

SPORT



The ongoing heat wave has the Dhaka Premier League players, who are practising in Mirpur ahead of the league's opening day tomorrow, reaching for refreshments. In this picture Kalabagan Krira Chakra player Abdur Razzak (L) seeks comfort in a gulp of coconut water while captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (R) and coach Jalal Ahmed Chowdhury join him for a much-needed break yesterday. For more on the cricketers' battle with the scorching heat, click on the story titled 'Heat wave has cricketers hoping for rain' on The Daily Star website.

PHOTO: STAR

'DPL crucial for No. 3 spot'

SPORTS REPORTER

For Bangladesh's T20 side, Sabbir Rahman's promotion to number three in the batting order worked out quite well. His natural style of play helped Bangladesh get out of early trouble a number of times.

Whenever the Tigers lost early wickets, Sabbir's aggression helped relieve the pressure. The only problem that he had was that he was a bit inconsistent as far as spending time at the crease was concerned. However, he improved a lot on that front prior to the World Twenty20 and that was evident during the Asia Cup.

Watching Sabbir bat at three over the last few months is something that fans and viewers have become accustomed to. But the fact remains that in the ODI format, the scenario is completely different. The 24-year-old bats at six in ODIs.

Yesterday however, while speaking to reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Sabbir indicated that he would not mind being promoted to three in ODIs as well.

"It depends on my form. I will be playing at three or four in the Dhaka Premier League. If I can do well here, then I can be a candidate for the national team as well," he said when asked if he can handle the pressure of batting at the top in ODIs as well.

Bangladesh's next scheduled ODI series is due in October and there is plenty of time to go through the required strategies. However, the one fact that no one can ignore is that the Tigers have a problem when it comes to the number three position.

Three different players played at number three in the last three matches: Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad and Liton Das. In fact, it has been a while since Bangladesh had a successful number three batsman. From Soumya Sarkar to Mahmudullah to Liton Das, there has been plenty of shuffling and that is a trend which has been going on for a while. The fact that Aftab Ahmed is still the only player to have scored more than 1000 runs in that position in ODIs therefore does not come as a surprise.

Players often say that there is an immense amount of pressure for a batsman batting in that position. One really does not know what to expect. A player may just wear his pads for half the innings and still not get a chance to bat or he might have to go to the crease in the very first over.

Sabbir has shown that he can handle that pressure. However, what also matters is the way a promotion may affect the entire combination of the team. A lot will depend on how he plays in this league.



Prime Bank Cricket Club's Icon player Sabbir Rahman does a few stretches at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium before heading to the nets for a batting session yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

DPL 2016 PREVIEW: PRIME DOLESHWAR & LEGENDS OF RUPGANJ

A chance to right last season's wrongs

SPORTS REPORTER

Prime Doleshwar Cricket Club's success in the last season of the Dhaka Premier League was applauded even by the sternest of their opponents. They finished second, just two points behind the eventual champions Prime Bank Cricket Club.

Although they did not win the championship, they did manage to win hearts mainly because of the way they systematically handled themselves throughout the competition. Their key national players last season were Mushfiqur Rahim and Mominul Haque, but Prime Doleshwar did not have their services for most of the league and needed the other players to step up.

And that is exactly what happened. In the absence of the services of their senior players, their openers Mehedi Maruf and Rony Talukdar stole the show. Rony scored 714 runs at an average of 51 and finished as the highest run-getter of the competition. That was the performance that helped him earn a chance in the national squad.

It therefore was not a surprise to see Prime Doleshwar buy Rony again. In terms of Icon players though, they plumped for Nasir Hossain. The all-rounder may not have received much of an opportunity during Bangladesh's T20 season, but the fact remains that he is a brilliant one-day player. Doleshwar will hugely depend on him with both bat and ball.

For Nasir too, this will be an opportunity to prove to the national team management once

again the exciting ability that he possesses. Another prominent player in the side is all-rounder Forhad Reza who has been a handful as far as domestic cricket is concerned.

While Doleshwar finished second last season, the Legends of Rupganj finished a disappointing sixth. It was an anticlimax considering that the club had an extremely glamorous unveiling ceremony with Sachin Tendulkar coming in as the chief guest in that programme.

Rupganj may not have the senior stars in their team this year, but they have still managed to form a formidable line-up. They have got seven cricketers in the side who have played international cricket and there are a number of others who are hoping to make a name for themselves.

Their Icon player is Soumya Sarkar. Despite all his brilliance, his recent form remains a bit

of a concern. He had a horrendous T20 World Cup and even before that he had a rough time in the domestic circuit. For Rupganj to fire, they need their Icon player to come to the party. Also in the side are Jahurul Islam and Mohammad Mithun, both talented batsmen but they too need to shrug off their recent form and start anew. Mithun was a surprise entrant in the World Twenty20 squad and did not manage to make much of an impact at the event. Jahurul on the other hand has been outside the national team for years now and he will be looking to make this season count.

