

# SPORT

## A NEW BEGINNING

SPORTS REPORTER



For the first time in history, the Bangladesh Premier League is to begin outside the capital.

The ninth edition of the top-tier professional football league will kick off at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong today as the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) look to spread the game beyond the centre and into the far corners of the country.

While the new format is a step back from the home-and-away system prevalent in professional leagues across the world, the fact that the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka has previously hosted a majority of the matches for the leagues has failed to do any justice to the home-and-away format.

This time however, Dhaka will not get the lion's share of fixtures as the league matches are spread between Chittagong, Mymensingh, Sylhet as well -- making it the first time that the league is held across as many as four venues -- in order to tap into the enthusiasm of the people outside the capital and encourage them to attend the matches in greater numbers, something which rarely occurs when games are held in the capital.

The BFF believes that through a larger audience, higher attendance revenues as well as positive portrayal of the league can be achieved.

The fixtures have pit defending champions



Sheikh Russel players go through a drill at the Bander Ground in Chittagong yesterday ahead of opening day's fixture of the JB Bangladesh Premier League, which kicks off at the city's MA Aziz Stadium today.

PHOTO: STAR

Sheikh Jamal DC against Arambagh Krira Sangha and runners-up Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra against promoted Uttar Baridhara Club in the opening day's fixtures.

While the two fixtures may seem like mismatches on paper, the recent performances of some of the lesser teams suggest that this league could be the tightest in years. A case in

point is the rise of Arambagh KS, who stormed into the final of the Federation Cup before losing out to Abahani. The Motijheel outfit, coached by Saiful Bari Titu, flourished on talents of their young guns, so much so that the two-time defending champions Sheikh Jamal fell prey to them in the quarterfinal stage.

That performance as well as Sheikh

Jamal's troubles, is a source of inspiration and hope to Titu ahead of the league opener.

"We beat Sheikh Jamal in the Fed Cup. We will try to secure our defence first and play on the counter. Jafar Iqbal and Mohammad Abdullah are skillful players, and if they get the ball in the right areas, they are hard to stop," opined the former national team coach.

On the other hand, Sheikh Jamal still have quite a few issues to sort out. They are waiting for the arrival of former coach Joseph Afusi after having parted ways with Shafiqul Islam Manik recently. The club has a shaky midfield and will be without star striker Wedson Anselme for at least the first few matches.

Last season's runners-up Sheikh Russel KC, who will take on minnows Uttar Baridhara in the second match today, are grappling with injuries.

The players set to miss the opening game due to injuries are: proven forwards Zahid Hasan Emily and Shakhawat Hosain Rony, winger Abdul Baten Kamol and foreign recruit Fikru Teffera. However Coach Maruful Haque believes the players at his disposal should be good enough to win even though he is worried about the prospect of rain.

"It didn't rain today and I hope tomorrow will be the same. If it rains, it will be difficult for us as rain always works as an advantage for smaller teams. However, I believe that we can beat Baridhara even without our main players," opined the veteran coach.

## Sk Jamal's payment deadline extended

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has allowed the deadline for Sheikh Jamal to clear its dues, with a couple of clubs as well as players, to be extended by over a month as they have failed to do so before the previous cut-off date.

The defending Bangladesh Premier League champions, who kick off the ninth edition of the league in Chittagong today, have been found to have defaulted on several payment dates, the total amount of which is said to be Tk 56.2 lakh.

With the latest deadline having been passed on July 22, the game's governing body elected to set the new deadline at August 30 after receiving a request from the club.

According to an assessment by the BFF, Sheikh Russel KC are owed Tk 27 lakh by Sheikh Jamal as the latter have yet to pay after signing defenders Mohammed Linkon and Didarul Alam from the former, all of whom had initially taken payments in advance from Sheikh Russel.

Abahani are owed Tk 12.5 lakh from Sheikh Jamal as Abahani provided payment in advance to sign defenders Kesto Kumar and Yeasin Khan from Sheikh Jamal, both of whom changed their minds in favour of staying with the Dhanmondi outfit.

In addition, Sheikh Jamal owes former players Shahidul Alam Sohel, Yeamin Ahmed Munna and Nasir Uddin Chowdhury a total amount of Tk 16.7 lakh as arrear salary.

On the other hand, the Dhanmondi giants are believed to be owed Tk 16.33 lakh from three players -- midfielder Sheikh Alamgir Kabir Rana, defenders Rayhan Hasan and midfielder Sohel Rana -- as they joined other clubs after taking their payments in advance.

## 'Neither sad nor proud'

SPORTS REPORTER



He may be one of the most successful batsmen Bangladesh has ever produced, but it has been close to a year since Mominul Haque last played international cricket.

He boasts a batting average of 56 in Test cricket at a time when the country's top batsmen are struggling to touch 40. He has even produced much better numbers in ODIs while batting at number three than all his current competitors. However, the 'Test specialist' tag has remained for Mominul and that's the reason why the scheduled England series in October is so important for him.

