

SPORT

Battle of Primes

Defeat to Kalabagan ends Abahani's chances

SPORTS REPORTER

A painful defeat for Abahani and wins for Prime Doleshwar and Prime Bank Cricket Academy in the penultimate round of the Dhaka Premier League's Super Sixes yesterday has transformed the league into a two-way battle.

Going into the final round this Sunday, Mushfiqur Rahim's Doleshwar and Mahmudullah Riyad's Prime Bank CC will both have an opportunity to win the title. Currently, Prime Bank are at the top of the league with 24 points while Prime Doleshwar are second with 22 points.

Prime Bank will win the championship if they beat Abahani in the final round tomorrow. However if they lose and Prime Doleshwar beat Mohammedan, then the side with the higher run-rate will be crowned champions. Both sides have beaten the other once in the league and, as a result; the head-to-head count won't come into play.

NASIR V SABBIR

Nasir Hossain has been working hard to regain a spot in the national side. He had earlier scored a conducive half-century to bring back Abahani from the dead and beat Mohammedan in a thriller. His 98-ball 104 at Mirpur yesterday almost led Abahani to yet another decisive win. However, the player that took over Nasir's position in the national side, Sabbir Rahman, was at the other end and his career-best haul of 6 for 43 ensured Kalabagan Cricket Academy's victory in an intense affair.

Batting first, Abahani rode on Nasir's century to post 247. Nasir hammered 13 fours and was the mainstay of the innings. At the end of 42 overs Abahani were poised at a confident 202 for 3, however, that was when Sabbir scalped five wickets and helped restrict Abahani's scoring rate.

A confident 82 from former under-19

captain Mahmudul Hasan and a cameo from Iran Sukkur (44) towards the end took Kalabagan home with just one ball and one wicket to go. The defeat put Abahani out of contention for the league, as they remain stranded in third place with 20 points.

FORHAD'S FIGHT AND MASHRAFE'S MAGIC League leaders Prime Bank survived an early scare to beat Mohammedan by 20 runs at the BKSP. Mohammedan's pacers, led by Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, had reduced Prime Bank to 92 for 5 within the first 25 overs. However, Forhad Reza, who batted at eight, hammered four sixes and eight fours in his 56-ball 76 to take them to 230. Mashrafe was the pick of the bowlers as he finished with figures of 4 for 40 in 9.4 overs.

Mashrafe was the highlight with the bat as well for Mohammedan as he top-scored with 62.

Mohammedan's top-order had collapsed to 91 for 6 during the chase, before Mashrafe and Ariful Haque revived the side with a 110-run stand for the seventh wicket. By the 43rd over, they looked to be in a winning position at 201 for 6. But both batsmen were removed by Forhad shortly after, and the tailenders collapsed almost immediately.

SHAKIB THE OPENER Legends of Ruppang frequently changed their batting order in the Super Sixes. There were times when Abul Hasan was sent one down and on other occasions they opened with bowler Mosharraf Hossain. Yesterday, it was Shakib himself who opened the innings. The impact from the absence of the injured Tamim Iqbal has been quite revealing.

Shakib posted 28, while Abul smacked a half-century at number seven, to help the Legends post 221 for 9 at Fatullah. However, that total was never going to bother an in-form Prime Doleshwar. Opener Mehedi Maruf's second century of the league and a half-century from Mominul Haque took Doleshwar comfortably home in 39.1 overs.



SABBIR RAHMAN...6/43

SCORES IN BRIEF

ABAHANI: 247 for 9 (Nasir 104, Forhad 35; Sabbir 6-43, Nabil 2-44)
KALABAGAN: 248 for 9 in 49.5 overs (Mahmudul 82, Irfan 44; Jubair 2-35, 2-42)
Result: Kalabagan CA won by one wicket.

PRIME BANK CC: 230 all out in 49.4 overs (Forhad Reza 76, Nurul 32; Mashrafe 4-40)
MOHAMMEDAN: 210 all out in 45.5 overs (Mashrafe 62, Ariful 60; Riyad 3-33, Forhad 2-21)
Result: Prime Bank won by 20 runs.

Legends: 221 for 9 (Abul 51, Nazmul 42; Elias 2-27, Asif 2-41)
PRIME DOLESHWAR: 224 for 2 in 39.1 overs (Mehedi 118, Mominul 56; Abul 1-31)
Result: Prime Doleshwar won by eight wickets.



Abahani's Nasir Hossain slashes one through the off-side against Kalabagan Cricket Academy at Mirpur yesterday, on the way to scoring his first century in the Dhaka Premier League this season with a 98-ball 104. PHOTO: STAR

Sk Russel aim for the stars

SPORTS REPORTER



Sheikh Russel Kira Chakra are all set to form a star-studded side for the upcoming football season as the new Dhaka giants

are looking to rope a Haiti International and a Jamaican International within a few days. The treble winners of 2012-2013 season, who introduced the talismanic Haiti forward Sony Norde to Bangladesh football before bringing his national teammate Pascal Millien in 2013-14 season, are all prepared to bring in Haiti striker Kervens Belfort and Jamaican winger Akeem Priestley to add to the roster of the seven Bangladesh national team players.

The Haiti striker Belfort, who scored seven goals in 15 appearances for his country, plied his trade for the French lower-tier outfits such as Frejus Saint-Raphael, Le Mans and Grenoble.

It has been learnt that the 22-year-old striker has already started formalities to come to Dhaka to join Sheikh Russell KC's trial.

"Belfort has started the procedure of coming to Dhaka to join the trial. He demanded 17,000 dollars per month, but we want to watch him first before signing him," Sheikh Russel's director of sports Saleh Jaman Selim told reporters yesterday.

Selim also informed that Jamaican winger Akeem will also come to join the trial with Kervens. The 29-year-old winger, who represented Jamaica in youth teams before wearing the senior team's jersey for the first time in 2004, played for Rovaniemi Palloseura of Finland in the last season. It has been learnt that the Jamaican has asked for a monthly salary of 10,000 dollars.

Sheikh Russel are also discussing terms with Damir Ibrich, a 30-year-old Bosnian attacking midfielder, who played for Malaysian Super League club T-Team FC in the last

season. The 'Journeyman' midfielder, who was a product of Le Harve Youth Academy, has previously played for different clubs in Europe and Asia.

If these three players are signed, Sheikh Russel will be considered as a real challenger to Sheikh Jamal's title aspirations in the upcoming season. The treble winners of 2012-13 season, who finished a lowly sixth in the Premier League last season, have already roped in striker Zahid Hasan Emily, winger Zahid Hossain, striker Mithun Chowdhury, goalkeeper Russell Mahmud Liton, midfielder Hemantha Vincent Biswash, centre-back Atikur Rahman Meshu and right-back Topu Barman.

The club have already brought in their Montenegrin coach Dragan Djukanovic, who had successfully guided the side through the group stages of the AFC President's Cup in Colombo in March, 2014, for the upcoming season.

Injuries won't be an issue: Shakib

SPORTS REPORTER

With barely a month to go for the World Cup, Bangladesh have been hit with two crucial injury problems. Opener Tamim Iqbal had to go under the knife for a problem with his knee, while Mushfiqur injured his shoulder during practice on Thursday.

One would expect the Tigers' team management to be a nervous bunch at the moment. However, ace allrounder, Shakib Al Hasan dismissed the worries in a press conference at a city hotel yesterday.

"I have spoken to Tamim and he is doing well. He should be fit in time for the World Cup. It should not be a problem. I also don't think Mushfiqur's injury is serious. I expect him to be back very soon as well," said Shakib during the opening ceremony of an event management company.

Apart from playing in the Dhaka Premier League, the left-hander has been busy observing the Big Bash League. The 27-year-old, who will be leaving for Australia this week to play for the Melbourne Renegades, expects batting-friendly wickets in the competition.

ZC gets new MD

CRICINFO, Harare

Former Zimbabwe captain Alistair Campbell has been appointed managing director of Zimbabwe Cricket and replaces Wilfred Muzumbani, who will be redeployed elsewhere in the organisation. Campbell's position will be an all-encompassing role which will include identifying and developing talent for the national team.

'My only strength was sledging'

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

As tensions between the Australian and Indian cricket teams reach boiling point, Prime Minister Tony Abbott has revealed sledging was his only strength as a cricketer.

Speaking at an afternoon tea for the teams at Kirribilli House in Sydney on Thursday, Mr Abbott spoke of his time as a cricketer during his student days at Oxford University.

"I couldn't bat, I couldn't bowl, I couldn't field, but I could sledge, and I think I held my place in the team on this basis, and I promise there'll be none of that today," said the former captain of Oxford's Middle Common Room team of the Queen's College.

Emotions are riding high between the Australian and Indian sides following an explosive series that has featured plenty of sledging.

It's feared things could get worse during next week's fourth and final Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Mr Abbott weighed into the debate over Australian captain Steven Smith's decision to delay the declaration in the third Test at the MCG as the hosts failed to take the remaining four wickets to win the match and take a 3-0 series lead.

