

# MSC's defence dispatches rivals

SPORTS REPORTER



Mohammedan Sporting Club advanced into the final of the Modhumoti Bank Independence Cup football tournament with a lone-goal win over archrivals Abahani at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. The Black and Whites will now take on surprise package Feni in the final on Saturday.

Mohammedan got the all-important goal at the half-hour mark from a nice build-up down the right flank. Hemanta Vincent fed Zongo Ousseni with a neat minus inside the box that the Burkina Faso striker drove hard and low. The goal-bound shot struck the chest of an onrushing striker Zahid Hasan Emily before rattling the roof of the net.

It was Emily who put his name in the scoresheet but more importantly it ended Mohammedan's two-year miserable run against their bitter rivals. Mohammedan not only lost two of their three previous meetings against Abahani this season but also failed to win against them in any competition since their 2-0 success at the Bangladesh Premier League in 2012.

The second semifinal was tipped as a battle between Abahani's attack versus Mohammedan's defence where the heavily fortified Black and White fort triumphed over a toothless Sky Blue attack in front of some 5000 spectators. The ploy adopted by Mohammedan was so frustrating for Abahani coach Ali Akbar that he described it as anti-football after the defeat.

"I did not see any football from Mohammedan, who deployed seven to eight defenders," said a dejected Ali Akbar who also blamed his charges for their lack of mental and physical strength to overcome such a situation.

His Mohammedan counterpart Rui Capella Batista however was very happy with the outcome.

"Before the match I told you guys it was a 50-50 match but my boys put up a big performance against Abahani to make it 100 per cent for Mohammedan," said the Portuguese.

"One-goal lead was enough to defend as my defence organisation and midfield had been in good condition. Our ploy was to

defend first and then go for fast counter attack and my boys stuck to their guns," said a happy Batista.

On the back of two defeats and one draw against Abahani this season, Mohammedan started in aggressive fashion and pressed hard in a game in which their performance was a significant improvement from their quarterfinal clash against Muktiyoddha.

Zongo, Nigerian Demian Chogozie and Hemanta Vincent controlled Mohammedan's midfield and their hard work almost bore result in the 31st minute when Emily raced deep down the right flank but his shot at the near post just drifted away.

In the next minutes, Mohammedan launched the attack from the right and a promising Vincent nicely dodged past Abahani's veteran defender Sujan inside the box to cut it for an unmarked Zongo, whose shot entered the net via an Emily deflection much to the delight of the Black and Whites faithful.

Zongo again came close to doubling the lead but this time his shot floated over the crosspiece at the stroke of half time.

Mohammedan adopted a counter-attack game in the second half, leaving all pressure on their backline that really stood tall to defy the Abahani forwards.

Abahani's Ghanaian duo Auwdu Ibrahim and Osei Morison threatened to level the margin twice but they were denied by new signing Ubom Henry and Nigerian Bayback. Portuguese forward Neolind Soares was not as bright as he was against Sheikh Jamal and headed his only chance over the crosspiece.

Mohammedan also got a couple of good chances in counter attack but they could not avail any of them, thanks to timely interference from Abahani goalkeeper Shahedul Alam Shohel.

## TEAMS

**ABAHANI:** Shahedul Alam (GK), Mohammad Sujan, Atiqur Rahman, Wali Faisal, Samad Yussif, Pranotosh Kumar (Mohammad Rony), Shahedul Alam, Jamal Hossain (Arman Aziz), Awudu Ibrahim (Towhidul Alam), Leonildo Soares and Osei Morison.

**MOHAMMEDAN:** Mamun Khan (GK), Ubom Henry, Bayback, Arup Kumar, Nahidul Islam, Hemanto Vincent, Demian Chogozie, Zongo Ousseni, Zahid Hossain (Habibur



Mohammedan players celebrate their solitary-goal victory over Abahani in the second semifinal of the Modhumoti Bank Independence Cup football tournament at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## War of words goes on

AFP, Colombo



Sri Lanka's cricket board and two senior players were locked in a war of words Wednesday, a day after the World Cup-winning Twenty20 team returned home as national heroes.

