

Abahani back in hunt for 2nd place

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani returned to winning ways after three matches in the Nitol Tata Bangladesh Premier League by handing a 2-1 defeat to Team BJMC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Portuguese winger Leonildo Soares and Ghanaian hitman Awudu Ibrahim struck one goal apiece to push Abahani to 43 points from 23 matches, nine behind league leaders Sheikh Jamal DC.

Abahani have virtually no hope of regaining the prestigious league title they have clinched four times as the Sky Blues can end the season with a maximum of 55 points if they win their remaining four games while leaders Sheikh Jamal need only four points from as many matches to ensure their second professional football league title.

However Abahani have a good chance of finishing second as they are five points clear of third-placed Mohammedan SC, who now have 38 points from 23 outings.

Back to the game, Abahani grabbed the lead in the 20th minute. Ibrahim played to Soares on the right flank and the Portuguese winger darted into the box to drive a low shot past BJMC goalkeeper Arifuzzaman Himel.

After conceding the lead, BJMC started to put pressure on their mighty opponents and almost levelled the margin on the half-hour mark but Nabib Nawas Jibon saw his angular shot just miss the mark despite beating Abahani goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Shohel. BJMC came close twice more but Saiful Islam Saif was denied by goalkeeper Shohel on both occasions before defender SM Rajib headed an Abdullah Parvez corner home to level the margin in the 37th minute.

Abahani took five minutes to restore supremacy as Osei Morison played to Ibrahim on the left flank and Ibrahim beat the BJMC goalkeeper with a powerful shot to ensure Abahani's 11th win of the league.

SHAKIB CONTROVERSY

'Threats made out of anger'

SPORTS REPORTER



Upon his return from London yesterday, Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan told reporters that his threat to quit Test and ODI cricket was made to coach Chandika Hathurusingha out of anger. The left-hander further said that it was a misunderstanding between him and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) that led to him leaving without a no-objection certificate to take part in the Caribbean Premier League (CPL), set to begin later this month.

Describing the national team as a family Shakib said, "The way I see it, if you fight with your parents you may not eat for two days, but that does not mean that you won't stay. I was angry and I said a few things that I shouldn't have, but I said sorry and he accepted that as well. There are no hard feelings. I will play for Bangladesh for the next ten years if God wills," he added.

The disagreement arose when Hathurusingha had asked Shakib to return to Bangladesh, following his stint in the CPL by July 31 and join Bangladesh's training camp before the Tigers' tour of the West Indies, which begins on August 20.

The left-hander however tried to negotiate the terms.

"I tried to reason with him. I tried to tell



I was asked to contact the CEO. He in turn asked me to contact Akram Bhai. He asked me to continue with my travelling plans and said that he would sign the NOC once I returned to Dhaka.

-- Shakib



I did tell him that I have no problem with him leaving. However, I asked him to go through the CEO since it is he who has to sign the NOC.

-- Akram Khan

him that from July 31 there would only be ten days until the team left for the West Indies. He told me that this is a team game and asked me to join the camp. He showed his logic and I showed mine. At the end of the day it went his way," said Shakib.

On Friday, an enraged BCB president

Nazmul Hassan Papon told the media that Shakib had threatened to quit Test and ODI cricket; a piece of information he received from Hathurusingha via a letter.

Regarding his decision to leave without receiving the NOC, Shakib said, "Along with Tamim Iqbal, I had taken a NOC for the

match in England (bicentennial celebrations). There was a chance of me playing that match. I thought that the NOC I received for that match included the NOC for the Caribbean Premier League because the events are scheduled close by.

"I had mainly come to the board (on July 1) to enquire about my NOC for the Big Bash. That's when I got to know that I did not have the NOC for the CPL. I was asked to contact the CEO. He in turn asked me to contact Akram Bhai. He asked me to continue with my travelling plans. He said that he would sign the NOC once I returned to Dhaka."

