

SPORT



Sabbir Rahman stylishly flicks one down the leg side, his preferred region on the park, en route to his second one-day century at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. His 97-ball 100 led Prime Bank Cricket Club to a thumping win over Sheikh Jamal. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Similar effect, different aims

SPORTS REPORTER



Imtiaz Hossain continued his good form in the ongoing Dhaka Premier League as the 31-year old hit his second hundred in the competition at BKSP yesterday, but a 24-year old batsman who ruled the pitch on the same day at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur hogged most of the spotlight.

Prime Bank's Sabbir Rahman's second List A hundred, scored against Sheikh Jamal, and first in more than five years understandably drew much more attention than Imtiaz as the former paints on a broader canvas than the latter. While Imtiaz hardly has any ambitions beyond this league, Sabbir has bigger dreams.

"I had a target to put on a good performance in this league and so far things are going well. I just want to enjoy cricket, nothing else, and want to focus match by match and I am least bothered to think beyond this league," said seasoned domestic campaigner Imtiaz, who scored an unbeaten 100 for Prime Doleshwar against Brothers Union.

Sabbir's celebration however depicted how happy the man was after his maiden hundred in the country's most coveted 50-over competition. Batting at number three, the right-hander took off his helmet, raised

his bat and then kissed the wicket to celebrate his century.

"It's always important to score no matter where. I always try to play as per my potential. I failed to score in the first two games. In the second and third games I played with grit and I am hopeful I can continue it in the next matches," said an excited Sabbir, who took little time to recall the last List A hundred he made in 2010 at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra.

Sabbir already showed that he has got the potential to excel in world cricket. The good-looking batsman already established himself as a one-down batsman for the national side in T20Is and has expressed his desire to become a contender for the number-three position in all formats.

"The Dhaka league can be a good platform for the impressive batsman to push for his cause. I may not get the chance to play at the number three position in international cricket but when I got the chance here, I want to capitalise on it," said Sabbir.

For a top-order batsman, especially for a number three batsman, the most important thing is to build the innings properly and Sabbir displayed this attribute during his 97-ball 100.

"I always focus on staying at the crease till the last ball," said Sabbir, making his motto clear.



Bolt to race in Jamaica

AGENCIES, Kingston

The world's fastest man, Jamaican Usain Bolt, has announced his intention to run on home soil for the first time in about two years. The 100 metres and 200m world record holder says he is eager to compete in Jamaica at the inaugural Racers Grand Prix scheduled for the National Stadium on June 11, reports CMC.

"I am really proud of the effort being made to put on a meet, the first actual track club in Jamaica to do that," Bolt said on Tuesday. "I am very proud of my coach [Glen Mills] for making this move and I know it is going to be a great meet". "I haven't run in Jamaica for a couple years, so I am looking forward to it. People should come out and support because it will be good".

Bangladesh officially 7th

SPORTS REPORTER



Although hopes were raised, albeit for all of four hours on April 25, of a climb up the rankings ladder for the Bangladesh ODI team, the Tigers remain at seventh spot in the updated International Cricket Council (ICC) rankings. Their T20I ranking remains at a much less impressive 10th, one place below ICC Associate Member nation Afghanistan.

In the rankings cycle that ended on May 1 Bangladesh, who are on 98 ranking points, are comfortably clear of eighth-placed West Indies on 88 points.

On April 25, upon returning from the ICC meeting in Dubai, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon had declared that Bangladesh were odds-on favourites to be one of the automatic qualifiers because the new rankings would see them placed at number five in the ODI table. Some premature celebratory messages on social media later it emerged that it was all a misunderstanding and that, as can best be surmised, the president was only considering

results from the last two seasons -- that too at 100 per cent weighting. No one from the BCB could lend any clarity during those four hours and it took the ICC media manager to chime in with the facts.

As things stand, Bangladesh are still in line for automatic qualification into the 2019 50-over World Cup to be held in England. The next edition of the global event is set to be a 10-team affair with the top seven-ranked teams -- the ranking cut-off for which is August 31, 2017 -- along with hosts England gaining automatic qualification.

As the rankings are calculated on a three-season cycle with only results in the most recent season given 100 per cent weighting and results of the previous two weighted at 50 per cent, the next season will be most crucial for Bangladesh as far as automatic qualification to the World Cup is concerned.

Meanwhile, Australia have retained their place at the top of the ODI rankings with New Zealand in second place. However, the Kiwis have jumped two places to rule the roost in T20Is, ahead of India -- who have also fallen to fourth in ODIs -- by a mere 0.21 points, while Australia are languishing in sixth.

