

Sheikh Jamal's rapturous return

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club returned home last night to a rapturous welcome after clinching the prestigious King's Cup title in Bhutan the previous night.

Maruful Haque's charges, who overcame Pune FC 1-0 in an adrenaline-charged final to emerge as unbeaten champions in the nine-team tournament, were greeted with garlands upon their arrival at the airport at around 9:00pm.

Club president Manjur Kader, officials of other Dhaka clubs and Bangladesh Football Federation, greeted the victorious team members while the country's ambassador adorned them with traditional Bhutanese scarves.

Maruful said it was a tough competition and they had to overcome quite a few odds to return with the trophy.

"Firstly we needed time to get used to the high altitude and the extremely cold weather of Thimphu. People there didn't know much about us, therefore we didn't get much support in the beginning as the locals were in favour of the Indians and the Nepalese," said Maruful.

"Most of the teams were more competitive than we expected. But the players put in their full dedication and concentrated fully on their job, which is why we became the champions," added Maruful.

Yasin Khan, the scorer of the only goal of the final, pointed to his finger, saying he still felt like he was bleeding from the cold of Thimphu. But he was happy to have come back with the trophy as the players posed for photographs and took selfies with the silverware at the VIP Lounge of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

After the greetings and brief conversations with members of the media, the triumphant team left in a special bus, adorned with flowers, followed by a motorcade of club supporters.



Toklish Ahmed takes a selfie with Yeasin Khan (M) and Shakhawat Hossain Rony, holding the King's Cup trophy, at the VIP Lounge of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport upon their return from Bhutan last night.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Legends lose 3 on the trot

SPORTS REPORTER



Slow-left armer Taijul Islam was the only national player to make a sizeable impact in the Dhaka Premier League yesterday in a round which saw the arrival of the national players following the Zimbabwe series. Taijul's four-wicket haul helped Prime Bank Cricket Club beat Shakib Al Hasan-led Legends of Rupganj by 95 runs at the BKSP. The defeat pushed the most expensive team of the league to fourth place, while Prime Bank CC took a four-point lead at the top of the table.

Batting first, Prime Bank were scored 243, courtesy of Shuvagata Hom's 46 and Nunul Hasan's 41. In reply, Rupganj were bundled out for just 148. Taijul, who finished with figures of 4 for 32 was the chief destroyer.

The intense match, expectedly, witnessed its share of incidents. Rupganj's Mosharraf Hossain was

hit on the head with a bouncer while batting and had to retire. Mosharraf later told The Daily Star that the injury was not serious and that he had been asked to rest for a day. Shakib, who finished with figures of 1 for 32, was fined for excessive appealing.

Jahurul Islam scored his fourth half-century while Ryan Ten Doeschate hit 40 in Rupganj's 148.

Mushfiquur Rahim began his DPL stint with a win as his side, Prime Doleshwar, thumped bottom-placed Old DOHS Sporting Club by 109 runs. Mehedi Maruf was the top scorer for Doleshwar with 47 and helped them post 225 at Fatullah yesterday.

In reply, Old DOHS were sent packing for 116 as Asif Ahmed took five wickets while Sanjamul scalped four.

Mohammedan Sporting Club secured a tense eight-run win over Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club at Mirpur yesterday with Naeem Islam leading the way for MSC with a half-

century and a three-wicket haul. Batting first, MSC posted 185. In reply, Sheikh Jamal were bowled out for 177.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PRIME BANK CC: 243 for 9 (Shuvagata 46, Nurul 41; Nayeem 2-48)

LEGENDS OF RUPGANJ: 148 all out in 39.1 overs (Jahurul 53, Ten Doeschate 40; Taijul 4-32)

Result: Prime Bank CC won by 95 runs.

PRIME DOLESHWAR SC: 225 for 9 (Mehedi 47, Rony 29; Saleh 4-30, Shahidul 2-29)

Old DOHS SC: 116 all out in 40.2 overs (Shahnaj 59; Asif 5-24, Sanjamul 4-20)

Result: Doleshwar won by 109 runs.

MOHAMMEDAN SC: 185 for 9 (Naeem 57, Ariful 37; Shohag 3-33, Mehedi 2-33)

SHEIKH JAMAL DC: 177 all out in 48.5 overs (Shahriar 89; Naeem 3-21, Amit 3-35)

Result: Mohammedan won by eight runs.

Badal blames it on BCB

SPORTS REPORTER

Legends of Rupganj owner Lutfur Rahman Badal, following his side's 95-run defeat yesterday, lashed out at the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), blaming them of 'manipulating the umpires' against his side.

