

Runs aplenty as NCL 15 nears close

SPORTS REPORTER



The runs continued to flow on the third day of the final round of the National Cricket League as three batsmen scored centuries yesterday.

Mominul Haque, from his overnight score of 52, scored 168 at the BKSP and took Chittagong to a strong 415 against Sylhet, before declaring with a wicket to go. Sylhet's Ahmed Sadiqur with figures of seven for 105 was the chief destroyer. In reply, Sylhet finished the day at 64 for 1. They now have to survive an entire day to avoid defeat.

National opener Anamul Haque continued his good run to score 119 for Khulna at Cox's Bazar yesterday. His side however were bowled out for just 232 and, with Dhaka needing just 127 runs to win the game, are seemingly heading for a defeat. Dhaka, already crowned champions, finished the day on 96 for 1.

Second-placed Rajshahi are in danger of finishing the league on a sour note as they slumped to 120 for six in the fourth innings of their game against Dhaka Metro at Chittagong. After bowling Metro out for 352, Rajshahi required 272 runs to win the game. They however lost a series of wickets and now require 152 runs on the final day, with just four wickets in hand, to win the game.

The game at Fatullah between Rangpur and Barisal is headed for a draw. After Barisal were bowled out for 289 in their first innings, Rangpur posted a buoyant 543. Dhiman Ghosh's innings of 149 the previous day was complemented by Tanvir Haider's 121 yesterday. Barisal, in their second innings were restricted to 133 for two with Nasir Hossain getting both the scalps. Their first aim today will be to wipe out the 121-run deficit and then look to bat as long as possible to secure a draw.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KHULNA: 243 and 232 all out in 94 overs (Anamul 119; Taiabur 3-40, Shuvagata 3-59)

DHAKA: 252 and 96 for 1 (Rony 45 not out, Taiabur 32)

DHAKA METRO: 126 and 352 all out in 116.5 overs

(Saykat 95, Shadman 85; Taijul 5-83)

RAJSHAHI: 207 and 120 for 6 (Junaid 28; Shohid 2-17, Elias 2-24)

BARISAL: 289 and 133 for 2 (Salman 38 not out; Nasir 2 for 16)

RANGPUR: 543 all out in 165 overs (Dhiman 149, Tanvir 121 not out; Monir 5-151)

CHITTAGONG: 213 and 415 for 9 dec (Mominul 168, Nazim 68; Ahmed Sadiqur 7-105)

SYLHET: 190 and 64 for 1 (Sayem 39; Ali 1-11)

Venue decision after further inspection

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The Professional Football League Committee (PFLC) will further inspect three 'disputed' venues in Chittagong, Gopalganj and Feni to see the improvement of the venues before taking a final decision in next meeting on April 28.

"Instructions have already been given to the host clubs to clear all hindrance in a bid to host matches of the Bangladesh Premier League and we will take the final decision on whether those venues can hold matches after inspecting venues in Gopalganj and Chittagong on April 26," said PFLC chairman Abdus Salam Murshedy, adding that they would inspect the Feni venue after May 3.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Jamal DC, Mohammedan SC, Brothers Union and Uttar Baridhara Club have opposed the idea of playing away matches in those three venues.

INTER-DISTRICT V'BALL Dhaka beat Ctg 3-0

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka defeated Chittagong by 25-10, 25-19, 25-16 points in the opening day's match of the Walton Inter-district Volleyball Tournament at the Volleyball Stadium in Paltan yesterday.

In the days other matches, Khulna beat Patuakhali 25-14, 25-11, 25-22; Sathkira beat Habiganj 25-10, 25-10, 25-19 and Narail beat Rangpur 21-25, 25-17, 25-24, 25-09.

The other participating districts of the 12-team meet are Dinajpur, Gazipur, Comilla and Pabna.



PHOTO: STAR

Sheikh Russel's Haitian midfielder Pascal Millien (2nd from L) skips past Chittagong Abahani defenders during their Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Millien scored a goal as the defending champions came out with a 1-1 draw.

Ctg Abahani hold Sk Russel

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Despite appointing a new Montenegrin coach, Sheikh Russel KC lost further ground in the Bangladesh Premier League title race when they dropped points against relegation-threatened Chittagong Abahani yesterday. The new coach Dragan Djukanovic said

his side eke out a 1-1 draw, thanks to Pascal Millien's 65 th minute penalty conversion ruling cancelling out a 53rd-minute goal from Mohamed Conte of Chittagong Abahani, at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The draw kept Sheikh Russel in fourth position with 16 points from 11 outings, eight behind leaders Jamal DC, who have played a match less than the defending champions.

