

# SPORTS

## Where non-payment is the norm

SPORTS REPORTER

The 'art' of non-payment seems to have become synonymous with the game of cricket in Bangladesh in the last few years. Ever since the first season of the Bangladesh Premier League T20, when players encountered this problem in a big way for the first time, the 'art' seems to have spread throughout the different branches of the sport.

Take for instance the country's premier 50-over competition, the Dhaka Premier League, which has been the domestic players' main source of income. Until last year the clubs were almost impeccable when it came to clearing their players' payments.

Yes, there have been many times when a small portion of the player's money was kept in order to reserve him for the following year, but seldom did it resemble the farce of the BPL. That is of course, until the last DPL, which took place in September last year.

According to players, only three out of the 12 clubs in the competition have cleared their payments, with the remaining players left in the lurch.

What must frustrate the players even more is that payments in the last league followed a new system which required the clubs to pay a lot less than in previous seasons. For instance, according to the 'player-by-choice' system last year, the highest possible bid that a club could have made for a player was around Tk 25 lakh, a significant reduction from almost Tk 40 lakh in the previous year.

The league was also delayed a number of times last year, which has eventually led to players missing out on one season -- the 2012-2013 which took place in 2013-14.

It has been desperate times for many players, some of whom have just given up hope. Veteran Tushar Imran, for instance, has just received 40 per cent of his payments; it's the sort of trouble that he has never had to face before.

National batsman Nasir Hossain's condition is far worse. He claims to have received just 25 per cent of his payments. Nasir is a nationally contracted player and can perhaps manage with the sponsors and considerable yearly income. However, as

former national player Rajin Saleh puts it, the non-national players have been the worst sufferers.

"When the management asked us to play this league despite the delay, we did so. They promised that they would make up for the delay by hosting two leagues this season but that is not happening, and that's disappointing."

"Also because of the player-by-choice system we played with less money and unfortunately a majority of the players did not receive even that amount. When we ask the board, they tell us to contact the governing committee of the league (Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis)," Rajin said.

"But the sad part is, CCDM's chairman is the owner of Brothers Union, and he himself could not clear the payments of this club. Who will we report to?" added a desperate Rajin.

It is not just the DPL payments that are due. The BCB is yet to dispatch its monthly salary to the 105 non-national players who they had brought under contract in 2012. Officials state that the board is reportedly three months behind and is working on renewing the contracts.

"How long will they take to renew it? Honestly speaking, these are really bad times. Some of the players, who should be playing the Premier Division League, are in fact thinking of signing up with first division clubs just so that they can get some money in hand. Some of these players are that poor!" exclaimed Rajin.

While players continue to suffer on the one hand, on the other, those who played for Prime Doleshwar, Gazi Tank and Prime Bank Cricket Club received their payment and are thanking their stars.

"I feel very lucky that I got my money in time. But it's not the same with everyone. I am in the national team so it won't make a big difference to me, but for the others it's difficult," said off-spinner Shohag Gazi, who played for Prime Doleshwar.

Former vice-captain Mahmudullah Riyad echoed Gazi's sentiments. "I played for Gazi Tank. Not only did I get the complete money, but we also got bonuses for winning the tournament. I can't comment on the cases of the other players."



Abahani winger Towhidul Alam (L) celebrates his late winner against Feni Soccer Club during their Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Abahani edge past Feni

SPORTS REPORTER



A late strike from substitute Towhidul Alam brought Abahani back to winning ways in the Nitol Tata Bangladesh Premier League as they handed a 2-1 defeat to surprise-package Feni Soccer Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Midfielder Jamal Hossain had put Abahani ahead midway through the first half, but the lead was cancelled by Feni's Gambian forward Landing Darboe three minutes before the break. But Towhidul, coming on as a substitute, ensured the Sky Blues' victory by striking seven minutes before the end.

The sixth win in 11 matches means four-time professional league champions Abahani moved to 22 points, five behind leaders Sheikh Jamal while Independence Cup runners-up Feni

Soccer remained in eighth position with seven points from same number of matches.

Abahani's Iranian coach Ali Akbar brought three changes in the starting eleven with debutant Umaru Mustapha replacing out-of-form Osei Morison and right-back Nasir Hossain and Soikat Bhoumik replacing Wali Faisal and Mohammad Sujon respectively. The changes had an impact as Abahani played possession football from the beginning and yielded two good opportunities within the first five minutes but Portuguese winger Leonildo Soares was denied by Feni goalkeeper Mohammad Nehal and defender Abu Sufian in those two occasions.

