

# SPORT

## DHAKA PREMIER LEAGUE-2016

# Five to watch

SPORTS REPORTER

The Dhaka Premier League, the country's premier 50-over domestic competition, is scheduled to begin on April 22. With the league likely to be the only domestic competition before Bangladesh's Test tour of India, there will be a number of players who will be looking to impress the national selectors.

Bangladesh's Test side, after all, is not as consistent as its One-Day-International outfit and a brilliant run in this competition may just compel selectors to explore other options.

The following are a few players whose individual goals in this tournament will definitely not be constrained within the purview of this competition.

### Mosaddek Hossain

The 20-year-old middle order batsman recently made his international debut when he was picked for a T20I against Zimbabwe.

allrounder is a theory that many subscribe to. He only started playing first-class cricket in 2015 but already has three five-wicket hauls and has received plenty of acclaim from the local coaches already. The league this season could well prove to be a huge step in the youngster's career.

### Jubair Hossain

It's rare for a Bangladeshi national cricketer not to get an opportunity in domestic cricket after performing well at the international level. Jubair Hossain, the 20-year-old leg-spinner has barely featured in Bangladesh's domestic leagues in the last year. According to the coaches of the divisions he played in, he lacks accuracy and as a result his turns have not been appreciated. He is still likely to be included in Bangladesh's upcoming Test matches, considering that he featured in the last few. For him to get his rhythm back, one would hope that Abahani Limited go that extra mile and give him the game-time he deserves.



Taskin Ahmed Rubel Hossain Mosaddek Hossain Jubair Hossain Mehedi Hasan

He struggled his way to a 19-ball 15 before getting bowled by Sikandar Raza. It was the kind of start that a player of his calibre would not be happy with. A talented middle-order batsman, Mosaddek, at least as per the stats, is arguably the most consistent batsman in the longer version of the game in Bangladesh at the moment. He averages 70.89 in first-class cricket. In just 18 first-class games, he has scored seven hundreds and six fifties with a highest score of 282. He has three double hundreds to his name already and he recently managed to post 12 50-plus scores in consecutive matches. With a number of Tests to come for the Tigers this year, it will not be a surprise if the selectors keep an eye on the youngster during the competition.

### Mehedi Hasan Miraz

One would probably say that it is still too early to consider Bangladesh's former under-19 captain for the senior team. He is an off-spinning all-rounder and there are plenty with the same attributes in the pipeline already. However, that Miraz has the potential to become a great international

### Taskin Ahmed

There is no doubt regarding Taskin Ahmed's form. There is no doubt that he will be able to bowl those scorching yorkers in the league for Abahani as well. However, for Taskin, his major target will be to get ready ahead of his bowling test, which he may take next month. He was banned for his bouncers, because of which he has been provided with a rehabilitation programme with Heath Streak. Taskin's challenge will be to successfully incorporate the changes that Streak suggested before the latter's departure.

### Rubel Hossain

The hero of Bangladesh's 2015 World Cup has been out of sight ever since the Bangladesh Premier League. He has gone through tough times. Constant injuries compelled selectors not to consider him for the World Twenty20. He was also kept out of the national contract because he did not follow his rehabilitation programme properly. For Rubel, this league will be an opportunity to undo the wrong and storm back into action.



Chittagong Abahani skipper Zahid Hossain is fired up after scoring the opener against Uttar Baridhara Club in their KFC Independence Cup fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FROZ AHMED

# Zahid drives Ctg Abahani

## Fikru hits fifth in three matches as Sheikh Russel win

SPORTS REPORTER



Chittagong Abahani notched up their second successive victory in the KFC Independence Cup with a 2-1 win over 10-man Uttar Baridhara Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Winger Zahid Hossain made the difference by scoring one and creating the other before Khalekuzzman Sabuj deposited one back for the recently promoted Uttar Baridhara just before the final whistle.

The second win in as many matches brightened big-budget Chittagong Abahani's chances of

reaching the semifinals as they now sit second in Group A with six points, just three behind leaders Sheikh Jamal DC. Uttar Baridhara, on the other hand, are out of the race as they haven't got a single point from four matches.

Fresh from a 2-0 win over Muktiyoddha Sangsad but still playing without five key players due to Sheikh Jamal's petition granted by the high court, the charges of Jozef Pavlik looked unimpressive throughout. And they could not break the deadlock in the first half despite seeing the opposition reduced to 10 men in the 12th minute, following Kosoko Olasukanmi's use of abusive words toward referee Jalaluddin.

