

SPORT



Mariner Youngs players are embraced by the club officials after they beat defending champions and title-rivals Usha Krira Chakra 3-2 in the title-deciding final day of the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday to lift the league title for the first time.

(Inset) The momentous occasion for the Motijheel outfit, however, came after a bit of rowdiness from the club supporters who vandalised the VIP gallery as the players protested an umpire's decision, forcing a 15-minute halt to the game.

PHOTOS: FIROZ AHMED



Maiden glory for Mariners

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club became champions of the Premier Division Hockey League for the first time after staging a come-from-behind 3-2 victory against title rivals Usha KC in the last and title-deciding match of the Super-Six stage at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

A draw would have been enough to see the Motijheel outfit clinch their first top-tier title in their 27-year journey, but Gerhard Peter Rach's charges showed character as they came from two goals down to beat Usha and become the seventh team to win the league title after Mahuttuli SC, Abahani, Mohammedan SC, Shadharan Bima KS, Ajax SC and Usha KC.

The name Mariner Youngs has been more synonymous with "rowdy hockey team" over the years, but this time they

were comparatively tranquil on the pitch throughout the league even though yesterday's match was partially marred by its rowdy fans and officials, who vandalised the windows of the VIP gallery and damaged some 50 plastic chairs following a decision of the umpire.

Away from the unwanted off-field incident, Mariners showed great determination to post their 13th straight win of the league and finished with a tally of 43 points from 16 matches, ultimately finishing five points ahead of four-time champions Usha.

Usha, who needed an outright victory to defend their title, got off to a drizzling start to score two goals within 15 minutes through Hasan Jubair Niloy and Pushkor Khisha Mimo, but they soon lost their tempo once the match was halted for 15 minutes due to crowd trouble following a yellow card brandished against Mariners' Pakistani player Mohammad Toufiq.

After resumption, Mariner raised the bar

and pulled one goal back in the 26th minute when Pakistani forward Waqas Sharif cleverly connected a rising hit from Arshad Hossain, who then levelled the margin with a soft touch from in front of goal in the 50th minute after his first attempt was ruled out through video referral.

With the game locked at 2-2, Mariners only needed to hold their own, but they brilliantly sealed the victory with a third goal one minute from time when Isteaque Ahmed finished off an excellent move involving Moinul Islam Koushik and Waqas.

"We are very happy to be part of the winning Mariner Youngs team as it was a dividend of our hard work. The coach and the club management had a good contribution behind this success," said midfielder Koushik.

Mariners' general secretary Hasan Ullah Khan Rana credited the players as well as its hockey committee chairman Mominul Haque Sayeed for the success. The former

player, however, apologised for the unwanted incident at the gallery.

"I am sorry for what took place at the gallery. It happened on the spur of the moment. We won five out of six decisions which were referred, which only shows the low standard of foreign umpires. The umpires were paid only 25 dollars each per match, and hence the standard of umpiring hampered the spirit of the game," said Rana.

Usha coach Mamunur Rashid blamed the off-field chaos for his side's defeat.

"The turning point of the match was the vandalism outside the ground and it panicked my Pakistani players who failed to show their natural performance and all the players lost their rhythm and concentration. They [Mariners] won the match by terrorism," said Mamunur.

Bangladesh Hockey Federation's general secretary Abdus Sadeque told reporters that the league committee would sit and take necessary steps after the Eid vacation.

Eid at home excites Fizz

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh pace sensation Mustafizur Rahman said yesterday that he was ready to play for Sussex.

"It would be good to go to Sussex. I will try to give my best there. When you talk about cricket the name of England comes first. I feel better than I was after I came to Dhaka from the IPL. I can bowl now, which I wasn't able to previously," Mustafizur said while he was talking to the reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur after a long break.

Apart from talking about his fitness after bowling seven overs in the nets, the 20-year old pacer -- who played one Under-19 game in England in 2013 before returning home soon after due to an injury -- responded to many issues like his planning for Eid vacation, his IPL experience, interest from different T20 leagues all over the world, his shoe size (12) which is bigger than his skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's (11).

