tournament and be a part of a special bowling programme that would help him maintain his fitness levels. Yesterday however, the national selectors, after having a chat with the player decided to include him in the Islami Bank East Zone, one of the four teams in the BCL.

TEAMS

North Zone: Mushfiquur Rahim, Junaed Siddique, Naeem Islam, Nasir Hossain, Mysukur Rahman, Sabbir Rahman, Forhad Hossain, Mizanur Rahman, Saqlain Sajib, Sanjamul Islam, Tajjul Islam, Md Shohrawardi, Hamidul Islam, Forhad Reza, Muktar Ali, Shuvashis Roy, Mahmudul Hassan, Delwar Hossain, Jahurul Islam, Nazmul Hossain.

East Zone: Tamim Iqbal, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Mominul Haque, Nafis Iqbal, Nazimuddin, Alok Kopali, Tapash Baysia, Rumman Ahmed, Shafiuul Islam, Tasamul Haq, Jubair Ahmed, Liton Kumar Das, Enamul Haque Jr, Nabil Samad, Dhiman Ghosh, Nur Hossain, Alauddin Babu, Abu Zahid Chowdhury, Mehedi Hassan Rana, Yasin Arafat.

South Zone: Anamul Haque, Imrul Kayes, Shakib Al Hasan, Rubel Hossain, Al-Amin, Shohag Gazi, Shuvagata Hom, Ziaur Rahman, Abdur Razzak, Robiul Islam, Nazmul Islam Opu, Murad Khan, Soumya Sarkar, Taibur Rahman, Md Mithun, Fazle Rabbi, Salman Hossain, Nasir Uddin Faruq, Monir Hossain, Kamrul Islam Rabbi.

Central Zone: Shamsur Rahman, Rokibul Hassan, Mahmudullah Riyad, Elias Sunny, Shahriar Nafees, Marshall Ayub, Abdul Majid, Rony Talukder, Mehrab Hossain, Nurul Hasan, Arafat Sunny, Md Sharifullah, Dewan Sabbir, Shahadat Hossain, Mohammad Sharif, Md. Shoaib, Tarek Aziz, Saikat Ali, Sahagir Hossain, Talha Jubair.

Usha maul Azad

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Defending champions Usha Krira Chakra made a flying start in the UCBL Club Cup Hockey Competition when they thrashed Azad Sporting Club by a massive 13-1 goal margin at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Usha's national defender Mamunur Rahman Chayan scored four goals from penalty corners while Zahid Bin Talib, Moinul Islam Koushik and Krishno Kumar scored two goals each. Belal Hossain, Sarwar Hossain and Tapash Barman scored the other three goals for the defending champions. The winners led the first half by 6-1 goals.

There are two matches to be played today. Sonali Bank will take on Dhaka Wanderers Club while Azad SC will play against Ajax SC.

Tennis team in Thailand

SPORTS REPORTER

A six-member team from Bangladesh are currently participating in two tournaments of the ITF U-14 Asian Tennis Championship Division-2 in Bangkok, Thailand, said a press release from the Bangladesh Tennis Federation yesterday. The members of the Bangladesh team are: Mohammad Hridoy Hasan, Naimul Islam Amiyo, Zubin Omar, Afrana Islam Preety, Popy Akter and coach Rokon Uddin Ahmed. The other participating teams are: Bhutan, Indonesia, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Syria, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Libya and Yemen.

"His eagerness and the fact that he has lost a lot of weight are some of the key factors that helped us take the decision of including him in the BCL," said chief selector Faruque Ahmed.

"One can say that it's a chance that we are taking, but on the other hand if he never plays four-day cricket then we will never get to know his capability in this format," he added.

Mashrafe, who played his last Test in 2009, is however unlikely to return for the upcoming Test series against Sri Lanka.

"Not now," said Faruque, when asked if he would be considered for the Sri Lanka Test series.

"Mashrafe is a very important player for us. He does not need to prove anything. We have plans for him in the one-dayers and T20s. Even from that aspect it will be good if he plays the four dayers," he added.

The player, who is currently following a bowling programme designed by national coach Shane Jurgensen, stated that he would want to play at least one game in the league.

The last time Mashrafe played in a longer version game was in a three-day practice match prior to the New Zealand series in September last year. Mashrafe's last official longer version game was in November 2012 when he played for Khulna in the National Cricket League. Prior to that, he featured for Khulna in the 2009-2010 NCL season.

Unlike last year's BCL, a majority of the national players will be available for this year's competition. Central Zone were the champions last year. They beat North Zone in a close final at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, a match played under lights with a pink ball. This year however, Central will be without one of their key players in Mosharraf Hossain, who has been temporarily suspended due to fixing allegations.