"It [the England series] is something that I am looking forward to since I have not played for a while. Many may think that since I haven't played international cricket I may face problems during the series, but I personally don't think it will be an issue.

"In the last few months I have played in the Bangladesh Cricket League and the National Cricket League, both four-day competitions, and I have been in touch. With regards to longer version cricket I think I have played a lot more frequently than some of the others," Mominul told reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, where the national players have been busy sweating it out in a camp since Wednesday.

"I hadn't played international cricket for a while when Pakistan arrived here after the World Cup. I scored two 50s in that series. According to Shakib [Al Hasan] bhai and

Tamim [Iqbal] bhai, that was something tough to do, considering that I hadn't played international cricket for a while.

"But that's not how I think. I get to play three to four times a year. So for me, no matter when I play, be it after a year or after ten years, if I don't perform, I'll be left out. We play very few Tests, so I have to perform in each of them," he added.

For now, Mominul isn't concerned about his place in any other format except for Tests. He wants to consolidate in the longer version and then earn a callback to the other formats in the process.

"I don't feel bad and neither do I feel proud (about being tagged as a Test specialist and not being considered for ODIS.) I just feel good in general whenever I am involved with the game.

"For now, if I have to get into the one day team, I need to further consolidate my current position. If I do well here, then I am sure the coach and the selectors will consider me," said Mominul.

The left-handed batsman admitted that the England series would be tough. However, he believes that playing at home could give the Tigers an advantage.

"We have players like Mustafizur [Rahman] and Shakib [Al Hasan] bhai. We probably just need a good leg-spinner in our bowling attack. We aren't as good in Tests as we are in ODIs, but I still feel we can do well in our own ground," he said, while adding that he hopes to draw inspiration from Shakib and Mustafizur's performances outside the country.



Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Soumya Sarkar were making fashion statements as the captain showed off his new hairstyle while Soumya has been growing out his moustache. Their teammates however turned things around and found a perfect chance to poke fun at the duo.

PHOTO: STAR

## England plant their Root

AFP, Manchester



Joe Root's double century and three wickets for Chris Woakes put England on course for a series-levelling win in the second Test against Pakistan at Old Trafford on Saturday.

Pakistan ended the second day having collapsed to 57 for four in reply to England's first innings 589 for eight declared, a huge deficit of 532 runs.

Root's Test-best 254, just the sixth double century scored in 132 years of Test cricket at Old Trafford, saw him bat for more than 10 hours.

Woakes, who earlier on Saturday

made a brisk 58, then underlined his growing all-round credentials with three for 18 in six overs as he dismissed Mohammad Hafeez (18), Azhar Ali and nightwatchman Rahat Ali (both one).

Left-handed opener Shan Masood (30 not out) and Pakistan captain Misbah-ul-Haq (one not out) got through to the close.

England resumed on their overnight 314 for four, with vice-captain Root 141 not out after he had shared a second-wicket stand of 185 with skipper and fellow senior batsman Alastair Cook (105).

Although sent in as a nightwatchman, Woakes showed his batting class on Saturday during a boundary-filled fifty that saw him outscore Root in a fifth-wicket partnership of 103.

Two not out overnight, Woakes -- who has scored nine first-class hundreds -- was soon demonstrating a fundamentally orthodox batting technique with a succession of fours off Rahat.

Mohammad Amir, another of Pakistan's left-arm quicks, was uppercut for six high over third man by Woakes.

Root had not given a chance on Friday but on 155 he had a reprieve when an outside edge off leg-spinner Yasir Shah just carried to slip.

But Younis Khan was slow to react to the difficult low catch.

Woakes's 104-ball innings, which included eight fours and a six, ended when he chipped a return catch straight back to Shah to leave England 414 for five.

That gave Shah then-innings figures of one for 139 in 38.4 overs -- a

marked contrast to his man-of-the-match return of 10 for 141 during Pakistan's 75-run win in the first Test at Lord's last week.

SCOREBOARD				
<b>ENGLAND:</b> First Innings (overnight: 314-4)				
Cook b Amir			105	
Hales b Amir			10	
Root c Hafeez b Riaz			254	
Vince c Sarfraz b Rahat			18	
Ballance b Rahat			23	
Woakes c and b Shah			58	
Stokes c Sarfraz b Riaz			34	
Baird c Misbah b Riaz			58	
All not out			2	
Extras: (lb-9, w-8, nb-10)			27	
Total: (For 8 wickets declared in 152.2 overs)			589	
Did not bat: S Broad, J Anderson				
FOW: 1-25, 2-210, 3-238, 4-311, 5-414, 6-471, 7-577, 8-589.				
<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Amir	29	6	89	2
Rahat	29	4	101	2
Riaz	26.2	1	106	3
Shah	54	6	213	1
Azhar	11	0	52	0
Masood	3	0	19	0
<b>PAKISTAN:</b> First Innings				
Hafeez c Root b Woakes			18	
Masood not out			30	
Azhar c and b Woakes			1	
Younis c Baird b Stokes			1	
Rahat c Ballance b Woakes			4	
Misbah not out			1	
Extras: (lb-1, nb-1)			2	
Total: (For 4 wickets in 24 overs)			57	
To bat: Shafig, Sarfraz, Riaz, Amir, Shah				
FOW: 1-27, 2-43, 3-48, 4-53.				
<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Anderson	6	3	7	0
Broad	5	2	9	0
Ali	3	0	11	0
Woakes	6	0	18	3
Stokes	4	0	11	1