The 45-year-old Montenegrin coach, who replaced last season's treble-winning coach Maruful Haque, decided to play Serbian Ivan

Kurtusic in defence instead of Uruguayan midfielder Francisco Ouscar while winger Shakil Ahmed was drafted as left back and the moves virtually weakened Sheikh Russel's midfield, which failed to provide their strikers enough opportunities.

"We controlled the game all the time but the opponents defended well and it is tough to play in such situation. The refereeing was so poor that I didn't understand what was happening on the field," said Djukanovic.

Fresh from a 5-2 win over Uttar Baridhara Club in the previous match, the game against Chittagong Abahani was thought to be an easy one for Sheikh Russel and they showed signs of domination but Millien was dreadful with the first chance in the sixth minute as he failed to control the ball inside the box with only the opposition goalkeeper to beat.

Four minutes later Serbian Miroslav Savanovic let loose a powerful drive from 30 yards but Chittagong Abahani goalkeeper

Salimullah brilliantly thwarted the attempt for a corner.

Abahani found a great scoring opportunity in the 27th minute when Sohel Mia put a nice lob for Rafael Sagno, who reacted too slow to go after the ball and right-back Sohel Rana cleared the danger with a swift move.

Abahani took the lead eight minutes into the second half when Conte placed a Ddumba Michael free-kick home from inside the box but the lead lasted only 12 minutes as referee Bharat Chandra awarded a penalty kick for Sheikh Russel when Chittagong Abahani defender Camara Momado handled the ball shot inside the box. Millien sent goalkeeper Salimullah the wrong way to level the margin.

"The penalty decision was not justified because the ball hit the hand of the player, rather than the other way round. Referee gifted one point to Sheikh Russel in honour of their new coach," opined Chittagong Abahani coach Nazrul Islam Ledu.

Bookies suspend Moyes sack bets

AFP, London



Leading British bookmakers stopped taking bets on David Moyes being sacked as Manchester United manager Monday after several national newspapers said Moyes was about to be fired.

Sky Bet cut their odds on Moyes leaving United before the end of May to 1/4 from 9/4 before suspending betting.

Ladbrokes installed United great Ryan Giggs, currently a player/coach at Old Trafford, as the 5/1 favourite to replace Moyes before they too suspended betting on their "next manager to leave" market.

Speculation about Moyes's future intensified following Sunday's 2-0 loss at Everton -- the Scot's former club -- which condemned reigning champions United to their 11th defeat of the season and meant they could not qualify for the Champions League.

Moyes was the chosen successor of former United boss Alex Ferguson -- British football's most successful manager -- following his retirement at the end of last season.

But Moyes has endured a torrid first season at Old Trafford and United will only secure a place in next term's Europa League, European football's second-tier competition, if they overhaul a six-point gap between themselves and Tottenham.

United's owners, the US-based Glazer family, have so far been supportive. But doubts have now surfaced over whether they will allow Moyes to oversee the club's final four matches of the season, against Norwich, Sunderland, Hull and Southampton.

Earlier Monday, Moyes -- who clearly believes he still has a future at Old Trafford -- told MUTV, United's in-house television station: "We need to end the season on a high."

"We want to finish by winning all of our games. We'll do everything we possibly can to make that happen."

Moyes received backing from Everton goalkeeper Tim Howard, who said the home fans at Goodison had been wrong to boo the club's former boss when he emerged from the tunnel on Sunday and jeer him throughout the game.

"We have brilliant fans, but that was unfair on him," Howard said of Moyes, who spent 11 years as Everton manager.

"He was the second coming, the messiah 12 months ago, and I don't think as Evertonians we should ever forget that."

"I love David Moyes. I think he is a brilliant manager," said the American, who spent four years at United.

After Sunday's match, Moyes said "rank" and "rotten" defending had led to Everton's two goals, a penalty converted by Leighton Baines and Kevin Mirallas's shot from a tight angle.

Zia still in 2nd position

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Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman held the second position along with 12 other players after securing three from four matches in the Asian Continental Chess Championship Sharjah, UAE.

Zia drew his fourth round match against Chinese GM Bu Xiangzhi on Monday.

In the women's section, WFM Nazrana Khan Eva drew against Al Najar Huda of Syria to collect 1.5 points from four rounds.

