

SPORTS

Mukhtar's perfect finishing touch

SPORTS REPORTER

Statistics will not always tell the whole story of what happened at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday during the Abahani-Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club match. While Tamim Iqbal's composed 90 was the show to watch in the first session in the scorching heat before his soft dismissal, the seasoned domestic campaigner Mahbubul Karim's swashbuckling 130-run innings in the second session overshadowed the national opener's brilliant effort.

But it was Mukhtar Ali who ended as the hero, although he scored only seven.

After all the drama in the high-scoring battle, the match reached a position where Sheikh Jamal needed five runs from the last delivery. Mukhtar came to the crease, settled into a wide stance and got a pure half-volley from Taskin Ahmed which he smacked over long-on to seal an exciting four-wicket victory. And thus he spoiled Taskin Ahmed's party. It was none other than man-of-the-match Mahbubul who gave all credit to the hard-hitting batsman as without his last-ball blow the right-hander's effort would have gone in vain.

Riding on Mahbubul's 110-ball innings that featured 15 fours and five sixes, Sheikh Jamal were in a comfortable position to chase down the 287-run target, but Abahani came back by removing the centurion and captain Mahmudullah Riyad in quick succession. Finally, it was right-arm pacer Taskin who was all set to become a hero before Mukhtar shattered his dream.

Before the last over Abahani coach Khaled Mahmud entered the dressing room in anger as pacer Abul Hasan conceded 14 runs in the penultimate over, leaving Sheikh Jamal to score seven runs from six balls. Abul took time to start his bowling as fre-

quent instructions came from the Abahani to change the field, but the left-handed Nazmus Sadat hit a straight six off the first ball and ended the over with a third-man boundary.

Taskin however was not ready to quit. Sri Lanka's Angelo Perera fell to a run-out at the non-striker's end in the first ball. The next ball saw the paceman uproot Nazmus Sadat's stumps with a perfect yorker and Sohag Gazi then managed one run from the next two yorker-length deliveries to set a daunting task for Mukhtar.

Taskin also successfully bowled yorker-length deliveries in the 48th over to give only four runs when Sheikh Jamal needed 25 runs from the last three, but the question was raised whether the paceman could try anything different or whether his skipper told him to do something differently when Sheikh Jamal needed five from the last ball.

"See, he successfully bowled yorkers in 11 deliveries and he was confident also in the last one but unfortunately it did not happen. Yes, he can learn from it but Taskin deserves credit because it was his effort which helped us to come so close in the match," said Abahani skipper Tamim.

Mukhtar, who shouted so much in celebration that he lost his voice, was however confident of pulling it off. "Two years back I did the same thing against Abahani in the same situation but then the bowler was Abul Hasan. I was confident and you know I had sensed before the match that I would need to do something like that," said an excited Mukhtar.

Two young prospects Nazmul Hossain and Mosaddek Hossain showed some character, especially a switch hit from the latter hogged the spotlight. Nazmul then took the two vital wickets of Mahbubul and Riyad while leg-spinner Jubair Hossain looked ordinary after his six-wicket haul in the first match. It was however all about the last three overs.



With five runs required off the last ball, Sheikh Jamal's Mukhtar Ali smashed Taskin Ahmed for a six and took his side home in Mirpur yesterday. Here, he is seen celebrating with his teammates after completing the epic victory.
PHOTO: STAR

Day of close finishes

SPORTS REPORTER

It was a day of close finishes in the Dhaka Premier League yesterday. A few exceptional performances meant that each of the games witnessed intense finishes.

At Fatullah, Nasir Hossain's Prime Doleshwar Sporting Club took on the Mashrafe Bin Mortaza-led Kalabagan Krira Chakra (KCC). On paper, Prime Doleshwar are a much better side, but the way KCC competed yesterday suggested that they have plenty to play for in this competition.

Batting first, Prime Doleshwar, riding on Nasir's 75-ball 97 posted a powerful 287. It was a good knock from Nasir, who was ignored during the World Twenty20. The player

needs to do well in the ongoing league in order to garner some attention ahead of the international series coming up this year and he has begun well. It was his knock that helped his side cross the 280-mark towards the end. Opener Imtiaz Hossain also did well, finishing on an 81-ball 73.

Mashrafe was the key wicket-taker. Abdur Razzak also did well, finishing with figures of two for 32 in eight overs.

Despite a good fight from Kalabagan Krira Chakra, they were restricted to 283 for nine after the exchange. Mehrab Hossain Jr, who smacked 86 off 87 balls with nine fours and a six was the key run-scorer. Five of the nine wickets fell to run-outs and that was one of the main reasons why Mashrafe's side failed to win the game.

At the BKSP in Savar holders

Prime Bank Cricket Club took on the newcomers Cricket Coaching School (CCS). Here too Prime Bank were expected to ease past CCS, considering that the latter is dominated by players who do not have much experience and have come mostly from the Bangladesh under-19 side. However, the juniors fought extremely well and would have won the game if they just had a good number of finishers.

