

SPORT

DPL 2016 PREVIEW: KALABAGAN KC & GAZI GROUP Teams with much to prove

SPORTS REPORTER

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza may not be Bangladesh's best bowler. He sure is not among the top batsmen in the country either. But the one area in which he is head and shoulders ahead of the rest is his ability to lead a side.

Many had expected the Comilla Victorians to get eliminated early in the last Bangladesh Premier League. However, under Mashrafe, the side steadily found its way and eventually went on to take the championship. It was quite a feat considering that almost no one had expected them to go all the way.

And so, during the players' draft of the Dhaka Premier League, when Mashrafe was picked towards the end by Kalabagan Krira Chakra (KKC), many found it a bit surprising. For his part, Mashrafe did not mind the fact that a series of other icon players were called ahead of him. He is ready to prove himself with the team that he has got.

While several teams in the league have preferred to hire the young guns, KKC, on the other hand decided to stick to experience. The likes of Abdur Razzak and Robiul Islam are in this squad. Five years ago, this would have been a great combination, but today both these bowlers are nowhere near a national call-up.

Razzak however has been in good touch. He was the highest wicket-taker in the recently concluded Bangladesh Cricket League. Robiul on the other hand has faced fitness issues in the recent past and will hope to get past that. Also in the side are Sadman Islam Anik, Dewan Sabbir and Nihaduzzaman, who are considered extremely talented.

In the final of the BPL, Alok Kapali smacked a couple of boundaries towards the end in order to lead Mashrafe's side to an unthinkable victory. Kapali though will not be playing for his former national teammate in the DPL.

He will instead be playing for the newly-promoted Gazi Group Cricketers. For a side that has just

entered the premier division, they stack up pretty well. Aside from Kapali, they have got Elias Sunny, Anamul Haque and Shamsur Rahman.

Kapali in particular has been in tremendous form this year. He scored three centuries in the Bangladesh Cricket League and looks to be in fine form. What is even better is that he has taken wickets with his leg-spinners as well.

In the game against North Zone, he not only scored 154 but also finished with figures of five for 70. In the following game, his last match, he scored 111 and also scalped three wickets.

The likes of Anamul and Shamsur will want to work on regaining their respective spots in the national team. The spots for Tamim Iqbal's opening partner in ODIs and T20Is are still up for grabs, and a good performance here could change their fortunes.

Anamul in particular will want to quash the unfortunate streak that he has been going through ever since he injured his shoulder during the 2015 World Cup and make a fresh start here.



Bangladesh and Abahani opener Tamim Iqbal unleashes a front-foot pull on way to a century in the DPL warm-up game against Prime Bank at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Gayle to miss next two IPL matches

PTI, Bengaluru

Royal Challengers Bangalore will be without the services of their star batsman Chris Gayle in the next two IPL matches as he has gone back to the West Indies to be with his partner Natasha Berridge, who is expecting their first child.

On Monday, the West Indian had tweeted a picture of himself on board an aircraft, with the caption, "I'm on my way, Baby".

Gayle will miss Wednesday's away game against Mumbai Indians at the Wankhede Stadium and also the next game against Rising Pune Supergiants in Pune on Friday.

RCB face Gujarat Lions on Sunday in Rajkot.

The big-hitting Jamaican is yet to fire in the Indian Premier League but his skipper Virat Kohli said he was not worried about Gayle's form.

Women lifters to leave for Uzbekistan

SPORTS REPORTER

Four women weightlifters will leave for Uzbekistan this morning to take part in the Asian Weightlifting Championships with an eye on improving their performance from the South Asian Games while at the same time trying to earn quota places for the Rio Olympic Games.

The team consists of SA Games gold medallist Mbia Akter Simanta, silver medallists Phulpati Chakma and Rokeya Sultana Sathee and bronze medallist Mollah Sabira Sultana along with coach Shahria Sultana Suchi. The championships will be held in Tashkent from April 23 to 30 and will be participated by 25 to 30 Asian nations.

"Some 261 weightlifters from across the world will compete in 15 different categories in the upcoming Olympics Games in Brazil and they will be selected from different championships in different continents. Some weightlifters will qualify from the Asian Championships. So our target is to qualify for the Olympics as well as improve on the performance which they put up in the SA Games," said Bangladesh Amateur Weightlifting Federation's general secretary Mohyuddin Ahmed.

SA 'not in favour' of D/N Test

REUTERS, Melbourne

South Africa are reluctant to play a day-night Test during their tour of Australia as they have no experience with the pink ball, the Proteas' players association chief has said on Tuesday.

South Africa will tour Australia in a three-Test series in the home summer and Cricket Australia announced last year that they wanted one of the fixtures to be a day-night match.

