

SPORT



Mustafizur Rahman was brilliant with his off-cutters and slower deliveries as his three wickets in three overs propelled Sunrisers Hyderabad to an 85-run victory over Mumbai Indians in their IPL encounter in Vishakhapatnam yesterday.

PHOTO: BCCI

Usha eye hat trick, Abahani revenge

SPORTS REPORTER



While Usha Krira Chakra will be looking to capture a third Club Cup Hockey title on the trot, arch-rivals Abahani will try to exact revenge for the previous two defeats when the two sides meet in the third consecutive final today. The match will get underway at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium at 3:00pm and will be telecast live on ATN Bangla.

The road to the final of this season's curtain-raiser, which featured all the big Dhaka clubs after four long years, has not been an easy one for either side. While both teams breezed through the group stages, finishing top of their respective groups, the semifinal hurdles proved to be a little too intense. Usha, guided by Mamunur Rashid, had to overcome a spirited Mohammedan side in penalty shoot-out while Abahani, coached by Mahbub Harun, needed a last-ditch strike to break Mariner Youngs' hearts.

Both teams, however, have been propelled mostly by their foreign recruits. Abahani have four Pakistani players – Shakil Abbasi, Tousif Arshad, Shafiq Rasul and Mohammad Irfan – to thank for their progression while Usha's strength has been

bolstered by four Malaysians – Abu Ismail Shafiq Cholan, Zulhairi Bin Hashim and Faizal Bin Shari. While the Pakistani recruits of Abahani are thought to revel on their individual skill, it is the discipline and teamwork that makes the Malaysians of Usha formidable.

However, there have also been some notable performers from among the local players, including Abahani midfielder Rumman Sarkar, who was the best performer of the side in their last two matches. Usha have Pushkor Khisha Mimo and Hasan Jubayer Niloy who could be lethal in front of goal. So the battle for this year's title could go down the wire.

Abahani skipper and goalie Asim Gope felt if the forwards click, they can win the final. "We will go for a win because Abahani never want to finish second. The performances of our forwards have fluctuated, but tomorrow [Monday] we will hope they will give their best," the national team goalkeeper said at the pre-final press conference.

Usha skipper Krishna Kumar was confident that his side can complete the hat trick of club cup titles. "We are all eager to win hat trick of club cup titles. We want teamwork, and if we can have that, we will be unbeatable," said the national team midfielder.

Fizz stars in Mumbai thrashing

SPORTS REPORTER



For the first time in the Indian Premier League, Mustafizur Rahman had to wait for nine overs before getting a chance to bowl. It was an odd occurrence, considering that the pacer has been Sunrisers Hyderabad's strike bowler throughout the competition. The 20-year-old is generally given at least one over in the opening powerplay.

However, one can't blame Hyderabad skipper for the change in tactic. Hyderabad might have depended on Mustafizur a number of times in the ongoing Indian Premier League, but yesterday was a tad bit different. Some brilliant bowling from the Hyderabad pacers Ashish Nehra, Bhuvaneshwar Kumar and Barinder Sran had reduced the Mumbai Indians to 49

for 6 in nine overs during their chase of 177 at Vishakhapatnam.

By the time Warner gave the ball to Mustafizur, Mumbai were struggling. The only thing the pacer could do was to have a go at the tail and he didn't disappoint.

He sent back Hardik Pandya with his first ball of the game with a cutter that Pandya failed to adjust himself against. Pandya attempted to slice the ball through point but the ball curved away to the hands of the keeper. The umpire judged that out but the replays were inconclusive.

In the very first ball of his second over, he bowled yet another slower delivery that moved away from the batsman and this time got the edge of Tim Southee.

He returned in the 14th over to get the wicket of Mitchell McClenaghan, who had earlier driven Mustafizur for a boundary in the very first ball of the over.

HIGHEST WICKET-TAKERS

Player	Mat	Wkts	Avg	Econ
M McClenaghan	10	14	22.35	8.12
Mustafizur Rahman	9	13	15.61	6.15
Andre Russell	10	13	17.46	7.82
B Kumar	9	13	20.84	7.97
S Watson	8	12	21.00	8.26

McClenaghan attempted to smack him again in the last ball of the over but misjudged the slower delivery and merely looped it to midwicket.