Akram however, had a different statement. "I did tell him that I have no problem with him leaving. However, I asked him to go through the CEO since it is he who has to sign the NOC," Akram told The Daily Star.

"On the morning of my journey I received a call from operations asking me not to go without an NOC. After that I called the CEO and the president, both of whom I could not get through to. I figured that since I had an approval from Akram Bhai, things would be okay once I reached London," said Shakib.

"However, once I reached London I received a mail asking me to come back. I never expected the problem to stretch this far. I e-mailed back and apologised, caught the next flight and returned," he added.

Of pretenders & contenders

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Vaart. But whatever players he had, he turned them into a well-functioning unit shorn of their egoistic demons, thriving on swift counter-attacking football spear-headed by the pace and guile of Arjen Robben.

On Saturday against a sticky Costa Rica side, despite having enjoyed the lion's share of possession and enough chances to kill the game off in 90 minutes, Netherlands found themselves in a sticky situation, facing the prospect of overcoming the monstrous Keylor Navas in goal.

As the penalties loomed, the Dutch fans might have felt the impending horror of being knocked out in the same fashion for the fifth time. But Van Gaal had carefully kept his trump card for the opportune moment. On came Tim Krul of Newcastle United, to the shock of Jasper Cillessen, saved two penalty kicks and became the latest hero in a World Cup of goalkeepers.



Novak Djokovic is pumped up after winning a point against Roger Federer in the Wimbledon final at the All England Tennis Club yesterday.

Fighting Novak wins epic final

AFP, London



Novak Djokovic won his second Wimbledon title and seventh career major with a 6-7 (7/9), 6-4, 7-6 (7/4), 5-7, 6-4 victory over Roger Federer Sunday, shattering the Swiss star's dream of a record eighth triumph in an epic struggle.

Victory allowed the top seeded Serb, who was also the 2011 champion and runner-up last year, to end a run of three successive defeats in Grand Slam finals, but the 27-year-old struggled to get across the finish line, surrendering a 5-2 lead in the fourth set and then a match point.

Djokovic celebrated victory in typically eccentric style, kneeling on the Centre Court turf and munching on a few blades of grass just as he had done three years ago.

"First of all I want to congratulate Roger it was a great match to be a part of he is a magnificent champion and a great example of a great athlete and a role model. I respect everything you have done and thanks for letting me win today," smiled Djokovic. Djokovic has the added bonus of reclaiming the world number one spot from Rafael Nadal.

Federer said he was surprised to have got to a deciding set. "It was a great final. I can't believe I made it to five, it wasn't looking good for a while," said Federer.

Two rallies featured 21 strokes apiece but neither player could fashion a break point in the first set.

In a rollercoaster of a tiebreaker, Federer saw a 3/0 lead gobbled up and then had to save two set points.

But the Swiss rallied when it mattered, taking the opener when Djokovic dumped a backhand return into the net.

But he did break in the third game of the second set for 2-1 before calling the trainer to treat the left ankle he hurt in the fall. Federer had his first break point of the tie in the 10th game but Djokovic saved it and levelled the final with a brutal overhead.

But it was Djokovic who was on top in the tiebreaker charging to two set points and the third set when Federer pushed a drive wide.

In a thrilling fourth set, Djokovic broke for 3-1, Federer hit back for 2-3 but the Serb regained the initiative for 4-2 and held a nervy seventh game for 5-2.

Astonishingly, back came the veteran Swiss to go to 4-5, breaking his opponent when he served for the title. He saved a match point in the 10th game on a successful challenge to take the final into a decider.

Djokovic led 2-1 in the fifth and called the trainer for the second time for treatment to his right calf.

The man from Belgrade fought off a break point to lead 4-3 and then wasted three of his own as the rivals went to 4-4.

Djokovic held for 5-4 and from nowhere he seized the initiative, moving to two championship points and clinched the trophy when Federer netted a return.

