

SPORT



Skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is scheduled to attend his first bowling session, since recovering from dengue, towards the end of this week, until which he will be working on his fitness levels. However, that didn't stop the Narail brave-heart from bowling a few down the line at Mirpur during training yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

Another false dawn?

SPORTS REPORTER

Why is Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup football tournament that concluded in the port city on Friday a stupendous success? Firstly, it has drawn enormous enthusiasm among the football fans, which was evident in that blockbuster final. Secondly, it was a fairytale story of an otherwise non-descript hosts who went all the way to lifting their maiden silverware. But will this tournament have any far-reaching impact on our domestic football front, which has been starving for even a decent crowd for a long time? Optimists, who belie logic, will come up with the same old rhetoric they have been spouting after any international football tournament, saying that this event has 'once again proven how popular football is in our country and what we need is to build on it.'

produced something different in the 70s but also unfolded the biggest sporting rivalry the country has ever witnessed or will ever see, that between Abahani and Mohammedan. We also saw the rise of Brothers Union as a third force in domestic football for a while, but the reality is that the country's football fan-base is still rooting for that rivalry to be revived.

In Friday's final when Zahid Hossain sped down the right flank sporting that famous Sky Blue shirt, the crowd in the stands and millions in front of television sets roared in anticipation of something that matched many of those forgotten moments of Abahani-Mohammedan rivalry.

We can have a Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club winning some domestic silverware, the return of Muktiyoddha Sangsad as one of the title contenders, or Chittagong Abahani winning their first-ever major domestic title but, as it has always been the case, the crowd hardly turned up to see those teams winning titles.

The basic difference is that Sheikh Kamal's Abahani tried to win hearts more than just winning titles. It had created its own heroes, not just a Kingsley who may never make a lasting impression in the fans' minds.

Shekih Kamal always focused on home-grown players and those players eventually built the biggest fans-base for Abahani.

Fans deserted domestic football not solely because of the absence of Abahani-Mohammedan rivalry -- it is perhaps the most prominent reason -- but there were other factors at work such as the failure of the clubs to groom a football culture of their own. The current officials of both Abahani and Mohammedan will have to take the lion's share of the blame. The unbridled passion that the club officials in those days worked with is hard to find among their successors.

But make no mistake the fans will root for anything that a dreamer like Sheikh

'We have to accept reality'

SPORTS REPORTER



Being motivated will be the biggest challenge for the Tigers when they play their series against a comparatively weaker side like Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe series provided some relief after Australia had postponed their scheduled tour, but the reality is that the Tigers were looking forward to bigger challenges since they were doing so well against the top-ranked sides. And when Nasir Hossain

talked to reporters outside the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium after practice yesterday, the all-rounder could not avoid that reality.

"We personally feel that we enjoy playing against big teams and had we played against them we would have learnt a lot. Had we performed we would also have been under the limelight. So yes, from that perspective we were sad not to play the Tests against Australia. But we can't do anything about this now. We have to accept reality," said Nasir.

However he was quick to remind that Bangladesh would need to play

good cricket to be successful, even against a weaker side like Zimbabwe.

"With regards to the Zimbabwe series all I can say is that we are practising and we will be able to do well Insha Allah. There's no such thing as a small series. Every series is important for the players. Those who play well, they play seriously against both big and small teams. Personally I feel that Zimbabwe is slightly weaker than the other sides which have toured here, but then again the game can change in one day. The team which plays

better on that day will win," he explained.

When asked about his personal goal, Nasir said, "I am trying to increase my scoring shots and score quickly. I am practicing that way considering the Twenty20 World Cup [to be held in India next year]. I have a slight injury so I can't bowl right now, but I will start [bowling] after two days.

While Nasir isn't bowling right now, once the series starts Bangladesh will definitely look forward to seeing Nasir continue his good form with both bat and ball.



