

## 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



## 'I'm ready to guide a young team to glory'

SPORTS REPORTER

When Comilla Victorians skipper takes the field at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium today, he will be eyeing a third consecutive Bangladesh Premier League title. Having won the two previous tournaments with the Dhaka Gladiators, Mashrafe hopes his experience can help him guide the younger players to the title.

"I am obviously very happy to have reached my third final. But what's more important is to finish well. There are many young players in the side who will be playing such a competitive final for the first time, and I hope I can guide them," said Mashrafe at the pre-match briefing.

Mashrafe believes that his team's main strength has been their spirit. "If you look at the IPL, Royal Challengers Bangalore is perhaps the best team ever. They buy Chris Gayle, Virat Kohli, Ab de Villiers every year. But it's not just the cricketers that bring you results, it's the entire team performance. "Everyone has performed their roles to perfection. Everyone wanted to do well. There was a determination amongst the players both on and off the field in the team," said Mashrafe.

When asked if the absence of Gayle would make a difference, Mashrafe said, "They chased 161 yesterday without Gayle. They are a strong team even without him."

## FINAL INSIGHT

**KEY PLAYER**

**ASHAR ZAIDI**  
With 199 runs at an average of 66.33 and 16 wickets with the ball, Zaidi is a strong contender for becoming the player of the tournament. He has been Comilla's most consistent performer and has been a game-changer.

**SABBIR RAHMAN**  
The 24-year-old couldn't have come to form at a better time in the tournament. Having overcome his early lean patch, Sabbir seems like he is ready to display his true form, with scores of 79 and 41 in the last two games.

**STRENGTH**

Their undying team spirit has been their biggest strength in the competition. They may not have biggest names, but under Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, almost each of these players have been able to deliver their best.

Rayad Emrit, Kevon Cooper, Evin Lewis, Sabbir Rahman and even Al-Amin Hossain have all been game-changers for Barisal. Their ability to come back from the dead has been their major strength.

**WEAKNESS**

It's hard to find a weakness when everything goes so well for a team. However, the Victorians, on too many occasions ended up depending upon Ashar Zaidi towards the end, since they don't have natural hitters at the top.

If the wicket turns out to assist the spinners, it may be a bit of a problem for the Bulls, for their two frontline spinners – Seekuge Prasanna and Taijul Islam – haven't been enjoying the tournament so far.

We are not worried about the fact that Chris Gayle is not in the team. We won without him in the last game, we can do it again.

**-Coach Mohammad Salauddin** **-Shahriar Nafees**



## 'Being from Barisal is extra inspiration'

SPORTS REPORTER

The Barisal Bulls have come to the final the hard way. For starters, they had to plan a strategy without their master-batsman Chris Gayle and then they had to apply it in a must-win encounter in the eliminator.

When Gayle's name wasn't included in the playing eleven against the Rangpur Riders, there were many who reckoned that would go on to be their last match of the competition. However, a record-breaking stand between Shahriar Nafees and Sabbir Rahman changed all that.

Their ability to come back from the dead has been their specialty in the competition.

And that's the mindset that Shahriar Nafees, who spoke to the media yesterday in place of Mahmudullah Riyad who was asked to rest due to a slight injury, wants Barisal to go into the game with.

"We have played well in the league stage and that's the reason why we qualified for the final. We just want to hold on to that form and play our normal game," said Shahriar.

Shahriar, who is originally from Barisal, hoped he could win it for his hometown.

"Being from Barisal is an extra inspiration to play for this franchise. There's a lot of emotion and I will try to use that inspiration in the final," he added.



## Complaint filed against Anamul

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A complaint was lodged with the Kushtia Model Police Station on Sunday night against national cricketer Anamul Haque for allegedly beating and stabbing a youth. Abdul Halim, father of the victim, filed the case accusing Anamul of beating and stabbing his son, Motaieb Hossain Bappy, 24, now receiving treatment at a local hospital.

According to the complaint, Anamul's father Jamil Hossain, who has been living in a flat rented out by Halim, got into an altercation with Bappy over a trivial issue. Following the altercation, Anamul and his brother Sajib beat Bappy with a bat and stabbed him with a sharp weapon in the evening.

Anamul, however denied the allegations. "Bappy himself attacked us when I and my younger brother went to his house and asked why he misbehaved with my father," Anamul told this correspondent.

Biplob Kumar Debnath, OC of the Kushtia Model Police Station, said that they were investigating the incident.

