

# SPORTS

**BPL 120**

## WHACK-OMETER

TOTAL 6s HIT **201** | TOTAL 4s HIT **609**

Most 6s by players: 10, Chris Gayle, Barisal Bulls and Tillakaratne Dilshan, Chittagong Vikings  
Most 4s by a player: 34, Kumar Sangakkara, Dhaka Dynamites



Sylhet Superstars went from a commanding position to needing eight runs from the last three balls against Dhaka Dynamites, but two consecutive sixes from 'Boom Boom Afridi' gave them the victory with a ball to spare.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Superstars seal dramatic win

SPORTS REPORTER

In a dramatic finish, the Sylhet Superstars kept their hopes of securing a berth in the final four of the competition alive when they edged past the Dhaka Dynamites by five wickets in Mirpur yesterday.

Truth be told, Sylhet, who were set a target of 157, were on top for most parts of the game. They had an 84-run stand for the second wicket between half-centurions Ravi Bopara and Junaid Siddique and they were expected to ease through to their target.

With six overs to go, they required just 40 runs and had nine wickets in hand. However, that's when Mustafizur Rahman was brought back into the attack and changed the complexion of the game.

The left-armed bowler bowled overs number 15 and 19 and gave away just seven runs at the death. None of the batsmen could read him. From the settled pair of Bopara and Junaid to skipper Shahid Afridi, the nifty pacer troubled them all.

As a result, the equation went from 40 off six overs to ten runs required from the last over and suddenly Sylhet seemed nervous.

They had Sohail Tanvir and Afridi at the crease for the last over which was bowled by Farhad Reza. The medium-pace uprooted Tanvir's stumps with the second ball of the over and gave away just two run off the first three balls.

With eight required off three balls, both the dressing rooms were becoming increasingly tense.

Afridi though brought an end to the drama in typical fashion. He bent down twice and swept two full-length deliveries for consecutive sixes over mid-wicket.

As soon as the ball rammed into the

sideboards for the second time, Sylhet's players and team management heaved a huge sigh of relief -- an emotion that was evident in their celebrations -- because they knew that this game was theirs to lose.

The win has given fifth-placed Sylhet six points from nine matches and a shot at making it to the last four. However, despite the defeat, Dhaka -- with eight points from nine matches -- are still favourites to seal that final spot.

All they need to do now is win their last match against the Barisal Bulls today. However, if Kumar Sangakkara's side end up losing that match and Sylhet go on to pull off a surprise victory in their last fixture against the Comilla Victorians today, then the team with the higher run-rate will make it through to the last four.

Yesterday's match was unique in the sense that it actually turned out to be batsmen's day at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. After being asked to bat, the Dynamites, riding on Sangakkara's 48, posted 157.

It was a total that many assumed would be difficult to chase down, going by the trend of the league in which high scores have been hard to come by.

However, as Junaid and Bopara later proved, all one needed to do here was spend some time at the wicket. They both managed to do that and set the perfect foundation for the chase.

Junaid hit three sixes and one four for his 44-ball 51, whereas Bopara made 55 off 40 balls, smacking four sixes and three fours.

By the time both batsmen departed, Sylhet were in a comfortable 139 for 3 and needed just 19 off 13 deliveries. Although the introduction of Mustafizur infused drama into the game, the foundation proved to be unshakeable in the end.

## 'We need a cardiologist'

SPORTS REPORTER

Sylhet Superstars have had to endure the agony of a number of heartbreaks in the last few weeks. They lost their first two matches by one run each time and then fell six runs short of their target, 109, against the Rangour Riders in their third match.

As they were seemingly heading towards a comfortable victory yesterday, the complexion of the game changed in the 18th over of the match.

They had lost two wickets and all

of a sudden they required eight runs off three balls.

While they eventually reached the target, for a moment it seemed like Sylhet were destined for yet another nail-biting defeat.

"I think our team is in need of a cardiologist," joked Junaid Siddique, whose half-century helped Sylhet reach home, after the match.

"We lost so many close matches in this tournament that now whenever a match becomes close, we seem to run into trouble. Yes, we could have finished the match much earlier and in fact we should have done that. But in the end it's good that we managed to win," said

Junaid.

After losing two wickets towards the end, Mustafizur Rahman bowled a brilliant 19th over to induce such a tough situation and Junaid was in awe of the left-armed.

"Mustafizur's over was the most crucial. He is a world-class player. But at the same time we had the experienced Shahid Afridi at the crease. I knew that even if he had played out Mustafizur for dots, he could take us home in the last over. And that's what he did," said Junaid.

Prior to the last over there was a brief discussion between Kumar Sangakkara and the other senior players of the Dhaka Dynamites. It

was only after that that he gave the ball to Farhad Reza and asked him to bowl the last over as opposed to leg-spinner Yasir Shah.