The Shuvagata Hom-led Prime Bank Cricket Club were bundled out for 257, Taibur Rahman with a score 76 and Yasir Ali with 53 were their chief run-getters. Once again their Icon player Sabbir Rahman, who had a brilliant time during the T20 World Cup, failed to perform. He was dismissed for just 16. If not for some good batting from their numbers six and seven - Taibur and Yasir -- the result

would have been different.

After the exchange, youngsters Saif Hassan and Salman Hossain scored centuries and had taken their side to a comfortable 208 for two in 44 overs. With six overs remaining they required 50 runs. But once the duo got out, they crumbled and were restricted to 252 for seven. While these youngsters did do well to score centuries, their partnership however, was a bit too slow for the chase. The duo put on a staggering 195-run stand for the third wicket, however, it took them 40.5 overs, which basically meant that they went at a run-rate of 4.77 and eventually towards the end it didn't work out for them. It was a learning experience, for the youngsters, one which will definitely come to use in the upcoming games.

SCORES IN BRIEF	
ABAHANI: 287 for 4 (Tamim 90, Kaul 63, Nazmul 52, Mosaddek 46; Moniruzzaman 1-25)	Refatuzzaman 2-29, Saleh Ahmed 2-38
SHEIKH JAMAL DHANMONDI CLUB: 289 for 6 (Mahbubul 130, Marshall 47; Nazmul Shanto 2-39, Saqlain 2-51)	CRICKET COACHING SCHOOL: 252 for 7 (Salman 110, Saif 100; Rbuel 3-48, Shuvagata 2-36)
Result: Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club won by four wickets.	Result: Prime Bank Cricket Club won by five runs.
PRIME DOLESHWAR SPORTING CLUB: 287 for 8 (Nasir 97, Imtiaz 73, Farhad 47; Mashrafe 3-50, Razzak 2-32)	KALABAGAN KRIRA CHAKRA: 283 for 9 (Mehrab 86, Jashimuddin 45; Rahatul 3-40)
Result: Prime Doleshwar Sporting Club won by four runs.	



TAMIM IQBAL ... 90



NASIR HOSSAIN ... 97



MAHBUBUL KARIM ... 130



SALMAN HOSSAIN ... 110



SAIF HASSAN ... 100

Flying starts for Usha, Mariners

Defending champions Usha KC and rejuvenated Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club made winning starts in the Marcel Club Cup at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Four-time champions Usha KC posted an emphatic 5-0 win over Ajax SC, with Pushkor Khisha Mimo and Hasan Jubair Niloy, national strike partners, sharing three goals while Mithun and Mahbub Hossain struck one goal apiece to give the Old Dhaka outfit a flying start to the season.

In the day's second match, Mariner Youngs Club impressed with a brilliant performance and inflicted a massive 9-0 defeat to Shadharan Bima after going into the second half with a 4-0 lead.

Mamunur Rahman Chayan and Ashraf Islam struck two goals each from penalty corners while Rimon Kumar added two more in the one-sided affair. National midfielder Moinul Islam Koushik, Raju Ahmed Tapu and Germany's Nikolai Hens also struck one goal apiece.

Khawaja to replace KP?

USMAN KHAWAJA could be on a plane to India to replace injured Pune Supergiants batsman Kevin Pietersen.

Pietersen was ruled out of the IPL on Sunday and Pune have not named a replacement for the Englishman, but Khawaja is the one of the frontrunners, according to Pune coach Stephen Fleming,

AFC U-14 REGIONAL C'SHIP BD girls outclass India in opener

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's bid to defend the AFC U-14 Girls' Regional Championship got off to a brilliant start as they handed a 3-1 defeat to their Indian counterparts in their opening Group B encounter at the Aviatar Stadium in Dushanbe, Tajikistan yesterday.

From the outset, Bangladesh girls, according to coach Golam Rabbani Choton, established their superiority over the Indians, who had never previously lost against Bangladesh at any level of women's football. Bangladesh took a deserved lead in the 34th minute through a strike from midfielder Tahura Khatun. Maria Manda doubled the margin three minutes from the break before Tahura established a commanding 3-0 lead in the 48th minute.

India pulled one back two minutes later, but that wasn't enough for the South Asian powerhouse to avoid their first defeat to Bangladesh. The two sides had shared a 1-1 draw in the last edition of the championship.

"The girls played really well throughout the match against the mighty Indians and executed the plan well in a 4-3-3 formation. The margin of victory could have been 6-1 had Tahura and captain Marzia not squandered three chances," said Choton over phone.

"Tahura and Monika put up brilliant performances while Anai Mogini defended well throughout the game. Anuching Mogini also threatened the opposition with her relentless running," Choton added.

Bangladesh will play their second and final group match against Nepal on April 28.



PHOTO: BFF

The Bangladesh Under-14 girls' team midfielder, Tahura Khatun, who scored twice against India yesterday.

