

# SPORT



Abahani forward Jewel Rana (R), who came on as a substitute, celebrates his winning goal against Sheikh Russel in a KFC Independence Cup encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Abahani through to semifinals

Beat Sk Russel 1-0 to complete last four line-up

SPORTS REPORTER



Abahani moved into the semifinals of the KFC Independence Cup as the fourth and final team after a 1-0 victory over Sheikh Russel KC in the last group fixture of the season's curtain-raising tournament at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Young national team forward Jewel Rana, who came on as a second-half substitute, scored the winning goal in the 72nd minute with a well-placed shot as the Sky Blues finished runners-up in Group B behind Sheikh Russel KC. Sheikh Jamal DC and Chittagong Abahani had already confirmed their last four berths from Group A.

With Sheikh Russel having already confirmed the top position in the group after three wins and a draw, the Sky Blues needed to avoid defeat in this match to pip Team BJMC to the second spot. And the game meandered along for long towards a draw, only for the diminutive winger to seal all three points for the Sky Blues outfit.

The first half saw little action, with Senegalese forward Camara Sarba's volley, which was acrobatically fisted over by Sheikh Russel goalkeeper Rasel Mahmud Liton in the 39th minute, being the only notable incident of the half.

The second half was far more open and engaging, especially for Abahani who looked

desperate to confirm their last four berth. Abahani's English forward Lee Tuck saw his dipping free-kick from 30 yards cleanly gathered by Liton before Sarba provided a delightful chip inside the box for Sunday Chizoba, only to see the Nigerian blast it over the bar. But the consistent pressure paid off in the 72nd minute, with Sarba in the thick of things again. This time the Senegalese forward opened up the opposition defence with a clever back-heel, which was spotted early by the fleet-footed Jewel, who ran onto the loose

### REMAINING FIXTURES

Date	Match	Time	Venue
May 3	Sk Jamal v Abahani	5:30pm	BNS
May 4	Sk Russel v Ctg Abahani	5:30pm	BNS
May 7	Final	5:30pm	BNS

ball and slid it past Liton into the empty net.

The win set up Abahani a semifinal clash against Group A winners Sheikh Jamal while Group B winners Sheikh Russel will face off against Chittagong Abahani in the second semifinal. The two semifinals will take place on May 3 and 4 as the tournament heads into a ten-day break to make way for Sheikh Jamal's AFC Cup home fixture against Tampines Rovers on April 26 and the BFF elections on April 30.

The final is scheduled to take place on May 7.

## Can Soumya find form?

SPORTS REPORTER



Soumya Sarkar will forever be indebted to the Dhaka Premier League (DPL). His fluent footwork and good run in the league last season were both noticed and he was drafted into Bangladesh's World Cup 2015 squad.

In fact, the day the national squad was announced -- January 4, 2015 -- Soumya had hit a brilliant 91-ball 97 to lead Prime Bank Cricket Club to the trophy. The squad was announced moments after Soumya secured the win, and the player could barely control his emotions during the post-match press conference back then.

A year on and the left-hander now faces a new challenge. There's no doubt

that the year 2015 was brilliant for him internationally. However, he struggled towards the end and failed to replicate his performances in domestic cricket.

His lack of form eventually hurt him and the national team during the World Twenty20. The team didn't receive the impetus that one would have generally expected from the bat of the left-hander as they crashed out in the Super 10 stage.

In a bid to make a fresh start, Soumya has turned to his roots. He will be playing for the Legends of Rugganj this season, who have their first game against Mominul Haque-led Victoria Sporting at BKSP today.

"I have been working very hard for the past few days. I have tried to fix my mistakes and also learn from them. Practice was good, but what matters is the real game. Let's see what happens

tomorrow," a cautious Soumya told reporters during training yesterday.

"We can definitely be champions with this team. But first, we need to start well. If we can win the first few matches, then we can become champions," he added.

His opposing captain, Mominul, faces a similar issue. Although he did well in the recently concluded Bangladesh Cricket League, he is desperate to garner attention in the shorter format.

He hasn't been in touch with the national team for the last few months and is extremely keen to utilise this league and make the most of it.

At the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, Imrul Kayes's Brothers Union will take on Mushfiqur Rahim-led Mohammedan SC.

Both sides look equally balanced. Brothers have a strong batting lineup with the likes of Shahriar Nafees, young Zakir Hasan and Tushar Imran, while their bowling attack is also quite experienced with Mohammad Shahid and Nabil Samad.

Mushfiqur's Mohammedan also has a decent setup with the likes of Sakat Ali, Enamul Haque jr and Nazmul Hossain Milon.

For Mohammedan, the key will be their wicketkeeper-batsman, Mushfiqur. The Test captain hasn't enjoyed the last few months as much and will hope that a change in format, from T20 to 50-over cricket, can help him rediscover himself.

At Fatullah Kalabagan Cricket Academy, a side which includes the inspirational under-19 captain, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, will take on Mahmudullah Riyad's Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club. Sheikh Jamal definitely look stronger on paper, but one can never underestimate the power of the youth and that's what KCA will be counting on.



Soumya Sarkar will hope he can use the Dhaka Premier League this season to return to form when his side, the Legends of Rugganj, take on Victoria Sporting Club at the BKSP today.

PHOTO: STAR FILE

## Rach back in hockey scene

SPORTS REPORTER

Gerhard Peter Rach, former coach of the Bangladesh national hockey team, will be back in Bangladesh hockey scene, even if it is only to guide one of the clubs ahead of the Club Cup tournament, which begins tomorrow.

