

Feni dream ends in shootout

SPORTS REPORTERS



Mohammedan SC put an end to Feni Soccer Club's impressive run in the Modhumoti Bank Independence Cup football tournament when the popular Black and Whites emerged champions with a 5-4 win in penalty shootout over Feni in the final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The match rolled into the tiebreaker after regulation and extra time ended with both sides goalless. Experienced Mohammedan goalkeeper Mamun Khan thwarted Feni's first shot from Gambian hitman Kabba Jobe and that one save was enough for Mohammedan to see off a tough Feni to take home their first title of the season.

Feni could have entered the history books as the first team from outside the capital to win the Independence Cup but they fell at the final hurdle against Mohammedan, who have a track record of winning tournaments instead of leagues since the introduction of the professional football league in 2006.

However, Feni showed their nerve in front of some 7,000 spectators by fighting against superior opponents till the last moment. Ironically it was one of the three Gambians who had turned their fortunes around this season, who ended up costing Feni their brightest moment.

The final was tipped to be a fight between Feni's forwards and Mohammedan's defenders but both sides played attacking football in a fast-paced match. A number of scoring chances were created but the forwards of both sides squandered those chances.

Feni, who came into the final dispatching holders Sheikh Russel and Brothers Union, gave Mohammedan a scare at the start when Gambian hitman Landing Darboe struck a dipping free kick that went inches over the crosspiece in the fifth minute.

Mohammedan also responded soon to come close to taking the lead in the next minute but they were denied by goalkeeper Nehal, who thwarted a powerful shot from striker Touhidul Alam Sabuz inside the box.

The attack and counter attack went on and Feni were ahead of Mohammedan in the first 20 minutes before the Black and Whites established their authority by launching some good attacks before the breather.

Mohammedan should have taken the lead at the 21-minute mark but winger Zahid Hossain floated a Zahid Hasan Emily cutback over the crosspiece when he had enough time to go close and beat goalkeeper Nehal.

Both sides yielded such chances in either half but failed to capitalise on those opportunities because of the forwards' inability to finish the job or the goalkeepers' efficiency.

However, Mohammedan's easiest chance of the night was squandered by Zongo Ousseni from Burkina Faso in the 115th minute when an Emily shot fell to him inside the box with the goalkeeper to beat but the midfielder's shot floated over the crosspiece.

Feni also saw their hope of winning the title stifled two minutes from time in the second half of extra time when Nigerian Chuka Charles fired over the crosspiece from close.

Finally, Mohammedan kept their good track record against Feni intact with a shootout win and maintained their unbeaten run in Dhaka against Feni.



PHOTOS: STAR

Mohammedan players celebrate their Modhumoti Bank Independence Cup triumph after beating Feni SC in a tiebreaker at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Despite losing the final, unfancied Feni (inset) won the hearts of football fans after their amazing run in the tournament.

Four tons and a rout

DHAKA METRO: 172 all out in 70.5 overs (Sadman 40; Razzak 4-78, Ripon 3-27). **KHULNA:** 46 for 1 (Robiul 23, Imrul 13; Riyad 1-14). **BARISAL:** 323 all out in 79.2 overs (Shahriar 129, Nuruzzaman 79; Shuvagata 3-59). **DHAKA:** 14 for no loss (Rony 7 not out, Abdul 6 not out). **RAJSHAHI:** 424 for 7 (Forhad 182 not out, Sanjamul 172; Mehedi 2-52, Mamun 2-54) v Chittagong. **RANGPUR:** 256 for 7 (Naeem 144, Tanvir 62 not out; Nasum 5-58) v Sylhet

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Rajshahi may be led by national captain Mushfiqur Rahim, but as Forhad Reza and Sanjamul Islam showed yesterday, it was quite clear that unlike the current national team, Mushfiqur does not need to shoulder a majority of the burden of this side.

At 77 for six against Chittagong on a good batting track at the BKSP, it seemed as though second-placed Rajshahi resumed their National Cricket League venture in the worst possible manner, almost gifting away the game within the first couple of sessions. National returnees

Mushfiqur and Sabbir were sent back to the pavilion after scoring eight and six respectively.

However, Forhad and Sanjamul shared a blistering 347-run stand for the seventh wicket to not only bring Rajshahi back in contention but put them in a commanding position.

Forhad hammered an unbeaten 182 in 209 balls, while Sanjamul scored 172 off 196 before getting stumped just before the close of play. Forhad, who earlier went through an unsuccessful return to the national side, hammered 26 fours and five sixes. Sanjamul was not far behind with 22 fours and two sixes.

The pair were in an aggressive mindset right from the start of their stand. Forhad reached his 50 off just

55 balls and then took 49 more deliveries for his next 50. Sanjamul too, shifted gears after his 50, reaching his 100 in 144 balls.

The wicket did have something in it for the bowlers in the morning and that is what Chittagong's bowlers utilised. However, once the sun came out, it was all Forhad and Sanjamul.

At the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium captain Shahriar Nafees scored a welcome century to take Barisal to 323 against league leaders Dhaka. He scored 129 off 143 balls and was well supported by Nuruzzaman's 79.

