

SPORT

LVG HANDS OUT GIFTS

Manchester United manager Louis van Gaal got into the Christmas spirit ahead of his side's win over Newcastle on Boxing Day, handing out presents to United fans. The Dutchman was in a festive mood as he gave wrapped gifts to supporters seated around the



'5 minutes made the difference'

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club coach Maruful Haque felt two costly mistakes at the beginning and the absence of clinical finishing from his forwards made the difference in their 0-2 defeat against Busan I'Park yesterday. Apart from the first five minutes, when Sheikh Jamal conceded both the goals, Maruful felt his side had played admirably in all the departments.

"The difference was made in those first five minutes," said the 45-year-old coach at the post-match press briefing.

"We thought we would start the match at a brisk pace and catch them napping, but unfortunately the opposite is what happened. A mistake from Landing [Darboe] and wrong positioning of Jamal Bhuiyan gave away the first goal, while the second one was unfortunate as Nasir [Chowdhury] slipped on a soft part of the pitch," explained the UEFA Pro License holder.

Despite falling two goals behind so early, Maruful didn't shuffle with his attacking strategy and was duly rewarded as his charges put up a fight and dominated possession, even though they failed to find the back of the net.

The veteran coach's instruction to Jamal was to operate just in front of the two centre-backs. But the defensive midfielder stayed too far ahead of the defenders during the goals and, after repositioning himself properly, the defence became fortified.

Maruful's opposite number, Yoon Sung Hyo said: "I thought we could have scored more goals, but the players failed to live up to that expectation. However, I thought that was partly due to the pitch, which was too hard and not of a very high standard."



Busan I'Park goalkeeper Lee Chang Gyun kept his side from conceding with a few saves like this one during their international friendly against Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Sk Jamal go down fighting

SPORTS REPORTER



Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club didn't know what had hit them. Before they could warm up to the occasion, the Bangladesh Premier League champions found themselves two goals down against South Korea's top-tier outfit Busan I'Park in their FIFA International Friendly (Category II) at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

By the time Sheikh Jamal players found their footing in the game the contest had skewed heavily towards the visitors. But the Dhanmondi giants came back strongly and regrouped themselves to dominate possession and create quite a few scoring chances. And if not for a couple of brilliant saves from the I'Park keeper Lee Chang Gyun, both teams might have left the field with a share of the spoils. But eventually the two early goals proved enough for the visitors as the hosts left the field defeated, though they entertained the 8000-odd spectators, including Korea Football Association (KFA) president Chung Mong Gyu, also the chairman of the K League outfit Busan I'Park.

The opening goal of the match was perhaps one of the fastest goals to come at the big bowl, as the visitors took the lead within 43 seconds. Quick as it was, it was also arguably the best move of the game. A through pass from I'Park defender Ku Hyun Jun was flicked on brilliantly by Park Yong Ji to midfielder Kim Jing Gyu, who killed off the move with a first time volley into the far corner of the net.

The lead was doubled four minutes later when striker Yoon Dong-min latched on to a long ball from Ju Se Jong, before rounding Sheikh Jamal keeper Mazharul Islam Himel and putting the ball into the empty net.

The hosts then started stringing a few passes in midfield and by the end of the first quarter of an hour they were seeing more of the ball. The first shot from Sheikh Jamal came in the 22nd minute when talismanic midfielder Mamunul Islam saw his left-footed shot go wide. Being set up beautifully by Gambian forward Landing Darboe, Bangladesh skipper Mamunul unleashed a decent attempt on goal, but it was a few inches too wide.

Five minutes later, Wedson Ansele bulldozed his way from the left flank before letting out a ripper of a shot, which missed the target by a few yards.

The easiest chance of the half fell to Landing in the 31st minute when he shrugged off a few defenders on a Mamunul free-kick, but the connection he made left a lot to be desired.

The second half started slowly but a moment of sheer cynicism saw Sheikh Jamal goalkeeper Mazharul Islam Himel race out of the blocks and handle the ball, for which was cautioned with a yellow card. Meandering its way for the most part of the second half, the match burst into life once more in the last ten minutes as chances came knocking at both ends.

First it was Kim Jimin's header that thudded against the Sheikh Jamal post in the 81st minute, before Wedson's brilliant dipping free-kick from outside the box rattled I'Park's crossbar three minutes later. Sohel Rana then tested the best of Chang Gyun as his powerful left-footer was tipped to safety by the agile Korean keeper's fingers. Mamunul's long ball was blasted away over the bar by Sheikh Jamal skipper Nasiruddin Chowdhury, before Wedson's free-kick from the left side of the box produced another brilliant save from a backpeddling Chang Gyun. The referee blew the final whistle soon after, bringing an end to an entertaining game of football.

SCORES IN BRIEF SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 289 for 3 (Elgar 121, du Plessis 103, Amla 23 not out; Peters 1-44, Gabriel 1-52, Taylor 1-74)

Rain ruins second day

AFP, Port Elizabeth

Faf du Plessis completed his fourth Test century and was dismissed immediately afterwards on a rain-hit second day of the second Test between South Africa and the West Indies at St George's Park on Saturday.