Poor batting costs Fizz's Hyderabad

Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman had an odd day, in terms of bowling figures, in the Indian Premier League yesterday as he went away for 21 runs in two overs during Sunrisers Hyderabad's game against the Rising Pune Supergiants at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium.

On the whole, it was a bad day for Hyderabad. Batting first they were restricted to just 118 for 8. The key destructor was Pune's Ashok Dinda. The bowler finished with figures of 3 for 23 and took the key wicket of David Warner.

Shikhar Dhawan was the only who managed to provide some resistance with a 53-ball 56. A burst from Bhuvaneshwar Kumar at the end, which saw him hit 21 runs off eight balls with a six and three fours helped them post 118. Had it not been for Kumar, Hyderabad would have struggled to cross the 100-run mark.

After the exchange, Hyderabad began well when Ajinkya Rahane was removed in the first over by Kumar. However, after that, Faf Du Plessis and Steven Smith put in an 80-run partnership in just eight overs and took the game away from Hyderabad. By the time rain stopped play, Pune were poised at 94 for 3 and were 34 runs ahead of the Duckworth-Lewis par score and won comfortably.

It was a game that Hyderabad lost because of their poor batting.

All boards keen on D/N Tests

REUTERS, Melbourne

The cricket boards of all major Test-playing nations have thrown their support behind day-night matches and nearly half intend to host a game under lights in the next 12 months, according to Cricket Australia boss James Sutherland.

Australia hosted the first day-night Test against New Zealand in Adelaide last year and will play Pakistan in another match under lights in Brisbane in December.

South Africa's players have balked at an invitation to play Australia in a day-night match in November, however, citing concerns about the specially developed pink ball and their relative inexperience playing it.

Sutherland, who met with South African officials during an International Cricket Council meeting in Dubai on Sunday, said no final decision on the Adelaide Test could be expected until Proteas players returned home from the Indian Premier League tournament.

But he said day-night Tests in general had unanimous support from the top nations' boards.

"What I heard from (ICC) full member country CEO's in meeting was a very broad-ranging commitment to day-night test cricket and indeed three or four full member countries are planning on hosting Test cricket under lights in the course of the next 12 months, which is very encouraging," Sutherland told reporters at CA's Melbourne headquarters on Tuesday.

"Certainly India, Pakistan are very keen to play day-night Test cricket, I know New Zealand are also keen. To a person, full member countries and their CEOs stated their absolute support of Tests being played under lights."

The first day-night Test drew huge crowds to Adelaide Oval and big television audiences, helping to offset disappointing attendances to the season-

opening Tests against New Zealand in Brisbane and Perth.

CA and players on both sides hailed the match a success in the aftermath but South Africa captain AB de Villiers told local media last week that his team had been discouraged from committing to the day-night Test in Adelaide after getting feedback from Australian players, including captain Steve Smith.

Test crowds have waned across the globe even as domestic Twenty20 tournaments have soared in popularity and threatened to undermine the quality of international cricket by luring top players away from their national teams.

Australia's domestic Big Bash T20 competition drew more than a million people into stadiums during the last home summer, outstripping the attendance for last year's 50-over World Cup.

Cricket Australia has lowered ticket prices for Test matches against Pakistan and South Africa for the coming home summer in a bid to bring fans back to the red-ball game.

ICC blasts WI for World T20 outburst

REUTERS, Melbourne

The International Cricket Council has criticised West Indies for using their victory speech at the World Twenty20 tournament to complain about their cricket board after a long drawn-out pay dispute.

During the televised broadcast, West Indies captain Darren Sammy referred to the dispute which saw the team threaten to withdraw from the tournament in India before a last-minute deal was brokered with the board.

All-rounder Dwayne Bravo later criticised the West Indies Cricket Board in an interview with a local broadcaster.

The ICC said in a media release that the players' comments had "inappropriate".

"The (ICC) Board considered the behaviour of some of the West Indies players in the immediate aftermath of the final, and unanimously agreed that certain comments and actions were inappropriate, disrespectful and brought the event into disrepute," the ICC said.

"The Board acknowledged an apology by the WICB but was disappointed to note that such behaviour had detracted from the success of what was otherwise a magnificent tournament and final."

The ICC added that "serious consideration" had been given to bringing code of conduct charges against the players.

After West Indies' four-wicket win over England in Kolkata, skipper Sammy said in an interview: "People were wondering whether we would play this tournament. 'We had a lot of issues, we felt disrespected by our board ... I'm yet to hear from (them). That is very disappointing.'

Donald to join Oz?

AGENCIES, Brisbane

South Africa fast bowling great Allan Donald is set to join the Australian team as a bowling coach for the tour of Sri Lanka and at least one series against the Proteas.

According to News Limited Donald will fill the vacancy left by former bowling coach Craig McDermott for a lengthy tour of Sri Lanka that features three Tests, five one-day internationals and two Twenty20s between July and September.

Cricket Australia has not officially confirmed Donald's appointment, but the report suggests he will also join the Australian squad for an ODI series in South Africa.