



Nigerian striker Chuka Charles of Feni Soccer Club celebrates scoring one of his two goals with a somersault in their Bangladesh Premier League match against Team BJMC yesterday at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

BCB's mental reinforcement

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's dismal display in the recent World Twenty20 at home has led to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) hiring an expert who will work with the national team as a 'psychological skill development coach'.

Ali Khan, a Bangladeshi Canadian, who currently works as a tennis coach in Canada, will join the national team for three days. Khan, who was approved by the board on Friday, will have group sessions with the national team on April 24 and 27. He will then speak to the players individually on April 28.

The BCB's project however seems to be in its initial stages as Khan --who is currently in Dhaka on leave -- is yet to sign a long-term contract with the board.

The national team's performances at home so far this year -- including the World Twenty20, the Asia Cup and the series against Sri Lanka -- was well below par and the players openly admitted their failing battles against pressure.

Some of the most obvious instances which showed that the players lacked confidence include Mushfiqur Rahim's statement in a press conference before the Asia Cup that he reckoned that Bangladesh, in the form they were in, could go down even to Afghanistan, which they duly did.

Even the usually fearless Shakib Al Hasan, in a recent interview described clearly how pressurised the players were with the weight of expectations.

Apart from approving a coach to help the players with their confidence levels, the board also received the post-world cup reports regarding the drop in the team's performance levels.

"I have received the coach's report. I also got the medical team's report, but I am yet to see the report from cricket operations. I have read both the reports but I don't want to reveal anything without having discussions in the board," said BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon yesterday.

When asked if there was a possibility of the board to hiring a new coach, Papon denied saying that the board 'had not thought of anything like that'. He however, stated that they were in the hunt for specialised coaches.

"We have already talked about hiring specialised spin and batting coaches. We are in the hunt," said Papon.

Dehli end drought

AGENCIES, Dubai

JP Duminy hit a timely unbeaten 52 after skipper Dinesh Karthik set the foundation with a fighting 56-run knock as Delhi Daredevils edged out Kolkata Knight Riders by four wickets in a thrilling IPL Twenty20 match, in Dubai yesterday.

Electing to bat, KKR posted a decent 166 for five, thanks to some brilliant batting by Robin Uthappa (55), Manish Pandey (48) and Shakib Al Hasan (30 not out) at Dubai International Stadium.

Delhi Daredevils batsmen responded to the challenge well and overhauled the target with three balls to spare.

In the day's first match, after restricting Mumbai Indians to a modest 115 for nine, the Royal Challengers of Bangalore cantered to a seven-wicket win, their second on the trot, in the Indian Premier League in 17.3 overs.

RCB though had a shaky start when left-handed opener Nic Maddinson was cleaned up by pacer Lasith Malinga for 16 and Zaheer Khan wreaked havoc in the very next over with two wickets.

Left-arm pacer Zaheer sent skipper Virat Kohli for a duck and trapped Sharjah hero Yuvraj Singh lbw for nought in the space of three deliveries.

But Mumbai's cheer was shortlived as Parthiv Patel and AB de Villiers soon got a grip of the situation to stitch a 99-run unbeaten partnership.

SCORES IN BRIEF

MI: 115 for 9 in 20 overs (Rayudu 35, Anderson 18, Tare 17, Hussey 16; Chahal 2-17, Starc 2-21, Aaron 2-30)

RCB: 116 for 3 in 17.3 overs (Patel 57, de Villiers 45; Zaheer 2-21)

Result: Bangalore won by 7 wickets.

Player-of-the-match:

Parthiv Patel.

KKR: 166 for 5 in 20 overs (Uthappa 55, Pandey 48, Shakib 30 not out; Coulter-Nile 2-27)

DD: 167 for 6 (Karthik 56, Duminy 52 not out; Morkel 2-41, Shakib 0-25)

Result: Dehli won by 4 wickets. **Player-of-the-match:** Jean-Paul Duminy.

Sheikh Russel release Maruful Haque

Montenegrin coach takes over

SPORTS REPORTER



Sheikh Russel KC released their treble-winning coach Maruful Haque along with the entire coaching staff yesterday due to poor performance of the club during this season. The UEFA A licensed coach, who joined the club for his second stint in the

2011-2012 season and delivered the club an unprecedented treble -- the Federation Cup, Independence Cup and the Bangladesh Premier League -- in his second season (2012-2013), was relieved of his duties yesterday and replaced by Montenegrin coach Dragan Djukanovic, who has already arrived in Dhaka, confirmed the club's president Nurul Alam Chowdhury yesterday.