Elaborating on the group huddle Nasir Hossain said: "Sangakkara asked me who to give the last over to, Farhad bhai or Yasir Shah. I said Farhad, because at that point in time Shahid Afridi and Sohail Tanvir were at the crease. They would know how Yasir would have bowled."

"And I personally don't think Farhad bowled a bad over," said Nasir.

"We are all focused on our last match. We need to win that to qualify and at the moment that's all we are thinking about," said Nasir.

## 'The Lion has awoken'

SPORTS REPORTER

It wasn't just the spectators sitting in the gallery who were in awe of Chris Gayle at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, but his teammates as well.

As the West Indian pounded one six after the other, some of which threatened to come as far as the press box, the likes of Kevon Cooper, Evin Lewis who were sitting in the dressing room, and even Gayle's partner Mahmudullah Riyad, couldn't help but just enjoy the show.

And why wouldn't they? As Mahmudullah, while describing the innings in the post-match press confer-

ence, said: "It was a special innings from a special player."

What Gayle did yesterday was obviously not a surprise; everyone knows the ability that the Jamaican has. However, every time he reaches that gear, he seems to leave everyone in a trance.

"He hit the ball, I turned right; he hit the ball, I turned left. That's all I really did actually," said Mahmudullah while trying to locate areas where the ball disappeared.

"For me it was a lot of fun. I don't think I have seen a batsman hit sixes so powerful from the other end before. It was truly an honour to watch the Lion bat," added the Barisal Bulls skipper.

While speaking to channel nine after the match, Gayle admitted that he

was a bit tired, but said that he enjoyed the knock.

"I feel like I have been hit by a truck actually, but it was good to be among the runs. The guys have been playing good cricket and I didn't score in the last two crucial games."

"The wicket was good today and the ball was coming on to the bat. We should be prepared for the next games," said Gayle.

There's no doubt that the Bulls are prepared for the next round; the question that remains though is whether the rest of the teams are ready to face the Gayle storm, for he has unleashed himself.

Cooper perhaps described it in the best possible way. "The Lion has awoken," he muttered while Gayle was walking back to the dressing room.

Barisal Bulls opener Chris Gayle failed to get going in his first two outings, but the Gayle force was in full fury against Chittagong Vikings yesterday when he hit nine thunderous sixes in his 47-ball 92 not out.



PHOTO: STAR

## Groin injury sidelines Tamim


SPORTS REPORTER

Tamim Iqbal opted not to play for the Chittagong Vikings in the franchise's last match of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) yesterday due to a groin injury.

The left-hander had been suffering from the injury ever since the Vikings' last match in Chittagong, but did play the previous game.

The good news is that the injury wasn't deemed serious and Tamim should be up and running by the time the team management announces the dates for the next national camp.

Tamim had a decent run with the bat in BPL, scoring 298 runs at an average of



### SCOREBOARDS

DYNAMITES V SUPERSTARS					VIKINGS V BULLS					
Player	R/B	4/6	R	W	Player	R/B	4/6	R	W	
Yasir c Shahid b Razzak	8/18	1/0			Anamul b Shohag	28/18	2/2			
Farhad c Mushfiqur b Bopara	31/28	4/1			Dilshan c Rony b Al-Amin	28/22	2/2			
Hafeez c Mominul b Razzak	8/6	2/0			Yasir c Sabbir b Cooper	11/11	0/1			
Sangakkara b Shahid	48/35	7/0			U Akmal c Rony b Sami	25/30	1/1			
Nasir c Cobb b Rubel	31/23	2/2			Mendis lbw b Mahmudullah	3/7	0/0			
Waller not out	13/6	0/0			Naeem c Rony b Cooper	4/9	0/0			
Mosaddek not out	13/4	3/0			Asif c Rony b Sami	17/14	3/0			
Extras: (lb-2, w-3)	5				Bilawal not out	9/9	0/0			
Total: (For 5 wks in 20 overs)	157				Extras: (lb 3, lb 5, w 2)	10				
Fall of wickets: 1-28, 2-48, 3-55, 4-124, 5-144.					Total: (For 7 wks in 20 overs)	135				
<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-52, 2-60, 3-72, 4-85, 5-105, 6-112, 7-135.	<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Tanvir	4	0	32	0	Sami	4	0	31	2	
Shahid	4	0	33	1	Al-Amin	4	0	31	1	
Afridi	3	0	25	0	Cooper	4	0	24	2	
Razzak	2	0	9	2	Shohag	4	0	17	1	
Bopara	2	0	13	1	Tajjul	3	0	19	0	
Rubel	3	0	28	1	Mahmudullah	1	0	5	1	
Cobb	2	0	15	0	<b>BARISAL BULLS</b>	<b>R/B</b>	<b>4/6</b>			
<b>SYLHET SUPERSTARS</b>	<b>R/B</b>	<b>4/6</b>			Gayle not out	92/47	6/9			
Cobb run out	15/17	2/0			Rony run out	1/2	0/0			
Junaid c Waller b Yasir	51/44	1/3			Maruf b Taskin	18/18	2/1			
Bopara c Waller b Farhad	55/40	4/4			Mahmudullah not out	19/25	1/0			
Tanvir b Farhad	19/11	3/0			Extras: (lb-5, w-4, nb-2)	11				
Afridi not out	15/7	0/2			Total: (For 2 wks in 15 overs)	141				
Mushfiqur not out	1/1	0/0			Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-31.	<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Extras: (b-4, lb-1, nb-1)	6				Dilshan	3	0	16	0	
Total: (For 4 wks in 19.5 overs)	162				Bilawal	3	0	26	0	
<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>	Shafiq	2	0	12	0	
Nabil	3	0	22	0	Naeem	2	0	14	0	
Hasan	4	0	38	0	Taskin	3	0	23	1	
Mustafizur	4	0	14	0	Asif	1	0	19	0	
Mosharrif	2	0	21	0	Mendis	1	0	26	0	
Yasir	3	0	20	1						
Farhad	3.5	0	42	2						
<b>Result:</b> Sylhet Superstars won by 6 wickets.					<b>Result:</b> Barisal Bulls won by 8 wickets.					
<b>Player-of-the-match:</b> Ravi Bopara.					<b>Player-of-the-match:</b> Chris Gayle.					