Apparently it seemed that Mustafizur was happy about the prospect of spending his Eid vacation at home in his beloved Tetulia.

"Last time I was in Chittagong during the Eid vacation and it was too hard for me. But this time I will have my parents and brothers beside me at home during the Eid celebrations, so what can be better for me?" said Mustafizur, adding that he will prefer to stay at home during the holidays rather than travelling.

Mustafizur informed that he was yet to buy any gifts for Eid but gave money to others so that they can buy something according to their own choice.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) media manager Jalal Yunus said that Mustafizur will depart for his English county side Sussex on July 13, pending the approval of his visa. He will be available for at least four matches each in the NatWest T20 Blast and the Royal London One-Day Cup.

"Our medical team informed us that his rehabilitation went well and he is fine now. He is doing fine in training at the moment and we expect him to keep improving in the coming days. He will leave for England on July 13 if he gets the visa," said Yunus.

Mark Davis's men have already played eight matches in the Natwest T20 Blast and are fourth in the table with eight points in the South Group and if Sussex advance beyond the group stage, Mustafizur will get the opportunity to play even more games and gain some valuable experience.



Siddikur sneaks through

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman played a three-under-par (60) in the second round to sneak into the final two rounds of the Yeangder Tournament Players Championship yesterday. Having started the day at a precarious 100th position and staring at an early exit, the 31-year-old Bangladeshi upped his game to exchange four birdies for a single bogey at the Linkou International Golf and Country Club in Taipei yesterday.

That effort took him to joint 51st position as he, along with 72 other golfers, moved into the weekend rounds of this 500,000-dollar Asian Tour event. With an aggregate score of one-under-par (143), Siddikur was trailing joint leaders Namchok Tantiokhakul of Thailand and Scott Barr of Australia by eight strokes.

Schedule worries Lehmann

REUTERS, Melbourne

Australia coach Darren Lehmann has urged cricket's governing body to help reduce the workload on players competing in all three forms of the game as he fears the current packed schedule is unsustainable.

"If it keeps going like this, with players playing IPL as well, they are inevitably going to break down," Lehmann said Friday.

"Hopefully changes will happen at the ICC and then you will see a refined schedule which will be better."

'A disaster in every sense'

Zim, SL react to proposed two-tier system

AGENCIES, Undated

Test cricket's newest nations are in despair at plans to split the format into two divisions, fearing it could undo decades of hard-fought progress on the field and kill interest in the game.

Cricket's governing body the International Cricket Council (ICC) is meeting in Edinburgh this week to debate proposals for the seven top-ranked teams to establish a de facto premier league in a bid to boost waning interest in Tests.

Under the scheme being considered by the ICC, the other three countries with Test status would join a five-strong second division along with Afghanistan and Ireland.

As things stand, the two latest arrivals at cricket's top table -- Bangladesh and Zimbabwe -- will be doomed to the second tier and could be joined by another relative newcomer Sri Lanka.

Alistair Campbell, a former director of Zimbabwe's board, appreciated the arguments for a split because of the gulf in class between the top and bottom sides.

But Campbell said it would be heartbreaking if current players would never be able to compete against the best.

"It's going to be a tragedy if you are growing up in a country like Zimbabwe or Bangladesh," he told AFP.

"It means you might never get the opportunity to play with top tier sides. That might drive players to go and seek greener pastures."

There are similar fears in Sri Lanka, currently ranked seventh and in danger of being overtaken by an improving West Indies by the time the proposed split comes into force.

Sidath Wettimuny, who scored Sri Lanka's first Test century, warned the architects of the split were playing with fire.

"It's okay to make some tweaks but what is proposed is going to be a disaster in every sense of the word," he said.

Sri Lanka's cash-strapped board is hugely dependent on TV money and ticket revenue from tours by the likes of India and Australia.

But neither broadcasters nor spectators will pay significant amounts for matches involving minnows such as Ireland.

"If you club the weakest teams in one league, who'll be interested in watching those games? This will lead to financial ruin," Sports Minister Dayasiri Jayasekera told AFP.