Also in the side is Mosharraf Hossain Rubel, the all-rounder who has been doing well in domestic cricket. He recently led Central Zone to the Bangladesh Cricket League title and is the frontrunner to lead the Legends of Rupganj as well.

Rio in mind

Siddikur tees off in Japan today

SPORTS REPORTER

Ace Bangladesh golfer Siddikur Rahman will look to have a good outing at the Panasonic Open Golf Championship beginning today in Japan to get back into contention for a qualifying spot for August's Rio Olympic Games.

The two-time Asian Tour winner, who has just slipped off the 60-man eligibility list this week, knows this will be his penultimate opportunity to get back into the fold.

After having spent a patchy season on the Asian Tour so far, the 31-year-old golfer regained some confidence by winning the bti Open, a co-sanctioned event of PGTI and BPGA, at home earlier this month. He had to dig deep and engage in a play-off against compatriot Sajib Ali before grabbing his first international title in more than two years.

The Bangladeshi golfer admitted that he feels much better after winning the title.

"The win two weeks ago has really helped me gain more confidence. It was a great week. I hope to utilise that confidence for this week.

"I've been struggling the past two years. I wanted to win a tournament and it finally happened," Siddikur was quoted as saying by Asiantour.com.

However, the challenge in the 1.27-million-dollar Panasonic Open will be far greater, with the presence of some stalwarts from the Asian Tour and Japan Tour. But Siddikur is intent on putting a good show, with the Olympics in sight.

"If I can get into the Olympics then it will be good for me and my country. If I play well then the result will help me achieve that dream. I wish to represent my country at the Olympics so hopefully I can start getting good results," said Siddikur.

The cut-off date for the ranking of the Olympic Games is July 11, and Siddikur will get one more Asian Tour event -- The Mauritius Open in middle of May -- to ensure his qualification.

Pak commit, SA still unsure

REUTERS, Melbourne

Cricket Australia has scheduled day-night Test matches against South Africa and Pakistan in a revamped southern summer that will break with tradition by starting in Perth.

CA on Wednesday released a programme including a three-Test series against South Africa, opening in Perth on Nov. 3 and moving to Hobart before a proposed -- yet to be confirmed -- day-night match in Adelaide. A second three-Test series against Pakistan will begin with a day-nighter in Brisbane on Dec 15 before moving to Melbourne and Sydney in the traditional Boxing Day and New Year's timeslots.

In between those series, Australia will play New Zealand in three limited-overs internationals.

The South African players' association has expressed reservations about playing a day-night Test with a pink ball and there's no agreement yet that the third Test of the series will be played under those conditions.

Pakistan has committed to the day-night Test in sub-tropical Brisbane, where Sutherland said the climate is ideal for the format.

AFC U-14 GIRLS' REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

BD team leave tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh U-14 women's national team will leave for Tajikistan tomorrow with the hope of defending the title of AFC U-14 Girls' Regional (South and Central) Championship, which is scheduled to be held in Dushanbe from April 26 to May 1.

Bangladesh will start the campaign taking on India on April 26 before facing Nepal in their second and final Group B match two days later. Group A

consists of hosts Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Bhutan and Iran. Top two teams from each group will advance to the semifinals.

"This time we have taken good preparation tactically and technically as some new players have been included and we are hopeful of producing good results. We are also optimistic about playing in the final and win the championship," said captain Marzia, who scored the winning goal against hosts Nepal in the final of the tournament in Kathmandu last December.

The 18-member squad includes

eight players who were part of that winning squad while the rest of the players have been selected from JFA Cup U-14 girls' tournament as well as the national football championship.

"It is an advantage to have eight players who were part of the last championship, but the big advantage is that the new players are more sound technically and tactically. I am really hopeful about these girls," said coach Golam Rabbani Choton, who also informed that the team won all three friendly matches after a one-month training period at the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan.



Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal was officially announced as the captain of Abahani at a ceremony at the club premises yesterday. During the programme that was attended by the likes of Taskin Ahmed, Mosaddek Hossain and a number of other players and officials, the club also unveiled its team jersey.

PHOTO: STAR

HC permits May 1 game in Pune

PTI, Mumbai

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday permitted BCCI to hold the May 1 IPL match between Mumbai Indians and Rising Pune Supergiants in Pune, days after it ordered shifting to other venues all post-April 30 matches planned in drought-hit Maharashtra.

A division bench of justices V M Kanade and M S Karnik granted the permission while hearing an application filed by BCCI's general manager (games development) Ratnakar Shetty urging the court to let the cricket body hold the May 1 IPL match as scheduled in Pune.

The application had been filed following an order passed by the high court on April 12 directing all IPL matches from April 30 onwards to be shifted out of Maharashtra due to the severe drought situation in the state.

By the High Court order, a total of 13 matches were to be shifted to other states.

Shetty, in his application, sought permission from the court to allow the cricket board to hold the May 1 match in Pune between Mumbai Indians and Rising Pune Supergiants as they would not be able to make arrangements to shift the match in a single day after playing an April 29 match in Pune against Gujarat Lions.