"We have decided to sack the coaching staff including head coach Maruful Haque on mutual understanding. The decision was taken after discussing the matter with the coaches and through full professionalism," said Chowdhury over phone.

After delivering the treble last season, Maruf became the highest paid coach in the country's history when he was offered a contract extension for Tk 18 lakh. But he failed to deliver the same success this season after some of the big stars of the club -- including Haitian striker Sony Norde, local forwards Zahid Hasan and Zahid Hossain and skipper Mamunul Islam -- departed the club at the end of last sea-

son. Maruf brought some new foreign recruits both in the preseason and midseason windows, but their performance has been anything but convincing as the club finished the first leg of the league in sixth position on 12 points, nine behind leaders Sheikh Jamal DC. The defending champions were also knocked out at the quarterfinal stage of both the Federation Cup and Independence Cup.

"We are grateful to the coach for delivering a treble in the last season, but this season we failed to do well in the Federation Cup and neither do we have a good position in the league. What was most disappointing is the way the team performed in the recently concluded Independence Cup," said Chowdhury.

Despite repeated attempts, Maruful could not be reached for a comment on his extermination. However, not only Maruf but his assistant coach Zulfikar Ali Mintu and the goalkeeping coach Humayun have also been sacked as the treble-winning club are looking to reorganise the coaching staff. New coach Djukanovic, who is a 46-year-old Montenegrin with almost 12 years of experi-

ence in coaching, has already arrived in Dhaka on Saturday and attended the club's practice session.

According to information gathered, the 45-year-old UEFA A Licensed and Pro Licensed coach played for various clubs in the leagues of Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and Cyprus before he called time on his career in 2003 and joined coaching full time.



MARUFUL HAQUE

Dhaka on course

SPORTS REPORTER



Dhaka took a giant step forward to regaining the title of the National Cricket League as they achieved maximum bowling bonus points by wrapping up Khulna on the first day of the final round encounter at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

With a 21-point advantage over nearest rivals Rajshahi, Dhaka increased their lead to 24 points as they bowled Khulna out for 243 runs in their first innings while on a bowler-dominated day at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong, Rajshahi also managed the maximum three bowling bonus points by dismissing Dhaka Metro for 126. But they also suffered a jolt in their batting, ending the day on 139 for seven.

It was not a day for the batsmen -- the first innings was completed at all four venues. Pacer Delwar Hossain was the best among the bowlers as he claimed five wickets to put Rajshahi on top. On the other hand Ziaur Rahman hit 80, which helped Khulna recover from early strife to score 243.

Sabbir Rahman ensured Rajshahi's first innings lead as he scored 64 in Rajshahi's 139 for seven in reply to Dhaka Metro's 126.

Barisal made the day's highest total with 289 thanks to Shohag Gazi, who made 87 against Rangpur at the Fatullah Outer Stadium while an unbeaten 64 from number eight batsman Saif Uddin helped Chittagong cross the 200 mark against Sylhet at the BKSP.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KHULNA: 243 all out in 81.4 overs (Imrul 39, Nizamuddin 43, Zia 80, Razzak 32; Masum 3-69, Shuvagoto 2-6)

DHAKA: 75-1 in 17.3 overs (Majid 42, Rony 32 not out; Nahidul 1-1)

DHAKA METRO: 126 all out in 37.1 overs (Marshal 30; Delwar 5-41, Forhad 2-19)

RAJSHAH: 139-7 in 44 overs (Sabbir 64, Mushfiqur 22; Shohid 3-24, Siddiq 2-8)

BARISAL: 289 all out in 66 overs (Rabbi 24, Nuruzzaman 41, Gazi 87, Shahin 45, Kamrul 52; Sajedul 2-22, Hasan 2-67, Shuvo 3-74, Tanvir 2-59)

RANGPUR: 89-2 in 22 overs (Tarik 26, Ashish 22, Nasir 27 not out; Gazi 1-45, Monir 1-12)

CHITTAGONG: 213 all out in 56.4 overs (Mamun 40, Yasir 27, Mominul 35, Saif Uddin 64 not out; Nazmul 2-10, Enamul 3-68, Sadiqur 3-34)

SYLHET: 75-3 in 33 overs (Kapali 28)

Siddikur now 65th

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's ace golfer Siddikur Rahman slipped to 65th position on the leaderboard after carding a horrendous five-over-par (77) in the third round of the Maybank Malaysian Open yesterday.