Central's Marshall Ayub, with 465 runs in four matches including a career-best 289, was the highest run-scorer of the tournament. Among the bowlers it was spinner Shohag Gazi who topped the wickets column with 19 wickets in three matches.

The tournament will be played at the BKSPP and will see two rounds take place between January 11 to January 21, after which the national players will join their camp for the Sri Lankan series. The finals will take place after the Sri Lankan series.



Sheikh Jamal's Nigerian striker Emeke Darlington celebrates a goal of his treble as Brothers Union goalkeeper Sabuj Das kneels down in despair during their Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Sheikh Jamal thrash Brothers Union

SPORTS REPORTER



Nigerian hitman Emeke Darlington slammed the second hatrick of the 7th Bangladesh Premier League to power title aspirants Sheikh Jamal DC to an emphatic 4-1 win over Brothers Union at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Haitian Wedson Anselme struck the other goal for the Federation Cup champions, who jointly lead the table with six points from two matches with defending champions Sheikh Russel KC.

Ghanaian midfielder Issah Yousuf pulled one back for Brothers Union in their second defeat in as many matches.

In the absence of injured Sony Norde, Darlington seemed to take all responsibility as the Nigerian striker followed up his two-goal feat of the previous match to hit a treble after Sheikh Russel KC striker Mithun Chowdhury slammed the hatrick in the first match of the seventh edition of the professional football league.

On the back of a comfortable 3-1 win over Chittagong Abahani in their opening match, Sheikh Jamal took the field with confidence sky high against Brothers Union, who have troubled them in their past league encounters. The 2011 champions, playing with their usual 4-3-3 formation, took little time to establish their control in the midfield.

The first goal came in the 17th minute when Nigerian winger Okemmiri ran down deep to provide a low cross for his compatriot Darlington, who flicked the ball home from inside the six-yard box.

Having conceded the lead, Brothers Union stepped up the ante and almost found the equaliser through Kester Akon in the 24th minute, but Akon's attempt was brilliantly saved by the outstretched legs of Sheikh Jamal goalkeeper Ziaur Rahman.

Brothers found the equaliser three minutes later as Issah converted a penalty kick after Nche Francis was brought down inside the box by Raihan Hasan. The equaliser gave promise of mouth-watering match but Darlington soon struck twice within

two minutes kill the game off before the breather.

National midfielder Shohel Rana put a nice through-pass for Darlington, who darted into the box to dance past one defender and round the keeper Sabuj Das to send the ball home with an angular shot in the 33rd minute before he completed his hatrick with a close-range effort after availing a square-pass from Wedson.

After resumption, Brothers bolstered their attacking line by sending on midfielder Sohel Rana in place of Yousuf Ali, which gave Brothers an advantage in the midfield and they even came close to reducing the margin in the 53rd minute but Jewel Rana's placing shot on the far post was saved by the onrushing goalkeeper Zia.

Brothers goalkeeper Sabuj Das also made two superb saves but he could not foil the fourth goal when Wedson volleyed a Darlington header home nine minutes from time.

Despite going 4-1 down, Brothers kept on pressing for reducing the margin and their last effort by substitute Mezbah was cleared from the goalline by Raihan in the 82nd minute.

WI save the best for last

INTERNET, Hamilton



The West Indies racked up their highest-ever limited-overs total to crush New Zealand by 203 runs in the fifth one-day international on Wednesday, and draw the series 2-2.

Kirk Edwards and Dwayne Bravo both notched centuries as the West Indies played New Zealand's attack to reach 363 for four, before Nikita Miller dominated with the ball to skittle the Black Caps for 160.

The mammoth total was the highest ever posted by the West Indies in a 50-over match, surpassing the previous mark of 360 set against Sri Lanka in 1987.

Edwards and Dwayne Bravo came together at 143-3 and put on 211 runs, with Edwards finishing unbeaten on 123, his maiden ODI century. Skipper Bravo was dismissed shortly before the end of the innings for 106.

Opener Kieran Powell had launched a blistering assault at the start of the innings, smashing 73 runs off just 44 balls with 12 fours and two sixes. He plundered 18 off a single Mitchell McClenaghan over.

New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum brought on his brother Nathan to try to stem the runs and the tactic paid off almost immediately when Powell was out lbw for 73, trying to sweep.

Fellow opener Johnson Charles was run out for 31 when Nathan McCullum sent the stumps flying with a direct hit as the batsman attempted a quick single and Lendl Simmons followed soon after, caught by Kane Williamson.

Bravo came to the crease and steadied the innings with Edwards, who smashed a six to notch his half century.