## Fizz fumbles

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After making a big splash on his debut in the NatWest T20 Blast in England, Sussex CCC's Mustafizur Rahman had an outing to forget as Surrey CCC defeated his side by six wickets at the Kennington Oval in London on Friday night.

The Fizz got his campaign off to a flying start with a four-wicket haul that helped the Sussex Sharks to a comfortable win over Essex. However, he went wicketless yesterday and conceded 31 runs in his 3.2 overs.

With the 20-year-old's variations and cunning always posing a threat to batsmen, Sussex would have been quietly confident heading into the last over needing to defend eight runs, but Mustafizur failed where he was expected to shine.

Chris Morris ran two off the first ball and with just six runs required off five balls, he blasted Fizz over the boundary to put the game to bed.

Sussex will now take on Gloucestershire on July 24 and Hampshire on July 27 in the Royal London One-Day Cup before facing Glamorgan in their last T20 Blast group stage tie on July 28.

## India take control

AFP, North Sound



Mohammed Shami snared two more wickets and Umesh Yadav grabbed his first victims as the West Indies crashed to 157 for seven replying to India's first innings total of 566 for eight declared at tea on the third day of the first Test on Saturday.

Opener Kraigg Brathwaite was the only batsman to defy the Indian assault for any protracted period but his was the last wicket to fall before the interval.

Unable to get his bat out of the way of a sharp lifter from Yadav, he fell for 74, giving wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha his fifth dismissal of the innings.

Yadav had claimed his first wicket of the innings just a few minutes earlier when he ended the brief defiance of Roston Chase, the debutant miscuing an attempted pull when on 23 and giving a simple catch to Indian captain Virat Kohli at short midwicket.

His dismissal ended a 47-run partnership for the sixth wicket with Brathwaite and held up India's progress for just over an hour when it appeared they would have ripped through the rest of a suspect batting line-up just after lunch.

That was when Shami, in the midst of an inspired spell of bowling, removed Marlon Samuels and Jermaine Blackwood in the same over to have the West Indies tot-

tering at 92 for five.

Having dismissed Darren Bravo just before lunch to a catch at the wicket, Shami then drew Samuels into a careless waft outside the off-stump for Saha to take another catch and extend the experienced batsman's wretched form in Tests since the tour of Sri Lanka nine months earlier.

Blackwood was then surprised by the extra pace and bounce of the bowler's fourth delivery to him and Rahane held the comfortable catch at gully to send the batsman back to the pavilion without scoring.

At that stage, the West Indies had lost four wickets for 24 runs either side of the lunch interval.

In contrast to the afternoon rout, India were made to work hard for early success at the start of the day as Brathwaite and nightwatchman Devendra Bishoo defied the efforts of all five frontline bowlers for 75 minutes.

Amit Mishra got the breakthrough, the leg-spinner luring Bishoo into the sweep shot and Saha effecting the sharp stumping the batsman marginally out of his ground.

Real hopes for prolonged resistance rested heavily on the shoulders of Brathwaite and new batsman Bravo.

But the left-hander's attempt to gather runs backward of point off Shami proved his undoing as extra bounce resulted in an edge to Saha and jubilation among the Indians.

SCOREBOARD				
<b>INDIA:</b> 1st Innings 566 for 8 declared				
<b>WEST INDIES:</b> 1st Innings (overnight 31/1)				
Brathwaite c Saha b Yadav			74	
Chandrika c Saha b Shami			16	
Bishoo st Saha b Mishra			12	
Bravo c Saha b Shami			11	
Samuels c Saha b Shami			1	
Blackwood c Rahane b Shami			0	
Chase c Kohli b Yadav			23	
Dowrick not out			6	
Holder not out			9	
Extras: (lb-2, w-1, nb-2)			5	
Total: (For 7 wickets in 44 overs)			157	
To bat: Brathwaite, Gabriel				
FOW: 1-30, 2-68, 3-90, 4-92, 5-92, 6-139, 7-144.				
<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Sharma	13	5	24	0
Yadav	8	5	12	0
Shami	10	1	23	2
Ashwin	8	3	22	0
Mishra	5	1	7	1



England batsman Joe Root kept his fantastic innings rolling on, finishing on 254, against Pakistan on the second day of the second Test at Old Trafford.

PHOTO: REUTERS