The 29-year-old golfer, who started the day in 37th position, fired three birdies along with four bogeys and two double-bogeys at the Kuala Lumpur Golf and Country Club to take his aggregate score to four-over-par (220) after the third round yesterday.

The poor performance meant Siddikur slipped 18 shots off leader Lee Westwood of England, who has notched up 14-under-par (202) after a one-under-par third round. Another Englishman Andy Sullivan is one stroke behind Westwood after carding a six-under-par (66).

Feni turnaround continues

SPORTS REPORTER



Gambian coach Omar Sisse's Feni Soccer Club followed up their Independence Cup heroics with their first league win of the season when they handed mid-table side Team BJMC a 2-1 defeat in their Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The Independence Cup finalists came from behind to beat Team BJMC thanks to two second-half goals from Nigerian forward Chuka Charles, which saw them move off the bottom of the table and into eighth position with seven points from 10 outings. The defeat left Team BJMC in sixth position with 12 points from the same number of matches.

That Feni were no longer a punching bag in local football was evident from their superlative show in the Independence Cup, where they eventually lost in tiebreakers against Mohammedan on April 12. The turnaround was further evident yesterday as they notched their first league win and are looking forward to avoiding relegation.

"I am very much relieved with the three points and the first victory in the league and we will definitely avoid relegation," said a relieved Sisse after the match.

The Feni outfit started the match in attacking vein but were also guilty of wast-

ing opportunities. Midfielder Ajmal Hossain Biddyt missed a sitter in the 11th minute when he failed to keep his shot on target on a header from forward Kappa Jobe while Abdullah Al Mamun blasted the ball over the bar six minutes later.

Team BJMC took the lead, against the run of play in the 21st minute when defender Saiful Islam blasted an angular volley from inside the box to leave the Feni keeper stunned. Saif then made a goal-line clearance in the stoppage time of the first half when Feni's Nigerian striker Chuka Charles had gotten the better of the keeper.

But Charles did get the equaliser in the 58th minute with a neat placing shot after receiving a through ball from Mathew Mendy. Charles, who had switched from Mohammedan to Feni in the mid-season transfers, then completed the turnaround by scoring his second goal in a similar fashion to the first one just a minute before the end of regulation time.

"I am a young coach trying to develop myself. It may sound funny to some but think I am helping myself more than my team. I want to develop the football here, I want my name to be here in Bangladesh football," said an ambitious Sisse, who brought a few players from his native Gambia during mid-season, which led to the club's recent success.

Federer ousts Djokovic

REUTERS, Monte Carlo



Roger Federer beat an injured Novak Djokovic 7-5 6-2 to set up an all-Swiss Monte Carlo Masters final with Stanislas Wawrinka after the Australian Open champion ousted David Ferrer 6-1 7-6 (3) on Saturday.

Holder Djokovic resisted for one set before pain in his right wrist was just too much to bear for the second-seeded Serb who bowed out on the first match point after one hour 14 minutes.

The much-awaited clash lived up to expectations early on, with 17-times grand slam champion Federer saving two set points on serve at 5-4.

Federer, who has never won the Monte Carlo Masters, broke in the following game and pocketed the set with an ace before Djokovic went to his chair holding his right wrist.

The second set was a stroll for the Swiss who produced a series of forehand winners as he moved 18-16 up in his head-to-head record against Djokovic.

Earlier, third seed Wawrinka showed no mercy against the giant-killing Ferrer.

The Swiss raced through the first set and kept his composure in the second when the Spaniard raised his level.

Sixth seed Ferrer, who knocked out eight-times French Open champion and world number one Rafael Nadal in the quarter-finals on Friday, was on the back foot throughout.

"It was the perfect start for me. I played very well in spite of the wind," Wawrinka told Canal Plus TV.

"He changed tactics in the second set, being more aggressive, and I became more hesitant but I played tougher then."

Wawrinka quickly opened a 5-0 lead after breaking twice with a passing shot and a forehand return winner.

The Swiss, looking to win his first Masters 1000 title, sealed the opening set with a stunning backhand winner down the line.

Ferrer saved a break point in the opening game of the second set but Wawrinka, whose 31 winners made up for 40 unforced errors, accelerated again in the tiebreak and prevailed on his second match point when his opponent netted a backhand.