Only half an hour's play was possible in Port Elizabeth, during which six overs were bowled and South Africa moved from their overnight 270 for two to 289 for three.

"It was a very frustrating day," said du Plessis after play was finally called off more than four-and-a-half hours after the stoppage.

Du Plessis, on 99 overnight, flicked Jerome Taylor's first ball of the day for four runs to raise his century off 229 balls.

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'Big Bash best way to prepare'

SPORTS REPORTER



Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has said that playing in the Big Bash would enable him to prepare in the best possible way for the World Cup in Australia next year.

Shakib, who will be playing for the Melbourne Renegades in the Australian T20 competition, is expected to leave in the first week of January, three weeks before the departure of the national team.

"The best thing is that I will be able to play in a number of grounds there and will be able to adjust with the weather. There can't be any better way to prepare for the World Cup."

"I'll be getting 20 extra days there and that will be a big deal. The players over there know what to do in order to be successful in their conditions. That is something that I can't learn here," said Shakib, after his sides' Premier League match at Fatullah.

"Things like how much the ball swings, or how high the bounce would be... I can pass on this information to my teammates," he added.

The restriction put on Shakib with regards to the foreign leagues was lifted two-and-a-half weeks before the start of the competition. Shakib thanked the BCB president Papon for 'trusting' him and believed that he was quite 'lucky' to get a team on such short notice.

Rating Big Bash as one of the more competitive foreign leagues that he has played in, Shakib expects the upcoming endeavour to be challenging.

"With regards to how tough leagues are, I think Big Bash would right up there. It's challenging and also if I perform well it will give my confidence a boost in the World Cup," explained Shakib.

KFA president promises help

SPORTS REPORTER



The visiting Korea Football Association (KFA) president Chung Mong Gyu hoped to extend his support to Bangladesh football.

The KFA president discussed quite a few possibilities with BFF president Kazi Salahuddin at the BFF Bhaban.

"We want to continue the football friendship between the two countries by sending coaches and inviting Sheikh Jamal to Korea to train with us. At the national level, we have discussed the possibilities of bringing Korean national teams here. We have also discussed exchanging club tours and sending our coaches to this country," said the KFA president.

Salahuddin informed that he was seeking technical assistance from them.

"Since Korea has developed significantly in youth football, I'm trying to pick their brains to work in their way. For one, we can have coaches for the BFF Academy while I have also asked him to send more Korean teams here as well as to invite our teams to Korea," said the BFF boss.



Jahurul Islam (L), who scored a match-winning 93 against Abahani, exchanges a single with Legends of Rupganj captain Shakib Al Hasan at Fatullah yesterday. INSET Pacer Delwar Hossain took a five-for in Prime Doleshwar's match against Prime Bank at Mirpur.

PHOTOS: STAR

Doleshwar enter title race

SPORTS REPORTER

Mushfiqur Rahim-led Prime Doleshwar entered the race for the Dhaka Premier League title, after beating second-placed Prime Bank Cricket Club by seven wickets at Mirpur yesterday. In addition, league leaders Abahani suffered their third defeat of the competition when they went down to Shakib Al Hasan's Legends of Rupganj at Fatullah.

At the BKSP, Anamul Haque-led Kalabagan Cricket Academy won an important game against Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's Mohammedan. They beat Mohammedan by 63 runs.

However, despite the defeats Abahani and Prime Bank CC continue

to lead the league with 20 points each. Prime Doleshwar with 18 points are now third, while Kalabagan and Legends remain fourth, tied at 16 points with only three rounds to go.

A fighting 93 from opener Jahurul Islam helped Legends post 222. He hammered four sixes and three fours. In reply, Abahani were restricted to 145.

Shakib and Rubel Hossain scalped a total of six wickets.

At Mirpur, Rony Talukdar's third consecutive 50-plus score and a five-wicket haul from pacer Delwar Hossain led Prime Doleshwar home. Batting first, Prime Bank were bundled out for 153 in 35.4 overs. Delwar's five-wicket haul wrapped up the tail quickly. Talukdar scored a powerful 77 off 60, and it led Doleshwar to their target in

28.2 overs and seven wickets remaining.

SCORES IN BRIEF LEGENDS: 221 for 9 (Jahurul 93, Junaid 42; Shubhashish 4-42)

ABAHANI: 145 for 9 in 34.4 overs (Rakibul 45; Shakib 3-25, Rubel 3-29)

Result: Legends won by 76 runs. PRIME BANK: 153 all out in 34.3 overs (Shuvagata 37; Delwar 5-26)

PRIME DOLESHWAR: 154 for 3 in 28.2 overs (Rony 77; Soumya 1-17)

Result: Prime Doleshwar won by 7 wickets. KALABAGAN CA: 200 all out in 43.4 overs (Imtiaz 56, Mehedi 41; Naeem 3-30, Rahatul 3-35)

MOHAMMEDAN: 137 all out in 41.2 overs (Naeem 56; Nabil 4-10, Mahmudul 3-21)

Result: Kalabagan won by 63 runs.

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