Earlier in the week in Dhaka, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) directors also expressed consternation about the proposed Test divisions.

"This will spell the death of international cricket as we've known it," said BCB director Ahmed Sazzadul Alam.

BCB vice president Mahbubul Anam warned Bangladesh "would go backwards" if they stop playing teams such as England and India, both of whom they are due to play later this year.

"The resulting downturn in revenues would undermine development programmes and funding of domestic leagues."

"It will effectively mean the end of cricket for countries like us."



The second-round Wimbledon match between fourth seed Stanislas Wawrinka and the 2009 US Open champion Juan Martin Del Potro was as high-profile as it gets at this stage of a Grand Slam, and it was the latter who emerged victorious at the All England Lawn Tennis Club yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Del Potro stuns Wawrinka

AGENCIES, Undated



Juan Martin del Potro sent Swiss fourth seed Stan Wawrinka crashing out of Wimbledon on Friday with a 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/2), 6-3 victory in the second round.

The world number 165 from Argentina, who was a semi-finalist in 2013 in what was his last appearance at the tournament, next faces French 32nd seed Lucas Pouille.

Del Potro is playing in his first major since the Australian Open in 2014 after undergoing three wrist surgeries.

"It feels amazing, it's a great sensation," said the 27-year-old.

"I enjoyed the crowd. It's an incredible feeling, that's why my hands are still shaking."

"I feel alive again. After sitting at home for two years, this feels like a

second or third career," added the former world number four.

On a wet day at Wimbledon, with only Centre Court matches being played relatively uninterrupted because of the retractable roof, defending champion Serena Williams survived a scare from fellow American Christina McHale, eventually winning a fiercely fought encounter 6-7 (7), 6-2, 6-4 to go into the third round.

It was a day of hard-earned success for both the Williams sisters as five-time champion Venus Williams reached the last-16, seeing off Russian teenager Daria Kasatkina 7-5, 4-6, 10-8 in a tie featuring a rain stoppage when she held match point.

In another rain-interrupted encounter, Australian Nick Kyrgios survived a warning for bad language and a third-set sulk to clinch a 6-7 (3), 6-1, 2-6, 6-4, 6-4 victory over

Dustin Brown of Germany in an explosive second-round clash. Both players are known for their entertaining styles and they did not disappoint with a five-setter replete with quality shot-making.

Kyrgios, who famously shocked Rafael Nadal en route to the Wimbledon quarter-finals two years ago, spent most of the match ranting, drawing a code violation for an audible obscenity and appearing to give minimal effort in protest as he sulked his way through the third set against the man who shocked Nadal last year.

Hammering aces and winners with abandon, it took Brown and Kyrgios just one hour and 40 minutes to reach a fifth set. Kyrgios lost his temper again in the decider over more debatable line-calls, but in between the theatrics he finally came out on top.

Krishnapada banned

SPORTS REPORTER

Krishnapada, a player of Brothers Union, was handed a one-year ban from all football competitions arranged by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) after the disciplinary committee found him guilty of assaulting an assistant referee during their Federation Cup match against Abahani on June 19.

Brothers Union's assistant manager Hashem Mollah was also handed a three-match stadium ban for his unruly behaviour towards the referees. Krishnapada and Hashem were fined Tk 100,000 and Tk 20,000 respectively and were asked to pay the fine within 30 days.

Meanwhile, Rahmatganj MFS coach Kamal Babu and the club's player Faisal Ahmed were fined Tk 5,000 each for using abusive words against the referee during their Federation Cup match against Sheikh Russel KC on June 18.

Shastri quits ICC post

PTI, New Delhi

Former India captain and team director Ravi Shastri resigned from his post as media representative in ICC's Cricket Committee.

"I have already submitted my resignation. There are personal commitments and I have been there for six years," Shastri told PTI.

The official reason is his busy media commitments as commentator, TV expert and columnist, but there is speculation that he may have resigned as he is yet to come to terms with rejection that led to a widely publicised spat with Cricket Advisory Committee member Sourav Ganguly.