

# SPORT

## Contenders look to seize the moment

**SPORTS REPORTER**  
The tussle for the Dhaka Premier League championship will continue today as the top six teams take on each other in the third round of the Super League.

With the teams stacked up so closely to each other, the result of every game is bound to have a big influence on the rankings table. However, today's highlight will be the match between Tamim Iqbal's Abahani and Mominul Haque's Victoria Sporting Club at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium at Mirpur.

Victoria entered the Super League on top, but now find themselves in second place after having lost a close game to current league leaders Legends of Rugganj earlier this week. It was a game they should have won after reducing Rugganj to just 83 for six during a chase of 251. However, Pawan Negi's brilliant hundred changed the game.

Victoria boast the highest wicket-taker, Chaturanga De Silva, and some of the best performers of the league so far. However, they may be a little low in confidence after the last game. Their main target will be to regain their confidence. Their key player will be Mominul Haque, who has scored consecutive half-centuries and has looked in form since the start of the Super League.

Abahani, on the other hand, will be brimming with confidence. They hammered the highest score in the history of the Dhaka Premier League in the last game and will hope they can continue their run. They stand in third place with 16 points and have a game in hand.

Shakib Al Hasan will be Abahani's key player. He scored a half-century and took a five-wicket haul in the last game. While he does not really have a history of performing his best in Bangladesh's domestic circuit, this season seems to be different.

Leaders Rugganj will take on Prime Bank Cricket Club at the BKSP in Savar. The unique aspect about Rugganj has been the way they performed as a team. It has not just been the case of individuals performing for

them. They do not boast the highest run-scorers or the highest wicket-takers in the competition, but they do have players who raise their hands in the most crucial situations.

Judging by the manner in which Negi changed the game against Victoria, he will definitely be the player to look out for.

Prime Bank on the other hand have made vast improvements since the first phase of the league. In their last game, it was their bowlers who won the match for them. They beat a powerful Prime Doleshwar side. Rubel Hossain, who took two wickets, in particular seemed in really good form and was steaming in. He won the player of the match award in the last game and could once again prove to be the decisive factor in this game. With 14 points in 13 matches and placed fifth, Prime Bank will need to win this game in order to stay in contention for the championship.

And finally, Mushfiqur Rahim's Mohammedan will take on Nasir Hossain's Prime Doleshwar at Fatullah. Both the teams have 14 points each and will need wins in order to stay alive in the tournament.

At the moment, Prime Doleshwar seem favourites to win this game. Mohammedan were thrashed by Abahani by 260 runs, the largest ever List A win in Bangladesh in terms of runs. What is more, they had put up a dismal batting performance in the first game of the Super League as well.

They will hope Mushfiqur Rahim and Naeem Islam Junior can find form and do well at this crucial juncture.

Prime Doleshwar's form in the Super League has been slightly better. They should have won their first game against Abahani at BKSP when they had bundled out the giants for just 192. However, that game surprisingly had to be postponed due to the umpires coming off the field.

The result of that match seemed to have affected them in the next game as they crumbled against Prime Bank Cricket Club. But there too they were a bit unlucky, with the rains deciding their fate.

They will hope they can shrug off the jitters and do it right this time.



Arambagh's answer to the Black Spider, Mithul Hassan, is lofted high by his teammates after his brilliant performance between the sticks saw his side defeat Sheikh Jamal on penalties in the quarterfinal of the Federation Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Arambagh stun reigning champs

**SPORTS REPORTER**  
Arambagh KS produced a stunning upset in the Walton Federation Cup to move into the semifinals after dispatching reigning champions Sheikh Jamal 5-4 on penalties at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Newly-promoted Arambagh, who surged from two goals behind, took the match to the sudden-death stage after playing out a 2-2 draw through regulation and extra time in the tournament's first quarterfinal.

Sheikh Jamal goalkeeper Mazhrul Islam Himel stopped Arambagh's first spot-kick from Yoko Samnick as it seemed like the Dhanmondi giants were heading for the final. However, Himel's teammates ruined the back-to-back champions' chances of clinching a third title as they squandered their penalties.

Unshaken by the initial miss, Arambagh converted their next five

penalties, while Sheikh Jamal's Enamul Haque and Kesto Kumar sent their efforts wide, sparking raucous celebrations in Arambagh's dugout.

