

SPORT



The fans were kept waiting for the start of the Bangladesh Premier League as mother nature's fury was unleashed on the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, forcing both fixtures on the opening day to be abandoned. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

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No action on wet opening day

SPORTS REPORTER

The opening day of the Bangladesh Premier League's fourth season was all set to be a classic. Bangladesh had just achieved their biggest win by beating England in a Test for the first time and that was perhaps why enthusiastic fans lined up outside the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium (SBNS) in large numbers yesterday.

For a moment, it seemed as though the SBNS was hosting an international series rather than a domestic competition. After all, the BPL attendance in the last few seasons was not that great.

However, yesterday, hundreds of fans braved the rain and waited for hours before they were finally let in the stadium at around 3:00pm.

Unfortunately for them, both the scheduled matches had to be abandoned due to the incessant rainfall. Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's Comilla Victorians was supposed to take on Darren Sammy's Rajshahi Kings in the afternoon. However, that game was called off at around 4:45pm.

The evening game between Shahid Afridi's Rangpur Riders and Mahmudullah Riyad's Khulna Titans was supposed to begin at 7:15 pm. However, the rain caused by a tropical depression in the Bay

of Bengal that is forecast to manifest as Cyclone Nada, fell throughout the evening. The match was eventually called off at 9:25pm.

The rains did stop for a brief period at around 7:30 pm and that provided hopes of a curtailed match. The covers were briefly taken off the wicket and the groundsmen were inspecting the situation. The players had come out of their dressing room and were seen talking to the umpires. However, minutes later the drizzle resumed and the covers were back on.

The matches scheduled to take place on Saturday and Sunday might meet a similar fate as the rain is expected to continue till November 6.

The only respite for the fans at the stadium was that they got to see rock star Ayub Bacchu perform live. The circumstances under which the band performed were a little odd. They were given a spot at a corner of the stadium and each of the members performed underneath an umbrella. So, every time Ayub Bacchu went into one of his riveting solos, he had to ensure that he was underneath the shade and did not move too far.

Following the rock show, firecrackers were burst from the press box end. What could have been a festive beginning unfortunately ended with all four teams with a point apiece.

BANGLADESH TOUR OF NEW ZEALAND Fizz, 3 newcomers in preliminary squad

SPORTS REPORTER

Nasir Hossain, Rubel Hossain and Kamrul Islam Rabbi have not been included in the preliminary squad for Bangladesh's tour of New Zealand set to begin on December 26. The other big news is that pace sensation Mustafizur Rahman, currently recovering from shoulder surgery, has been included.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board yesterday announced the squad for the preparation camp in Sydney, Australia and the tour of

New Zealand.

The 22 players will leave for Australia after the Bangladesh Premier League and prepare for Bangladesh's tour of New Zealand in Australia. The Tigers are set to play three ODIs, two T20Is and two Tests in New Zealand.

The team includes three newcomers in, Nazmul Hossain Shanto, Ebadat Hossain and Tanveer Haider. Nazmul is a former under-19 player who had played under Mehedi Hasan Miraz.

"We have made a team keeping in mind the away conditions of New Zealand and the pacers and spinners we have taken in the team are the best possible options," said chief selector Minhajul Abedin. "Nasir, Kamrul, Al-Amin and Rubel have hence not been included in the team. We have included our best pacers, and since Taskin [Ahmed] is very much a part of that group, he has been included with a view to the New Zealand Tests.

"Ebadat and Nazmul have been selected as a part of the development process. They have been selected with an aim for the limited-overs format.

Leg-spin bowling all-rounder Tanveer has been a topic of discussion over the last few days, and he might turn out to be a surprise inclusion in the final squad.

SQUAD

Tamim Iqbal, Imrul Kayes, Mominul Haque, Mahmudullah Riyad, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Sabbir Rahman, Soumya Sarkar, Mosaddek Hossain, Nurul Hassan, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Shuvagata Hom, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Tajjul Islam, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Mustafizur Rahman, Taskin Ahmed, Shafiqul Islam, Shubhashis Roy, Mohammad Shahid, Ebadat Hossain, Tanveer Haider.

Stand by: Shahriar Nafees, Abdul Majid, Liton Kumar, Mosharraf Hossain, Kamrul Islam Rabbi, Al Amin Hossain, Alauddin Babu, Nasir Hossain, Rubel Hossain.

