



What to WATCH

DAY'S EVENT

National Cricket League  
(Four-Day Match, Day-1)  
Time: 9:30am  
Khulna v Dhaka  
Venue: Fatullah Stadium

STAR SPORTS 2  
Australia v Pakistan  
Second Test, Day 3  
Live from 5:30am (Wednesday)

TEN 1 HD  
South Africa v Sri Lanka  
First Test, Day 2  
Live from 2:00pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT HD 1  
English Premiership  
Liverpool v Stoke City  
Live from 11:30pm

Abahani players celebrate one of their goals during their 4-0 victory against Uttar Baridhara at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday, a win which confirmed the fifth professional league title for the Sky Blues. PHOTO: STAR

# High five for Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani were crowned champions of the Bangladesh Premier League with a match in hand after the Sky Blues handed an emphatic 4-0 defeat to newcomers Uttar Baridhara Club in the penultimate round of the ninth edition professional football league at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

English midfielder Jonathan David, substitute striker Nabib Newaj Jibon, midfielder Emon Mahmud and substitute winger Faisal Mahmud stuck one goal apiece in the one-sided affair to help Abahani regain the coveted title three seasons since their last triumph in the 2011-12 season. It was their fifth overall title of the top-tier professional league.

The 14th win in 21 matches means the Dhanmondi-based outfit have 49 points, five more than second-placed Chittagong Abahani, with one game remaining. Chittagong Abahani's 1-1 draw against Muktijoddha Sangsad in the day's first match paved the way for the title for their Dhaka namesake.

However, the official announcement to declare the champions may take some time if the league committee wants to look into the 'suspicious' match between Abahani and Sheikh Jamal DC where the former came from behind to strike two goals within three minutes of the stoppage time to notch

ROLL OF HONOUR		
Season	Champions	Runners-up
2007	Abahani	Mohammedan SC
2008	Abahani	Mohammedan SC
2009	Abahani	Mohammedan SC
2010	Sheikh Jamal DC	Muktijoddha Sangsad
2011-12	Abahani	Muktijoddha Sangsad
2012-13	Sheikh Russel KC	Sheikh Jamal DC
2013-14	Sheikh Jamal DC	Abahani
2014-15	Sheikh Jamal DC	Sheikh Russel KC
2015-16	Abahani	Chittagong Abahani

up a dramatic 3-2 win. The league committee is supposed to discuss this matter in its next meeting.

Chittagong Abahani could have extended Abahani's wait for title till the final round had they secured full points against Muktijoddha Sangsad. Mamunul Islam had given the port city side the lead directly from a corner kick in the 31st minute, but Javed Khan levelled the margin with a powerful drive four minutes into the second half. The charges of Zulfikar Mahmud Mintu seemed to lack the urgency for a win, which was not the case for the eventual champions Abahani.

The Sky Blues, despite the absence of two key players in the starting eleven – injured Sunday Chizoba and Lee Tuck – never looked short of urgency.

Abahani took the lead in the 18th minute when David turned in Hemanta Vincent Biswas's defence-splitting pass before Jibon doubled the margin with a glancing header on 58 minutes. Emon made it 3-0 from the

spot on 83 minutes and Faisal wrapped up the victory with a header three minutes from time.

Abahani coach George Kottan was repeatedly thrown into the air by his charges in acknowledgement of his first success in domestic circuit in three attempts as the Sky Blues players celebrated their triumph.

"The title came through hard work. We didn't lose any match. It is a good team as I have always said. After hard work, this is success," said the Austrian, who had guided Bangladesh national team to SAFF Championship title back in 2003.

"Though I missed the last two crucial matches due to injury, I am really happy

UTTAR BARIDHARA 0 - 4 ABAHANI  
MUKTIJODDHA 1 - 1 CTG ABAHANI

to see Abahani become champions and join the celebration with the teammates. It is also a memorable league for me because I am the top-scorer [19 goals]," said Sunday, who tasted his first professional league title in five seasons.

Captain Ariful Islam also believed that winning the title was a result of teamwork as they had extra training beyond the coach's schedule.

"As there are many experienced players in the squad who had been part of different teams to win the league before, we have kept our concentration till the last which many teams could not do despite staying in the title race," said Ariful.

## Australia peg back Pakistan

AFP, Melbourne

Australian seamer Jackson Bird claimed two crucial wickets just before rain stopped play on the opening day of the second Test against Pakistan at the MCG on Monday.

When tea was called early due to rain, the visitors were 142 for four with opener Azhar Ali on 66 and first Test centurion Asad Shafiq on four, and that proved to be the stumps score as well.

The rain continued after tea and play was abandoned without any more action.