"This is a scheme by the board. They want us out just because we have been winning for the last three years. If this is how it's going to continue then I don't think there's any point of playing the league. I am honestly thinking about withdrawing this year," he said.

Umpires Committee Chairman, IH Mallick, however denied the allegations. "Every committee in the BCB works independently. Apart from him, no other club has complained regarding the league for the last three years.

"He had also targeted me in one of his statements. I don't have any personal grudge against him. I don't have any say on the selection of the umpires," said Mallick.

DHAKA Retired League!

BISHWAJIT ROY



BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon loves to talk about the technical aspects of cricket. In fact in his last few press meets he even provided the media with hints about the upcoming players in the national line-up.

The one thing that he frequently highlights is the 'big number of players in the pipeline' who are apparently inches away from making the national team.

However, the comebacks made by former national players in the Dhaka Premier League this year paint a different picture. The other day coach Khaled Mashud played for Kalabagan. And yesterday, former national opener Mehrab Hossain took the field after three years for Mohammedan. The reasons stated by the players for their returns provide a bleak outlook of Bangladesh's cricket.

Mashud had earlier told reporters that he returned to the game as a result of the 'shortage of quality players' in his side. Mehrab had a similar statement.

"The team does not have a back-up opener and since their current openers are not performing the team management requested to me to play and I agreed. I can't say anything more," Mehrab told The Daily Star yesterday.

The league is the lone 50-over domestic competition in the country. In the face of Bangladesh's international engagements, the once gorgeous tournament may have lost its zeal, but the importance of the league still prevails. It is a league that witnesses the country's top twelve clubs compete and when a club belongs to that stature they ideally should not be struggling to allure eleven quality players to play a match.

The question however remains as to whether the quality of the players has also declined along with the waning interest from the fans.

The quality of players is bound to suffer when the supply line is not properly nursed. We are, as it is, yet to get rid of the culture of hastily arranging competitions just for the sake of making the numbers. Nobody knows for how long the cries for good wickets and facilities in the domestic level will continue.

While this issue has perhaps gone unnoticed in the fervour of Bangladesh's recent run of wins, it is bound to crop up in the future, maybe only for the sake of discussions, when the Tigers go through a slide.



Former national opener Mehrab Hossain (L) yesterday made a surprise return to Dhaka cricket after apparently quitting three years ago.

PHOTO: STAR

Final goodbye to Phil

AFP, Macksville

Cricketing greats bid an emotional farewell to Phillip Hughes at a funeral service in his home town Wednesday, as Australia stopped to remember the batsman whose death from a freak injury sent shockwaves through the sport.

A lone cricket bat rested against the coffin at a packed service in his former high school hall in Macksville on the New South Wales coast in front of his heartbroken parents, family and friends and a shattered Australian Test team.

"Taken from the game, his family and loved ones at the age of just 25, left a mark on our game that needs no embellishment," tearful captain Michael Clarke told the funeral. "I don't know about you but I keep looking for him."

Hughes, who had played 26 Tests and was on the cusp of a recall, died from bleeding on the brain last Thursday after being hit on the base of the skull by a rising ball at the Sydney Cricket Ground during a domestic match.

Clarke said he walked to the middle of the SCG on Thursday night: "Those same blades of grass beneath my feet where he and I and so many of his mates here today have built partnerships, taken chances and lived out the dreams we painted in our heads as boys.

"I stood there at the wicket, I knelt down and touched the grass, I swear he was with me... Telling me we just needed to dig in and get through to tea," he added.

Clarke said the tributes offered from sports stars and fans across the globe had sustained him, from



"We must dig in and get through to tea. And we must play on. Rest in peace, my little brother. See you out in the middle." – were the words from Australia captain Michael Clarke for Phillip Hughes at his funeral service in Macksville yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

a little girl holding a candle in tribute, to masters of the game such as Sachin Tendulkar expressing sorrow.

"This is what makes our game the greatest game in the world. We must dig in and get through to tea. And we must play on," he added.

"So rest in peace my little brother. I will see you out in the middle."

In Hughes's small hometown of Macksville, on Australia's east coast, tributes to the opening batsman hung in shop windows, while ribbons in the green and gold colours of the Australian Test team adorned telephone poles.

Macksville itself, with a population of just 2,500, welcomed greats such as Shane Warne, Brian Lara, Glenn McGrath, Virat Kohli and Hughes's first Test skipper

Ricky Ponting.