Farashganj beat Wari

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Farashganj SC beat Wari Club 2-0 in their Premier Bank Bangladesh Championship League match at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

After a barren first half, Ripon gave Farashganj the lead 54th minute before Pushbon Molla sealed the victory scoring the 92nd minute.

Roach not hurt seriously in car crash

AFP, Bridgetown

West Indies fast bowler Kemar Roach escaped serious injury when his BMW car flipped over several times on a rain-lashed Bridgetown road, local media reported Sunday.

The 25-year-old suffered a head injury and was taken to hospital, the Barbados Today online newspaper claimed.

But Roach insisted he had not been seriously hurt.

"Sorry To Scare My Friends, Family And Fans But I'm Straight! Thanks For The Love! #BlessUp," he wrote on Twitter.

Roach has played 23 Tests and 61 one-day internationals but has not featured for the West Indies in nearly a year.

Germany in Fed Cup final

To meet Czech Rep

AFP, Paris

Germany reached their first Fed Cup final since 1992 on Sunday -- where they will face the Czech Republic, who will be playing in a third title match in four years.

Germany completed a 3-1 victory over Australia in Brisbane while the Czechs, the 2011 and 2012 winners, defeated defending champions Italy 4-0 in Ostrava.

The Czech Republic will host the final of the women's international tennis competition on November 8-9.

Angelique Kerber put Germany into their first final in 22 years -- the last time being when Steffi Graf starred in the win over Spain -- with a fighting victory over Samantha Stosur.

World number seven Kerber fought back from dropping the opening set to beat former US Open champion Stosur 4-6, 6-0, 6-4 in two hours, 14 minutes to give Germany an unassailable 3-0 lead.

The Australian pair of Casey Dellacqua and Ashleigh Barty prevented a wipe-out when they claimed the "dead" doubles rubber 6-2, 6-7 (5/7), 10-2 over Julia Goerges and Anna-Lena Groenefeld.

"It's a very special moment for me and the whole team," Kerber said.

"It feels great. I played a good match but it was a tough one because Sam was playing also very tough, and I have never beaten her before."



PHOTO: COURTESY

National opener Anamul Haque celebrates after scoring a century for Khulna against Dhaka in the final round of the National Cricket League at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

Storm brewing in SL?

CRICINFO, Colombo



For almost 18 years, there was hardly a better time to be a Sri Lanka cricket fan than the past two weeks. The WT20 party hurtled

seamlessly into the Sinhala and Tamil New Year in one uninterrupted sequence of exploding firecrackers, and the nation drew deep from the taste and noise of success. But two weeks is all you get. As the head coach contemplates jumping ship, euphoria has begun to dissolve with the onset of monsoon rains, leaving behind harder features of the Sri Lanka fan's existence: frustration and uncertainty.

The full story behind Paul Farbrace's potential departure is not yet clear but, while he had been well-regarded within the team, unconfirmed tales of discontent with SLC have already begun to emerge. Before

taking the job, Farbrace had spoken of an "affinity" for Sri Lanka and its players since his time as the team's assistant coach from 2007 to 2009, and perhaps he will have known that to thrive in Sri Lanka, an affinity for chaos is also required. Chaos is what he got when Sri Lanka set out to the World T20 with central contracts unsigned, only to win the tournament, before senior players publically slammed board officials minutes after the team had landed.

That Farbrace will have been offered a bigger salary by the ECB is almost certain, and even if SLC was not crippled by debt, it could hardly hope to match the England board's financial might. Sri Lanka's cricketers play unpaid for months because they feel it is their duty but a foreigner is not bound by such virtue. SLC has also confirmed Farbrace is on a six-month probationary period, which may mean Farbrace can walk out of his contract

with few repercussions, though SLC secretary Nishantha Ranatunga said on Sunday that the exact legal consequences have not yet been worked out.

If Farbrace is appointed England's assistant coach, Sri Lanka will be in considerable strife. They are weeks from undertaking their biggest overseas tour of the year, and fewer than 12 months out from a World Cup they have built methodically for since 2012. A recent history of ODI success in Australia and their general global tournament form has the team believing they can win back-to-back ICC titles, but to make a dramatic change to the coaching staff at this stage may be counter-productive. That said, so often in Sri Lankan cricket, the team triumphs not only in spite of upheaval, but seemingly because of it.

"Upheaval motivates the players," Kumar Sangakkara recently said of the World T20 win.