

SPORT

DPL 2016 PREVIEW

Prime's juggernaut & Jamal's balance

SPORTS REPORTER

At the end of the Dhaka Premier League last season, one thing that was certain: the traditional powerhouses like Abahani Limited and Mohammedan Sporting Club were not the only ones who would dominate the league.

Prime Bank Cricket Club proved the point when they built a good all-round set up to win the trophy last year and they have managed to build a similar team this time around as well.

They have got four players from the national team and key among them will be Sabbir Rahman. The hard-hitting top-order batsman has been in great form throughout the last year. In the last few months he has seemingly managed to learn the art of finding a balance between aggression and patience and there is no doubt that that factor will play a crucial role in the league.

Along with Sabbir, there's Rubel Hossain, Kazi Nurul Hasan and Shuvagata Hom Chowdhury. Bangladesh's 2015 World Cup hero Rubel has been out of the national team mainly due to injury. He was also left out of the national contract because he did not appropriately follow the rehabilitation process that was set for him. As a result, it goes without saying that there will be plenty that Rubel will be looking to regain through the competition.

Although both Nurul and Shuvagata have not gotten many opportunities in the

national team, they do have a good record in domestic cricket. Nurul, apart from his swift wicketkeeping skills, is also a crafty batsman. He is the kind of player who needs some time to get set before he gets going and the league seems an ideal foundation for that.

Having scalped the wicket of Virat Kohli in the ICC World Twenty20, Shuvagata will be raring to go as well.

One of the weaknesses of this side could be the fact that they do not have a senior player to lead the side. They do have performers, but they need someone to keep heads calm whenever things go out of control.

Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club is another side that has managed to rack up a balanced team. They will be led by the most consistent national batsman for Bangladesh in recent times, Mahmudullah Riyad.

His drives through point were a delight to watch during the Asia Cup and the ICC World Twenty20. He has been in good touch ever since the Bangladesh Premier League last year and he will hope he can continue the good run.

The good part about this team is that they have got a decent spin attack, which in leagues like these could prove to be crucial. In Shohag Gazi and Arafat Sunny, they have got a lethal combination.

Also, they have the likes of Marshall Ayub and Muktar Ali in the side, both of whom possess immense talent but unfortunately have not been able to cement their places in the national team. They also have a fit-again Shafiqul Islam, whose swinging deliveries could prove extremely handy.



LEADERSHIP TIPS? Bangladesh captain and Kalabagan KC's icon player Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (R) imparts some wisdom to his national teammate and Sheikh Jamal DC's likely captain Mahmudullah Riyad during the teams' practice session at the Academy Ground in Mirpur, ahead of the Dhaka Premier League's scheduled kick-off on April 22. PHOTO: FEROZ AHMED

'DPL my only route back'

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh national off-spinner Shohag Gazi has described the upcoming Dhaka Premier League (DPL) as his 'only possible path' to make a comeback to the national team.

The 24-year-old, who will be representing Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club this season, last played an international game in July last year when he was picked for the T20I against South Africa.

However, he has not played a Test or ODI since August 2014.

He hopes that the upcoming DPL can change his fortunes.

"It feels good that the Premier League is starting. I am not in the national team and this is the only path left for me. If I can do well here, maybe I can make a comeback to the national side," Gazi told reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today.

The off-spinner, who had shot to fame after becoming the first player in the history of Test cricket to take a hat-trick and score a century in the same Test, admitted that life outside the national team has been difficult.

"It is definitely painful. Playing for the national team is a different feeling altogether. I don't get that



SHOHAG GAZI

feeling now. When I see the national team play on the television, I feel bad. I feel bad when my parents or my siblings talk about it. I obviously can't express my feelings in front of them. I have to keep it inside of me. I miss the fun we used to have in the dressing room after winning a game.

"Hopefully I can eradicate that pain through this league. The competition is so high right now that it's not just enough to return to the national fold but to ensure that you stay in it," explained Gazi.

Furthermore, Shohag also indicated that his performances in domestic cricket had been overlooked in the last few months.

"Actually, when a new player does a small thing, everybody notices that. That is what happened with me. When I got 42

wickets in the first division, you all put me up there. If you see [Abdur Razzak] Raj bhai was the highest wicket taker in the Bangladesh Cricket League, but no one's talking about him.

