

# SPORT

**WHACK-OMETER**

TOTAL 6s HIT **237** | TOTAL 4s HIT **725**

Most 6s by players: 12, Chris Gayle, Barisal Bulls  
Most 4s by a player: 35, Kumar Sangakkara, Dhaka Dynamites

## Sabbir blinder takes Bulls to final

SPORTS REPORTER

They represented the Bangladesh national team during different eras, their favourite hitting zones barely matched and neither of them have had a good time in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

However, when Shahriar Nafees and Sabbir Rahman got together for the Barisal Bulls yesterday, they put on a partnership that took their side to an exciting five-wicket victory in Mirpur.

It may not have been a Chris Gayle-blitz as many had hoped to witness, but the cleverly crafted 124-run stand was just as entertaining as any innings from the hard-hitting West Indian.

While Sabbir looked to smother the leg-side, Shahriar delicately carved the ball through the off. It was a mix of the new and old and it was a stand that left Shakib Al Hasan's side in tatters.

The day didn't start in the best possible way for Barisal as they had fielded an eleven without their master-hitter, Chris Gayle. There seemed to be growing tension in the Barisal dressing room after Lendl Simmons's brilliant 57-ball 73 led the Rangpur Riders to 160 for 9.

However Sabbir ensured that Barisal didn't miss Gayle by hammering a 48-ball 79. It was a brilliant knock from a player

who had scored just 60-odd runs in his first six BPL matches.

Almost everything seemed to come off the bat perfectly for Sabbir as he smacked three sixes and seven fours.

Playing his third match of the BPL, Shahriar complemented Sabbir with a 40-ball 44. Apart from smacking boundaries the duo rarely missed an opportunity to take singles.

From ten for two, the pair took Barisal to 134 for two. By the time Shahriar was run-out in the 17th over, Barisal required just 27 off 23 balls.

They did face a setback when Darren Sammy took a brilliant catch at the edge of the boundary to dismiss Sabbir. Sammy jumped high and athletically balanced himself inches away from the boundary to take the catch.

A single later and Barisal required 19 runs off 12 balls. Things got worse when they lost Mahmudullah in the fourth ball of the 19th over. However, Rayad Emrit evened things with a thunderous slog that went all the way.

As a result of the six, Barisal required eight runs off the last over. The first ball from Thisara Perera was a gift for the just-arrived Kevon Cooper, who gleefully guided the leg-stump full-toss for four. He then took a double off the second and smacked a boundary off the third ball to spark wild celebrations for the Bulls, who will now take on Comilla Victorians in the grand final tomorrow.



Barisal Bulls batsman Sabbir Rahman points to the dressing room after smashing Rangpur Riders spinner Arafat Sunny for a six during the second qualifier of the BPL at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Gayle's mysterious absence

SPORTS REPORTER

The exclusion of master-hitter Chris Gayle from Barisal Bulls' playing eleven in yesterday's qualifier against Rangpur Riders in Mirpur surprised all and sundry.

Barisal skipper Mahmudullah Riyad first revealed it during the toss.

"He will not be able to play with us due to his commitment to the Big Bash League (BBL)," Mahmudullah said, while referring to Gayle's commitment for the Melbourne Renegades in the competition, which is scheduled to begin on December 17.

Certain franchises in the BBL require their players to join their teams a week before the start of the competition. Initially, there was speculation that Gayle, who had a five-match contract with the Bulls leading to the December 15 final, had left due to this rule.

However, the BPL governing council has taken the Gayle 'no show' episode very seriously.

"We feel that the decision to not play Gayle is suspicious because from what we knew he was supposed to play five matches. We are going to investigate the matter," said BPL governing council chairman Afzalur Rahman Sinha.

"We were told by the franchise that Gayle was injured and that he decided to leave for the BBL. If that was the case then he could have met our medical team and we could have figured out a solution. The reason why we have made this statement is because many people have been asking us regarding his absence," he added.

Gayle, who recently underwent back surgery, played four games for the Bulls in what were his first competitive appearances since recovering. Although he started slowly, scoring 16 in his first two games, he returned to his belligerent best with 47-ball unbeaten 92 in a crucial group league game against Chittagong Vikings. Gayle also scored a quick-fire 31 against Dhaka Dynamites on Saturday in match that the Bulls won convincingly to set up yesterday's clash against the Riders.

