

# SPORT

## All to play for as Super League beckons

SPORTS REPORTER

With just one more round to go for the Super League after today, the remaining three matches of the 10th round today are expected to be highly competitive. All six teams will need to win today in order to achieve their respective targets.

At the BKSP, Soumya Sarkar's Legends of Rupganj will take on Mahmudullah Riyad's Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club. Both these teams are in the running for a place in the top six, or in other words a spot in the Super League, which makes today's game all the more exciting.

Currently, Rupganj are placed fifth with eleven points in nine games while Sheikh Jamal are currently in eighth position with 10 points. A win for Rupganj can take them at least to the fourth spot. On the other hand, Sheikh Jamal will be looking to enter the top six.

The key players for Rupganj have been Asif Ahmed and Abu Hider.

Unfortunately for them, their star player Soumya Sarkar is yet to fire. They will hope Soumya can hit form at the right time. An additional worry is that they will be without their skipper Mosharraf Hossain and batsman Mohammad Mithun, both of who have been banned for one game due to misconduct on the field.

At the other end, Sheikh Jamal have been riding on their skipper Mahmudullah Riyad. With 17 wickets and 435 runs, Riyad is both their highest wicket-taker and run-getter.

Fatullah is expected to host an intense encounter with Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's Kalabagan Krira Chakra taking on Mushfiqur Rahim's Mohammedan. Kalabagan are currently placed eighth with eight points, whereas Mohammedan are second with 12 points.

A win will send Mohammedan to the top of the league. A win for Kalabagan is also crucial since it can take them out of the relegation league.

The bottom three teams of the league play in the relegation league to battle it

out to stay in the competition. A win for Mashrafe's side can help them avoid that phase.

Naeem Islam Jnr has been Mohammedan's go-to bowler in the league so far. With 18 wickets at an average of 18.44 he has done extremely well. Mashrafe has been in a sense the lone hero of Kalabagan. He is currently the second highest wicket-taker of the competition with 20 wickets, which is an amazing feat considering that tournaments in Bangladesh rarely see pacers attaining so much success.

Finally, at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium at Mirpur, Mominul Haque's Victoria Sporting Club will take on Tushar Imran's Brothers Union. Sri Lanka's Chaturanga De Silva, who plays for Victoria, is the highest wicket-taker of the competition so far and Victoria will hope that their foreign recruit can fire again. Skipper Tushar may be old, but he has been Brothers' most consistent performer in the competition so far. Both teams need a win in order to find a place in the Super Six.

## De Kruif critical of team, federation

SPORTS REPORTER

In the wake of the 5-0 drubbing at the hands of Tajikistan on Thursday night, Bangladesh coach Lodewijk de Kruif has said that his charges were not able to cope with the standard of the opposition. The 46-year-old Dutchman also criticised the Bangladesh Football Federation for not having a proper plan to groom players from grassroots level.

"We were not up to date to handle an opponent like Tajikistan, who played high tempo with positional game, what we are used to playing in Holland. I think what they did was fantastic and an example for Bangladesh," de Kruif was quoted as saying at the post-match briefing in a statement released by the BFF yesterday.

The game's governing body reappointed the Dutchman with an aim of qualifying for the Asian Cup, for which the team are playing the doubled-legged play-off against Tajikistan. A failure in this fixture, which looks all but certain, will leave the team with a chance to get into the second round of qualifiers through another play-off against Bhutan in September-October.

With the home leg against Tajikistan scheduled for June 7, De Kruif has already raised questions about the professionalism of the players who suffered a second successive 5-0 reverse against the same opposition within six months.

"If the players were professional, they would do what they were instructed to do. I could only live with a defeat margin of 2-0 or 3-1. We had trained tactical things in standard situation. In a game like this we received one goal from corner kick and two goals from free-kicks," said de Kruif.

The coach had worked on defensive organisation, but it was the defenders who frustrated the most with aimless movements and inability to restrict the forwards of the opposition during open play as well as set-pieces.

The coach also apparently blamed some players for their lack of match-play.

"One of the excuses is that we did not get the expected services from six important players who didn't play matches in home for 2-3 months or even 90 minutes. Still I am a sportsman and I want to win every game," said de Kruif, who had brought back two suspended players into the side and fielded Mamunul Islam, Jamal

Bhuiyan, Raihan Hasan, Sohel Rana and goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel, all of whom were out of action in domestic competitions due to a court ruling.

De Kruif also spoke about the BFF's lack of initiatives to groom footballers from the grassroots level.

"In Bangladesh we don't have proper education plan to grow up footballers from the age of 8-10 years, but we are planning to implement grassroots plan in Bangladesh and hope that we will be a good football nation in Asia [in future]," said the Dutchman.



## Abahani edge past bankers

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Abahani survived a scare in the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League as they came from behind to post a 4-3 win over Sonali Bank at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The fifth win in seven matches has put Abahani temporarily on top of the table with 17 points, one more than Usha KC and Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club, with the latter thrashing Azad SC by 8-0 goals in the other match yesterday. Usha, however, have played a match less than Abahani.

Sonali Bank, who had come into the match on the back of a 1-2 defeat against Mariners, stunned the Sky Blues in the very first minute with a strike from Taher Ali but Tushiq Arshad levelled the margin in the 20th minute converting a penalty corner.

Seven minutes later, Romman Sarker gave Abahani the lead before Sonali Bank staged a strong comeback to equalise through Tushiq Ahmed in the 31st minute.

Shakeel Abbasi restored Abahani's lead in the 49th minute before his compatriot Mohammad Irfan widened the margin ten minutes later.