## Holder dreams of Aussie scalp

AFP, Hobart

Skipper Jason Holder Wednesday said his embattled West Indies players must focus on their individual game plans if they want to pull off a stunning win against Australia in the first Test in Hobart starting today.

"We are very upbeat about this series. It's a fresh series for us, so we have to be positive going into it," Holder told a match-eve media conference.

## Doping, Cairns shroud Test buildup

REUTERS, Dunedin

A positive doping test and questions over a contentious criminal trial in London have threatened to overshadow the first Test between New Zealand and Sri Lanka, which begins today.

The match was supposed to contain the storyline of a Sri Lanka side in transition and a New Zealand team looking to build on momentum, but news of Kusal Perera's testing positive earlier this year for a banned substance and sending back, coupled with Kiwi captain Brendon McCullum's being subjected to questions concerning the recent Chris Cairns criminal trial, has shifted the focus away from

## Vikings marooned by Gayle force

SPORTS REPORTER

He had come to entertain and entertain he did. Chris Gayle finally hit form in the Bangladesh Premier League yesterday and simultaneously sent a warning to the rest of the teams of the competition.

His half-century yesterday may not have been his fastest, but it was a sign that the West Indian had come to terms with the conditions here.

It was his unbeaten 92 off 47 deliveries that led the Barisal Bulls to a thumping eight-wicket win over the Chittagong Vikings in Mirpur. The victory means that Barisal now have 12 points from nine matches. However, they will have to win their last game today to ensure a spot in the top two.

Batting first, Chittagong were restricted to 135 for 7. In reply, Barisal, courtesy of Gayle -- who hit nine 6s and six 4s -- romped to their target in 15 overs.

All the left-hander did was just stand and deliver. There was no risk involved in any of his hits and it seemed as though he had all the time in the world to select his spot outside the boundary and dispatch bowlers.

He began by hammering Asif Ahmed for 18 runs in the sixth over. That over though, merely turned out to be a precursor for what was yet to come because the sixes that he hit towards the end left the bowlers in tatters.

Jeevan Mendis and Taskin Ahmed got the worst treatment. Taskin was hammered into the stands in the 13th

## 'Indo-Pak series hopes dashed'

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan's cricket chief said Wednesday his hopes for a bilateral series with arch-rivals India had been dashed after a visit to Islamabad by India's external minister failed to yield any breakthrough.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) had hoped Sushma Swaraj's visit to Pakistan for the Heart of Asia regional conference Tuesday and Wednesday would open the way for a limited short over series, agreed between the PCB and the Indian cricket board and due to be played in Sri Lanka.

But Pakistan media reported cricket was not discussed during Swaraj's talks with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his foreign affairs adviser Sartaj Aziz, while she made no reference to the series in a brief statement Wednesday evening.

Any chance of a series is "over", PCB chairman Shaharyar Khan told AFP, adding that the foreign office had conveyed to him that without talks on the cricket it would be "difficult" to arrange any series.

Khan said the series could have netted Pakistan \$50 million (five billion rupees).

"We are disappointed that India did not honour their commitment," he said.

POINTS TABLE					
Teams	Mat	W	L	Pts	NRR
Rangpur Riders	10	7	3	14	+0.693
Comilla Victorians	9	6	3	12	+0.475
Barisal Bulls	9	6	3	12	+0.054
Dhaka Dynamites	9	4	5	8	+0.007
Sylhet Superstars	9	3	6	6	-0.376
Chittagong Vikings	10	2	8	4	-0.828