**PREMIER cement**

**SCOREBOARDS**

**RIDERS V BULLS**

| RANGPUR RIDERS  |          |          |          | BARISAL BULLS                                    |  |          |          |          |   |
|---|----------|----------|----------|--|--|----------|----------|----------|---|
| R/B   | 4/6      | R        | W        | R/B  | 4/6  | R        | W        |          |   |
| Simmons b Sami  | 73/57    | 9/2      |          | Rony c Perera b Arafat                           | 2/6  | 0/0      |          |          |   |
| Abdullah b Prasanna   | 20/23    | 1/1      |          | Prasanna lbw b Shakib                            | 7/9  | 0/1      |          |          |   |
| Soumya c Sami b Cooper  | 6/8      | 0/0      |          | Sabbir c Sammy b Perera                          | 79/49  | 7/3      |          |          |   |
| Shakib b Al-Amin  | 13/10    | 0/1      |          | Nafees run out                                   | 44/40  | 6/0      |          |          |   |
| Perera c b Cooper   | 5/5      | 0/0      |          | Mahmudullah c Perera b Sammy                     | 5/6  | 0/0      |          |          |   |
| Sammy c Tajul b Cooper  | 23/10    | 3/1      |          | Emrit not out                                    | 7/4  | 0/1      |          |          |   |
| Nabi c Emrit b Cooper   | 8/6      | 1/0      |          | Cooper not out                                   | 10/3   | 2/0      |          |          |   |
| Mithun run out  | 1/1      | 0/0      |          | Extras: (lb-6, w-3)                              | 9  |          |          |          |   |
| Sajlain run out   | 1/1      | 0/0      |          | Total: (For 5 wks in 19.3 overs)                 | 163  |          |          |          |   |
| Jayed not out   | 0/0      | 0/0      |          | Fall of wickets: 1/3, 2/10, 3/134, 4/141, 5/147. |  |          |          |          |   |
| Extras: (lb-2, w-7, nb-1)   | 10       |          |          | <b>Bowler</b>                                    | <b>O</b>                                       | <b>M</b> | <b>R</b> | <b>W</b> |   |
| Total: (For 9 wks in 20 overs)  | 160      |          |          | Shakib   | 4  | 0        | 29       | 1        |   |
| Fall of wickets: 1/52, 2/70, 3/114, 4/125, 5/127, 6/152, 7/158, 8/159, 9/160. |          |          |          | Arafat   | 3  | 0        | 18       | 1        |   |
| <b>Bowler</b>   | <b>O</b> | <b>M</b> | <b>R</b> | <b>W</b>   |  |          |          |          |   |
| Sami  | 4        | 0        | 31       | 1  | Sammy  | 4        | 0        | 36       | 1 |
| Al-Amin   | 4        | 0        | 30       | 1  | Jayed  | 1        | 0        | 9        | 0 |
| Cooper  | 4        | 0        | 39       | 4  | Perera   | 2.3      | 0        | 25       | 1 |
| Tajul   | 1        | 0        | 14       | 0  | Sajlain  | 2        | 0        | 16       | 0 |
| Prasanna  | 3        | 0        | 20       | 1  | <b>Result:</b> Barisal Bulls won by 5 wickets. |          |          |          |   |
| Emrit   | 4        | 0        | 24       | 0  | <b>Player-of-the-match:</b> Sabbir Rahman.     |          |          |          |   |

## 'I can play T20'

SPORTS REPORTER



There were plenty of concerns raised about him in the group stages of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

There were worries that the player who had the ability to hit the ball the farthest in the national team was losing his touch a couple of months before the ICC World Twenty20.

However, as the BPL enters its climax, Sabbir Rahman has risen to the fore. His powerful 49-ball 79 was the cornerstone in Barisal Bull's exciting five-wicket win against Rangpur Riders at Mirpur yesterday.

"We knew that (Chris) Gayle wouldn't be playing in the final stages of the competition. There was no extra pressure on me, but I knew that I had to do well," said a focused Sabbir after his match-winning innings.

