

Nitol Tata to sponsor BPL

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday roped in Nitol Tata Group as title sponsors of the Bangladesh Premier League after 35 matches into the ongoing professional football league.

Nitol Tata Group, who had earlier sponsored the National Football Championship from 2000 to 2005, came forward to sponsoring the seventh edition of professional football league after Grameenphone decided not to renew their deal with the game's governing body.

It has been learnt that the amount Nitol Tata is giving to BFF is Tk 60 lakh, even though BFF did not officially disclose the amount. Nitol Tata will also provide some electronics goods to the champions, players and spectators.

It was disclosed at a press conference yesterday at the BFF House where BFF's senior vice president Abdus Salam Murshedy and Nitol Tata Group chairman Abdul Matlub Ahmed were among other presents.

Cavani out for weeks

AFP, Paris

Club record signing Edinson Cavani is set to miss at least three weeks after picking up a hamstring injury in Friday's win over Bordeaux, his club Paris Saint-Germain said Sunday.

The news means the Uruguay striker will miss the crunch top-of-the-table clash at Monaco on February 9.

It also means he could miss PSG's Champions League last 16 first leg clash at Bayer Leverkusen on February 18.

He will also miss the League Cup semifinal at Nantes on Tuesday, as well as the Ligue 1 reception of lowly Valenciennes on February 14, which is also his 27th birthday.

Cavani had to come off in the 76th minute of PSG's 2-0 win over Bordeaux after feeling his hamstring.

"El Matador", as he is known, has scored 13 goals this season and has struck up an effective partnership with Zlatan Ibrahimovic, the league's top scorer with 18 goals.



Real Madrid superstar Cristiano Ronaldo leaves the pitch after he was shown red card during their Primera Liga match against Athletic Bilbao at the San Mames Stadium on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ronaldo sees red as Real held

AFP, Madrid



Cristiano Ronaldo was sent-off as Real Madrid lost ground in the La Liga title race with a 1-1 draw away to Athletic Bilbao on Sunday.

Atletico Madrid became outright leaders for the first time since their double winning season in 1996 earlier in the day with a 4-0 win over Real Sociedad on Sunday.

The draw moves Real level with Barcelona, who suffered a shock defeat at home to Valencia on Saturday, three points behind Atletico.

It could have been so much better for Madrid as after a difficult opening 45 minutes, Jese Rodriguez looked to have them on the road to a 11th consecutive victory when he prodded home Ronaldo's cross 25 minutes from time.

However, after Ibai Gomez had spectacularly equalised, Ronaldo was shown a soft red card for lashing out at Carlos Gurpegi.

And in the end Madrid were grateful to goalkeeper Diego Lopez for salvaging a point as he made lave saves from Gomez and Aritz Aduriz.

Carlo Ancelotti's men could have been in front after just 20 seconds as Ronaldo took advantage of a poor clearance by Gorka Iraizoz, but his effort flew inches wide.

Thereafter, it was Athletic who had the upper hand in the first-half and should have been in front when Aduriz shot wide when clean through on Diego Lopez.

Iker Muniain also passed up a great chance to open the scoring when he miscontrolled

RESULTS

Elche 1 (Herrera 58) Almeria 0
Real Betis 2 (Ruben Castro 71, 88) Espanyol 0
Atletico Madrid 4 (Villa 38, Diego Costa 72, Miranda 74, Diego 87) Real Sociedad 0
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Ibai Gomez 73) Real Madrid 1 (Jese 64)

when unmarked inside the area.

However, Madrid responded after the break and Iraizoz was forced into two flying saves to deny Luka Modric and Karim Benzema.

The visitors did finally find a way through 25 minutes from time as Benzema fed Ronaldo on the left and his low cross was turned home on the stretch by Jese.

Real's lead lasted just nine minutes as Gomez made a stunning introduction as a substitute as with his second touch he fired an effort from 20 yards in off the inside of the post.

Madrid were then left to hold on for a point when Ronaldo saw red after a coming together with Gurpegi after having a penalty appeal turned down.

Earlier, Atletico moved top on an emotional evening at the Vicente Calderon, as former players and fans paid their tributes to former Spain and Atletico player and coach Luis Aragonés, who died on Saturday, before the match.

After a quiet start, the hosts went in front seven minutes before the break when David Villa finished off a fine team move for his 12th goal of the season.

Diego Costa made sure of the three points 18 minutes from time when he coolly slotted Raul Garcia's through ball into the far corner.

Bayern run riot

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich maintained their 13-point lead at the top of the Bundesliga with a 5-0 home romp against Eintracht Frankfurt to extend their record 44-match unbeaten run on Sunday.

Bayern ran riot against strugglers Frankfurt with Mario Goetze, Franck Ribery, Arjen Robben and centre-back Dante all getting on the scoresheet at Munich's Allianz Arena.

Spain's Thiago Alcantara set a new Bundesliga record with 185 ball contacts as Bayern's midfield dominated.

Germany star Goetze put the hosts ahead when he chested down Mario Mandzukic's cross and slammed his shot inside the far post with only 12 minutes gone.

France star Ribery then proved he has recovered from a leg injury when he added Bayern's second just before the break.

Likewise, Robben came off the bench and fired home Goetze's final pass to put his leg injury behind him on 67 minutes before Dante headed Bayern's fourth two minutes later.

This was Bayern's 17th win in 19 games and they have conceded just nine league goals.

Juve outclass Inter

AFP, Milan



Champions Juventus tightened their grip on Italy's Serie A on Sunday after outclassing Inter Milan 3-1 to claim deserved bragging rights from the 'Derby d'Italia'.

Inter travelled to Turin hoping to at least replicate their 1-1 draw with Antonio Conte's men in Milan during the opening half of the season.