Smarting from a 1-2 drubbing at the hands of Brothers Union in the previous match, Sheikh Jamal came out strong against a defensive-minded Arambagh, whose five-man backline had to tread on the path of caution with the deadly trio of foreigner attackers -- Emeka Darlington, Wedson Anselme and Landin Darboe -- aided by locals Enamul Haque and Mohammed Linkon threatening time and again.

However a sensational performance from goalkeeper Mithul Hassan frustrated Sheikh Jamal's forwards whenever they broke free from the defense's shackles. He thwarted their attacks till the 42nd minute when Linkon broke the deadlock with a clinical finish after availing a cross from Wedson.

Shortly afterwards, Wedson doubled the margin in stoppage time after bringing a through-ball from Enamul under his spell beau-

tifully before blasting home. After resumption, Arambagh came out of their shell and went all-out with Cameroonian defensive midfielder Samnick playing as an attacking midfielder with the aim of creating more chances.

Abdullah, who made the jump to top-flight football after playing in the third division last season, came close to reducing the margin just a minute into the

ARAMBAGH	-	2
SHEIKH JAMAL	-	2

second half, but the promising midfielder failed to beat Himel from the six-yard box.

Samnick then headed home a cross from Jafar Iqbal -- another third division player -- in the 61st minute, before turning provider for the equaliser in the 69th minute as his ball found former Sheikh Jamal player Kestor Akon, who scored over the advancing Himel.

With parity restored, Sheikh Jamal created a few scoring chances, but Wedson, Emeka, Linkon and substitute Rakib Sarkar failed to beat Arambagh shot-stopper Mithul Hassan, whose brilliant performances saw him being adjudged man of the match.

"All credit goes to the players, who played really hard in the second half after conceding two poor goals. Yoko Samnick and Mithun Hasan really put up some bold performances to keep the margin level in the regulation and extra time," said Arambagh coach Saiful Bari Titu, adding that they had practiced for the shootout for the past three days.

"After taking a two-goal lead, the players looked relaxed in the second half and the opponents grabbed these opportunities with both hands. Besides that the forwards failed to capitalize on some scoring opportunities in the latter part of the game," said Sheikh Jamal coach Shafiqul Islam Manik.

## Sk Russel in tough group

**SPORTS REPORTER**  
The draw for the 2017 AFC Cup Playoff Qualifiers was held in Kuala Lumpur on Friday night, with Sheikh Russel being pitted in Group C alongside Bhutan's FC Terton and Chinese Taipei's Tatung FC.

Sheikh Jamal, by virtue of being Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) champions last season, were supposed to take part in the tournament. However, after their withdrawal from the continental event, Sheikh Russel, who had finished as runners-up in last season's BPL, were given the opportunity to compete.

Sheikh Russel have played on this stage before, making an appearance in the tournament in 2015. They qualified for the tournament after becoming the AFC President's Cup group stage winners, but they were eliminated at the qualifying play-off stage after suffering a 1-0 loss to Tajikistan's Khayr Vahdat.

The qualifiers will see each team play the other once, with the three group winners advancing to the Playoff stage of the competition.

## Pink ball to debut in India

**AFP, New Delhi**  
India will witness its first ever multi-day pink ball game at Kolkata's Eden Gardens from Saturday, a possible precursor to a day-night Test later this year.

The four-day match is an inter-club final between Mohun Bagan and Bhowanipore Club which is being hosted by the Cricket Association of Bengal.



Mohammedan notched up a 5-1 win over Dhaka Wanderers during their Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League encounter at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

## MSC back to winning ways

**SPORTS REPORTER**  
Mohammedan SC returned to winning ways in the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League as they handed a 5-1 defeat to Dhaka Wanderers Club at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The win -- their eighth from 11 matches -- helped the Black and Whites raise their points tally to 26, equal with Abahani and two points behind leaders Usha KC. However, Usha and Abahani have played a game less than Mohammedan and will lock horns today in the last match of the league's first phase.

Mohammedan, who came into the match on the back of a 1-3 defeat, went ahead through Rasel Mahmud Jimmy's strike in the 12th minute. Jimmy went on to bag a hat-trick, scoring in the 25th and 60th minutes, while Imran Hassan Pintu and Salman Hossain struck a goal each, while Bishal pulled back a consolation goal for Wanderers.