ODI RANKINGS

Rank	Team	Points
1(-)	Australia	124
2(-)	New Zealand	113
3(+1)	South Africa	112
4(-1)	India	109
5(-)	Sri Lanka	104
6(-)	England	103
7(-)	Bangladesh	98(+1)
8(+1)	West Indies	88(+2)
9(-1)	Pakistan	87(-)
10(-)	Afghanistan	51(+4)

T20I RANKINGS

Rank	Team	Points
1(+2)	New Zealand	132(+12)
2(-1)	India	132(+6)
3(-1)	West Indies	122(-3)
4(+1)	South Africa	119(+4)
5(-1)	England	114(-1)
6(-)	Australia	110(-2)
7(-)	Pakistan	104(-3)
8(-)	Sri Lanka	98(-7)
9(-)	Afghanistan	78(-3)
10(-)	Bangladesh	74(-)

Bowling heroics in vain

SPORTS REPORTER



An exciting day of cricket yesterday saw Sabbir Rahman score a one-day century after almost five-and-a-half years and Mahmudullah Riyad scalp his first ever five-wicket haul in 50-over cricket. It also

witnessed 31-year-old Imtiaz Hossain score his second century of the tournament and Victoria's foreign recruit Chaturanga de Silva hit the highlights with a six-wicket haul against Abahani.

However, de Silva's effort in Fatullah went in vain as Tamim Iqbal-led Abahani escaped with a nine-run victory.

Batting first, Abahani rode on openers Tamim and Avishkek Mitra to make a good start as the pair posted 97 runs. However, once Mitra was bowled by De Silva, the floodgates opened. After scoring an 88-ball 63, Tamim was next to fall. Abahani lost their last eight wickets for just 99 runs and were bundled out for 221.

It was a total Victoria could have overcome had they not lost early wickets. During the chase, they crumbled to 9 for 2 after four overs. Mohammad Al-Amin scored a half-century and was well supported by de Silva's 25, which sparked the middle-order, who almost brought them back into the game.

With nine overs remaining, Victoria were poised at 206 for 8 with Sohrawadi Shuvo looking good on 45. However, once he was trapped in front, they were bowled out for 212 in 47.3 overs.

At the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, Sabbir's 97-ball 100, which saw him hit one six and eight fours, led the way against Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club. He was well supported by half-centuries from Shanaj Ahmed and Nurul Hasan as Prime Bank posted a powerful 318.

Mahmudullah was the only bowler who managed to provide some resistance and finished with figures of 5 for 66.

After the exchange, Sheikh Jamal crumbled at the thought of chasing down such a huge total and lost early wickets. Slow left-arm Nazmul Islam took three wickets in the first eight overs to reduce them to 20 for 3. Nazmus Sadat, who has a T20 international under his belt, was the only batsman who looked in form, scoring 76 off 103 balls. But those runs were scored too late. Eventually Sheikh Jamal were bundled out for 205.

At the BKSP, Prime Doleshwar continued their winning run, defeating Brothers Union by seven wickets. Imtiaz scored an unbeaten 100 and was well supported by Nasir Hossain's unbeaten 48. They chased down Brothers' 229 in 48.1 overs with seven wickets in hand.



IMTIAZ HOSSAIN ... 100 n.o

SCORES IN BRIEF

ABAHANI: 221 all out in 50 overs (Tamim 63, Avishkek 44, Abul 43, Mosaddek 34; De Silva 6-35, Kamrul 3-38)	PRIME BANK CRICKET CLUB: 318 for 9 (Sabbir 100, Shanaj 66, Nurul 63; Mahmudullah 5-66, Shaiful 2-62)	BROTHERS UNION: 229 all out in 50 overs (Imrul 57, Tushar 55; Robiul 2-24, Nasir 2-49)
VICTORIA SPORTING: 212 all out in 47.3 overs (Al-Amin 56, Sohrawadi 45; Taskin 2-29, Mosaddek 2-34, Jubair 2-41)	Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club: 205 all out in 46.2 overs (Nazmus 76, Muktar 40, Mahmudullah 37; Nazmul 3-36, Raihan 3-57, Sabbir 2-35)	PRIME DOLESHWAR SPORTING CLUB: 230 for 3 in 48.1 overs (Imtiaz 100 not out, Nasir 48 not out; Tushar 1-12, Nur 1-44)
Result: Abahani won by nine runs.	Result: Prime Bank won by 113 runs.	Result: Prime Doleshwar won by seven wickets.

Abahani sink Mohammedan

SPORTS REPORTER



Abahani set up a semifinal clash against Mariner Youngs Club after outplaying Mohammedan 4-2 in the final Group B fixture of the Marcel Club Cup at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. The Sky Blues, who had started the campaign with a hard-fought draw against Sonali Bank, dominated proceedings and notched the deserved victory to emerge champions of Group B. They will face Mariners in the second semifinal on May 7 following the first semifinal between Mohammedan and Usha Krira Chakra on May 6.

The Dhanmondi outfit took the lead in the sixth minute, with Maksudul Alam Habul flicking a hit from Rumman Sarker. The lead was doubled two minutes later when Pakistani recruit Shafkat Rasool beat the Mohammedan keeper after receiving a pass from Rumman. Habul then made it 3-0 in the 11th minute, with Rumman being the provider yet again.