The German, who coached the national team in 2009 and 2010, and is credited with giving chance to a number of Bangladeshi players in lower leagues of a several European countries, was supposed to land in Dhaka last night.

The veteran German coach will take charge of Mariner Youngs Club as the Motijheel-based outfit look to bolster their already-strong squad ahead of the nine-team Club Cup tournament. The German is expected to bring two players from his country for this tournament, it has been learnt.

Rach had previously coached Mohammedan Sporting Club for a season after his tenure with the national team came to an end.

## MAGICAL MUSTAFIZUR

STAR SPORTS DESK



Little genius. Magical. Absolutely unplayable. These were some of the words that were used to describe Mustafizur Rahman's bowling yesterday during the Indian Premier League game between Sunrisers Hyderabad and Kings XI Punjab at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad yesterday.

The pacer's brilliant figures of 2 for 9 in four overs helped restrict Punjab to 143 in the first innings given the Sunrisers chased down comfortably with 13 balls left.

Fizz began with a maiden. He came to bowl the last over of the first powerplay and confused the batsmen with a mix of his cutters and his yorkers. Manan Vohra, who was going great guns until that moment, was run-out as a result of the frustration that Mustafizur had built.

He came back in the 14th over, bowled five more dot balls and then got rid off Shaun Marsh who had smashed his way to 40 off 34 balls by then. Nikhil Naik tried his best to get

rid off Mustafizur an over later, but he failed to connect his bat to the ball.

At the end of three overs, Mustafizur had given away just three runs and had scalped a wicket. This was the lowest ever economy rate in an innings after three overs in the IPL.

He was brought in the last over and compelled Naik to sky one high in the air with his slower and got him out. Eventually, he finished with figures of 2 for 9.

So magnificent was his performance that it even led to Navjot Sidhu, generally a harsh critic of Bangladesh's cricket, go gaga over the left-armed during the post-match analysis.

Earlier, an assured bowling performance extended Delhi Daredevils' upswing to three successive matches with a 10-run victory over Mumbai Indians.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

KINGS XI PUNJAB: 143 for 6 in 20 overs (Marsh 40, Patel 36 not out; Mustafizur 2-9, Henriques 2-33)

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD: 146 for 5 in 17.5 overs (Warner 59, Dhawan 45; Sharma 1-20)

Result: Hyderabad won by 5 wickets

Man-of-the-match: Mustafizur Rahman



The commentators repeatedly uttered only two words -- Magical Mustafizur -- throughout yesterday's Punjab's innings. The Hyderabad pacer ended with two wickets for nine runs, but even those stunning figures belie the intelligence with which the 20-year-old bowled.

PHOTO: BCCP

## BBL door still open for Gayle

AFP, Sydney

Big-hitting batsman Chris Gayle could return to Australia's Big Bash League (BBL), with Cricket Australia saying the West Indian had not been blacklisted over a sexism scandal, reports said Saturday.

Gayle made headlines in January when he attempted to flirt with television reporter Mel McLaughlin during a live interview.

At the time, Cricket Australia's James Sutherland said such comments were inappropriate in the workplace, adding that Gayle was not in a "night club".

But Sutherland told News Corp this week that it wasn't Cricket Australia's place to rule players out, and individual clubs in the BBL were free to choose their line-ups.

"No matter what anyone at Cricket Australia thought [of the incident] at management level, board level, I think you're on a slippery slope if you start making judgements on players who should or shouldn't be playing in our domestic competitions," Sutherland said in comments published Saturday.

"Because, when does that ever end? My view is unless there's a very, very strong reason along the lines of anti-corruption, then it's difficult for us to be making those judgements."

Gayle, 36, reportedly wants to return to the Big Bash League in Australia later this year.

## Siddikur slips

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman slipped to the second-last position after a three-over-par (74) in the third round of the Panasonic Open Golf Championship in Japan yesterday. The two-time Asian Tour winner, who was tied 61st at the end of the second round, ended day three at joint 77th position with an aggregate score of five-over-par (218).

The 31-year-old golfer traded four bogeys for a single birdie -- just like the opening round -- in the penultimate round at the Chiba Country Club yesterday.

India's Shiv Kapur grabbed the clubhouse lead at nine-under-par (204).

## 'Waqar's attitude led to disharmony'

PTI, Karachi



Discarded Test all-rounder Abdul Razzaq has blamed the national team's outgoing coach Waqar Younis for causing damage to Pakistan cricket.

In a stinging attack on his former captain and teammate, Razzaq said in an interview that Waqar, instead of blaming others and giving excuses for his failures, should realise he himself is responsible for Pakistan cricket's downfall.

"It is no secret and I am witness to it -- Waqar never wanted or respected senior players and was unable to treat players equally and fairly which resulted in disharmony in the team," Razzaq said.

"He himself is responsible for causing insecurity among the players and not being able to give them enough confidence to perform well for the country," he added.

Razzaq said Waqar's likes and dislikes unsettled the team. He was also critical about some former players and criticised the decision by the Pakistan Cricket Board to appoint Misbah-ul-Haq and Younis Khan as advisors.

"Tell me if today Pakistan is at the bottom in limited over cricket who is responsible. Obviously the very people who have been playing for the last six-seven years. So what advice will they give," he questioned.