In the day's other match, Bangladesh SC played out a 2-2 draw with Wari Club.

Prince and Siraj Ali scored for Bangladesh SC while Jihad and Krishna struck for Wari Club.

## 'Amir can't put a foot wrong'

**AFP, Karachi**  
Pakistan cricket team manager Intikhab Alam Friday warned fast bowler Mohammad Amir cannot afford to put a foot wrong on the tour of England where he was caught in a spot-fixing case six years ago.

The images of Amir's shocking over-stepping of the crease to bowl no-balls during the Lord's Test in 2010 will re-emerge as he is all set to take the field on July 14 in the first of a four-match series.

Amir and his new-ball partner Mohammad Asif bowled deliberate no-balls on the order of then Test captain Salman Butt in return for money. All three players were banned for five years from playing cricket and jailed by a UK court.

But since the ban was lifted in September last year, Amir has been in superb wicket-taking form and will be the key bowler for Pakistan on the tour which also has five one-day and a Twenty20 international.

"Amir cannot afford to put a foot wrong," Alam told AFP as the team prepares to depart for England early Saturday.

"Amir has to prove a point to the cricketing world that there will be no slip-up, make up for the five years he lost and do justice to his talent by bringing laurels."

Alam said he fears people will provoke him.

"I fear people will provoke him on and off the field but he has been told to remain calm and do not react," said Alam. "That happened on his first tour (New Zealand) when he was fielding on the boundary line but they die down once you don't react," said Alam. "Amir will have to follow strict code of conduct which stops him from meeting people and focus on cricket," said Alam, who praised Amir's conduct.

## India seek encore in Twenty20 series

**PTI, Harare**  
The ODI series proving to be a stroll in the park, Mahendra Singh Dhoni would look to finish his current season with another dominant performance when he leads India in the three-match Twenty20 series against a hapless Zimbabwe, starting here on Saturday.

Riding high after inflicting a 3-0 white-wash on the hosts, Dhoni and his boys will try to do an encore in the shortest version as well.

The likes of Kedar Jadhav and Manish Pandey, who toured here last time, will remember that the T20 series in 2015 ended in 1-1 draw after India lost the second game.

But the world's most experienced T20 skipper in-charge and a team which has 14 out of the 15 players (save Faiz Fazal) with IPL contracts, India again are runaway favourites to decimate a Zimbabwe side which at times has looked inferior than many of the lower-rung first-class Indian sides.

With the gulf between the two teams being so huge, Dhoni would ideally like to shuffle his batting order a bit and also try out some of

## Lion selfies land Jadeja in trouble

**AFP, Ahmedabad**  
Forestry officials in western India have ordered an inquiry after cricketer Ravindra Jadeja posted several photos on social media of him and his wife posing with endangered Asiatic lions.

Officials from Gujarat state's Gir wildlife sanctuary ordered the probe late Thursday after photos showing the couple in front of a pride of lions during a safari earlier this week went viral.

"The Gir National Park and Sanctuary is a protected area and people are not supposed to get off their vehicle during safari," a chief forest conservator told AFP.

In one of the photos on Instagram, Jadeja is seen smiling and pointing at a pride of big cats resting behind him with a caption "family photo, having good time in Sasan (Gir)".

## Younis unfazed by familiar foes

**AFP, Lahore**  
Pakistan's top Test batsman Younis Khan has brushed aside the threat posed by England's in-form pace attack as his team prepare to return to the scene of an infamous spot-fixing scandal in 2010.

Khan said Pakistan's familiarity with the likes of Stuart Broad and James Anderson would blunt their potency when they open a four-Test series at Lord's on July 14.

England's fast bowlers combined to take 33 wickets between them in their recent 2-0 rout of a Sri Lankan side missing recent retirees such as Kumar Sangakkara and Mahela Jayawardene.

Anderson's 21 wickets came at a phenomenal 10.8 runs apiece, but Khan, the lynchpin of Pakistan's batting for more than a decade, said his team would not roll over as easily.

"No doubt about Anderson and Broad -- they are the top bowlers these days. But we play regularly against Broad and Finn and Anderson," he said.