However, Abahani took a deserved lead in the 22nd minute when Mustapha, availing a long ball from Saikat, raced on to the danger zone and cut the ball back to Awudu Ibrahim, who squared it to unmarked Jamal. The diminutive midfielder beat Nehal

with a grounder.

Afterwards Feni took the control of the match and hit back through Landing, who found the back of the Abahani net with free-kick which took a deflection off the wall on 42 minutes.

After resumption, Feni established their total control on the game and scared Abahani by launching number of attacks which virtually exposed the Abahani backline. The Sky Blues were lucky not to concede any more goals, thanks to some unforgivable misses from Gambian Mathew Mendy and Nigerian Chuka Charles.

Abahani brought two changes as they sent on winger Towhidul and striker Shohel Rana in place of Jamal and Mustapha and the pair had an impact in the latter part of the game, which resulted in the winning goal.

Suares worked hard down the right flank and put a low cross which Towhidul fired in from close range to provide something to cheer about for a few hundred Sky Blues faithful, who

## Jabbarer Boli returns on Friday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The 105th edition of the longstanding Jabbarer Boli Khela, a century-old traditional wrestling competition held in Chittagong to celebrate the month of Boishakh, will be held at the historical Laldighi Maidan tomorrow (Friday).

On the occasion, a three-day Boishakhi fair will start today over a two square kilometre area, covering Anderkilla to Kotwali and Shahid Minar to Badarpatti area.

With the slogan "Let our cultural heritage be the inspiration to do something new," Abdul Jabbar Smriti Kusti Protijogita o Baishakhi Mela Uddjapan Parishad will organise the event as in previous years.

"The Boli Khela (wrestling) is the main attraction of the event", said the parishad's organising secretary Swapan Mahajan, adding that over 100 bolis (wrestlers) would take part in the event from different upazilas of Chittagong division and other parts of the country.

Aiming at inspiring the youths to struggle against British colonial rule, Jabbar Sawdagor, a local merchant, introduced the form of wrestling in 1909. From then, the event is organised every year on the 12th of Boishakh, the first month of

## Zia slips to third

SPORTS REPORTER

Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman slipped to third position in the Asian Continental Chess Championships after conceding defeat against Indian Grandmaster Bogo Adhiban in the sixth round in Sharjah, UAE on Tuesday.

Zia has 4 points from six matches as shared the third position along with eight other players.

In the women's section, WFM Nazrana Khan Eva lost against WFM Arn Bayar of Mongolia to earn two points from six matches.

## Agrani hold Arambagh

SPORTS REPORTER

Agrani Bank played out a 1-1 draw against Arambagh KC in the Premier Bank Bangladesh Championship League at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

After a goalless first half, Kayes put Arambagh ahead in the 53rd minute while Mannaf restored the parity for the bankers' team in the 86th minute.



FIFA development officer Shaji Prabhakaran (2nd from L) hands over FIFA Adidas footballs to BFF president Kazi Salahuddin (2nd from R) during a press conference at the BFF House yesterday.

PHOTO: COURTESY

## Astro-turf in Kamalapur

SPORTS REPORTER

The Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium will have an international-standard astro-turf by this year, confirmed FIFA development officer Shaji Prabhakaran yesterday.

"It will be an international standard and top quality turf (105X65 meters) and will be capable of holding full-fledged international matches," said Prabhakaran at a press conference at the BFF House yesterday.

"I hope the installation process will be completed by the end of September and the tender process will begin in May-June," said the FIFA officer, who later inspected the Kamalapur Stadium.

Bangladesh is getting the second turf under FIFA Goal project-4 after FIFA gave astro-turfs at the Balur math adjacent to the BFF House and the BFF academy in Sylhet.

Prabhakaran said that FIFA is looking forward to extending more support in future and keen to involve in grassroot development as well as development of women's football.

