

**CHANNEL 9 & SONY SIX**  
**Bangladesh Premier League T20**  
 Barisal Bulls v Ctg Vikings  
 Live from 2:30pm  
 Comilla Victorians v Dhaka Dynamites  
 Live from 7:15pm

**BOISHAKHI TV**  
**Bangladesh Premier League**  
 Sk Russel v Rahmatganj  
 Live from 3:30pm  
 Sk Jamal v Uttar Baridhara  
 Live from 6:15pm

**STAR SPORTS 2**  
 Australia v South Africa  
 First Test, Day 3  
 Live from 8:30am  
**STAR SPORTS SELECT HD 1**  
 English Premiership  
 Man City v Middlesbrough

Live from 9:00pm  
 Chelsea v Everton  
 Live from 11:30pm  
**STAR Sports Select HD 2**  
 Bundesliga  
 Bayern Munich v Hoffenheim  
 Live from 8:30pm

Frankfurt v FC Koln  
 Live from 11:30pm  
**SONY SIX**  
 Primera Liga  
 Granada v Deportivo  
 Live from 6:00pm  
 Real Sociedad v Atletico Madrid

Live from 9:15pm  
 Osasuna v Alves  
 Live from 11:30pm  
 Las Palmas v Eibar  
 Live from 1:45am (Sunday)

**Bangladesh Premier League T20**  
 Barisal Bulls v Chittagong Vikings

Time: 2:30pm  
 Comilla Victorians v Dhaka Dynamites

Time: 7:15pm  
 Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium

**Bangladesh Premier League**  
 Sk Russel v Rahmatganj

Time: 3:30pm  
 Sk Jamal v Uttar Baridhara

Time: 6:15pm  
 Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

# A glorious past that mocks the dire present

AL-AMIN



Those who have seen the best of Bangladesh football and are now painfully watching the worst of it are convinced that the flawed structure has little to do with the beautiful game's rise and fall in the country.

The game was purely Dhaka-centric when it was popular from the 1970s to early 1990s. Our football has never grown or followed the way it has in other established footballing nations in the world. In most countries football clubs are city-based and each team has its own unique followers. While in other countries there are FCs (Football Clubs), we have SC (Sporting Club), KC (Krina Chakra), KS (Krina Sangha) et al. More importantly our clubs are multi-faceted and their involvement at times ranges from football to kabaddi. Our football clubs do not have a system to generate their own income and mostly survive on donations.

Despite being at absolute odds with the established structure, Bangladesh football's popularity grew based on two Dhaka clubs -- Mohammedan and Abahani. These are the two clubs that have divided the country's fans into two camps over the course of a fierce rivalry of 40-odd years. The distance between the two clubs is merely 10 kilometers of an ever-growing capital, which has over the years earned the dubious reputation of the go-to city for anyone who wants to excel in his or her respective fields or to earn quick money.

Just how popular football was in the mid 70s to early 90s can be an absolute fairytale for the present generation that has grown up watching the English Premier League or the Spanish La Liga. But for those who are now in their mid-forties and above, Dhaka football back then was the purest expression of fandom.

Growing up in the old part of the city, I have not only fallen in love with our domestic football but have been very much part of that endless discussion revolving around the players after

a defeat or a win of my fancied team or the opposition camp.

At that time passions ran so deep that we were engaged in competitions like outnumbering our rival camp when it came to hoisting the club flag on rooftops. Not only that, the bigger the flag, the bigger the satisfaction was the motto at that time. In those days the atmosphere was so vibrant before a football match that you did not need to turn to newspapers to know which teams were playing.

It was not just that mouthwatering Abahani-Mohammedan match, but every game those two teams played drew enormous ripple and crowd. One may laugh knowing that in those days we bought season tickets and turned up to the Bangabandhu National Stadium well in advance (sometimes five to six hours before kick-off) to watch our beloved team win or to see our rivals lose a point or three. 'Wari ailo' (here comes Wari) was a popular jibe after either of the two big teams suffered a defeat against the lightweights of that time.

During those heydays of football the biggest concern of every parent living in Dhaka and its surrounding districts was their disobeying offspring and even grown-up family members, who were hell bent on turning up to the ground to watch a football match despite being prone to being a subject of a pitched battle after almost every game involving fans of the two teams.

This is only a small reference to how passionately Dhaka football was followed at a time when almost every discussion over a cup of tea dominated the smallest details of that rivalry and the cast of characters of the two rival camps famously branded as 'the black and whites' and 'the sky blues'.

I was watching the Liverpool versus Manchester United game on October 17 and was wondering if the noise created from the famous Kop End at Anfield was more earth-shaking than what we had been associated with at our own 'Big Bowl' during our own Dhaka derby.