Mohammedan, who could not field any of their five foreign recruits due to not having the registration papers prepared, pulled one back through Tapash Barman in the 40th minute. But Abahani restored the three-goal cushion 11 minutes later when Rumman, a midfielder of the national team, got his name on the scoresheet with a fine solo effort.

Deen Islam pulled another back for Mohammedan in the 58th minute, but that effort proved too little too late. The match was, meanwhile, halted for five minutes during the second half following a scuffle between the two sets of players.

In the day's other match, Sonali Bank registered a 6-2 victory against Wari Club.

BCCI confirms Zim tour

PTI, New Delhi

The BCCI on Wednesday confirmed the Indian cricket team's tour of Zimbabwe next month for a three-match ODI series and three T20Is.

The six matches are scheduled to be held over 12 days, starting with the opening one-dayer on June 11 and the last T20 on June 22.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and Zimbabwe Cricket have confirmed the schedule for the India's tour of Zimbabwe, 2016," the BCCI said in a statement.

All the matches will be played at Harare Sports Club. Zimbabwe Cricket managing director Wilfred Mukondiwa was quoted as saying, "After finalising all the formalities with the BCCI, we are pleased to announce the incoming tour scheduled for this June. India had toured Zimbabwe in July last year. The visitors won the ODI series 3-0 and the T20 series was tied 1-1.

This will be India's fourth tour to Zimbabwe in the past six years. Half-centuries from Gautam

Russel takes KKR to top

STAR SPORT DESK



Andre Russel bowled a brilliant spell of four for 20 as Kolkata Knight Riders defended 164 against Kings XI Punjab at Eden Gardens last night to go top of the IPL points table.

The West Indies all-rounder got two of the top three batsmen out in his first two overs before coming at the death to take two more as Punjab fell seven runs short, making way for Kolkata to go top of the table with 12 points from nine matches.

Russel also affected two crucial run-outs in the last over as the Punjab outfit remained rooted to the bottom of the table.

Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who was drafted in after being benched for two matches, was economical, giving away only 21 runs in his three overs. The ace all-rounder, however, didn't get a chance to bat as the bulk of the runs for KKR were scored by their two openers.

Gambhir and Robin Uthappa had given the hosts the perfect launchpad before being pegged back a little later in the innings.

Put into bat, the two-time former champions got off to a solid start with Gambhir (54 from 45 balls) and Uthappa (70 from 49 balls) setting up a firm foundation in a 101-run partnership from 13.3 overs.

It was their highest opening wicket stand this season, and third overall century partnership which put them in right stead but their star duo of Yusuf Pathan and Russell failed to bring up their last match's heroics to be content with a total which could have been much bigger.

KKR could score only 43 runs in the last five overs as Pathan and Russell managed just 27 runs together in 19 balls.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS: 164 for 3 in 20 overs (Uthappa 70, Gambhir 54, Pathan 19)	KINGS XI PUNJAB: 157 for 9 in 20 overs (68, Saha 24; Russel 4-20)
Result: Kolkata Knight Riders won by 7 runs	Man-of-the-match: Andre Russel

Chittagong Abahani prevail in shootout

SPORTS REPORTER



Chittagong Abahani set up a final clash against their Dhaka namesakes after overcoming Sheikh Russel KC's challenge in a 4-2 victory in the second semifinal of the KFC Independence Cup yesterday. The new leviathans of domestic football rode on Rubel Mia's 66th minute strike, which cancelled out Fikru Tiferra's first-half stoppage-time strike before failure from Mithun Chowdhury and Shahedul Alam in tie-breakers paved the way for their first berth in the Independence Cup final.

Sheikh Russel coach Maruful Haque had to field his starting eleven without two of his regular strikers -- Paul Emile and Zahid Hasan Emily -- but welcomed Shakhawat Rony and Monaem Khan Raju from injury.

The All Blues made a brisk start and created three chances in the space of three minutes, but poor efforts in front of goal from Fikru, Rony and Shahed denied them the opener. Chittagong Abahani, too, had a

great chance to break the deadlock in the 27th minute, but Haitian forward Leonel Saint Preux miscued his attempt after getting round Sheikh Russel keeper Rasel Mahmud Liton.

Fikru, however, made amends poking home at the stroke of half-time after his initial shot was parried back by Liton.

But Chittagong Abahani hit back 21 minutes after restart, with Rubel Mia tapping home from a point-blank range following a low cross from Preux from the right. A minute later, Kaushik Barua saw his powerful strike from outside the box miss the target by a few inches as the game headed for a stalemate.

The extra time failed to find any winner as both sides lacked the cutting edge, forcing the contest into tie-breaker where Tarik El Janaby, Alison Udoka and Leonel Preux scored for the Chittagong outfit. While Fikru and Nahayo Valery managed to convert their chances, the failures from Mithun and Shahed meant Zahid Hossain's successful strike fourth sealed the deal for the port city side.