Kiwis win first T20I

AFP, Roseau



New Zealand relied on their two most experienced batsmen to defeat the West Indies by 12 runs on the Duckworth/Lewis scoring method in the rain-affected first T20 International at Windsor Park on Saturday to take a 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

Replying to the home side's total of 132 for eight off 18 overs in the rain-affected match, the tourists were cruising at 117 for four after 15 overs when the cumulative effect of a persistent drizzle and fading light forced the umpires to call a halt to the match.

Brendon McCullum spearheaded the run-chase for the Black Caps with an innings of 40 off 35 balls to wrest the initiative for his team despite a three-wicket burst by his West Indies counterpart, Darren Sammy.

McCullum's knock, and the support of Ross Taylor (28 not out), overshadowed the pulverizing innings of 52 off 39 balls by Andre Fletcher that paced the West Indies to what seemed a competitive total after they were in early trouble at 10 for two.

Taylor smashed two sixes and a four off an over from all-rounder Russell that shot New Zealand so far ahead of the required rate that victory was a formality from that point.

Fletcher and Darren Bravo (30) put on 88 for the third wicket, but the excellent bowling of seamer Tim Southee (2 for 20) restricted the home side in the critical final overs of the innings.

Debutant leg-spinner Ish Sodhi was the only New Zealand bowler to suffer against the West Indies batsmen, conceding 35 runs off three overs.

He did have the consolation however of claiming the wicket of Fletcher just at the point where the attacking right-hander was set to accelerate even further.

SCORES IN BRIEF

WEST INDIES: 132 for 8 in 18 overs (Fletcher 52, Bravo 30; Southee 2-20, Boult 2-28, Anderson 2-32)

NEW ZEALAND: 117 for 4 in 15 overs (McCullum 40, Taylor 28 not out; Sammy 3-22, Santokie 1-27)

Result: New Zealand won by 12 runs (D/L Method)

My World Cup

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makes a difference in any team. We're in a situation where we've lost something we don't want to miss, especially for the semifinal and final."

Scolari also said that Neymar, who had scored four times in the tournament prior to his injury, has requested to be in the stadium in Belo Horizonte for Tuesday's encounter with Germany and, should Brazil make it, the final too.

"He'll be with us if he can be, on the bench or in the stands," Scolari said. "We've asked this. It all depends on his state in the coming days. By his will, I've certainly felt that he will be."

Proteas win after Amla ton

AFP, Colombo



Opener Hashim Amla smashed 109 and Ryan McLaren took two wickets in three balls as South Africa thrashed Sri Lanka by 75 runs in their first one-dayer on Sunday.

Amla hit eight fours in his composed 130-ball knock and shared a 151-run stand for the third wicket with skipper AB de Villiers (75), helping the visitors to post a formidable 304-5 at the R. Premadasa Stadium.

Kumar Sangakkara responded with a fine 88 off just 84 balls but Sri Lanka were still bundled out for 229 off 40.3 overs.

The hosts appeared headed towards victory at one point. But paceman McLaren dismissed Lahiru Thirimanne and Sangakkara in the 38th over to trigger a collapse that saw Sri Lanka lose their last five wickets for just 13 runs.

Spinner Imran Tahir was a tad expensive

but emerged as the highest wicket taker for the visitors, finishing with 3-50 from seven overs.

Earlier, Sri Lanka's unorthodox spinner Ajantha Mendis took 3-61 including the prized scalp of star all-rounder Jacques Kallis for a duck to peg back South Africa.

The visitors got off to a steady start, putting on 58 before losing two batsmen in quick succession.

But Amla and de Villiers made light of the twin setbacks and steered the innings to a position of strength with their 141-ball stand.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: 304 for 5 (Amla 109, de Villiers 75, Miller 36 not out; Mendis 3-61, Mathews 1-30)

SRI LANKA: 229 all out in 40.3 overs (Sangakkara 88, Dilshan 40, Perera 34; Tahir 3-50, Steyn 2-38, McLaren 2-33)

Result: South Africa win by 75 runs

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