The pink ball has been developed for day-night Test cricket, replacing the traditional red ball which becomes too difficult for batsmen to see after dark.

"Our players are not in favour of playing the game under those conditions," South African players' association Chief Executive Tony Insole told The Australian newspaper.

DPL to start on April 22

SPORTS REPORTER

Holdings Prime Bank Cricket Club will take on Gazi Group Cricketers in one of the opening day's matches of the Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on April 22. Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) released the fixtures of the first three rounds of the country's most coveted 50-over competition, slotting in a reserve day for each match.

Prime Doleshwar Sporting Club meet Cricket Coaching School at BKSP and Abahani Limited face off with Kalabagan Krira Chakra at Fatullah Cricket Stadium in the other opening day fixtures.

"We kept a reserve day as there is possibility of rain during the league. The match will be bodily shifted if rain plays foul and the match will start on the reserve day from where it stopped," informed CCDM member secretary Rakib Haider Pavel.

CCDM had a meeting yesterday where captains took part. "Actually we were

informed about the International Cricket Council's (ICC's) new rules as well as the old ones. The meeting helped us a lot as we were informed about many things. It's fantastic that a reserve day has been slotted in the fixture as there is a chance of rain in this season," said Jahurul Islam, who represented Legend of Rugganj.

Pavel informed that they approved the by-laws of the league including the players' draft system.

This season a club will be able to register unlimited foreign players but can field only one. "The clubs are facing problems in confirming their desired foreign players mostly from Pakistan, Zimbabwe and Afghanistan because of the lengthy visa procedure. The foreign players need to go through a difficult procedure to get the visa so it would be helpful for us if the concerned authorities look into the issue," said Pavel adding that nobody sought a no-objection-certificate so far for any foreign player.

CCDM coordinator Amin Khan said that they were not thinking about foreign umpires as they have full faith on the local umpires.

Refreshed Tamim blazes warm-up ton

SPORTS REPORTER

Tamim Iqbal returned to cricket after a three-week hiatus with a century at Fatullah yesterday. The opener smacked 139 runs in 90 balls during a practice match played between Abahani Limited and Dhaka Premier League title-holders Prime Bank Cricket Club.

He smacked 18 fours and five sixes for Abahani and looked to be in sublime form. Speaking to reporters after the game, a content Tamim said that he looks forward to carrying his form throughout the DPL, the country's most prominent one-day cricket tournament which is set to begin on April 22.

"I think it will be great if I can bat like this throughout the tournament. It felt really good the way I batted today

(Monday). I am actually playing after 20-odd days. To play an innings like this immediately after getting back definitely boosts your confidence.

"And hopefully I can continue because this will be good for the team. And as we all know, Abahani is a traditional heavyweight that has only one aim: to be champions," said Tamim.

On paper, Abahani is considered to be the strongest team of the tournament. Of 13 players they signed up during the players' draft, eight of them have played international cricket, while the remaining five have been in good form.

They will have the services of the likes of Taskin Ahmed, Jubair Hossain, Nurul Hasan and Shuvagata Hom as well. However, no matter how strong the team may be, Tamim was not too keen on predicting the way the tournament would progress.

"On paper our team is definitely

very strong. But if you see, we had a good team in the Bangladesh Premier League as well. The Chittagong Vikings were really strong but at the end we finished sixth. There is no point of making assumptions based on calculations on paper. We have to play well on the field and only then will the results come our way. Everything depends on the way we play," said Tamim.

"Playing for teams like Abahani, Mohammedan is a different feeling altogether. We know that they are big teams. It feels different in the dressing room, the entire environment is quite different," he added.

Aside from Tamim's brilliance yesterday's game also saw the return of Rubel Hossain. He played his first match ever since his recovery from injury. The pacer bowled eight overs and gave away 52 runs; not the best of starts, but he was happy to be back on the field.



Sheikh Jamal skipper Wedson Anselme (L) rides a challenge from Muktijoddha Sangsad defender Mukta Lawal during their KFC Independence Cup encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Sk Jamal romp into semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Jamal DC may have struggled at international stage with their depleted side, but they are still a force to reckon with at the domestic circuit as they stormed their way into the semifinals of the KFC Independence Cup with an emphatic 3-1 win over Muktijoddha Sangsad KS at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Emeka Darlington, Landing Darboe and Wedson Anselme struck one goal each for the Dhanmondi giants while Mobarak Hossain scored a consolation goal for the All Reds.

The fourth successive win put Sheikh Jamal on top of Group A with maximum 12 points, leaving one spot up for grabs among Chittagong Abahani, Muktijoddha Sangsad and Mohammedan. Both

Abahani and Muktijoddha Sangsad have equal nine points but the former one have a match in hand against Sheikh Jamal DC.