Zahid, however, was an exception and whipped in number of crosses from the right but all of those went in vain, only to come out and put the port-city outfit ahead four minutes into the second half.

The breakthrough came in the 49th minute when Zahid beat the opposition goalie on the rebound after seeing his initial shot palmed away. Then the former national winger fed Haitian forward Fabrice Noel for the second goal in the 67th minute.

Baridhara scored a consolation goal a minute before the end of regulation time as Sabuj danced past two defenders after a fantastic run from the midfield and beat Abahani goalkeeper Ashraful Islam Rana.

In the second match of the day,

Sheikh Russel KC scraped past Rahmatganj MFS 2-1, thanks to the amazing goal-spree from Fikru Teferra.

The Ethiopian striker nodded home an Atiqur Rahman Meshu cross in the fifth minute of the match to put Sheikh Russel ahead. It was the Ethiopian's fifth goal in three matches. Ten minutes later, Cameroon's Paul Emile doubled the lead with a low drive.

But since those two early goals, it was Rahmatganj who enjoyed the lion's share of possession and kept Sheikh Russel on their toes. The Old Dhaka outfit deservedly pulled a goal back in the 85th minute through substitute Rashed Turzo, but could not find the equaliser.

## Nat'l Cricket C'ship from April 15

SPORTS REPORTER

The 36th National Cricket Championship (NCC) will kick off from April 15, 2016. Matches will be played in 14 venues across the country. The 36th NCC is a limited overs competition played on turf wickets. There are 64 district teams participating in the tournament. The teams have been divided into 14 groups. Eight teams will qualify the second round.

Based on the performances in the 36th NCL performance the 64 teams will be divided into two tiers of 32 each next season. The top performing teams will play in Tier-1 and the remaining sides will be placed in Tier 2, in the 37th NCC 2016-17. From each corresponding year the bottom eight teams from Tier 1 will be relegated to Tier 2 while the top eight finishers of Tier 2 will be promoted to Tier 1.

## 'None of us had dinner after India defeat'

PTI, Srinagar

Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza has revealed that he

and his teammates skipped dinner after their gut-wrenching one-run defeat against India in the recently concluded World T20.

Mortaza, who is holidaying in Kashmir, interacted with the local youngsters.

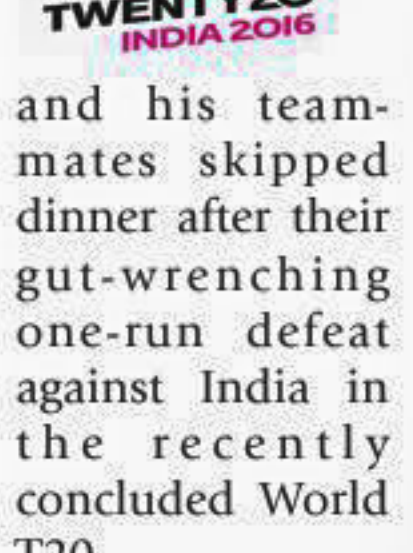
"We were very upset with that defeat. None of us had dinner that evening. Losing is a part of the game and we did not want to lose that match," Mortaza was quoted as saying by a local website, when a

local boy asked about Bangladesh not being able to score two runs off the last three balls during their group stage encounter against India.

It was a chance encounter for the locals with the Bangladeshi captain as he stopped by at a village on Srinagar-Sonamarg road yesterday.

"On his way back to summer capital (Srinagar) from Sonamarg, he saw a few youngsters playing cricket at Kullan. Mortaza stopped the vehicle and met the players," the website report stated.

The seamer gave some tips to the young players and even displayed his skills by bowling a few deliveries.



MASHRAFE BIN MORTAZA

## Troubled Sk Jamal face Selangor

SPORTS REPORTER

A struggling Sheikh Jamal DC will be looking to salvage some honour when they take on Selangor FA in their fourth match of the AFC Cup at the Selayang Municipal Council Stadium in Malaysia today. The match will kick-off at 6:30pm Bangladesh time.

The visitors, who suffered three defeats in three matches of the four-team Group E, have had a lot of trouble picking a 14-man squad, thanks to the shortage of players as well as injuries to a number of players them. The squad however received a last-moment with the joining of Sheikh Russel midfielder Jamal Bhuiyan.

"We have injury problems and other players have moved to other clubs ahead of the new domestic season, so it will be a difficult game for us," Sheikh Jamal DC coach Shafiqul Islam Manik was quoted as saying by the AFC official website.