After winning the toss and choosing to bat the visitors made a cautious start but only Ali was able to build an innings of substance.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: First innings 142 for 4 (Azhar 66 not out, Azam 23, Younis 21; Bird 2-53)

## Bangladesh in final

SPORTS REPORTER



Hosts Bangladesh ensured their final berth in the Bangabandhu Senior Men's Asian Central Zone International Volleyball Championship with a 3-0 sets win over Maldives in their final group match at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladesh finished second in the five-team table with 10 points from four matches, just one point behind unbeaten group champions Kyrgyzstan. As per the bylaws of the championship, the top two teams will play in today's play-off match to decide the title while the third and fourth place finishers will play a place-deciding match on the same day.

To ensure the final, Bangladesh had to beat Maldives had Nepal beaten Kyrgyzstan in the day's first match, but Nepal failed to do so, losing the match in 3-1 sets. That result automatically put the hosts in final before they took to the court.

Bangladesh were under no pressure against a side they defeated two months ago in World Cup Zonal Qualifying round, but this time the hosts had to toil hard to tame the islanders, who came up with a fight, especially in the first and third set.

Bangladesh posted a never-wracking 30-28 point win in the first set after both teams fought neck and neck. However, the hosts notched an easy 25-16 win in the second set before again facing stiff challenge in the third set, which they eventually won 30-26.

## Conte sets Chelsea record

AFP, London



Spanish forward Pedro Rodriguez scored twice as red-hot leaders

Chelsea crushed Bournemouth 3-0 on Monday to register a club-record 12th consecutive Premier League victory.

Pedro struck either side of Eden Hazard's 50th English league goal at Stamford Bridge as Antonio Conte's side opened up a provisional nine-point lead at the summit in the Boxing Day action.

Olivier Giroud prevented Arsenal losing more ground, his 86th-minute header snatching a 1-0 win over West Bromwich Albion.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored one goal and set up two others as Manchester United closed to within three points of the Champions League places by beating Sunderland 3-1, while champions

Leicester City lost again.

Chelsea's victory over Bournemouth left them one win short of Arsenal's 2002 record of 13 successive victories within the same top-flight season.

Pedro broke the deadlock in the 24th minute, curling a left-foot shot into the top corner from Fabregas's pass following a neatly worked corner.

Hazard made it 2-0 four minutes into the second half, rolling a penalty into the bottom-right corner after he had drawn a foul from Simon Francis, with Pedro adding a deflected shot in stoppage time.

Manchester United enjoyed a far less complicated afternoon, sinking Sunderland to record a fourth successive league win for the first time under manager Jose Mourinho.

Daley Blind opened the scoring in the 39th minute, striding onto Ibrahimovic's lay-off and steering a shot into the bottom-right corner.

## Lakmal gives SL edge

AFP, Port Elizabeth

Suranga Lakmal took four wickets and gave Sri Lanka a slight edge on the first day of the first Test against South Africa at St George's Park on Monday.

Lakmal took four for 62 in 23 overs as South Africa reached 267 for six at the end of a day on which they failed to capitalise on a century opening partnership between Stephen Cook and Dean Elgar.

Opening bowler Lakmal pegged back the hosts by taking the first three wickets and later dismissed South African captain Faf du Plessis. Left-arm spinner Rangana Herath took two wickets, including that of JP Duminy, South Africa's top scorer with a fluent 63.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 267 for 6 (Cook 59, Elgar 45, Duminy 63;; Lakmal 4-62, Herath 2-48)

V-DAY HOCKEY

## Navy clinch title

SPORTS REPORTER

National player-studded Bangladesh Navy clinched the title of Marcel Victory Day Hockey tournament with a 3-2 win in tiebreaker over Bangladesh Army in the final at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The match rolled into penalty shootout after regulation time produced a 1-1 draw. Rasel Mahmud Jimmy of Bangladesh Navy converted a penalty corner to cancel out a 57th minute strike from Khorshedur Rahman of Bangladesh Army.

State minister for foreign affairs Shahriar Alam witnessed the final to distribute prizes among the winners where Fahmi Gulandas Babel MP, sponsors Walton's head of marketing FM Iqbal Bin Anwar and Bangladesh Hockey Federation's vice president Khaza Rahmatullah and tournament committee secretary Ehsan Rana were among others present.

## Jewel takes Fakirerpool top

SPORTS REPORTER

Fakirerpool Youngmen's Club took solo lead in the Marcel Bangladesh Championship League with a single-goal win over T&T Club at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Jewel separated the sides in the 71st minute with his third goal of the campaign and take Youngmen's Club to the top of the eight-team table with 20 points from 11 outings, two more than second-placed Saif SC who however played a match less than the leaders.

T&T Club were in fifth position with 12 points from 11 matches.

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