The West Indies bludgeoned 117 off the last 10 overs, with Bravo out trying to smash Williamson out of the ground.

New Zealand made a disastrous start, slumping to 65 for five after just 15 overs through a combination of rash shots and a much-improved West Indian attack.

The Black Caps openers went cheaply, with Martin Gupthill out lbw for six and dangerman Jesse Ryder (17) scooping the ball skyward going for a slog.

SCORES IN BRIEF

WEST INDIES: 363 for 4 in 50 overs (Powell 73, Charles 31, Edwards 123 not out, Bravo 106; Williamson 1-30)

NEW ZEALAND: 160 all out in 29.5 overs (Ryder 17, Anderson 29, N McCullum 18, Mill 26; Holder 2-35, Miller 4-45, Russell 2-31)

Result: West Indies won by 203 runs and 5-match series drawn 2-2.

Player-of-the-match: Dwayne Bravo.

GM chess

SPORTS REPORTER

SM Sharon became 74th, Saimon Siddiqur Rahman became 104th, Sharif Hossain became 107th and Zoar Haque Proddhan became 112th in the 2nd Gurgaon International Grandmasters Chess Tournament which concluded in Hariyana yesterday. In the last round, Sharon beat Subhayan Kundu of India to earn 6 points, Saimon beat Kaur Palkin of India to earn 5.5 points, Sharif lost against Gurung Rakesh of India to finish with 5 points while Zoar lost against FM Hamal Manish of India to end it with 5 points. GM Sanikidze Tornike of Georgia became champion with 8 points.

Petra reaches Sydney semis

AP, Sydney

Former Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova advanced to the Sydney International semifinals on Wednesday with a 7-6 (4), 6-2 victory over fellow Czech player Lucie Safarova.

Kvitova, the second seed, will play the winner of the quarterfinal being played later Wednesday between Italy's Sara Errani and Bulgaria's Tsvetana Pironkova.

In other women's play, defending champion Elena Vesnina retired from her second-round match at the Hobart International with a back injury. Spanish qualifier Estrella Cabeza Candela was leading the match 4-6, 6-2, 4-1 when Vesnina quit.

Kiwi fan catches \$100k

PTI, Hamilton

A New Zealand cricket fan won 100,000 New Zealand dollars Wednesday after taking a spectacular catch in the crowd at the fifth one-day international between the West Indies and the Black Caps in Hamilton.

As part of a sponsorship promotion, brewer Tui pledged to make the payout to any spectator who made a one-handed catch while wearing one of its distinctive orange T-shirts when the ball cleared the boundary.

Michael Morton snared the prize when he latched onto a six from West Indies opening batsman Kieran Powell on the grassy embankment at Seddon Park. "It's pretty unbelievable," he told Sky News. "I was sitting there next to my dad and he yelled out, so I jumped up, put my hand out and somehow it stuck. I'm pretty happy."

Asked if he was a cricketer because of the comfortable way he took the catch, Morton replied: "Not anymore, but maybe I should be."



Action from yesterday's UCB Club Cup hockey tournament encounter between Usha Krira Chakra and Azad Sporting at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

PHOTO: STAR

Mirpur abuzz with returning cricketers

SPORTS REPORTER

Apart from the presence of players like Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Taskin Ahmed -- both of whom are working on their bowling programmes -- and Mushfiquur Rahim who is on a recovery track from his back injury, the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium seemed desolate until last Monday.

However, with the announcement of the start of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) from January 12, the wheels at the home of cricket started churning yet again as players arrived at different hours of the day yesterday to get their desired practice.

Robiul Islam, who went below the radar after his terrific performance in

Zimbabwe last April-May, mainly due to an injury, has vowed to regain his form during the BCL and take the momentum into the Sri Lanka series.

"The injury before the New Zealand series did affect my confidence a bit, but I have been working on that. The country's best cricketers play in this competition. So if I can perform well here it will give me the desired boost," said Robiul.

While Robiul is working towards a strong return to the national side, pacer Nazmul Hossain -- who recently underwent a knee surgery -- is looking forward to his first major tournament ever since the operation.

"My first target is to perform well in the BCL. I have been away from cricket for a long time and I really want to

make the most of it. It will be a challenge for me," said Nazmul.

Former national vice-captain Mahmudullah Riyad, who was left out of the Tigers' last Test series, is also working towards a comeback.

"The two rounds of the BCL is the perfect practice that we can have before the Sri Lanka series. Hopefully all the national players can hit form by then," said Riyad.

Riyad was also pleased to hear that Mashrafe Bin Mortaza would be participating in the tournament.

"He is returning to a longer-version competition after a while. If he stays on it will definitely boost our pace attack. It will be a good support for the other pacers in the team," he said.