Though Sheikh Jamal lost to Selangor 3-4 in their last meeting in Dhaka last month, the Dhanmondi-based outfit may take inspiration from the three straight wins in domestic league. The hosts, on the other hand, will come into the game on the back of a 1-3 defeat to Felda United in their local league.

Tampines Rover of Singapore lead the table on seven points, followed by Ceres La Salle of Philippines on six and Selangor on five. Sheikh Jamal are yet to open their account.

# Not the renaissance man we believed

AL-AMIN



When Kazi Salaudhin saddled on the BFF (Bangladesh Football Federation) presidency eight years ago, it created a positive vibe. People closely associated with football started to think that the game, which was living on saline at that time, was in good hands at last. There was one extremely loyal Salaudhin follower who took me by surprise. He was Al Musabbir Sadi, my professional colleague at the sports section.

One afternoon in 2009, Sadi came to me and said: "Dosto (friend), my idol is calling and I have decided to join him to pursue my dream." Sadi was very passionate while talking and I could only wonder about his belief that if football in Bangladesh really needed a charismatic character to revive its old glory, then Salaudhin was next to none.

Sadi left The Daily Star soon and joined his idol to serve the country's football. Unfortunately, Sadi left us all at a young age with an unfulfilled dream, leaving his idol to skate through rough weather. He was one of so many football lovers who had the faith that Salaudhin would pull Bangladesh football out of the gutter. There were logical reasons behind the faith. Salaudhin is not only one of the finest footballers the country has ever produced; he is Bangladesh's first player to have played in a professional league abroad. His football knowledge is precise; he is someone who loves the Dutch style of football; he is a dreamer who believes nothing is impossible. When he speaks, he captivates the audience.

But after eight years on the hot seat of Bangladesh football, Salaudhin's charisma, world of knowledge, big dreams and captivating ability is under serious scrutiny as he prepares for a third and final term for BFF presidency.

Once considered an unparalleled leader, Salaudhin is now feeling the heat of a negative campaign which has often been associated with elections of sports federations. The hate campaign this time has been so nasty that it even questioned his handling of BFF funds and that too from a section which once rallied behind him.

With the judgment day of April 30 drawing nearer, Salaudhin is faced with a kind of adversity he has never experienced before during his decorated career as a footballer, a coach and an administrator.

How good is he as an administrator? What positive changes has he made as BFF boss over the last eight years? Salaudhin will tell you of a lot of positives during his two terms. He will tell you he has fulfilled his commitment of keeping football on the ground round the year. He has arranged more games for the national team despite all those disappointing defeats. True, Bangladesh players got more exposure in international football during his time and their failure on the field has nothing to do with his administrative efforts.

But then ask him whether the whole effort was flawed as he could not produce 'one football-literate' player in his eight years. Whatever answer Salaudhin may come up with, the reality is that we have 30-odd national players but sadly not a single one knows how to play the beautiful game.

Eight years is a long time to build a fresh set of footballers. It is all about continuity, and like Salaudhin, who has dreamt big but painfully lacked the necessary tenacity to pursue that dream, Bangladesh

football desperately missed that continuity. We have had an under-16 team which never graduated into an under-21 side, which necessarily takes five years to complete the cycle. The BFF ran top-tier domestic football league every year and to some extent the Pioneer League, which is the beginners' league. But the Third Division, Second Division and The First Division were in absolute

chaos. Over the years District Football Leagues fed most of the players in the glamorous Dhaka Leagues. But the introduction of the DFA (District Football Association) in fact almost destroyed the age-old system. This is what Salaudhin, despite being a far-sighted administrator, has failed to address. The BFF Academy is a long story of an unfulfilled adventure and now awaits a complex procedure to become perhaps the only institute in world football which is 'a property of national federation run by a private company'. Eventually all these things had a cumulative negative effect on Bangladesh's football.

It may be too harsh to squarely blame the BFF boss alone for not fulfilling his dream. Actually, Bangladesh football had never been in the hands of a renaissance man in good times or in desperate times. It has always been about running the affairs in a conventional fashion. The only difference is that a lot of people served football out of sheer love in the past, which has subsided dramatically now.

We are not sure if we can find a renaissance man with a pragmatic goal and a whole-hearted effort to fulfil it in near future.



KAZI SALAUDDIN



Apex Footwear Limited's chief operating officer Rajan Pillai and head of marketing Zoheb Ahmed handed over gifts to winners of the Apex Presents Predictometer contest, which ran in The Daily Star, during a programme at the Apex showroom at Bashundhara City on Sunday. A total of 48 winners, who participated in the contest which ran throughout the World T20, received gift vouchers worth Tk 2000 each.

PHOTO: COURTESY