Former skippers Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara sparked the row by criticising cricket officials during a red-carpet reception at the airport, but the board hit back with a strongly-worded statement.

Sri Lanka Cricket denied allegations that they had made any disparaging remarks against the duo after they appeared to announce their retirement as the World Cup tournament got underway in Dhaka in mid-March.

Jayawardene was upset with reported comments from a Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) official, who was said to have accused them of announcing their retirement without prior notice to the board.

"SLC considers such statements as damaging to both the image of the institution and the officials concerned," the board said in a one-page statement.

It said Jayawardene's allegations were taken seriously because he suggested that the purported remarks by board secretary Nishantha Ranatunga and CEO Ashley de Silva could have demoralised the players.

"SLC regrets such unsubstantiated accusations levelled against the secretary and CEO by a senior member of the national team without verifying

the facts," the statement said.

Amid the allegations and denials, both players maintained on Tuesday that they had never publicly announced their intention to quit T20 cricket despite giving interviews talking about retirement.

Cricket commentators as well as local and international media played up the final game as a farewell match for the two former Sri Lankan skippers.

On Tuesday tens of thousands of fans joined an all-night party in Colombo after the team was driven in a slow motorcade from the airport, 35 kilometres from downtown Colombo.

The victory on Sunday night against India in Dhaka came 18 years after Sri Lanka's triumph in the 50-over World Cup.

## Quarrel in emergency meeting

SPORTS REPORTER

Verbal salvos were exchanged by club officials in an emergency meeting of the professional football league after Sheikh Jamal DC and Mohammedan SC opposed to playing their away matches outside Dhaka.

Sheikh Jamal and Mohammedan did not agree to play their away matches in Feni, Chittagong and Gopalganj. Brothers Union and Uttar Baridhara also joined them in the stance.

The clubs from outside the capital then raised question why they would come to Dhaka to play their away matches, and at one stage, the representative of Chittagong Abahani walked out following a heated altercation with Sheikh Jamal president Manzur Kader, confirmed a source in the meeting.

Before the start of the 7th edition of Bangladesh Premier League, all clubs though had agreed to play outside Dhaka following an executive committee decision of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF).

Later, the meeting decided to start the second phase of the ongoing league from proposed April 15 and referred the venue issue to the BFF's executive committee.

## Shakib off to UAE to join KKR

SPORTS REPORTER

With an aim to continue his successful run with the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in the Indian Premier League, ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan left for the UAE yesterday morning.

Kolkata will kick-start the seventh season of the IPL with a face-off against Mumbai Indians at Abu Dhabi.

The left-hander played eight games for KKR in the last season and had taken a total of 12 scalps. He had a miserly economy rate of 6.50 and bowled at an average of 16.25. In the auctions for this season's tournament, bids for Shakib were made by the Delhi Daredevils and KKR, before the latter eventually signed up the left-hander.

Shakib has taken a total of 52 wickets in T20 cricket last year and was Bangladesh's best performer in the recently concluded T20 World Cup.

# Oscar being grilled

AFP, Pretoria



South African Paralympian Oscar Pistorius faced fierce cross-examination at his murder trial Wednesday as the prosecution tore into his claim that he never intended to kill his girlfriend.

"You made a mistake?" prosecution lawyer Gerrie Nel thundered indignantly as he questioned the athlete's account of Reeva Steenkamp's death on Valentine's Day last year.

"You killed a person, that's what you did! You shot and killed her, won't you take responsibility for that?" he said just moments into the cross-examination of Pistorius who claimed he mistook Steenkamp for an intruder.

Pistorius broke down, as he has done frequently during the five weeks of his high-profile murder trial.

His emotional state and arguments between prosecution and defence lawyers forced a series of adjournments before Nel returned to the court to show footage of the Olympian firing a bullet into a watermelon. After seeing images of the fruit's pink flesh exploding through the air and hearing Pistorius remark it was "softer than brains" Nel turned to the witness box.

"You know that's the same that happened to Reeva's head," he said, causing a shocked Pistorius to grow more distraught.