Famous four face off today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Premier League fixtures for today promises to provide plenty of excitement at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur with the four bigwigs of Bangladesh's cricket set to take on each other.

In the afternoon, Mushfiqur Rahim-led Barisal Bulls will take on Tamim Iqbal's Chittagong Vikings while Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's Comilla Victorians will take on Shakib Al Hasan's Dhaka Dynamites in the evening.

With the teams having been selected based on a rotational process during the players' draft, there are no clear favourites in the fourth season of the BPL. Each team has its match-winners and it will be difficult to predict which team will have the edge.

Take, for instance, Mushfiqur's Barisal. They may not have the traditional 'star' T20 players in their team, but with a very balanced lineup, they could pose problems. Their bowling department seems stronger than their batting with Al-Amin Hossain, Kamrul Islam Rabbi, Abu Haider Ronnie and Tajjul Islam. They also have a number of all-rounders in Dilshan Munaweera and Thisara Perera. It's a team that can do well no matter the conditions they face. And that is an aspect that Mushfiqur addressed while speaking to reporters in Mirpur yesterday.

"Honestly speaking, our team may not be very strong on paper. We don't have many stars, but we have players who can work as per the plan and prove to be vital in T20 cricket. Al-Amin is a very successful bowler, Ronnie was the highest wicket-taker last time and [Kamrul Islam] Rabbi is very talented too.

"We have got spinners too. On the whole, I think we have got a good team and I am happy," said Mushfiqur.

Their opponents, Chittagong, have a similarly balanced setup. Apart from the players who played for Chittagong last year - Tamim, Taskin Ahmed and Anamul Haque -- they have also included the likes of Abdur Razzak, Shubhashis Roy and Jubair Hossain

Likhon. With Tamim, Anamul Haque, Shoaib Malik, Jeevan Mendis and Mohammad Nabi in the team, their batting department seems slightly better than Mushfiqur's team.

Had yesterday's game against Rajshahi Kings not been washed out, Mashrafe's Comilla could have had a slight advantage over Shakib's Dhaka today. However, with both teams set to play for the first time today, things could get interesting.

Comilla will depend mostly on their local players. They will expect Liton Das and Imrul Kayes to do the bulk of their scoring. From the foreign list, Ahmed Shahzad and all-rounder Ashar Zaidi will also be expected to contribute. They can also use the services of Afghanistan leg-spinner Rashid Khan who had troubled Bangladesh's batsmen earlier this year.

While Comilla won't have much trouble picking their foreign squad, Dhaka will.

Six-month layoff looms for Steyn

AFP, Perth

The playing future of South African fast bowler Dale Steyn appeared in grave doubt Friday, with the cricketer expected to need surgery on his troublesome right shoulder as he faces the prospect of being sidelined for at least six months.

Steyn, who first hurt his shoulder late last year, aggravated the problem before lunch on the second day of the first Test against Australia in Perth as his series came to a premature end.

The 33-year-old right-arm had just bowled the fourth ball in his 13th over when he clutched at the shoulder and left the field.

Scans at a local hospital revealed a fracture in his right shoulder and he will return to South Africa for possible surgery at the conclusion of the Test.

Team doctor Mohammed Moosajee said Steyn, who is just four Test wickets shy of Shaun Pollock's South African record, was likely to be sidelined for at least six months.

Tamim's suspension won't apply to BPL

SPORTS REPORTER

The Chittagong Vikings are set to play their first Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) match against the Barisal Bulls today afternoon at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium. Ahead of the game though, confusion surrounding the participation of Chittagong captain Tamim Iqbal arose yesterday.

In order to understand the reason behind the uncertainty, one has to revisit the Dhaka Premier League encounter between Abahani Limited and Prime Doleshwar Sporting Club, which took place on June 13 2016.

In an unusual occurrence, the umpires left the field in the second innings of the game leaving the match incomplete in the 17th over of the second innings. A stumping decision had gone against Abahani, when Saqlain Sajib thought he had sent Rakibul Hasan packing. However, when the batsman was ruled not out, the Abahani players were enraged.

A long discussion ensued between a visibly upset Tamim, Abahani's captain, and the umpires. An over later, the umpires decided that they would not continue officiating the match.