Sean Abbott, the young man who bowled the fast ball which struck Hughes, also attended supported by his parents, as did Prime Minister Tony Abbott.

Tony Abbott said there had been profound grief, in part because to "be felled by a hard but fair ball in the centre of the SCG at your most exuberant, it just doesn't seem right or natural".

Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland said over the past week the nation and the sporting world had reeled in shock.

Hughes's parents Greg and Virginia and siblings invited the whole town to the service at Macksville High School, where about 1,000 crammed into the hall and hundreds more watched on screens in overflow areas.

U-12 booters leave for Malaysia

SPORTS REPORTER

Some 16 kids, aged below 12, are set to explore new football horizons as a team from Bangladesh left for Malaysia last night to take part in the Super Mokh Cup, which is scheduled to begin today.

A total of 16 national and club teams, divided into four groups, will compete in nine-a-side affair, with each game consisting of 40 minutes. Top two teams from each group will advance to the quarterfinal stages. Bangladesh were placed in Group D along with Sevilla FC of Spain, Chonburi FC of Thailand and Malaysia Cougars.

"For the first time, we are sending an U-12 team abroad with the intention of selecting them for the BFF Academy in future because we have realised that we need to start with players aged between 10 and 12," said Bangladesh Football Federation's vice president and development committee chairman Badal Roy at a press conference yesterday, adding that results in this tournament is not their biggest priority.

The 16 kids were picked from the Max U-10/12 football festival, which was held over three days at the BFF artificial turf and organised by Sonali Otit Club earlier this month.

Eng win 3rd ODI Sangakkara joins 13k runs club

SPORTS DESK



England won the third ODI of the seven-match series against Sri Lanka despite 63 runs from Kumar Sangakkara, who became only the fourth batsman after Sachin Tendulkar, Ricky Ponting and Sanath Jayasuriya, to surpass 13,000 one-day runs in Hambantota yesterday.

The 37-year-old left-hander reached the landmark when he took a single off Chris Woakes to move to 13 and celebrated by top-scoring with 63 in the innings as the hosts posted 242 for eight in the 35-overs-a-side affair.

Despite wobbles at the top order, England managed to reach the target with eight balls to spare, thanks to 58 from Moeen Ali, an unbeaten 55 from Jos Buttler and unbeaten 48 from Joe Root.

Sri Lanka lead the series 2-1 with fourth ODI to beplayed next Sunday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SRI LANKA: 242 for 8 in 35 overs (Sangakkara 63, Mathews 37, Thirimanne 62 not out; Woakes 3-41, Jordan 2-46)

ENGLAND: 236 for 5 in 33.4 overs (Ali 58, Buttler 55 not out, Root 48; Mathews 2-34)

Result: England won by 5 wickets (D/L method)

First T20I today

NZ, Pakistan dedicate trophy to Hughes

AFP, Dubai

Pakistan and New Zealand dedicated the trophy for their two Twenty20 matches in Dubai starting on Thursday in memory of Australian batsman Phillip Hughes who died last week.

Hughes died last Thursday, two days after being hit by a bouncer in a first class match in Sydney, leaving the cricketing world to mourn his death.

Pakistan's Twenty20 captain Shahid Afridi said Hughes's tragic death has left the cricketing world in a shock.

"Hughes died very young and his tragic death has left everyone shocked," said Afridi on Wednesday. "We are thankful to the sponsors who have decided to dedicate the trophy in memory of Hughes as a mark of respect," said Afridi on Wednesday.

JUNIOR AHF CUP Upbeat hosts take on Oman

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh U-21 hockey team will be hoping to extend their winning streak in the Junior AHF Cup when they take on Oman in their third match at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium at 3:00pm today.

Bangladesh, Oman and Chinese Taipei have equal six points, even though Bangladesh top the five-team table with a superior goal difference. Oman beat Sri Lanka 3-2 yesterday, and they are just behind Bangladesh having scored a total of 10 goals against Bangladesh's 17.

A win for the hosts today will all but ensure their qualification for the final round of Junior Asia Cup to be held in Malaysia next year as two teams from this round will get entry to that tournament.

However, the hosts would want to win today's match and their next match against Sri Lanka on Saturday to clinch the title and their performances so far suggest that they are very much likely to achieve that feat.

Meanwhile, Chinese Taipei joined Bangladesh and Oman on six points after a 4-2 win over Thailand yesterday. Chinese Taipei have won two matches and lost one in their three matches.