However Sonali Bank did not give up and reduced the arrears in the 66th minute through a strike from Ehsanullah Khan.



Garbine Muguruza became the first Spanish woman in 16 years to reach the French Open final by defeating Australia's Samantha Stosur at the Roland Garros yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Garbine sets up Serena showdown

AFP, Paris



Serena Williams will play Garbine Muguruza in the French Open final on Saturday in a replay of last year's Wimbledon title match.

Williams won that in straight sets for her 21st Grand Slam title, but Muguruza, at 22, 12 years younger than the American, has improved further since then.

The top seed and defending champion kept alive her hopes of a record-equalling 22nd Grand Slam title against unseeded Dutchwoman Kiki Bertens.

But her form was at best patchy as she laboured to a 7-6 (9/7), 6-4 semi-final win.

The fourth seeded Muguruza, meanwhile, underlined her fine form with a 6-2, 6-4 win over Australia's Samantha Stosur to reach a Grand Slam final for just the second time.

Bertens went 2-0 up before Williams opened her account. The Dutchwoman failed to convert a set point at 5-3 with Williams serving and then a pair of drop shots in the next game brought up a break-back point for the American which she converted with a big forehand drive.

Bertens appeared to be having trouble with an injury to her left calf muscle as Williams took the lead for the first time in the match, but she held firm to force a tie-break, which Williams went on to win 9/7.

The pair exchanged service breaks to get the second set underway and Bertens then failed to take two break points to get to 4-2. Minutes later Williams grabbed the break she needed to put the match away, needing four match points in the end.

The final will be the fourth match in four days for Williams due to the bad weather that has dogged Roland Garros this week.

Muguruza, who is the first Spanish woman in 16 years to reach the French Open

final, was in command against 32-year-old Stosur, a former US Open champion, from the start but had difficulty putting away the match from 5-2 up in the second.

"Emotions can sometimes be bad when you make a final," said Muguruza who defeated Williams in straight sets in the 2014 French Open second round.

"Sometimes you just have to stay calm, prepare yourself as best you can and play with no regrets."

### FINAL H2H

SERENA WILLIAMS (1) VS GARBINE MUGURUZA (4)

Head to Head (Overall) Played: 4

3 1

Head to Head on Clay Played: 1

0 1

### FRENCH OPEN 2016 STATS

13 Sets Played 13

1 Sets Lost 1

28 Return Games Won 29

29 Aces 23

183 Winners 155

With the Suzanne Lenglen court barely half-full, Muguruza shrugged off the ghostly atmosphere as well as the bone-jarring 13 degrees to sweep the first set in 32 minutes.

There were no let-up in the second set as Muguruza, a quarter-finalist in the last two years, carved out a fifth break of the match for 5-2 after a sixth double-fault by Stosur on her way to sealing victory.

## Kyrgios pulls out of Rio, blasts AOC

AFP, Sydney

Fiery Australian tennis star Nick Kyrgios on Friday pulled out of the Rio Olympics, blaming "unwarranted attacks" on him by Australian Olympic chiefs after he was warned to behave.

His decision follows fellow Australian Bernard Tomic making himself unavailable for Games selection last month after widespread criticism about his recent on-court attitude and behaviour.

"Unfortunately, while I have expressed every intention of trying to win a medal for my country in Rio, it's very clear to me that the Australian Olympic Committee has other plans," the world number 19 said in a statement.

"AOC's unfair and unjust treatment of me over the last four weeks, as well as the organisation's crystal clear position on whether they want me to be a part of the Australian Olympic team, has solidified my final decision."

AOC's chief de mission Kitty Chiller, who had voiced concerns over selecting Kyrgios and Tomic due to their behaviour acknowledged Kyrgios' decision in a brief statement on Friday, adding that "in regard to selection every athlete in contention is treated equally and fairly".



Sportspersons pose with their awards alongside Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman (L) at the Rupchanda-Prothom Alo Sports Award ceremony which took place at a city hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## ICC mulls changes

STAR SPORT DESK



The International Cricket Council's (ICC)'s influential Cricket Committee has recommended some structural changes to the game after the conclusion of its two-day meeting at Lord's on Wednesday.

The committee, chaired by Anil Kumble, believed that the dimensions should be limited in order to help achieve a better balance between bat and ball. It also expressed concern over the quality of pitches prepared for Test matches, which normally favour the home team.

Further, the committee was worried that many international players still failed to wear helmets which met the British Safety Standards, but it declined a move proposed by Cricket Australia to introduce substitutes in the event of a player suffering a concussion.

On the issue of the Decision Review System, which is widely implemented but still faces stiff opposition from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), the committee said they were reviewing the system based on a presentation from Massachusetts Institute of Technology panel.

ICC chief executive Dave Richardson also chimed in with his two cents, saying that in order to improve the competitiveness of Test matches visiting teams should be given a more flexible schedule so that they would have more time to acclimatise to foreign conditions.

"It's not good where the home team seems to have such a huge advantage and I know the record over the last two or so years and the home team comes out on top much of the time," Richardson told AFP in an interview. "That's partly down to the fact I think that teams don't allow enough time to acclimatise."

The situation faced by Sri Lanka, who bucked the trend by winning a two-match series in England 1-0 in 2014, is one familiar to many touring teams.

"That means reducing the workload on players and also allowing time for teams to play that extra warm-up game which will give them more of a chance to acclimatise."

There were also recommendations on the structure of international cricket with plans to bring context to each format. The ICC press release also stated that 'day-night Test cricket needs to be delivered to a consistently high standard across all member countries if the concept is to be successful'.

Concern over quality of Test pitches

Limit on dimensions of bats suggested

Concussion substitutes idea rejected