BRB Cables were declared as the title sponsors of the Bangladesh Premier League's third season in a ceremony, which also unveiled the league's logo, at a city hotel yesterday. The sponsorship rights have been sold for Tk 9 crore and 30 lakh.

PHOTO: STAR

Barisal 27 runs away from Tier 1

SPORTS REPORTER



A 270-run stand for the second wicket between centurions Shahriar Nafees and Fazle Mahmud led Barisal to a powerful 323 for 1 against Chittagong at the end of the first day of the National Cricket League's final round.

What's even better is that both Nafees and Fazle remained unbeaten in Bogra yesterday. Barisal's brilliant start essentially means that they require just 27 more runs to receive a three bonus points, which will be enough to confirm their promotion to Tier One.

After being put in to bat, Barisal's openers raced to a half-century stand before Shahin Hossain was sent back to the pavilion. That was the only wicket which fell at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium yesterday. Former national opener Shahriar smashed 20 fours and a six to post 158. His partner Fazle scored at a slightly

slower rate, finishing the day on 128.

The pair's first target today of course will be to score those 27 runs and confirm a slot in the top four. Once they manage to do that, they will look to build on their personal scores.

The other Tier Two encounter at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna saw 12 wickets fall on Day One. Alok Kapali's Sylhet, who had won their first game of the league in the previous round, were bundled out for just 176 in 60.3 overs by Rajshahi. Rajshahi's Moinul Islam and Sanjamul Islam were the key wicket-takers with three scalps each. Sylhet's batters looked completely out of sorts after being put into bat. After 38 overs they were struggling 95 for 7 and a 150-plus total seemed unlikely at that point in time. However, number nine Nasum Ahmed stepped up and smacked a boundary-filled half-century to provide his side with some relief. He hit 10 fours for his 59 runs.

The slight momentum that Nasum managed to gather for Sylhet seemed to boost them after the exchange as they took two quick scalps and reduced Rajshahi to 42 for 2 before stumps.

The Tier One matches were washed out yesterday. Dhaka were supposed to face Dhaka Metro in Cox's Bazar while leaders Khulna were set to face Rangpur in Chittagong.



FAZLE MAHMUD



SHAHRIAR NAFEEES

SCORES IN BRIEF	
BARISAL V CHITTAGONG Barisal: 323 for 1 (Nafees 158 not out, Fazle 128 not out; Dollar 1-66)	RAJSHAH V SYLHET Sylhet: 176 all out in 60.3 overs (Nasum 59; Moinul 3-20, Sanjamul 3-39) Rajshahi: 42 for 2 (Junaid 29; Imtiaz 1-2, Khaled 1-16)

Zim name team for BD tour

AGENCIES, Harare

Zimbabwe's national selectors chose a 16-man squad for their tour of Bangladesh. The Zimbabweans are expected to reach Bangladesh on November 2 and over the course of their stay, they will play three one-day internationals and two Twenty20 international matches.

The series will kick-off with an ODI encounter on November 7. The following ODIs will be on the 9th and 11th, while the T20s will be on the 13th and 15th.

The Zimbabwe side will be led by Elton Chigumbura and includes twelve players who were in the squad that featured against Afghanistan in October.

Regis Chakabva was recalled to the national side after his recent good performances for Zimbabwe A.

SQUAD
Elton Chigumbura (captain), Sikandar Raza, Regis Chakabva, Chamu Chibhabha, Tendai Chisoro, Graeme Cremer, Craig Ervine, Luke Jongwe, Neville Madziva, Wellington Masakadza, Richmond Mutumbami, Taurai Muzarabani, John Nyumbu, Tinashwe Panyangara, Malcolm Waller, Sean Williams

Windies look to hit back

AGENCIES, Colombo

The three-match One Day International (ODI) series between Sri Lanka and the West Indies, which starts today, should turn out to be a keenly contested affair.