His record breaking 124-run stand with Shahriar Nafees, the highest ever for the fourth wicket in the BPL, changed the entire scenario. Despite the extremely different batting approaches, the duo gelled well together.

"He (Nafees) is a very positive player. He was telling me to continue rotating the strike. The plan was that I would go after the off-spinners and he would go after the left-arm bowlers," said Sabbir.

While he did emphasise quite a bit on the singles aspect, there definitely wasn't a shortage in the number of big hits he unleashed. After he slogged one over cover, Sabbir held out hand in the shape of a gun and pretended to shoot the audience at the grand stand.

When asked about the celebration, he said, "It was my reply to those who couldn't believe that I could come back. People go through bad patches and I think some of the spectators should understand that. There have also things written about me. It was just my way of letting them know that I can play T20 cricket," said Sabbir.

Barisal Bulls captain Mahmudullah Riyad also praised Sabbir's blistering knock, terming it as a 'special one'. His Rangpur Riders counterpart Shakib Al Hasan also reserved special praise for Sabbir.

"It was an outstanding innings from

# 'Fizz is a fantastic addition to Bangladesh'

Kumar Sangakkara has left Bangladesh in the manner that he always does: on top. The last time he came here, he went back home with the T20I World Cup and prior to that he had ambled his way to his first ever triple century. With 349 runs for the Dhaka Dynamites this time, he has exited the Bangladesh Premier League as the competition's highest run-getter. The best part about Sangakkara's stint in the BPL this time perhaps was the determination that he displayed in every single game. The 38-year-old may have retired from international cricket, but he clearly still has in him that sense of resolve that urges him to chase the next milestone. From describing how this visit had been his 'best ever trip' in Dhaka to speaking on his busy post-retirement life, Sangakkara spoke to *The Daily Star's* Naimul Karim and a Bengali daily at the team hotel prior to his departure.

**The Daily Star:** With the players' payment and fixing issues hovering around, were you initially a little concerned when you were approached to play in the BPL?

**Kumar Sangakkara:** Yeah I think you know that the BPL was unfortunately tainted before with all the issues you mentioned and when that happens a tournament loses its luster, it's shewn and players, especially international players, are always going to think twice before they come here and play. It's not only about the salary; it's about playing in a tournament that's healthy and good.

So I did take a lot of time to think about it. But at the same time with a new administration in Bangladesh, with Chandika Hathurusingha coaching here and the way Bangladesh has performed in the past year-and-a-half, this tournament is going to be vital for the development of their cricketers.

And with the assurances given and also the fact that they were really really looking very strongly to ensure that this tournament would, that made it slightly easier to decide. Having come here it has been a revelation. The tournament has been fantastic; the administrators have been brilliant, it has been run very well. The Cricket has been of a high standard. It's everyone's responsibility to make sure that together there is no chance for corruption. TDS: You tweeted saying that Dhaka had changed in the last year or so. What are the changes that you have seen?

KS: I think Dhaka is a place where you need to know where to go in order to enjoy and it has been a revelation. This has been the most enjoyable trip I have had to Dhaka. So many new places have come up. The attitudes of people have changed



in a sense that people have always been very welcoming and very warm and hospitable, but I think everyone has embraced this tournament and everyone wants it to succeed and they take a lot of pride in it.

I am not just talking about the players and the administrators but also the people you meet on the street or anywhere else. I think this has been a great start for the rest of the years of the BPL.

Of course the traffic is still that in Dhaka. Sri Lankan traffic has increased as well in the past year and half. To actually come here and to enjoy what Dhaka has to offer, I think this is the first time that I have really done that and I think it's brilliant.

TDS: What are the new things that you have actually seen here?  
KS: It's just the new places to go eat and new places to go see. Once you do that you find out that yes, you don't get

overwhelmed by just one part, one side or one issue here. There is so much more to Dhaka then meets the eye. You need to have people to know how to take you to places. You could actually be anywhere in the world in those places.

TDS: You have played with Mustafizur Rahman. Many consider him to be a freak bowler...

KS: I don't think he is a freak. He is just a very good bowler with some very good variations and great accuracy and a good mindset. Bowlers like that come along very rarely. Fizz is a fantastic addition to Bangladesh. He will develop and learn more, but at this moment I look at him and I am extremely impressed. I have spoken to other foreign players everywhere and they all think the same; that he is a wonderful find for Bangladesh and that he is going to be a superstar.