During the press conference, FIFA also handed over 7000 Adidas footballs for the development of Bangladesh football, where Prabhakaran urged the government to come

## Jadeja guides CSK home

SPORTS REPORTER



An all-round performance from Ravindra Jadeja powered Chennai Super Kings to a seven-run victory over Rajasthan Royals in 10th match of the Indian Twenty20 Premier League at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Jadeja took four wickets for 33 runs to help dismiss Rajasthan Royals for 133, after his unbeaten 36 had guided his side to a par score of 140. The India all-rounder took the crucial wickets of Sanju Samson, Shane Watson, Steven Smith and Tim Southee -- all cheaply -- to break the backbone of Rajasthan Royals' batting. Some late hitting from Rajat Bhatia and Dhawal Kulkarni got Royal closer to the title, but in the end they fell seven runs short, losing their last wicket through a run-out in the penultimate delivery of the innings.

Earlier, Jadeja had scored an unbeaten 36 runs off 33 deliveries to resurrect the Chennai

Super Kings innings to 140 from a precarious position of 75 for 5. Chennai had got to a brisk start with openers Dwayne Smith and Brendon McCullum taking the score to 34 in the sixth over before McCullum fell for six. But Smith was severe at the other end as he raced to a 28-ball 50, with three sixes and six boundaries, before getting dismissed to the bowling of Stuart Binny. Smith's departure, at the team score of 59, brought a mini collapse to Chennai Innings as they were reduced to 71 for four when Jadeja came in. Three runs later skipper MS Dhoni followed, but batted sensibly, steadied the ship and stayed there till the end to make sure they had just enough runs on the board to defend.

SCORES IN BRIEF

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS: 140 for 6 (Smith 40, Jadeja 36 not out; Bhatia 2-13, Tambe 1-27)

RAJASTHAN ROYALS: 133 all out in 19.5 overs (Kulkarni 28 not out, Bhatia 23; Jadeja 4-33)

Result: CSK won by 7 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Ravindra Jadeja (CSK)

## 'ST better than the Don'

PTI, New Delhi



The jury is still out on whether Sachin Tendulkar retired a greater batsman than late Australian legend Don Bradman but a Chennai-based author claims to have found the "forensic evidence" to prove that the Indian maestro was indeed the better of the two icons.

On the eve of Tendulkar's 41st birthday, his first after retiring from international cricket, Rudolph Lambert Fernandez has come up with a book 'Greater Than Bradman', which aims to prove that the Little Master is the greatest batsman of all time.

"It is not another biography of Sachin or Bradman. It is not another compilation of interviews, match anecdotes and expert essays. It is not an autobiography. It is an analysis. It is a forensic study that aims to set the record straight," the author claims about the book.

"This is the first and only book that challenges Bradman's rank as a batsman," he says.

Fernandez wishes to present a copy of the book to Tendulkar's brother Ajit, his wife Anjali and his formative coach Ramakant Achrekar.

"I am eager to present a paperback of the book to the three As, who were in many ways responsible for Sachin realising his greatness. This book is a celebration of Tendulkar's greatness and what he stood for on the cricket field -- there is no higher tribute," said Fernandez.

Fernandez says the book uses illustrations from "science and martial arts" to prove Tendulkar's greatness.

"It questions traditional measures of greatness that revolve around statistics. It offers a more honest approach that respects a batsman's figures but places them against the backdrop of his playing environment", he says. "The 21st century cricket readers need a closer look at Bradman. They appear all too familiar with Sachin, having seen his every shot dissected a 100 times. They have seen his ducks, his run-outs, his many failures," said Fernandez.

Fernandez said his book offers a whole new perspective on Tendulkar's cricketing

## Sharapova still happy

AFP, Stuttgart



Defending champion Maria Sharapova admits she had a tough opening in her bid to win a third straight Stuttgart WTA tournament title after her three-sets win over Lucie Safarova.

Sharapova, who has never lost on her two appearances in Stuttgart after winning the 2012 and 2013 titles, will face Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova in Thursday's last-16 tie after beating Czech Republic's Safarova 7-6(7/5), 6-7(5/7), 7-6(7/2) late on Tuesday.

Earlier Pavlyuchenkova defeated Latvian qualifier Diana Marcinkevica 6-3, 6-2 to set up her clash with Sharapova for a quarterfinal place.

Former world number one Jelena Jankovic saved four match points to reach Thursday's last 16 when she came back to claim a 2-6, 7-6(10/8), 6-3 win over German lucky loser Mona Barthel. She will now face either German wildcard Andrea Petkovic or Italy's Flavia Pennetta for a place in the quarterfinals.