That Dhaka derby is still played and won, but unfortunately the missing



**The Citycell Super Cup final in 2009 reminded most of the past as traditional powerhouses Mohammedan and Abahani reignited their storied rivalry in front of a packed house reminiscent of Bangladesh football's heydays. Unfortunately nowadays a match between even these two teams fails to draw spectators, whose numbers have been dwindling since before the turn of the millennium.**

PHOTO: STAR FILE

element is that unbridled passion on that same hallowed turf. The reference of that rivalry, which is now completely missing, is perhaps the biggest reason for the free fall of Bangladesh's football standard that hit its nadir in Thimphu two weeks ago.

The 3-1 defeat against Bhutan sparked such an uproar in the football fraternity that a total overhaul of the country's football has now become the popular demand. Knives are already out against Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Kazi Salahuddin for sponsoring that disaster with many demanding his resignation from the top post he has been occupying for nine years. The more serious allegation against Salahuddin, an icon of Bangladesh football's glorious days, is his unrealistic vision which has played a big role in that recipe for disaster. He is being criticised for being too focused on the national team and extremely oblivious of the youth development programme.

Although the former national

striker, with the distinction of being the first Bangladeshi to have played in a professional league, tried everything in his power to run the top-tier Dhaka Leagues (Bangladesh Premier League and Bangladesh Championship League) without any interruptions, his critics came down on him hard for his failure to run the lower tiers of the Dhaka League and the district football leagues consistently. He has also failed to make the District Football Associations (DFA) truly functional and his effort to give the club structure a professional attire bit the dust in the backdrop of a ground reality guided by financial constraints.

These are all valid criticisms and, despite all his efforts and the spectacular ideas which he tried to implement, Salahuddin's nine-odd years at the helm can be best described as a philosophy that had a negative impact on an already 'moribund' football scene that has been living on saline even before he took over.

Some people might even say that

Salahuddin's nine years have been a total waste. But is there anybody around who can come up with a formula which will bring back the glory days of football? To be honest we need every stakeholder of football to sit together and work day in and day out in earnest if we are to pull Bangladesh's football out of the grave. In that context, the Dhaka clubs must play the biggest role.

People often refer to the success of Bangladesh's cricket as a model for football to follow, but we tend to forget that football is more club-based than cricket. Cricket will still grow if the clubs cease to play the game, but for football to prosper we need a very strong club-based structure.

It was an opportunity lost when our club football was very popular. The federation officials at that time rested on their laurels and never thought of forming a sustainable structure. We are also criticising the BFF for not putting enough effort to build a strong youth structure. There are only a handful of

instances of a national federation embarking on a strong youth system or the sidelines of a strong club youth system.

Besides, why are we not criticising the BKSP for failing to produce young players for a long time? Over the years BKSP developed a lot of quality players who not only excelled at the club level, but also served the national team with distinction.

There is a small instance of the impact a set of BKSP players had while playing for a non-descript Youngmen's Fakirerpool Club in the Dhaka League in the early 90s. If I am not mistaken, that set perhaps played the most modern football after Brothers Union (in 1982). The biggest facet of that team was the use of the wingbacks in what was an entertaining brand of total football.

There are so many instances in Dhaka football where it was just not about the rivalry of the two big teams but also the exceptional efforts from the lightweights. The Dhaka League could have been even more meaningful had the federation been more proactive against the evils of arranged affairs -- an open secret and which has done untold damage to our football in the long run.

We have done enough to damage our football. Now the biggest question is are we really serious about stopping the rot? It needs a thorough soul-searching and it should start from the top brass to all the clubs -- from a Premier to a Pioneer outfit. We do not need a national team management committee; we need a disaster management committee involving every stakeholder of the game. We need to bring back the Abahani-Mohammedan rivalry, which is not just a piece of our history, but a culture deeply rooted in our footballing existence. It is about time the football authorities become accommodative rather than imposing. It is also time for the clubs to decide in which system they will fit in, considering all the constraints.

The destiny of our football is at the hand of the clubs.

# FIFA emphasises on youth and grassroots development

SPORTS REPORTER



FIFA senior development manager Mike Pfister has termed the draft master plan of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) as a very ambitious one and emphasised on the need for youth and grassroots development in the final plan.

The game's governing body presented a four-year master plan before a four-member FIFA delegation headed by Pfister -- the son of former Bangladesh coach Otto Pfister -- who came here to look at the BFF's tailor-made projects under the new FIFA Forward programme in which each FIFA member will be provided US\$ 7.5 lakh per year, subject to approval from the FIFA development committee.

"It is very good opportunity to come here and discuss the massive plan. We discussed the potential support that FIFA can put on table. We will analyze it [the BFF master plan] in the next couple of months.

FIFA is here to support the BFF to mobilise knowledge and provide financial support in key areas.

"FIFA doesn't distribute development funding. These funds are given for development programmes with a clear objective and we control that money very, very carefully. It is a controlled mechanism so that the money which is invested reaches its destined objective," Pfister said at a media briefing at the BFF House yesterday, summing up the delegation's three-day visit to Bangladesh where they talked to high-ranking government officials, BFF higher-ups, club officials, DFA officials and BFF staff.