TDS: Did you face him in the nets?  
KS: I did, I did and I know how difficult he is. It takes you quite a while to get used

to what he does. So that means that when batsmen do get used to his variations he has to keep changing so that he keeps the batsmen guessing.

TDS: Mustafizur is a part of a Bangladesh team that has done extremely well this year. Many have said that this team has the ability to do what Sri Lanka did in 1996. What are your thoughts on that comparison?

KS: I think Bangladesh is definitely on an upward trend. Of course Sri Lanka in 1996 was a singular event because we had the most experienced one-day side in the world. There was no one who had played more one-dayers than Sri Lanka at that time.

We had some of the best players in one-day cricket. And the rules and the wickets in one-day suited us perfectly. In those days, 220 runs was a score that you easily defend, especially in the sub-continent.

Times have changed, rules have changed and I think it has become a lot more even on sub-continental wickets. So Bangladesh, probably have a tougher uphill struggle than Sri Lanka. Players from Australia, England and South Africa have learnt to play spin a lot better now than in those days. So you find that these guys have become a lot better at playing us at our own game. Bangladesh will have to keep improving but the point is that they have a great chance.

TDS: How obvious is the change since Sri Lanka whitewashed them in 2014?  
KS: They have changed a lot and I think Chandika Hathurusingha, Mario Villavarayan and Ruwan Kalpage have a lot to do with that because these guys know exactly what it takes. Hathurusingha is a very smart, intelligent, switched-on coach and a great player manager.

TDS: After your retirement you have played for Surrey, Warne's Warriors, the BPL and you have a number of other tournaments lined-up. Would you consider yourself to be the busiest retired cricketer?  
KS: (laughs) I think all retired cricketers are busy and it's great. A few years ago once you retired that was it, you were finished. You had to find other things to do. But now after you retire, you have some great opportunities to go play cricket. I think we are very lucky in that sense and we have to appreciate that. TDS: But is life a little boring now? Do you miss the limelight?  
KS: I don't miss the limelight at all. I think being in the limelight is just a phrase. You just try and do as well as possible. Yes the motivation when you play for your country is very different in the sense that you take a lot of pride in wearing that jersey.

But the pride remains in the fact that you want to be at your best every time you go out to play. Be it playing with other retired players or playing in a tournament like this. You want to be fit and you want your skills to be at a high level because you don't want to go out there and look silly. So that drive and passion remains.

TDS: Now that you're retired, will you be more engrossed with your restaurant?  
KS: Well hopefully yes. We are looking to expand the restaurant internationally as well. Let's wait and see.

TDS: Perhaps open a restaurant in Dhaka?  
KS: I think Dhaka is a great place to come and set something up. It would be great to see if we can actually do that.

TDS: Finally, where do you see yourself five years from now?  
KS: Oh well, hopefully done with playing cricket other than just a bit of backyard cricket with my son. I really

## SL struggle before rain

AFP, Dunedin

Tim Southee took two wickets as New Zealand tightened the screws on Sri Lanka on the fourth day of the first Test Sunday, but rain threatened to derail their victory hopes.

New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum set the stage for a tantalising conclusion at Dunedin's University Oval with a sporting declaration that offered Sri Lanka more than five sessions to reach a 405-run target.

But the tourists' response was disrupted by three stoppages as southerly squalls swept across the ground. Further showers are forecast for the final day.

At stumps on day four, with an hour's play lost because of the weather, Sri Lanka were 109 for three, requiring a further 296 runs.

Dinesh Chandimal is not out 31 and captain Angelo Mathews has yet to face.

Sri Lanka veteran Rangana Herath, 37, said they needed the pair to bat through the first session on Monday to save the Test.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
**NEW ZEALAND:** First innings 431  
**SRI LANKA:** First innings 294  
**NEW ZEALAND:** Second innings 267 for 3 decl (Guptill 46, Latham 109 not out, Williamson 71; Herath 2-62)  
**SRI LANKA:** Second innings 109 for 3 (Karunaratne 29, Mendis 46, Chandimal 31 not out; Southee 2-16)