Unrelenting, Nel then quickly showed the court a graphic photo of the 29-year-old model's



GERRIE NEL

bloodied head, her blonde hair drenched with dark coagulated blood.

"That's it," Nel said, turning to Pistorius. "Have a look there, I know you don't want to because you don't want to take responsibility."

Growing ever more emotional and affronted, Pistorius said: "Milady I've taken responsibility."

"I don't want to look at a picture where I'm tormented by what I saw," he said wailing through tears.

"I don't have to look at a picture, I was there," said Pistorius, burying his head into his hands.

Pistorius's cross-examination is expected to be a key point in his trial, a stern test of both his version of events and of his resolve.

During five weeks of proceedings the world-famous athlete has appeared fragile, frequently crying in court and becoming physically sick when the

gruesome details of Steenkamp's injuries were discussed.

He is likely to remain on the stand for the remainder of this week as his extensive testimony is probed and picked at by Nel, who once won a corruption conviction against a South African police commissioner.

The 27-year-old Paralympian earlier wrapped up three days of emotional and harrowing defence testimony by denying he wanted to kill Steenkamp or the intruder he believed had broken into his house on Valentine's Day last year.

"I did not intend to kill Reeva, my lady, or anyone else," he told the murder trial, in his strongest rebuttal yet of charges against him.

He faces a life sentence if convicted of her murder. But he could also face a murder conviction if the prosecution shows he intended to kill when his life was not threatened -- regardless of whether he knew who was behind the door.

In calling Pistorius as a witness in his own defence, his handpicked legal team tried to counter the state's portrayal of him as reckless and obsessed with fast cars and guns.

Defence lawyer Barry Roux gently painted the portrait of a young man who likes dogs and carries out charitable acts, but who was marked by a fatherless childhood, the early death of his mother, physical disability and recurring crime.

He demonstrated remorse by apologising

Leading Cricketer in the World for 2013, a year in which he took 51 Test wickets in only nine games at an average of 17.

"Fast, penetrative and parsimonious, it was some combination," Wisden said.

The Five Cricketers of the Year, an honour dating back to 1889, were India's Shikhar Dhawan, Australia duo Chris Rogers and Ryan Harris, England batsman Joe Root and England women's captain Charlotte Edwards.

Opening batsman Dhawan was acknowledged for his role in India's victorious Champions Trophy campaign in England while opener Rogers, fast bowler Harris and Root were chosen for their contributions to the 2013 Ashes.

The Cricketer of the Year, the personal choice of the Wisden editor and an

award that generally reflects performances in the previous English season, can, by tradition, only be won once in a player's career.

Edwards, who led her side to defeat by Australia in the final of the recent World Twenty20, became only the second female cricketer, after England's Claire Taylor in 2009, to be named a Wisden Cricketer of the Year.

"In winning the Ashes home and away, Charlotte Edwards crowned an outstanding career as an England cricketer," said Wisden.

"After making her Test debut at 16, she remains at the top 18 years later."

But that still leaves her six years short of the 24-year international career enjoyed by Sachin Tendulkar, whose image adorns

the cover of the latest Wisden.

The 40-year-old India great announced his retirement from cricket in November, ending a remarkable career during which he became the world's leading scorer in both Test and one-day cricket.

"Tendulkar played Test matches in front of the most demanding fans in the world for 24 years," said Wisden, who compared his record with those of England captain Alastair Cook and Australia skipper Michael Clarke.

"If further proof was required of just how astonishing that was, it came at Perth in December, when for a few moments one Cook and one Clarke added up to exactly one Tendulkar: 200 Test caps, 15,921 runs and 51 hundreds."

AFP, London

International cricket is set for a future of "colonial-style divide and rule," and will be "holding its breath" over the extent of Indian influence, according to the 2014 edition of Wisden Cricketers' Almanack published Wednesday.

In February, changes to the governance of the International Cricket Council (ICC), handed the majority of the powers and revenue to the sport's 'big three' nations -- India, Australia and England.

"Here was colonial-style divide and rule," the English editor of cricket's 'bible', Lawrence Booth, wrote in the 151st edition of British-based Wisden, published every year since 1864.

# Wisden afraid of 'colonial cricket'