"If it was someone new instead of Raj bhai, then everyone would have spoken about him. If I was new today, then people would have spoken about the fact that I had given just 10 runs in three overs in a T20 practice match prior to the World Cup. That's a big deal considering that I bowled in the Powerplays. But then again, I wasn't allowed to complete my quota of overs," he lamented.

He also talked about how difficult the life of a player outside the national team is in terms of facilities.

"You don't have permission for the indoors or even to run on the field. Sometimes we take special permission from the curator to work out here. Whenever the national team or the women's team practice, you are not allowed to use the bowling machine. The only option is to go to your region and practice. But then if I do that, everyone will think Shohag Gazi has disappeared. So I try to do my best here," he smiled.

Despite all that, Gazi remains resolute and reckons he can make a comeback.

Inzy named PCB chief selector

AFP, Kabul

Pakistan batting great Inzamamul Haq has resigned from his job as Afghanistan coach, the Afghan cricket board said Sunday, and is set to be appointed as the Pakistan Cricket Board's chief selector.

Inzamam guided Afghanistan to the Super 10 stage of the recent World Twenty20 held in India, with the team defeating the mighty West Indies.

Afghanistan cricket board spokesman, Farid Hotak, confirmed Inzamam's resignation.

"Today Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Shahryar Khan called the Afghan cricket board chief, Shafiq Stanikzai, and requested to release the batting great Inzamamul Haq from his contract," he told AFP.

Hotak said Inzamam's contract was for one year and that he served for several months as coach for the Afghan cricket team.

Inzamam played in 378 one-day internationals and 120 Test matches representing his country.

BFF ELECTIONS 2016

Four buy nominations for presidency

SPORTS REPORTER

A total of 61 nomination papers were brought for various posts of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) Elections in two days of nomination purchase, which concluded yesterday. Four nomination papers each were bought for the president and senior vice-president posts while 12 papers for four vice-president posts and 41 papers for member posts were bought. Today is the last date of submission of the nomination papers.

As far as nomination purchase is concerned, incumbent president Kazi Salahuddin has three competitors -- former footballer Golam Rabbani Helal, who bought his paper yesterday as an independent candidate, while two unheralded candidates -- Nurul Islam Nuru and Kamrul Ashraf Khan Poton MP, the latter from Save Football panel -- had bought their candidatures on Saturday.

"It's a free country. Anyone can compete in elections, but everything will be settled by the BFF councillors on the elections day. I welcome all the candidates and I am happy that the BFF has reached such a standard where everyone wants to contest," Salahuddin said after his panel's nomination papers were collected by Abdus Salam Mursheedy and Kazi Nabil Ahmed.

The BFF boss kept mum regarding queries of the media, but said he would answer all the questions at a press conference on April 23.

Helal, who was once known as a close ally of

Salahuddin, said: "I have come here to develop football. You know well that even eight footballers have not been produced for the national team in the last eight years. I don't have any enmity with anyone, and I want to keep myself involved with football even if I am defeated."

The former footballer claimed that he had requested Poton to obtain a BFF councillor for the sake of getting a vote from him.

The Salahuddin-led panel, meanwhile, bought nomination papers for all 21 posts, with Mursheedy vying for senior vice-president post and Badal Roy, Kazi Nabil Ahmed, Shamsul Haque Chowdhury and Mohiuddin Ahmed Mohi contesting for the four vice-president posts.

Sheikh Jamal DC president Manjur Kader, Mohammedan's director-in-charge Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan and sports organiser Dewan Shafiqul Arefin Tutul declared their candidatures for the senior vice-president post from the Save Football panel.

Lokman and Tutul, however, also bought nominations for vice-president posts while Sheikh Jamal director Nazib Ahmed and its football committee chairman Ashraf Uddin Ahmed Chhunu also did the same.

Apart from those, Arambagh KS president Mominul Haque Sayeed, BFF EC member Sheikh Maruf Hasan and former footballer Khorshed Babul also bought nomination papers for vice-president posts.

Five-star Mohammedan

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Mohammedan Sporting Club brought down a high-flying Chittagong Abahani with a 5-1 drubbing in their KFC Independence Cup encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Guinean striker Ismail Bangoura put Mohammedan ahead in the 21st minute before Biplu Ahmed doubled the lead in the 32nd minute. Zahid Hossain reduced the margin for Chittagong Abahani four minutes later converting a penalty kick, but Mohammedan struck three more goals in the second half, with Bangoura, Masuk Mia Jonny and substitute Yusuf Sifat adding their names to the scoresheet in the 50th, 64th and stoppage time respectively.

The second win in four matches provided Mohammedan with a little hope of reaching the last four, provided they win their last match against Brothers Union while Chittagong Abahani and Muktijoddha Sangsad lose against Sheikh Jamal DC.



Mohammedan skipper Ismail Bangoura (L) celebrates one of his two goals during a 5-1 demolition of Chittagong Abahani in their KFC Independence Cup fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Despite the first defeat in four matches, Chittagong Abahani are still on top of Group A alongside Sheikh Jamal DC and Muktijoddha Sangsad on nine points each.

Meanwhile in the first match of the day, Abahani were held to a goalless draw by Arambagh KS, with Abahani's new coach Drago Mamice watching the proceedings

from the gallery.

The Sky Blues had come into the match five days after a massive 5-0 win over Team BJMC, but the four-time professional football league champions failed to keep that momentum as they were held to their second draw in three matches. Despite the draw, the Dhanmondi outfit are still in race

to reach the last four with five points, five less than leaders Sheikh Russel KC, who will play their last match against Abahani.

Abahani could hardly open the backbone of Arambagh, who had come into their fifth and final group match with three creditable draws against Rahmatganj MFS, Team BJMC and Feni Soccer.

Abahani's attempt to break the deadlock was dealt with a blow when English forward Lee Tuck got marching orders after hitting Abu Sufian in an off-the-ball incident in the 40th minute.

Despite the numerical disadvantage, Abahani looked better in the second half and created two goal-scoring chances, but Nigerian striker Sunday Chizoba saw his free-kick come off the woodwork in the 58th minute while winger Jewel Rana struck the ball straight to goalkeeper Mithun Hasan from a one-on-one situation in the 74th minute.

Arambagh KS also found an opportunity to take lead in the 80th minute, but Sufian failed to beat Abahani goalkeeper Sultan Ahmed Shakil in a one-on-one situation.

Herath quits shorter formats

AGENCIES, Colombo

Sri Lanka spinner Rangana Herath has retired from limited-overs cricket, with the aim of focusing solely on the Test format moving forward.

Herath calls time on a 12-year ODI career and a five-year T20 international career, during which he took a combined 92 wickets.

"Every cricketer has to stop at the right time," he said in a letter to Sri Lanka cricket.

"I feel it's time to make room for fresh talent to be groomed with the 2019 World Cup in view."

In a recent interview with Wisden India during the World T20, Herath said the secret to his success was simplicity.

"Wherever I go, I try not to change anything," he said.

"I give the ball air and try to get the batsmen out. I figure out the conditions and I have faith that I can adjust to the conditions."

Herath was an integral figure in Sri Lanka's 2014 World T20 success, his 5-3 in the semi-final against New Zealand swinging the contest and earning his team a shot at India in the final, in which they were able to send out legendary duo



Mahela Jayawardena and Kumar Sangakkara winners in the T20 game.

"In T20, the two spells I remember fondly are my 5 for 3 against New Zealand, and the 3 for 20-odd against Pakistan at Khetarama," Herath said.

"I haven't taken any five-wicket hauls in ODIs, but I bowled well in that tri-series final against India in the Caribbean in 2013. I took 4 for 20 in that game, though we went on to lose. I also have good memories of the 2011 World Cup semi-final against New Zealand [when he took 1 for 31]."

The left-arm orthodox spinner played six ODIs in 2004 before experiencing a six-year hiatus from Sri Lanka's ODI team, returning in 2010 and becoming a regular part of the side following the retirement of Muttiah Muralidharan.

Sri Lanka have a three-Test series against Australia beginning at the end of July, with 38-year-old Herath expected to play an important role for the home side.

BOWLING STATS

	Mat	Runs	Wkts	BBM	Econ	4w	5w
ODIs	71	2362	74	4/20	4.37	1	0
T20Is	17	373	18	5/3	6.13	0	1