But Juve, who had scored 16 goals in their five previous league games, flew out the blocks and had created several early goalscoring chances before Stephan Lichtsteiner's diving header from Andrea Pirlo's chipped ball gave the hosts a 15th minute lead.

Juve piled on the pressure and only the safe hands of Samir Handanovic kept Inter from conceding more before the break.

Juve doubled their lead only two minutes after the restart thanks to defender Giorgio Chiellini, with an alert Arturo Vidal giving Juve a 3-0 lead on 55 minutes after pouncing on Paul Pogba's rebound.

Inter's efforts in a late but faint fightback were rewarded in the 71st minute when Rolando beat Marco Storari in the Juve goal although it was scant consolation for what

RESULTS

Atalanta 3 (Denis 47, 64, Moralez 70) Napoli 0
Catania 3 (Bergessio 61, Barrientos 75, Almiron 88)
Livorno 3 (Emeghara 50, 77, Paulinho 72-pen)
Chievo 0 **Lazio 2** (Candreva 6, Keita 70)
Roma v Parma - postponed due to rain
Sassuolo 1 (Floro Flores 90+2) **Verona 2** (Manfredini 50-og, Toni 86)
Juventus 3 (Lichtsteiner 15, Chiellini 47, Vidal 55)
Inter Milan 1 (Rolando 71)

was a decidedly mediocre performance from Walter Mazzarri's side.

Juve's 19th win of the campaign took their lead on Roma to nine points although the Giallorossi's earlier encounter at home to Parma was rained off and has yet to be rescheduled.

Napoli are a distant third, 15 points adrift after a stunning 3-0 collapse at Atalanta, with Fiorentina a further three points off the pace.

Inter have now taken only eight points from their last 10 games and are sixth in the table, 26 points behind Juve and two behind Verona, who occupy the first Europa League qualifying place.

Kallstrom out for a month

AFP, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger revealed on Sunday that new loan signing Kim Kallstrom will be out for around a month with a back injury sustained before he joined the club.

Wenger reacted to a glut of injuries in central midfield by signing the 31-year-old Sweden international from Spartak Moscow on the final day of the January transfer window on Friday.

However, reports soon emerged that Kallstrom had hurt his back playing beach volleyball and might not be able to feature for Arsenal for around six weeks.

Wenger played down the gravity of Kallstrom's injury but admitted that it would keep him sidelined until late February at the earliest.

Ox fires Arsenal

AFP, London



Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain scored twice as Arsenal moved back to the top of the Premier League table with a 2-0 victory over Crystal Palace at the Emirates Stadium on Sunday.

The midfielder, 20, was making just his second league start of the campaign after missing the first five months of it with a knee problem.

Wenger chose to deploy Oxlade-Chamberlain in central midfield and also turned to Lukas Podolski for just his fifth Premier League start of the campaign to add some creativity alongside Mesut Ozil and Santi Cazorla.

But Palace nullified them with surprising ease for 45 minutes as manager Tony Pulis opted to anchor Mile Jedinak and Kagiso Dikgacoi in front of his defence in the hope of stifling the home side.

The hosts fired an early warning when Ozil spotted left-back Nacho Monreal racing upfield and lifted a superb ball over the Palace defence.

The angle was tight for the Spain defender, but he still forced Julian Speroni into a fine stop with his legs.

Monreal's chance appeared to increase Palace's resolve not to let Arsenal go into an early lead and one of their former players nearly put the visitors in front on 14 minutes.

Marouane Chamakh has looked rejuvenated in recent weeks and when he received the ball in midfield, he easily skipped past Laurent Koscielny.

But just as he was bearing down on Wojciech Szczesny, his touch eluded him and the Arsenal goalkeeper dived at his feet to save.

The closest either side came in the opening half was on 34 minutes when Ozil's free-kick was met by the head of Koscielny.

The central defender got the faintest of touches, but as the ball looked destined for the corner of the net, Speroni fully extended himself to make a fine save.

However, all of Palace's first-half efforts counted for little just two minutes into the second half.

On the first occasion that Jedinak failed to close down Arsenal's midfield, Cazorla found space to clip a majestic ball over the Palace back line and Oxlade-Chamberlain ghosted into the area before lobbing over the advancing Speroni.

Usha punish Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER



Title contenders Usha KC defeated Abahani 2-0 at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday to finish top of the table at the end of the first-leg of the Green Delta Insurance Premier Hockey League.

The sixth straight win from as many matches means the Club Cup champions will start the Super Four stage with three-point advantage over Abahani, who have 15 points after tasting the first defeat in six matches.

Mamunur Rahman Chayan and Jahid Bin Talib Shuvo struck one goal apiece to guide Usha to their second win over Abahani in the season following their 4-1 win in the Club Cup final.

Both the giants were boosted by the inclusion of four Pakistani players each and it virtually turned into a match between the two sets of Pakistani players.

Abahani shared the lion's share of possession and earned nine penalty corners in the first half but Usha's Pakistani goalkeeper Imran Butt and defender Niaz Ashfaq thwarted all those penalty corners, which were taken by a combination of three Pakistani players.

On the other hand, Usha converted the first penalty corner they earned in the 31st minute when Chayan dragged and flicked home after it was set up by Safkat Rasul and Sarwar Hossain. Usha took control of the proceedings in the second half and doubled the lead in the 40th minute when Shuvo who fired a rebounder from close range. Abahani earned five more penalty corners in the second half, but failed to convert any of them.

In the day's other match, Shadharan Bima and Ajax SC played out a 1-1 draw. Salman Sadik converted a penalty corner in the 47th minute to cancel Bima's 41-minute strike from Rajon.

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