## Finn back to England fold

REUTERS, London

England have added fast bowler Steven Finn to their squad for the four-match series in South Africa that starts with the first Test on Boxing Day.

He was initially left out because of a foot injury but proved his fitness on the England Lions tour of the United Arab Emirates.

"I've been really pleased with the way things have gone with the Lions," Finn said in a news release on Monday.

# Bulls' last charge at Victorians

SPORTS REPORTER

33 matches and three weeks on, the quest for the glory of the Bangladesh Premier League's (BPL) third edition has come down to a face-off between the two most consistent sides of the competition.

At 6:30 pm today, the glamorous T20 league, which has arguably witnessed its smoothest season thus far, will feature its grand finale between Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's Comilla Victorians and Mahmudullah Riyad's Barisal Bulls.

The reason why both the teams

have reached the final is simple: instead of solely depending on a few individuals throughout the tournament, they played as a unit. They have always had a different player raise their hands during times of trouble.

The Victorians for instance have a number of players to thank for their passage to the final. Apart from the most obvious choices, such as Ashar Zaidi and Abu Hider, players like Marlon Samuels, Imrul Kayes and obviously Mashrafe Bin Mortaza also played match-winning knocks.

The same goes for the Bulls. The West Indians in their team—Chris Gayle, Evin Lewis, Kevon Cooper and Rayad Emrit—have each won

matches for them. Mahmudullah Riyad scored crucial half-centuries when his batters struggled and towards the end, Sabbir Rahman arrived at the party.

Barisal needed a hitter at the top after Gayle had left and with Sabbir back in form, they will be feeling blessed.

Statistically speaking, a player-wise comparison leads to an even-field. The anchors of both the teams, Imrul Kayes and Mahmudullah Riyad have scored 259 and 231 runs respectively and have averaged around 25.

19 runs separate their most aggressive batsmen, Ashar Zaidi and Sabbir Rahman; with Zaidi having put on 199 and Sabbir

romping to 180, and both these batsmen are in terrific form.

As far as their pacers go, both Abu Hider and Kevon Cooper have excelled in the competition thus far. Hider has taken 21 wickets at an average of 13.38, while Cooper has taken 20 at an average of 8.70. They are also leading the wickets column.

Perhaps the only area where the Victorians are a notch ahead is in the head-to-head department. They beat the Bulls, quite comfortably one must add, in the group stage. In the first game, the Bulls were bundled out for just 89, while in the second for 105. But don't be surprised if Mahmudullah decides against

batting first this time around.

Both sides seem to have identical strengths. Their openers aren't exactly big hitters and are merely expected to lay a good foundation. The hitters start from the middle-order to the lower middle-order. Both teams have pacers, who have performed, as well as consistent spinners.

Statistics predict a thriller of a final. Predictions may not always go right. However, for the sake of an expectedly full house Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today and for the fact that the BPL hasn't witnessed any of the controversies that had hit the last two seasons, one would hope that the competition ends with a bang.

## Nepal booters due tonight

SPORTS REPORTER

The Nepal national football team will arrive here tonight for an international friendly against Bangladesh on December 17. The friendly fixture, scheduled to kick off at 5:00pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, will be the last practice match for both the teams ahead of the SAFF Championship, which will get underway in Kerala on December 23.

While Bangladesh squad have been training at BKSP's residential camp in Savar since November 28 and are believed to announce a 20-member final squad just a day before flying for Kerala, their Nepalese counterparts have already trimmed the squad to 20 members yesterday. The Nepal team will be guided by Belgian coach Patrick Aussems and captained by veteran striker Anil Gurung.

BANGABANDHU GOLD CUP

## Teams all but finalised

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has all but finalised the participating teams of the 2016 Bangabandhu Gold Cup after getting positive response from the Football Association of Malaysia.

Malaysia, champions of the 2015 edition, had initially expressed their reservation about taking part.

"I have been instructed to officially invite Malaysia by the BFF president [Kazi Salahuddin], who returned on Sunday night from Malaysia after getting a positive response from them," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag yesterday.

Shohag informed that Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Bahrain have already confirmed their participation while the sixth team could either be Nepal or Maldives.

Replying to a query, the BFF spokesman said that a couple of countries including Bahrain wanted to send their under-23 teams, but have been requested by the BFF to send senior teams for this tournament, which is scheduled to be held in the slot available between January 6 and January 20

## PREMIER DIVISION CHESS Sk Russel dethrone Navy

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel Memorial Sporting Club emerged champions in their maiden appearance in the Walton Premier Division Chess League, courtesy of better board points, after the ninth and final round was held at the National Sports Council Lounge yesterday.