Although the visitors surrendered meekly to lose the two-Test series nil-two, they are determined to fight back in the limited version of the game. They showed early signs with a great fight back to win the one-day practice match against Sri Lanka Board XI on Thursday. The morale boosting victory at Colts Grounds should inspire the visiting team to make the ODI series more competitive.

West Indian all-rounder Andre Russell has urged his teammates to set short term goals the three match ODI series.

"I am feeling strong and happy to be back in international cricket between West Indies colours. I would love to get few wickets. I have few goals for the series even though it is a short one. I want a century and a five-wicket haul in the series," said Russell.

IN A NUTSHELL

The pain will always remain: Sehwan

Virender Sehwan says the sadness of being "deprived of a farewell game shall always remain" in his mind.

"Had the selectors told me that they were going to drop me, I could have requested them to allow me to play my last Test in Delhi and then announce my retirement, but they did not give me that opportunity. "A sort of sadness shall always remain in my mind that I was not allowed to retire while playing, but anyway, it's all a part of life for a sportsman, who, while playing, never realises when he should retire, but he starts thinking about it when he is dropped," Sehwan said.

"I would like to ask, does a player who has played 12 to 13 years for his country not deserve a farewell match?"

When told that there was a farewell for him planned during during the forthcoming Test between India and South Africa starting December 3, Sehwan said, "If that is so, it will be good. It's not a question of me alone, every player who retires should get a farewell."

Afghans get heroes' welcome

Hundreds of dancing, flag-waving Afghan fans Friday gave a heroes' welcome to their cricket team as they arrived home after a triumphant tour of Zimbabwe.

Afghanistan sealed a historic first on Wednesday with a 2-0 T20I series victory over Zimbabwe, after becoming the first Associate nation to defeat a Test-playing country last Saturday when they beat Zimbabwe.

A traditional Attan folk dance erupted at Kabul's international airport on Friday as hundreds of fans gathered to welcome the team.

IPL ready for new teams

AGENCIES, New Delhi

The blueprint for the sale of two new franchises and 50-plus players -- including those from Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals -- is ready, pending the BCCI's AGM next month. The board will pay winning bid amount to the bidder. This amount is expected to cover some portion of the cost for franchise operations.

The interim franchises will not receive a share of the central revenue pool, but they can earn through gate money and sponsors.

Pakistan eye series win

AFP, Sharjah



Pakistan's third and final Test against England from Sunday could be a fitting farewell for Misbah-ul-Haq, the country's most successful captain who is mulling his future.

The 41-year-old had suggested that he would leave the game after a two-Test series against India in December.

But with relations between the arch-rivals once again strained and with that series in doubt, this series may be Misbah's last.

"I was trying to make a decision before this Test but now I have just left it," Misbah said Saturday.

"I will really think about what I should do because there is a long gap before our next series," Misbah added, referring to Pakistan's next series in England in July next year.

Pakistan are 1-0 up against England after winning the second Test by 178 runs in Dubai. The first Test ended in a draw in Abu Dhabi.

A 2-0 series win will lift Pakistan to number two in the ICC Test rankings.

Misbah's personal form and fitness suggest he can carry on but he said a player should leave the game on a high.

"One should think about leaving the game with respect rather than leaving it when he is forced to leave," said Misbah. Pakistan will bring in Azhar Ali to

open in place of Shan Masood.

England skipper Alastair Cook said changes would be decided later, with a third spinner Samit Patel in the reckoning as England already have three pacers in James Anderson, Stuart Broad and Ben Stokes.

If England, currently third in the rankings, lose the series 2-0 they will drop to as low as sixth.

PAKISTAN: Misbah (captain), Shehzad, Masood, Azhar, Hafeez, Alam, Shafiq, Younis, Malik, Sarfraz, Shah, Babar, Riaz, Ali, Junaid, Bilal, Rizwan

ENGLAND: Cook (capt), Ali, Anderson, Patel, Bairstow, Bell, Broad, Buttler, Jordan, Hales, Plunkett, Rashid, Root, Stokes, Taylor