Eventually Mumbai were bundled out for just 92 in 16.3 overs.

With figures of 3 for 16, Mustafizur recorded his best bowling figures of the tournament and also took his total tally of wickets to 13. He is currently the second highest wicket-taker of the competition, one short of Mitchell McClenaghan.

The 20-year-old though looks extremely capable of topping the

charts very soon as he currently has the best bowling average, 15.61 and best economy rate, 6.15, amongst bowlers who have played at least eight matches in the tournament.

Earlier, brilliant performances from Hyderabad openers, Warner and Shikhar Dhawan helped the team post a powerful 177. Dhawan scored 82 off 57 while Warner smacked 48 off 33. Yuvraj Singh also had a good time with the bat, scoring 39 off 23.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD: 177 for 3 in 20 overs (Warner 48, Dhawan 82 not out, Yuvraj 39; Harbhajan 2-29)

MUMBAI INDIANS: 92 all out in 16.3 overs (K Pandya 17, Pollard 11, Harbhajan 21 not out; Nehra 3-15, Sran 2-18, Mustafizur 3-16)

Result: Sunrisers Hyderabad won by 85 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Ashish Nehra.



Kolkata Knight Riders batsman Shakib Al Hasan finally made his presence felt in this year's Indian Premier League, smashing four sixes and as many fours to score 66 off just 49-balls.

PHOTO: AFP

Top half to battle it out today

SPORTS REPORTER



Five of the current top six teams will feature today in the Dhaka Premier League in what is expected to be an exciting fifth round.

Tamim Iqbal-led Abahani Limited will take on the Legends of Rupganj, who will hope that their key player Soumya Sarkar hits form. At the BKSP in Savar, Sabbir Rahman's Prime Bank Cricket Club will take on Brothers Union, while league leaders Prime Doleshwar Sporting Club will go head-to-head against Victoria Sporting Club.

The top of the table can change quite a bit based on the results of this round. At the moment, Nasir Hossain's Prime Doleshwar leads the table with eight points from four matches. Mohammedan, Abahani and Prime Bank Cricket Club are second, third and fourth respectively with six points each. While Victoria Sporting and Legends of Rupganj are fifth and sixth with five points each.

The highlight of the day though will be the game between Abahani and Rupganj due to take place at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Abahani have looked in good form so far and have clicked whenever the likes of Jubair Hossain and Tamim have performed. They also have a useful foreign player in Uday Kaul, who is their highest run-getter with 169 runs.

They key for them so far though has been Jubair. He has taken 12 wickets in four games and has broken crucial partnerships with his turners on flat tracks. He has taken a six-wicket haul and a four-wicket haul so far. If he can repeat a similar performance, then Rupganj could be in trouble.

While Rupganj have won two out of their four games, it would be fair to say that they are yet to hit their best form. The two games they won were against the weaker teams of the tournament and they are yet to get the services of their star players.

Soumya, for instance, hasn't been in touch and just doesn't seem to be able to make a move on at the top. He has opened at times and has batted at three as well and at the moment seems to be doing a bit of a soul searching. Their key player in this game will be their skipper Mosharrar Hossain. He is a regular performer at the domestic front both with the bat and the ball and in a crunch match like this, you will expect him to give his best.



Abahani skipper Tamim Iqbal opens his eyes wide in order to drive an incoming delivery during a net session at the BCB Academy Ground in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

BCB hoping to rope in Murali, Warne

SPORTS REPORTER

In order to develop spinners in Bangladesh's domestic circuit, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is trying to arrange a camp where turners from all over the country will be coached by 'high profile spinners' from abroad.

According to BCB director Akram Khan, the BCB is trying to get in touch with the likes of Muttiah Muralitharan and Shane Warne as well. While the date and the duration of the camps are yet to be finalised, the cricket operations committee of the board has made this project a priority.

"These camps will focus more on the spinners in the domestic circuit rather than the national players. The board, especially the BCB president, is trying to get in touch with Muttiah Muralitharan and Shane Warne," said Akram.