Sheikh Russel and holders Bangladesh Navy chess team finished top with equal 15 points from eight matches, but Sheikh Russel had earned more board points (27) following their straight 4-0 win over Titas Chess Team in the final round yesterday.

Bangladesh Navy beat Leonine Chess Club 3-1 in the final round yet had to be content with runners-up finish with 26 board points.

"Junior players like FM Mehdi Hasan Parag and IM Diptayan Ghosh put up brilliant performances throughout the

championship which helped us edge Bangladesh Navy, who also a balanced side too," said grandmaster Niaz Murshed, who had joined the Sheikh Russel team from Mohammedan SC at the eleventh hour.

Sheikh Russel Memorial SC entered top-flight chess this year through buying promoted Srijon Club. The club roped in Indian GM Dibyendu Barua and IM Diptayan from India along with GM Niaz, and FM Parag, FM Fahad Rahman and CM Sohail Chowdhury.

"As I am involved with Sheikh Russel Shishu Kishore Parisad, I wanted to preserve the memory of Sheikh Russel in chess and formed a strong squad after Sheikh Russel KC, a team playing in the professional football league, refused to enrol themselves in chess," said club president Mazibur Rahman Howlader, who is also a member of the executive committee of Bangladesh Chess Federation.

## Wagner sets up Kiwi win

AFP, Dunedin

A "miracle ball" from the recalled Neil Wagner set New Zealand up for a 122-run win in the first Test on Monday as Sri Lanka folded with the loss of seven wickets on the final day.

New Zealand had set the Sri Lankans a formidable 405-run target but with sufficient time to get there on a non-threatening University Oval wicket.

The Sri Lanka batsmen, however, failed to show the necessary patience and were all out for 282 midway through the final day.

Resistance crumbled after Wagner, back in the side after a year out of Test cricket, captured the crucial scalp of Angelo Mathews, who had put on 56 with Dinesh Chandimal for the fourth wicket.

After being peppered by short deliveries targeting the rib cage, Mathews, on 25, was taken by surprise by a full-length delivery which rattled into his stumps.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
NEW ZEALAND: First innings 431  
SRI LANKA: First innings 294  
NEW ZEALAND: Second innings 267 for 3 decl  
SRI LANKA: Second innings 282 (Mendis 46, Chandimal 58, Mathews 25; Boulton 2-58, Southee 36-52, Wagner 2-56)  
**Result:** NZ won by 122 runs.  
**Player-of-the-match:** Martin Guptill.

## Victory Day hockey sans Dhaka clubs

SPORTS REPORTER

The Fu-Wang Polymer Victory Day Hockey Competition gets underway tomorrow at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium without the participation of any of the Dhaka clubs which play in the premier division league. The eight-day tournament will feature seven teams – Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Police, Bangladesh Air Force, BKSP, Raktim Shanga and Narayanganj DSA, and the teams will play in round-robin format in two separate groups, informed organisers at a press conference at the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) yesterday.

This will be the first time since the end of the premier league in February, 2014 that most of the players of the national hockey team will participate in a domestic competition, even though some of them took part in the National Hockey League, which was held in April this year.

"Since the inter-club transfer window is scheduled to take place in early January, the clubs could not form their squads for this tournament and hence they have refused to participate," informed Kazi Moinuzzaman Pila, treasurer of the federation and vice-chairman of the Victory Day Competition Committee.

However, despite the absence of the Dhaka clubs, most of the national squad players will participate in this competition as they have already been absorbed by different services teams which are taking part.

The biggest contingent of the national players belong to Bangladesh Navy which finished runners-up in national hockey this year and are believed to be the strongest of the seven teams in this competition. After roping in Mamunur Rahman Chayan, Krishna Kumar and Tapash Barman in 2013, the services side have recently drafted in Russel Mahmud Jimmy, Asim Gope, Farhad Ahmed Shitul, Rumman Sarkar, Sarwar Hossain, Moinul Islam Koushik and Deen Islam.

"Seven of us have joined Navy recently. We have been training in Khulna for the last eight or nine days. This is a very good initiative by Navy and I hope that others will follow suit," Jimmy said when contacted yesterday.

The national team's training camp for the upcoming South Asian Games will remain suspended for the next eight days due to the competition, informed speakers.



New Zealand's Neil Wagner (L) captured the crucial scalp of Sri Lanka captain Angelo Mathews on the fifth day of the first Test in Dunedin yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP