

Abahani, MSC face off today

Sk Russel in pole position to finish second

SPORTS REPORTER



The race for the runners-up in the Manyavar Bangladesh Premier League could be decided today as the three teams in contention take the field in Dhaka. Sheikh Russel KC, the team in pole position to finish behind already-champions Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, need a win against Rahmatganj MFS in their last match today, which will kick off at 4:15pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. Even if they don't manage a win, they could still finish second if the other results, including the second match of the day which pits archrivals Mohammedan against Abahani, go their way.

Now with 37 points from 19 matches, former champions Sheikh Russel could have clinched the second position had they not lost their penultimate fixture away to Chittagong Abahani last week. Sheikh Russel manager Jewel Rana, who will be standing at the dug out in the absence of coach Maruful Haque, thinks even a second-place finish would be a disappointment for the side.

"I think the players were too complacent during the last match against Chittagong Abahani, for which they had to pay the price. Even finishing second for a team like ours will be a disappointment," said the former national defender yesterday.

While a draw or a defeat for Sheikh Russel would open the door for both Mohammedan and Abahani to fight for second place, the coaches of the two teams are more treating this match as a 'battle of pride'. Mohammedan coach

Joshimuddin Joshi, whose young side have one up over their perennial rivals from the first leg, wants to finish the campaign on a high.

"Soon as I took charge of the side, I promised that whatever the outcome, my players will fight. And they have played to the best of their potential. We beat Abahani in the first leg (1-0) and want a similar outcome in this match too," said the former national booter.

Mohammedan, playing their last match today, have 37 points in bag while Abahani, having played a match less, are three points behind. Abahani coach Amalesh Sen, spoke on a similar note to his counterpart.

"Since the league race had already been over long ago, it is only a matter of pride for us. We will have to win this one and the last match against Sheikh Jamal to salvage some pride," said the veteran coach.

Foxes march on

AFP, London



Leicester City brought West Ham United crashing to earth and returned to the top of the fledgling Premier League standings with a 2-1 victory at Upton Park on Saturday.

West Ham opened their campaign by winning 2-0 at Arsenal, but they were 2-0 down by half-time as Japan striker Shinji Okazaki headed in his first goal in English football and Riyad Mahrez scored his third goal in two games.

New signing Dimitri Payet replied for West Ham with a powerful strike, but it was not enough to prevent Claudio Ranieri's Foxes reclaiming first place on goal difference from Manchester United.

West Ham's misery was compounded in stoppage time when their Spanish goalkeeper Adrian was sent off for a high foot after going up to contest a corner.

Swansea City also built on an impressive opening performance, following up their battling 2-2 draw at champions Chelsea with a 2-0 win at home to Newcastle United that left Garry Monk's side in fourth place. Bafetimbi Gomis rounded Tim Krul to

RESULTS

Southampton 0 **Everton 3** (Lukaku 22, 45, Barkley 84)
Sunderland 1 (Watmore 88) **Norwich 3** (Martin 26, Whittaker 37, Redmond 57)
Swansea 2 (Gomis 9, Ayew 52) Newcastle 0
Tottenham 2 (Dier 19, Chadli 45+2) Stoke 2 (Arnautovic 78-pen, Diouf 83)
Watford 0 West Brom 0

put Swansea ahead in the ninth minute and Newcastle's afternoon took a further turn for the worse shortly before half-time when Daryl Janmaat was sent off for two bookable offences.

After Jefferson Montero and Gylfi Sigurdsson had both made the woodwork shudder, Andre Ayew made the game safe by polishing off a cross from the elusive Montero to register his second goal in two games.

A late Stoke City fightback prevented Tottenham Hotspur claiming a first win of the season in a 2-2 draw at White Hart Lane.

Beaten 1-0 by Manchester United on the opening day, Spurs, who welcomed back goalkeeper and captain Hugo Lloris, went 2-0 up through an Eric Dier header and a deflected Nacer Chadli volley.

Mourinho threatened walk out

AFP, Cobham

Jose Mourinho was on the verge of storming out of a media briefing on Friday after the Chelsea manager lost his cool during a grilling over his criticism of the club's medical staff.

When Mourinho confirmed at a packed press conference on Friday that Carneiro and Fearn wouldn't be on the bench with him when Chelsea face Manchester City at Eastlands on Sunday.

But in a separate briefing for English national newspapers later on Friday, he was subjected to more searching questions and this time lost his patience.

"Don't make me another question or I go. Think twice before you ask the question. Think twice."



Athletic Bilbao defender Mikel San Jose (C) celebrates his opening goal with teammates during their Spanish Supercup clash against Barcelona at the San Mames Stadium on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

Bilbao thrash Barca

AFP, Madrid



European champions Barcelona were stunned by an Aritz Aduriz hat-trick and brilliant opener from Mikel San Jose as Athletic Bilbao took a 4-0 lead into the second-leg of the Spanish Super Cup.

Barca had picked up their fourth trophy of the year in Tbilisi on Tuesday with a 5-4 win over Sevilla in extra time in the UEFA Super Cup.

But those exertions clearly took their toll as an under-strength side was dominated from the off by the Basques.

San Jose fired in a volley from just inside the Barca half to break the deadlock before Aduriz struck three times in 15 second-half minutes to give Ernesto Valverde's side a huge advantage heading into Monday's second-leg.

Barca's defensive deficiencies had been laid bare in blowing a 4-1 lead against Sevilla that forced them into an energy-sapping extra 30 minutes in the Georgian capital.

However, with Gerard Pique among four first-team regulars rested the Catalans were even more of a shambles at the back and this time couldn't be rescued by an off-colour Luis Suarez and Lionel Messi.

It is the first time in 14 years that the Catalans have conceded four times in two consecutive games.

San Jose began an unforgettable night for the hosts in fitting fashion as he pounced on Marc-Andre Ter Stegen's headed clearance to fire the ball beyond the German 'keeper from just beyond the halfway line.

The visitors twice came close to an equaliser at the start of the second period as Pedro fired off the underside of the bar before Iraizoz made another brilliant save to deny Messi from Suarez's clever cut-back.

However, the game turned back in Athletic's favour when Sabin Merino beat Dani Alves for pace and his cross was powerfully headed home by Aduriz.

More poor defending from Luis Enrique's men was punished nine minutes later as the ball ricocheted around the area before Aduriz smashed home on the turn.

Soldado joins Villarreal

AFP, Madrid

Spanish striker Roberto Soldado has joined Villarreal from Tottenham Hotspur on a three-year deal, both clubs confirmed on Friday.

"Villarreal CF and Tottenham Hotspur have reached an agreement for the transfer of Spanish striker Roberto Soldado, who will wear the yellow shirt for the next three seasons," Villarreal said in a statement on their website.

Soldado joined Spurs two years ago from Valencia for a then club record £26 million (\$40.6 million) as Spurs invested heavily to compensate for the sale of Gareth Bale to Real Madrid.

Platini warned Blatter of prison

AFP, Paris

FIFA president Sepp Blatter has alleged UEFA counterpart Michel Platini warned him he faced prison if he did not withdraw from the world football governing body's presidential race.

Speaking exclusively to Dutch newspaper de Volkskrant, Blatter claimed the warning, in which Platini allegedly said Blatter would go to jail if he did not withdraw from May's FIFA presidential race, was made to the Swiss official's brother.

"During lunch, Platini had sat down at my brother's table and said: 'Tell Sepp to withdraw from the election or he will go to prison,'" said Blatter.

Bayern rout Hamburg

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich launched their bid to win an historic fourth successive Bundesliga title on Friday with a 5-0 rout of Hamburg as new signing Douglas Costa shone on his league debut.

Bayern's established campaigners Robert Lewandowski, Medhi Benatia and Thomas Mueller, who netted twice, grabbed Bayern's first four goals with Brazil winger Costa adding the fifth to seal a show-stopping performance.

Costa, who Bayern coach Pep Guardiola has said can be the best winger in the world, showed why the champions paid Shakhtar Donetsk 30 million euros (\$33.3m) for him in July.

The 24-year-old chested down a long pass before firing in a cross which led to Bayern's third goal, then hit the back of the net with a crisp left-footed shot on 87 minutes.

Bayern, who won last season's title by 10

points, are bidding to become the first team to win four Bundesliga crowns in succession in the third and final year of Guardiola's contract.

Hamburg, who only avoided relegation last season by winning a play-off for the second year running, had their share of early chances as ex-Tottenham Hotspur midfielder Lewis Holtby fired a fourth minute shot straight at Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer.

But after Lewandowski headed over a Philipp Lahm cross on 22 minutes, Bayern got the breakthrough five minutes later.

Spain veteran Xabi Alonso curled in a free-kick and with five Bayern players free, Benatia headed home the first goal of the new season on 27 minutes.

Bayern doubled the lead after the break when Lewandowski fired home from close range. Alonso delivered a long ball, which took a deflection and hung in the air and was cleared by Hamburg defender Matthias Ostrzolek into Lewandowski's path for the Poland striker to slot home on 53 minutes.

Djokovic in semis, Nadal out

AFP, Montreal

Novak Djokovic had to fight off an upset bid from qualifier Ernests Gulbis, defeating the Latvian 5-7, 7-6 (9/7), 6-1 on Friday to reach the semifinals of the Montreal Masters.

But Rafael Nadal, like Djokovic a former champion at the event, was unable to escape an on-form Kei Nishikori as the fourth seed sent out the Spaniard 6-2, 6-4 thanks in part to six double-faults from Nadal.

The red-hot Nishikori is riding a wave of momentum from his hardcourt title last week in Washington and will next face second seed Andy Murray who beat French 10th-seeded holder Jo-Wilfried Tsonga 6-4, 6-4.

Januzaj tames Villa

AFP, Birmingham



Adnan Januzaj marked his Manchester United return with a goal as Louis van Gaal's side beat Aston Villa 1-0 on Friday to claim a second consecutive Premier League victory.

Making his first start since February, Januzaj converted a glorious pass from Juan Mata on the half-hour as United extended an unbeaten record in league games at Villa Park that now stands at 20 years.

Following a 1-0 win over Tottenham Hotspur last weekend, this victory, in a game brought forward due to a far-right march in the area on Saturday, means United, now top of the table, have started a season with back-to-back wins for the first time since 2011.

It took United until November 22 to record their first away win last season and with Van Gaal having pinpointed his side's away form as an area in need of improvement, he will hope that this win augurs well for the campaign ahead.



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