

MSC back to winning ways
SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan returned to winning ways in the Nitol Tata Bangladesh Premier League when they handed a 2-0 defeat to newcomers Uttar Baridhara Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

After two consecutive defeats against Sheikh Russel KC and Muktiyoddha Sangsad, the Black and Whites were desperate to return to winning ways and they pressed hard from the outset to score three goals, all of which were however ruled out due to off-side before Zahid Hasan Emily broke the deadlock in latter stages of the game.

Winger Zahid Hossain whipped a nice cross from the right flank for Emily, who just placed the ball home while substitute Yousuf Sifat wrapped up the 10th win from a counter attack for Mohammedan in the stoppage time of the second half.

With the victory, Mohammedan went up to third position with 35 points from 20 matches while Uttar Baridhara remained at the bottom with 12 points from 20 matches.

BD Navy lose 1-3
SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Navy Chess team got off to a losing start in the Asian Club Cup Team Chess Championship being held at the Danat Hotel Al Ain in the United Arab Emirates on Saturday.

Bangladesh Navy lost 1-3 to China Shanghai Chess Club. GM Enamul Hossain and FM Taibur Rahman drew with GM Zhou Jianchao and WGM Zhang Xiaowen respectively while GM Reefat Bin Sattar, FM Nasir Ahmed lost to IM Lou Yiping and Xu Yi of Shanghai respectively.

Bangladesh Navy was playing Al Ain Chess Club of UAE when this report was filed.



Nigeria forward Peter Odemwingie (L) dealt the killer blow to Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Arena Pantanal on Saturday.
PHOTO: AFP

Nigeria end long wait

REUTERS, Caiaba

Nigeria beat Bosnia 1-0 on Saturday to record their first World Cup finals victory since 1998 and condemn the European team to an early exit in their first appearance at the tournament.

Peter Odemwingie's 29th-minute goal lifted the African champions to four points from two games, two less than Argentina who they meet in their final Group F match on Wednesday with top spot at stake.

"It's been 16 years and no wins for our country so we are very excited," Odemwingie said in a television interview.

"We needed the win. They have some fantastic players so we are happy to bounce back after what our people thought was a poor performance in the first game (a 0-0 draw with Iran).

"Victories affect people in different ways so we are looking up now and if we get into the second round anything can happen. Maybe we will be inspired as we were in the last African Nations Cup."

Iran are third in the standings with one point and could reach the last 16 if they inflict Bosnia's third defeat in a row in their final group match and Nigeria lose to Argentina.

Nigeria took the lead when Odemwingie

fed Emmanuel Emenike on the right wing and raced into the box to receive the striker's low return before sweeping the ball under goalkeeper Asmir Begovic.

The Bosnian bench angrily protested that Emenike had fouled captain Emir Spahic as he bundled past him into the box before making his cross.

The tournament newcomers had earlier been denied a goal after a poor offside decision against striker Edin Dzeko after he ran on to a through pass and beat goalkeeper Vincent Enyeama in the 21st minute.

"I did not see the situation, I was told there was no offside but this was not the first or last refereeing mistake," Bosnia coach Safet Susic told reporters.

"I don't want to discuss that right now. We lost to a good team who played much better in this match than against Iran," he added.

"They scored that goal and they won deservedly, I can only congratulate them and I have nothing further to add."

Dzeko had another shot saved by Enyeama but he was well off target with chances later in the half as he fought a lonely battle with the Nigeria defence.

The more experienced Nigerians, playing in their fifth World Cup, created several chances in the first half but were let down by the final pass, poor control or wayward shooting and a couple of smart diving saves by Begovic.

SL fight back
AFP, Leeds

Mahela Jayawardene steered Sri Lanka to a lead of more than a hundred runs in the second Test at Headingley after Moeen Ali proved an unlikely bowling hero for England.

Sri Lanka were 214 for four in their second innings at stumps on Sunday's third day, a lead of 106 runs.

Jayawardene was 55 not out and Sri Lanka captain Angelo Mathews 24 not out, with two days remaining to decide the fate of this two-match series following the drawn first Test at Lord's.

Off-spinner Ali, primarily a batsman and in just his second Test, stunned Sri Lanka with two wickets for no runs in three balls to dismiss Kumar Sangakkara and Lahiru Thirimanne.

Earlier, Mathews took his Test-best figures of four for 44.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SRI LANKA: 257 and 214 for 4 (Jayawardene 55 not out, Sangakkara 55; Ali 2-26)
ENGLAND: 365 all out in 115.5 overs (Robson 127; Ballance 74; Mathews 4-44)

Brazil, why is O Rei not there?

AFP, Santos

He's 'the king', renowned as football's greatest ever and the icon of Brazilian World Cup success. But with the tournament finally back in his home country, it seems somebody forgot to invite Pele.

At the opening ceremony in Sao Paulo, attended by President Dilma Rousseff and a clutch of visiting heads of state, Pele was a notable absentee despite living not far away in Santos.

For Brazil's second game in Fortaleza, the three-time World Cup winner was not only not at the game -- he was in his car, stuck in Brazil's notorious traffic near Sao Paulo.

"It was the second time I heard a Brazil World Cup match on the radio... in 1950 and today," he told Globo television later, referring to when Brazil first hosted the World Cup.