The official statement from the

match referee was that both the umpires had suddenly fallen sick and could not continue officiating the game. As there was only one reserve umpire present at the venue, the match had to be stopped.

In order to address the issue, the BCB had formed a special committee to investigate the unfinished match. The committee members were Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) directors Nazmul Karim Tinku, Sheikh Sohel, BCB chief match referee ASM Roquibul Hasan and BCB technical committee member Athar Ali Khan.

On June 22 2016, after Abahani's last game of the league, the BCB released a press release stating the judgment of the committee. According to the press release, the committee decided to ban Tamim for one domestic match and also fine

him one lakh taka.

The following were the exact words used in the press release: "For breaching the code of conduct for players during the match, Abahani Limited captain Tamim Iqbal Khan has been fined BDT one (01) lac and also suspended for one (01) domestic tournament match."

Going by the statement issued by the BCB, Tamim should be suspended from the first BPL game since the BPL is a domestic match and this will be his first domestic game since the punishment.

However, member-secretary of the BPL's technical committee IH Mallick clarified the situation and said that the ban would only be applicable on a 50-over game.

"There shouldn't be any confusion here. He was banned because of an incident that took place in a 50-over match and so it won't affect his participation in the BPL. Besides, the BPL is a franchisee-based tournament so it's different.

"If there were any restrictions regarding Tamim's participation in the league, we would have clarified that before the players' draft, when the teams bought the players," said Mallick.



SHAKIB AL HASAN MUSHFIQUR RAHIM

They have got Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene, Andre Russell, Dwayne Bravo, Seakkuge Prasanna and Ravi Bopara available.

Speaking to reporters yesterday, skipper Shakib said that it was going to be difficult to select the four overseas players for every game. It is however highly likely that the Dynamites will go in with Russell, Bravo and Sangakkara at least. The last spot could be a tussle and one that could be finalised based on the makeup of the local players.

With Mosaddek Hossain, Nasir Hossain, Mohammad Shahid and Sanjamul Islam, the local players can be quite a handful as well. The advantage that they have is that they have got a number of all-rounders in the team. The team could see a minimum of five all-rounders in the playing eleven.

Dramatic fightback puts SA in front

AFP, Perth

South Africa overcame the loss of star paceman Dale Steyn to another shoulder injury to produce a stunning comeback on the second day of the opening Test against Australia in Perth Friday.

In reply to South Africa's 242, Australia were cruising at 158 for none early on day two, but then lost all 10 wickets for just 86 runs to lead by only two after the first innings.

At stumps on the second day, the visitors were 104 for two, an overall lead of 102 and arguably in the favoured position in the match, which

seemed unthinkable 24 hours earlier.

Dean Elgar was on 46 and JP Duminy was on 34.

That pair had added 59 after the Proteas lost two early second innings wickets, but their remarkable fightback was soured by news that Steyn would miss the remainder of the series.

Australia, who were in total control before Warner fell, then lost four wickets for just 23 runs.

Warner said the collapse continued a frustrating trend of middle order collapses for the Australians.

"I feel there has been a trend for 12 or 18 months and it is tough to see as an opening batter when we

fall away that easily.

"We have to knuckle down as a batting unit and build partnerships."

Warner has 768 runs in Tests in Perth at 96 apiece and his opening partnership with Shaun Marsh was a record for Australia against the Proteas at the ground.

The dashing left-hander appeared certain to score his fourth Test century at the venue, but was caught at first slip by Hashim Amla and his dismissal sparked a remarkable period of play.

Just eight runs later, Steyn left the field mid-over, after reinjuring his troublesome right shoulder in an around-the-wicket delivery to

Usman Khawaja.

One run later, Khawaja joined Warner back in the pavilion when he was clean-bowled by young paceman Rabada for four.

South African hopes were further boosted when Australian captain Steve Smith was the victim of a highly contentious lbw decision for a duck.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 242
AUSTRALIA: First innings 244 (Warner 97, Marsh 63; Philander 4-56, Rabada 2-78, Maharaj 3-56)
SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings 104 for 2 (Elgar 46 not out, Duminy 34 not out; Siddle 1-12)



South Africa spearhead Dale Steyn went down to yet another shoulder injury on the second day of the first Test against Australia yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS