

Feni hold Sk Jamal

SPORTS REPORTER



Surprise package of the season, Feni Soccer Club, came from two goals down to hold league leaders Sheikh Jamal DC to a 2-2 draw in the Nitol Tata Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Haitian forward Wedson Anselme gave Sheikh Jamal a 2-0 lead first half hour before Chukta Charles and Kabba Jobe scored one goal apiece in the next five minutes to snatch a valuable point from their mighty opponents, who had handed them a 4-2 defeat in their first meeting in the league.

Despite the fourth draw in 12 matches, Sheikh Jamal are still on top of the 10-team table with 28 points, six ahead of second-placed Abahani, who play their 12th match against Muktiyoddha Sangsad today. Feni Soccer, meanwhile, are in eighth position with eight points.

Sheikh Jamal had to toil hard in their two previous wins against Chittagong Abahani and Brothers Union but this time they were undone by a spirited Feni Soccer, who have been growing from strength to strength since their Independence Cup campaign in the where they finished runners-up.

Amid scorching heat at the big bowl, players from both sides had to struggle to put their natural performance. Sheikh Jamal, though, had the upper hand and came close to taking the lead in the fourth minute when Sohel Rana's shot rattled the crossbar.

The Federation Cup champions though took the lead in the 14th minute with a screamer drive from Wedson, who fired home from the edge of the box after his compatriot Sony Norde had fed him with a square-pass.

Wedson doubled the lead in the 30th minute when he raced onto a throughpass from Shahedul Alam and placed the ball home with an angular shot.

However, Sheikh Jamal hit back two minutes later, a bit fortunately, when Sheikh Jamal stopper Didarul Haque, playing in place of suspended Nasir Chowdhury, saw his clearance deflect off Charles and end up at the back of the net. Three minutes later Gambian forward Kabba Jobe headed a Romjan Ali free-kick home to level the margin.

Afterwards, Sheikh Jamal pressed hard to restore the lead and created a lot of chances but Wedson, Emeka Darlington and Sony could not find the target while Feni Soccer got a good chance in the stoppage time but Charles failed to beat failed goalkeeper Ziaur Rahman from a one-on-one situation.

"It's tough to come back in the game when you concede two goals within five minutes after taking a two-goal lead. But I congratulate Feni Soccer for their effort and they deserved one point. We could not play up to our usual standard," said Sheikh Jamal coach Joseph Afusi after the match.

Feni Soccer's Gambian coach Omar Sise said that they were happy to get one point and especially with the way they showed courage to come back despite going two goals down.



PHOTO: STAR

Sheikh Jamal forward Wedson Anselme (C) drives one to score one of his two goals during their 2-2 draw against Feni Soccer Club in their Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Bowled out for three!

AFP, London

England's cricketers may have suffered the embarrassment of a World T20 defeat by the Netherlands and a 5-0 Ashes thrashing in Australia but even they were never bowled out for three as happened to one club side on Saturday.

Wirral, from north-west England, were dismissed for just three away to Haslington in a Cheshire League Third Division match -- with extras the top-scorer courtesy of two leg-byes.

There were 10 ducks in the Wirral innings, with No.11 Connor Hodson, the only member to score a run.

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Suspended players Mosharraf Hossain Rubel and Mahbubul Alam Robin have been cleared by the Bangladesh Cricket Board to participate in the BCB's tournaments.

At a press conference in Mirpur yesterday BCB's acting CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury informed reporters of the players' clearance.

"We were waiting for an opinion from our legal team and we have got that now. As a result, the players are now free to participate in any form of cricket under the BCB," informed Chowdhury.

The duo, who were accused of spot-fixing in the second season of

the Bangladesh Premier League by the ICC's anti-corruption unit were cleared by an independent tribunal of all accusations in February through a short-verdict.

The BCB however, did not allow them to participate in the National Cricket League citing various reasons.

The board's media committee chairman Jalal Yunus had initially stated that the BCB was planning to appeal against the verdict while the BCB CEO had said that they were awaiting a decision from their legal team regarding the matter.

When asked why the BCB had taken so long to make the decision, Chowdhury said, "We were in fact waiting for the complete verdict. There was an indication that it would be released two weeks after the short

verdict. However, at this point of time, what's important is that they are free to play."

However if the BCB will appeal against the decision once they receive the complete verdict remains unsure. "The BCB and ICC are working together. We will see what happens in the coming days," said Chowdhury.

Mosharraf, who practised at the BCB Academy ground yesterday, was overjoyed with the news. He now looks forward to playing in the Bangladesh Cricket League, which begins this month, for Central Zone, a side he captained last year.

"It obviously feels really good. I can't express the feeling that I am going through right now. I hope I can make a good come back in the BCL later this month," said Rubel.

McInnes leaves

SPORTS REPORTER

Richard McInnes spent his last day as the head of Bangladesh Cricket Board's National Cricket Academy yesterday. A small farewell ceremony was organised for the Australian who is leaving the country for an opportunity in a software company in Brisbane.

McInnes, who is scheduled to fly today, described his second stint in Bangladesh as frustrating and believed that he had achieved a lot more during his previous term in 2005.

He was also made the under-19 coach for a number of tours during his tenure.

MSC school chess from tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

The inaugural Mohammedan International School Chess Championships get underway from tomorrow at the club premises with 150 budding players from within country and abroad expected to take part.

The Swiss-League basis championship will have six categories for the boys from Class KG to X and three categories for girls, informed Mohammedan's director Sarwar Hossain at a press conference, expecting that the number of participating players might reach 150 on the closing day on Tuesday.

Some 100 local players already enrolled their names while eight foreign players -- four from India, three from Nepal and one from Sri Lanka -- have registered their names in the championships, which is being organised by Mohammedan SC in association with the Bangladesh Chess Federation.