Brazil is not short of successful ex-players. But Pele, 73, was named an honorary ambassador in the build-up to the World Cup and has an unmatched following abroad.

Last week, a museum celebrating his life was unveiled in port city Santos, where Pele played his club football. "O Rei" (the king) cried freely at its inauguration.

However, at the World Cup his appearances have mainly been restricted to TV advertisements for supermarkets, fast food and shampoo at half-time.

Rather than Pele, Brazilian supermodel Gisele Bundchen is tipped as the personality most likely to hand over the trophy at the July 13 final in Rio de Janeiro.

It is a surprising demotion for a man named "athlete of the century" by France's L'Equipe sports magazine and who is feted the world over. For some fans, it seems a little odd.

"I think it's strange," said Rodrigo Andrade, 27, a pastor from Sao Paulo who was visiting the newly opened Pele museum in Santos's cobbled historic quarter.

"I think all the people who came from



PELE

outside of Brazil for the World Cup want to see Pele."

Pele was not available for comment, and his publicity team did not offer any explanations following requests from AFP.

Guilherme Guarache, historian at Santos FC's Memorial das Conquistas, the club museum, suggested that Pele had fallen out with football's world governing body FIFA.

"It depends on the conversation between Pele and FIFA. We don't know what happened between them, why he didn't show up. It's FIFA business," he said.

But journalist and historian Marcos Guterman said Pele's image has steadily diminished in Brazil, which is in the midst of great social upheaval.

"People here don't take him as seriously as foreigners," said Guterman, author of "Football Explains Brazil - a History of the biggest popular expression of the country".

"Pele is a symbol of a great era for

Brazilian soccer but he's part of the past." Guterman added: "There are many other soccer players that are more important than Pele, for example Socrates. His opinions were very important to us because he was politically engaged here in Brazil."

"Pele wasn't. He's sympathetic to the government, whatever government it is. He speaks for the government, including the dictatorship. So we don't take his political opinions seriously."

Last year Pele misjudged the public mood when he criticised protests against Brazil's inequality and lack of basic services during the Confederations Cup.

"It was embarrassing... he was very unpopular because of that opinion and of course people don't forget that," Guterman said.

"Pele stands for nothing more than memory from the past, he's not important for us now," he added. "When he speaks about politics or economic issues, almost every time it's disastrous. It's shocking but it's the truth."

Jose Paulo Florenzano, an anthropologist and soccer expert at Sao Paulo's Pontifical Catholic University, agrees that Pele is out of favour with Brazil's

media and progressives. Nevertheless, he said it was "too strange... that he's missing from all this spectacle".

"If Brazil goes forward in this tournament, at some moment Pele will appear in the stadium," he said. "But for me, this doesn't change the situation that we've noticed."

He said many people in Brazil were ambivalent about Pele, who was born Edson Arantes do Nascimento in 1940 and scored 1,281 goals in 1,363 games, according to FIFA.

Often Brazilians, when asked to name football's greatest player, will say Garrincha, the "Joy of the People" whose dribbling skills and goals have attained almost mythic status.

For Pele, listening to Brazil's game in his car, there is a circularity with 1950, when his country first hosted the World Cup and he tuned in on the radio aged nine.

He will hope that Brazil will fare better than 64 years ago, when they were stunned 2-1 by Uruguay in the decisive match.

And many will be watching to see if Pele steps off the sidelines before the current tournament is over.

Will proven class reign on grass?
Wimbledon starts today

AFP, London

This year's Wimbledon, starting today, returns focus on the four outstanding male players of the generation even as the two form players among them, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic, are plagued by injury fears and self-doubt, perhaps opening the door for fading legend Roger Federer. On the women's side, five-time champion Serena Williams will be looking to make amends for her recent indifferent form with a sixth title.

World number one Nadal, fresh from a record ninth French Open, was Wimbledon champion in 2008 and 2010 and runner-up in 2006, 2007 and 2010.

But his last two visits have been humiliating disasters. The Spaniard suffered his first-ever opening round exit at a Grand Slam in 2013 to Belgian journeyman Steve Darcis, who was ranked 135 and has not won a main tour match since. In 2012 he went out to the world's 100th best player, big-hitting Lukas Rosol, in the second round. Rosol could be a second round opponent this year.

Nadal, who faces Slovakia's Martin Klizan in the first round, suffered an opening exit on grass at Halle last week to German world number 85 Dustin Brown.

World number two Djokovic, who is seeded number one for Wimbledon, was runner-up to Andy Murray in 2013, has not played a grasscourt warm-up event since 2010.

Djokovic starts against Kazakh journeyman Andrey Golubev, but admits he still fears that a right wrist injury may return to haunt him.

Defending champion Murray goes into the tournament with his form also giving cause for concern. Murray has been seeded third, above seven-time champion Federer, who may have more reasons for being confident about an eighth title, having captured the Halle grasscourt trophy for the seventh time.

Last year, Federer was knocked out in the second round by Ukraine's world number 116, Sergei Stakhovsky, ending his run of 36 straight Grand Slam quarter-finals.

Williams sent a warning to her Wimbledon title rivals as the world number one completed her preparations in a feisty mood.

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