



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

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BPL
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 Muktijodha 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	Muktijodha Sangsad
2011-12	Abahani	Muktijodha 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 Muktijodha 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.

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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.

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