The home side had to settle for a draw, but still reclaimed the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with an unassailable 2-0 in the four-match series.

"When I told people last night that I was lucky enough to be hosting the Australian and the Indian cricket teams here today."



South African bowler Simon Harmer (3rd from R) celebrates the wicket of West Indies batsman Devon Smith (L) during the first day of the third Test at Newlands Cricket Stadium in Cape Town yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Steyn moves past Ntini

Windies 276 for 6 after Day 1

REUTERS, Cape Town



Dale Steyn became South Africa's second highest wicket-taker as West Indies reached 276 for six on the first day of the third Test on Friday.

Steyn caught and bowled captain Denesh Ramdin for 53 five overs from the close to claw back some of the advantage produced by a spirited West Indian batting performance in near perfect conditions at the iconic Newlands ground.

Ramdin looked to be vindicated in his decision to bat first as Leon Johnson, Devon Smith, Marlon Samuels and Jermaine Blackwood weighed in with runs before Steyn claimed his second wicket of the day.

The fast bowler moved past Makhaya Ntini on to 391 test victims, now only behind Shaun Pollock in the list of South Africa's all-time best bowlers.

Johnson top-scored for the tourists with 54 off 84 balls, surviving a review by a matter of millimetres when he padded up to an inswinging ball from Morne Morkel when

on four. Samuels was out for 43 after an injudicious shot saw him caught in the covers off part-time bowler Stiaan van Zyl, who claimed a first test wicket.

Blackwood, recalled to the team, will resume on Saturday on 45 not out. Steyn, who also had opener Kraigg Brathwaite caught for seven, was overshadowed by debutant Simon Harmer, who finished with figures of three for 67.

The off-spinner bowled Smith for 47 on the stroke of lunch before having Johnson trapped lbw in the second session. Harmer also claimed the prized wicket of veteran Shivnarine Chanderpaul, who slipped and was stumped for just nine.

Ramdin won the toss for a third time in the series but after opting to bowl first in the last two tests gambled on the wicket offering a chance for his team to put together a decent showing with the bat.

SCORES IN BRIEF

WEST INDIES: 276 for 6 (Smith 47, Johnson 54, Samuels 43, Blackwood 45 not out, Ramdin 53; Steyn 2-59, Harmer 3-67)

2nd NZ-SL Test starts today

AFP, Wellington

Concerns Friday over injuries to Tim Southee and Rangana Herath disrupted preparations for New Zealand and Sri Lanka on the eve of the second Test in Wellington.

Both camps have given their key bowlers until just before the Test starts on Saturday to prove their fitness.

With yet another green wicket promising plenty of bounce, the toss will be crucial with New Zealand and Sri Lanka both looking to bowl first.

Sri Lanka have signalled they now have a plan to combat the dominance of the hosts' captain Brendon McCullum, who set up the Black Caps' eight-wicket win in the first Test in Christchurch when he blasted 195 in the first innings.

Nat'l karate begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

The 23rd National Karate competition begins at the Shaheed Suhrawardy National Indoor Stadium in Mirpur today. Bangladesh Karate Federation president Mokhlesur Rahman is expected to inaugurate the two-day meet.

About 400 male and female karatekas from different services teams as well as from divisional and district sports teams will compete in 21 events of Kata and Kumi, said a press release from the federation.

'Kohli will be a fierce captain'

AFP, Sydney



Having featured regularly in war of words with new India captain Virat Kohli in the ongoing Test series, Australia fast bowler Mitchell Johnson believes the volatile batsman will probably be more aggressive than previous skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

Kohli replaced Dhoni after the wicketkeeper's sudden retirement from Test cricket after the drawn third match in Melbourne.

"Ever since I've seen him play cricket, I've always seen him pretty fiery," Johnson told reporters in Sydney ahead of the fourth and final Test match, which starts on Jan. 6.

"So he'll definitely be an aggressive type of captain I think in the way he sets fields, and I think you'll see a lot different to what MS did.

"He's an interesting character. He is a fierce competitor and he really does like to get involved in it all."

Kohli, who led India in Dhoni's absence in the first Test in Adelaide, has been involved in a battle with virtually the entire Australian team this series, exchanging heated words on the field particularly with Johnson and wicketkeeper Brad Haddin.



Mamunur Rahman Chayan (L) and Russel Mahmud Jimmy (R) vie for the ball with youngster Belal Hossain during a practice session of the national hockey team at the BKSP residential camp in Savar yesterday. The selectors are expected to announce an 18-member final squad today for next month's Hockey World League (Rd-2) to be held in Singapore. PHOTO: STAR