Naeem Islam was the day's other centurion, as he scored 144 to bail Rangpur out of a nervous 57 for five. He shared a 199-run stand with

Tanvir Haider for the sixth wicket to help Rangpur finish on 256 for seven against Sylhet at Fatullah.

Naeem, typical of his style, took plenty of time. He faced 227 balls to reach his century and stayed at the crease for almost six hours. He was well supported by Tanvir, who scored 62 off 165 balls. Sylhet's slow-left armer Nasum Ahmed finished with figures of five for 58.

At the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar, Dhaka Metro were routed for 172. Khulna's Abdur Razzak and Nizamuddin Ripon shared seven wickets and were the chief destroyers. In reply, Khulna reached stumps at 46 for one, with Soumya Sarker's wicket the only one to fall.

'Needed this win'

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Mohammedan SC once emerged on the right side of a penalty shootout to win the Modhumoti Bank Independence Cup, thanks to a brilliant save from goalkeeper Mamun Khan.

Mamun was also under the Mohammedan post during the 3rd Super Cup final's tiebreaker against Sheikh Russel KC and thwarted two shots to deliver Mohammedan's second Super Cup title last season. This time the out-of-favour national goalkeeper once again exhibited his skill to give Mohammedan their first Independence Cup title since 2000.

"I have developed the technique of stopping shots from the spot myself. I have experienced such situations on four or five occasions and each time I saved one or two shots but my team did not always finish victorious. It was the second time in my career that my team won such a match," said Mamun

after the game.

"Before the match, I said Feni was a very difficult side but we overcame them. We needed this win before the start of the second phase of the league," said Mohammedan's Portuguese coach Rui Capela Batista.

Captain Zahid Hasan Emily dedicated the trophy to the martyrs of the Liberation War and termed the triumph a special achievement for him.

"I have won a lot of trophies for different sides but never won as a captain so it is something special for me," said Emily, who however praised Feni goalkeeper Nehal for keeping Mohammedan in regulation time.

Feni's Gambian coach Omar K Sise was happy enough, despite defeat, at the way his charges played.

"One has to win the match and it was a good test for my boys. However, I am satisfied that the boys tried till the last moment," said Sise, who believed that they were a bit unlucky not to win the match despite going close.

School TT underway

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Dhanmondi Tutorial, Sunbeams International School, Summerfield School, Armanitola School and Scholastica (red) School posted wins on the first day of the Walton Dhaka Metropolis School Table Tennis tournament at the Shaheed Tajuddin Indoor Gymnasium yesterday.

Dhanmondi Tutorial beat Baridhara Scholars 3-1, Sunbeams beat Australian International 3-0, Summerfield beat Western School 3-2, Armanitola beat Scholastica (green) 3-0, Scholastica (red) beat Turkish Hope 3-0 and Sunbeams beat ESS 3-0.

Roger back at Rafa's den

AFP, Monte Carlo



Roger Federer returns to the Monte Carlo Masters starting today with a mission to try and topple king of clay Rafael Nadal as the Spaniard seeks an unprecedented ninth title in the principality.

Federer, his season taking flight and his ranking back to a more-than-respectable world number four, last competed at the optional Masters in 2011, when he was shuttled out in a quarterfinal surprise by Austrian Jurgen Melzer.

The 32-year-old Swiss who lost three straight finals here to Nadal between 2006 and 2008, will hope for the kind of week which Novak Djokovic produced a year ago.

The Serb defeated Nadal for the title 12 months ago, meting out to the Spaniard only his second loss at the tournament since

first playing it as a 16-year-old in 2003. Federer made the decision to play after helping Switzerland into the Davis Cup semifinals last weekend, a boost to his rising confidence.

He opens after a bye in the second round against the winner from the veteran pair of Radek Stepanek and Ivo Karlovic.

Nadal is starting his huge spring task of defending four 2013 titles on his surface of choice, with the Spaniard winning Barcelona, Madrid, Rome and an eighth trophy at Roland Garros.

After losing the Miami final a fortnight ago to arch rival Djokovic, Spain's world number one finds himself back in his tennis comfort zone at precisely the right moment, with the top seed opening against either a qualifier or Frenchman Gilles Simon.

And with all the pressure on his game for the next two months on the dirt, Nadal needs to keep his confidence sky-high.

3-on-3 B'ball from Tuesday

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Bangladesh will keep their sight on the title of Citycell South Asian Basketball Association 3-on-3 Basketball when the meet gets underway from Tuesday at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium.

The participation of Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives and hosts Bangladesh have been confirmed in the two-day meet while subcontinent powerhouse India have yet to confirm their participation, according to the officials of Bangladesh Basketball Federation (BBF).

"The Indian team are going through some visa complication. If they arrive before the meet then participating six teams will be divided into two groups. If it is five teams, then it will be a league-basis meet and top two teams will play the final," said BBF general secretary AK Sarker at the press briefing at the BOA auditorium yesterday.

SABA (South Asian Basketball Association) champions Bangladesh team comprise Rasheduzzaman, Mithun Biswas, Shoyeb and Akash. Taslim Ahmed, head of corporate communications & PR of Citycell, was among others present.



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