'Afridi's contract to depend on performance'

DAWN.COM

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Shaharyar Khan said the decision of awarding central contract to Shahid Afridi will be made after observing his performance.

The PCB chief, while talking to DawnNews on Sunday, said despite the fact that Afridi didn't take part in the fitness test arranged by PCB due to some injury, "our main focus will be on his performance".

Mamunul eager to return

SPORTS REPORTER



Former Bangladesh captain Mamunul Islam and fellow midfielder Sohel Rana yesterday applied to the Bangladesh Football Federation

(BFF) to withdraw suspensions from taking part for the national team, just a day after BFF vice-president Kazi Nabil Ahmed hinted that they would consider such action if the players applied.

Mamunul, Sohel along with winger Zahid Hossain and defender Yeashin Khan were handed different terms of suspension by the game's governing body, effective from March this year, due to the players' indiscipline and under-performance. While Mamunul and Zahid were handed one-year bans, Sohel and Yeasin had six-month suspensions slapped on them.

Mamunul said he was looking forward to returning to the national team soon. "I have applied to the BFF this morning admitting my mistake. I hope BFF will soon pave the way for us to return as I want to give the best for the national team," Mamunul said.

BFF's leniency on the players' suspension is believed to be to strengthen the squad for the upcoming Asian Cup qualifying play-offs against Tajikistan next month. The game's governing body has already decided to bring back former coach Lodewijk de Kruif for this double-legged fixture. Mamunul was supportive of the decision.

"The one point we got in the World Cup qualifiers came under de Kruif, and the federation knows well who they want to give the job. My job will be to perform. Even if I could not play for Chittagong Abahani in the Independence Cup, I trained with the team regularly to keep myself fit," added the midfielder.

KKR lose despite Shakib fireworks

STAR SPORT DESK



Shakib Al Hasan hit his highest score, 66, in the Indian Premier League in Kolkata during his side's game against the Gujarat Lions. He wasn't as successful with the ball though as he got smacked for 38 runs in three overs. He did, however, get a wicket.

The remaining KKR bowlers also leaked runs at a similar rate and as a result, the target that they set was easily overcome by the Lions. They reached home with two overs and five wickets to spare.

However, that won't take anything away from Shakib's batting knock.

The all-rounder, who was under pressure due to his lean run with the bat in the competition, came back in style with a 49-ball 66. While he began slowly, he ended up smacking four fours and as many sixes too make up for the cautious beginning.

It was an important innings under the circumstances as he helped Kolkata recover from a precarious 24 for 4 and post 158. He shared a 134-run stand with Yousuf Pathan, who scored 63 off 44. This was the highest ever fifth-wicket partnership for KKR.

Shakib steadily scored 24 runs off the first 32 balls he faced. After that phase though, he got set and unleashed himself. He danced down the track and hit Dwayne Bravo for a beautiful six over cover in the 16th over. An over later, he hit Bravo for two consecutive sixes. The first one was over wide long-on, while the second one was blasted straight back past the bowler's head.

He then finished in style by sloggling the same bowler for a six over deep mid-wicket in the 20th over. He also hit two boundaries in the 19th over off Praveen Kumar, both of which involved plenty of innovation. The first one was off a slower bouncer, which Shakib literally smashed behind the keeper. The second one went over the keeper again, although this time he scooped it.

Shakib had taken a short break from the IPL and came to Dhaka for two days in order to speak to his longtime coach Mohammad Salahuddin and rectify his batting. Whatever advice Salahuddin gave him seemed to work as Shakib smacked his first half-century of the tournament.

However, despite Shakib's knock, some good hitting from the Lions, led by Dinesh Kartik's 29-ball 51, Gujarat eased to a win.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KOLKATA: 158 for 4 in 20 overs (Shakib 66 not out, Pathan 63 not out; Kumar 2-19)

GUJARAT: (Smith 27, McCullum 29, Karthik 51, Finch 29; Shakib 1-38)

Result: Gujarat won by 5 wicket.

Player-of-the-match: P Kumar.