Azarenka's French hopes in doubt

AFP, Paris

Former world number one Victoria Azarenka pulled out of the Madrid and Rome WTA events on Saturday with a left foot injury which could put her French Open hopes in doubt.

The Belarus star has not played since a second round loss to Lauren Davis at Indian Wells in the first week of March.

The 24-year-old announced on Facebook that she would be forced to miss the Madrid and Rome events in May.



PHOTO: AFP

Maria Sharapova holds aloft the Stuttgart Open trophy while standing on the winner's prize, a Porsche 911 Targa sports car, after the final against Ana Ivanovic yesterday.

Sharapova's treble

AFP, Stuttgart



Maria Sharapova claimed a hattrick of Stuttgart titles on Sunday after coming from behind to win a three-set battle royale with Ana Ivanovic in Sunday's final.

Having won the 2012 and 2013 titles here, the 27-year-old Sharapova was made to work hard for her 13th consecutive win on Stuttgart's clay-courts in the 51st final of her career before over-powering Ivanovic to claim a 3-6, 6-4, 6-1 victory in just over two hours.

It is the Russian's first clay-court tournament in her build-up to the French Open, having lost to Serena Williams in last year's final.

Having been taken to three sets by the Czech Republic's Lucie Safarova in her first-round match, Russia's Sharapova had swept into the final with straight set wins over compatriot Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, top-

seed Agnieszka Radwanska of Poland, then Italian clay-court specialist Sara Errani in the semi-finals.

But Ivanovic, the ninth seed, made the statuesque Russian dig deep and the 26-year-old wasted no time asserting herself over Sharapova, racing into a 4-0 lead in the first set before the defending champion responded, but the Serbian held her serve to take the first set.

Having won her previous tournament in Monterrey, Mexico, last month, Ivanovic went 3-1 up in the second but the match's momentum turned against her when Sharapova broke her, then fought her way back to take the set.

Ivanovic had been chasing her first win over the Russian since the 2007 French Open semi-final, when Ivanovic went onto lose to Justine Henin in the final, but the Serbian ran out of steam and sixth seed Sharapova dominated the third set.

Chennai join Punjab

STAR SPORTS DESK



Chennai Super Kings joined leaders Kings XI Punjab when they beat Sunrisers Hyderabad by five wickets in an Indian Premier League match at Sharjah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Chennai however made heavy weather of an easy chase of 146 after Dwayne Smith and Brandon McCullum gave them a flying start, scoring 85 runs in just 10.5 overs. They toiled to score in the last five overs and eventually got over the line with three balls to spare.

It was Chennai's fourth win from five games while Punjab have won all their four games.

Earlier, defending champions Mumbai Indians slumped to their fourth consecutive defeat as Delhi Daredevils dished out a clinical all-round display to record an easy six-wicket win.

Delhi chased down a modest target of 126 with seven balls to spare with opener Murali Vijay top-scoring with a 34-ball 40 and captain Kevin Pietersen striking form after an injury lay-off with an unbeaten 26 to notch up their second win.

Delhi, playing their last match this season at the UAE, wobbled towards the end with JP

Duminy (19) and Dinesh Karthik (2) falling in the 16th over at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium.

Chasing a small target, Delhi made a decent start with the opening stand between Vijay and Quinton de Kock (16) yielding 34 runs.

Pietersen, who looked tentative and rusty during his knock of 16 in his first match two days back, steadied Delhi after the quick fall of Duminy and Karthik before steering his side home.

Delhi will now head home to play their next match at Ferozeshah Kotla on May 3.

Earlier, Delhi bowlers produced a clinical display to restrict Mumbai to a modest 125 for six.

SCORES IN BRIEF

MI: 125 for 6 in 20 overs (Pollard 33 not out, Gautam 22, Rayudu 14; Unadkat 2-29)

DD: 126 for 4 in 18.5 overs (Vijay 40, Pietersen 26 not out, Duminy 19; Malinga 2-17)

Result: Delhi Daredevils won six wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Murali Vijay.

SUNRISES HYDERABAD: 145-5 (Finch 44, Rahul 25, Sammy 23 not out; Hilfenhaus 2-32, M Sharma 2-27)

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS: 146-5 (Dwayne Smith 66, McCullum 40; B Kumar 2-23, I Sharman 2-37)

Result: Chennai won by 5 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Dwayne Smith

Academy to start by August?

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has made a promise to the FIFA to start its football academy in Sylhet by August this year following assurance from the Youth and Sports Ministry.

The game's governing body has been struggling to make the academy functional due to long-winded government procedures, but the BFF sees a new hope after a meeting with new state minister for youth and sports Biren Shikder, who promised to complete the remaining work by July.

The BFF president Kazi Salahuddin made the promise to

FIFA development officer Shaji Prabhakaran, who recently visited Bangladesh to hand over 7000 Adidas World Cup footballs as well as to inspect the Shaheed Birsreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium where an astro-turf under FIEA Goal project will be installed by this year.

FIFA, under Goal project-3, has already released 400,000 dollars out of a promised 700,000 dollars to the BFF in June 2012 to run the country's lone football academy under foreign coach. BFF sought help from the government to equip the academy with furniture at the dormitory, office rooms and staff quarters and turn the ground fit for practicing.

The finance ministry responded

by allocating Tk 1.94 crore in March, 20013 but negligence from the National Sports Council led the finance ministry take back the money, as no was work done in the last fiscal.

"The development work at the Sylhet BKSP has resumed three weeks ago and installation of furniture is going on even though filling of earth is yet to start. We are expecting to get the Sylhet Academy ready by July as per discussion with the sports minister and start the academy by August," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag on Friday.

The BFF will however have to wait to get the remaining 300,000 dollars from FIFA till the start of the academy.