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin informed that they have already prepared four projects for the first year -- a year-long training programme for the national boys' U-16, girls' U-16 and men's U-18 teams ahead of the AFC and SAFF championships alongside the construction of a players' dormitory on the rooftop of the BFF House and a gymnasium. The fourth project is the running of two youth football

tournaments across the country.

"It is a comprehensive plan [the four-year plan] but we still found it to be very ambitious and one advice is that the more projects they present, the harder it will be to reach their objectives. Our advice is to be realistic and concrete. Our plan is not for four years, it is for two years. We will see the first two years and, based on the success of these projects, we will start afresh for the next two years pending approval," said Pfister.

"First and foremost, when there is no development at the grassroots and no youth football in a country, that country's future in football is endangered. Particular plans and particular angles can be put on grassroots and youth football development. It's a shame that no club here has a youth team," added Pfister.

Pfister is well aware of the condition of Bangladesh football as he had been in Bangladesh with his father 20 years ago and he believes there is potential here.

"It's very difficult time now. Look at Bangladesh's performance on the

international scene. Of course the performances at the international level are a reflection of what is done here. That is an alarming wake-up call. We believe that Bangladesh needs a turning point. It's always a time to close a chapter and begin a new one."

Asked whether Bangladesh football was going down the right path, Pfister replied: "Before any success at the youth level, it is quite frequent that the country needs a wake-up call. Germany were crushed in the European Championships in 2010 and that was a wake-up call for them. After that they appointed a technical director for the first time and redesigned the system.

"Are we are on right track or not? We are not going down the same path and aiming for the same objectives. It is important to establish the objectives together. That is why we are here and why the master plan is being developed. We have advised them to make the master plan a unique one taking all the stakeholders into consideration. If the BFF follows the advice, I am sure you will see positivestwoyears later," he concluded.



**Jamaican sprint superstar Usain Bolt signs autographs for young fans in Melbourne yesterday.**

PHOTO: AFP

# Bolt to make Australia bow

AFP, Melbourne



Sprint superstar Usain Bolt will compete in Australia for the first time when he headlines an innovative team athletics event next year, he said on Friday.

The nine-time Olympic champion, 30, will captain the 'Bolt All-Stars' for the inaugural Nitro Athletics competition in Melbourne in February.

"This will be track and field as it's never been seen before and that's why I'm involved, not only as a competitor, but also as a team captain," Bolt said at the official launch in Melbourne.

Bolt, who sealed an amazing 'triple triple' of Olympic sprint titles in Rio in August, is reportedly set to pick up Aus\$1 million (US\$760,000) as the face of the new series.

The first edition will take place at Melbourne's Lakeside Stadium on February 4, 9 and 11, involving six teams of 24 athletes, split equally between men and women.

The meets will include non-traditional events such as middle-distance and hurdles relays in an attempt to broaden athletics' appeal.

"Nitro Athletics is what track and field needs, a fresh way to present the sport," Bolt said.

The appearance in Melbourne will kick off Bolt's preparations for what is expected to be his final major competition, the world championships in London in August.

Although Bolt is expected to retire after London, he has reportedly not ruled out extending his career to the 2018 Commonwealth Games on Australia's Gold Coast.

Besides Bolt, several other top names have expressed an interest in the new series with announcements expected over the coming weeks.

# Ruthless Murray

AFP, Paris

Andy Murray stepped up his assault on Novak Djokovic's world number one ranking by thrashing Lucas Pouille to ease into the quarter-finals of the Paris Masters on Thursday.

Murray reeled off the final eight games as he dispatched French 13th seed Pouille 6-3, 6-0 to extend his winning streak to 17 matches.

"I thought I returned well today. I had chances in almost all of his service games throughout the match. And on this surface, obviously when it's a bit quicker, that's good," said Murray.

"I felt tired (this morning) because it was a late finish (from Wednesday night when Murray defeated Fernando Verdasco) but I felt all right once I got going," added the second seed, having equalled last season's career-best total of 71 wins.

Murray, runner-up in Paris last year, will next meet Tomas Berdych who beat Gilles Simon 6-4, 6-3.

# Five-star Aduriz makes history

AFP, Bilbao



Veteran striker Aritz Aduriz made history as he scored all five goals for Athletic Bilbao in the Spanish club's 5-3 Europa League win against Genk on Thursday.

The 35-year-old had a hat-trick by half-time at San Mames, got his fourth goal in the 74th minute and completed a rare nap-hand by netting from the spot -- his third penalty -- in stoppage time.

Aduriz is the first player to score five goals in a Europa League match and the first to score a hat-trick of penalties in the competition.

The last player to do so in the old UEFA Cup was the Italian Fabrizio Ravanelli for Juventus against CSKA Sofia in 1994.

The tally doubled Aduriz's tally for the season to 10 goals in all competitions and the win improved Athletic's prospects of advancing to the knockout rounds.

The Basque club are second in Group F with six points behind Genk on goal difference.



**Athletic Bilbao striker Aritz Aduriz pumps his fist after scoring his fifth goal against Genk during their Europa League encounter at the San Mames Stadium on Thursday.**

PHOTO: AFP