Mohammedan, meanwhile, will have a chance if they beat Brothers Union by a big margin while Chittagong Abahani lose to Sheikh Jamal DC. In that case the Black and Whites, who have six points from four matches, will progress to the semifinals at the expense of the other two.

Sheikh Jamal, whose previous outing was a 1-0 win over Feni Soccer Club ten days ago before they left for Malaysia for the AFC Cup, started from where they had left. They took only 13 minutes to take the lead when Emeka tapped in Wedson's powerful drive. The Dhanmondi giants came close to doubling the lead in 18th minute, but Muktijoddha goalkeeper Mamun Khan made a brilliant save to thwart Shihab's powerful drive.

Mamun then made another good save to deny a Wedson effort, but he failed to keep out a grounder from Landing, who was provided with a through pass from the Haitian forward on the edge of the box.

Wedson then took the match away from Muktijoddha Sangsad striking with a curling effort from inside the box in the stoppage time of the first half. The goal took Wedson's tally to five as he went on par with Sheikh Russel's Fikru Teferra in second position.

After resumption, Muktijoddha Sangsad hit back when Mobarak converted a spot-kick after Sheikh Jamal goalkeeper Mazharul Islam Himel had brought down Towhidul Alam inside the box. The All Reds were deprived of another goal when defender Sweet made a goal-line clearance in the 53rd minute as they had to accept their second defeat in fifth match.

WI turn down PCB offer

PTI, Karachi

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is disappointed at the refusal of the West Indies Cricket Board to play a couple of limited-over games from their full series in Pakistan later this year.

West Indies, who recently won the World Twenty20 title in India, have turned down a request from the PCB to play in Pakistan a few matches of the full series that will be played in the UAE in September-October.

"The West Indies board have informed us they prefer to have the full series in UAE because of security reasons," a top official of the board told PTI.

"It is disappointing because we are trying our best to convince other boards that security conditions in Pakistan are improving with time and they need to support us even by playing a few games of a home series that is played in UAE," he said.

He said the West Indies board had conveyed that their players still had security concerns over playing in Pakistan. Pakistan will host the West Indies for two Tests, five one-day internationals and two Twenty20 internationals in September and October this year.

Since militants attacked the Sri Lankan team in Lahore in March, 2009 all top Test teams have avoided touring Pakistan because of security concerns.

Uthappa takes KKR to top spot

AGENCIES, Mohali



Robin Uthappa smashed his way to the third fastest half century of the season as Kolkata Knight Riders notched up a comfortable six-wicket victory over Kings

XI Punjab in the Indian Premier League here on Tuesday. The win takes KKR to top spot in the points table.

Put in to bat, Kings XI Punjab were restricted to 138 for eight in the stipulated 20 overs.

Led by Uthappa's blazing knock of 53 off 28 balls, the visitors chased down the target of 139 with 17 balls to spare. KKR skipper Gautam Gambhir continued to lead the team well, scoring 34 off as many deliveries.

Ace Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan bowled four overs for 28 runs without taking a wicket. In Kolkata's chase he came in at number five with 29 still needed but he could not see it through, caught for a 15-ball 11 off an attempted slog sweep with 16 still to get.

Uthappa reached his 50 off 24 balls, before leg-spinner Pradeep Sahu had him trapped in front of wicket to end a fluent opening wicket partnership of 82 runs in just under nine overs.

The wicketkeeper-batsman struck nine boundaries during his breezy knock.

Eyeing their third win of the season, KKR required 46 runs in the back 10 with Gambhir in control of the proceedings.

Gambhir made a run-a-ball 34 with the help of three boundaries.

Sahu was the most impressive of Punjab bowlers, returning figures of 2/18 in four overs. Axar Patel went straight through the defence of Manish Pandey (12) to KXIP their third breakthrough.

Earlier, Shaun Marsh top-scored for the hosts with an unbeaten 56 off 41 balls. The Australian struck five boundaries and a six during his stay in the middle in a rather mediocre outing by the Kings XI Punjab batting line-up.

For KKR, Sunil Narine finished with impressive figures of 2 for 22, while Morne Morkel had 2 for 27 from their quota of four overs each.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KINGS XI PUNJAB: 138 for 8 in 20 overs (Vijay 26, Marsh 56 not out, Abbott 12 not out; M Morkel 2-27, Yadav 1-17, Narine 2-22, Pathan 1-6)

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS: 141 for 4 in 17.1 overs (Uthappa 53, Gambhir 34, Pandey 12, Shakib 11, Yadav 11 not out, Pathan 12 not out; Patel 2-19, Sahu 2-18)

Result: Kolkata Knight Riders won by 6 wickets. Player-of-the-match: Robin Uthappa.