

SPORT



Dhaka Abahani's players (sporting blue) failed to contend with the high pressing football from TC Sports Club of Maldives in their Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup match at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday which the visitors won 1-0.

Kayes doubtful for SL

SPORTS REPORTER



Imrul Kayes's position in Bangladesh's Test team for the Sri Lanka series, which is expected to be

announced tomorrow, is in doubt as the Bangladesh Cricket Board's medical team have yet to deem him fit for the tour.

According to BCB chief selector Minhajul Abedin, the team management does not want to take any risk with Imrul following the bad experience that the team faced during the India series.

Imrul had just recovered from a muscle injury he had sustained during the New Zealand series when he went to play the lone Test in India. However, during the practice match, the left-hander hurt himself once again. Therefore this time around, the selectors want to be extra careful.

"It's difficult to tell how early he will be fit based on the reports of the physio. He should be playing a match [in the Bangladesh Cricket League] on Sunday. A lot will depend on that.

"It's not just his batting that we will focus on. He will need to prove his fielding as well. And it won't be enough if he fields at slips. He needs to move around and do some running as well," explained Minhajul.

"So from that aspect, we feel that he will need to play at least two BCL matches to regain full fitness. Because if he goes to Sri Lanka and gets a muscle injury again, that will be bad. We already had a bad experience in Hyderabad and we want to give more

focus this time," he added.

Aside from that, Bangladesh's Test team isn't likely to see too many changes from the India series. Mustafizur Rahman, who has played a number of BCL games already, is likely to make his return. He himself had said that he was feeling confident about the Sri Lanka series and Minhajul, who had observed Mustafizur during the BCL games, echoed the left-hander's sentiments.

On another note, Minhajul and co will have a meeting with Test skipper Mushfiqur Rahim today. They are likely to discuss Mushfiqur's position in the team as a wicketkeeper.

"We will have a discussion on it tomorrow and we can let you know then," said Minhajul, when asked if the management is planning to hand someone else the wicket-keeping gloves.

The camp for the tour is scheduled to begin on February 23. Shakib Al Hasan, Mahmudullah Riyad and Tamim Iqbal, who have gone to the United Arab Emirates to take part in the Pakistan Super League, will join the players directly in Sri Lanka.

The ODI series is scheduled to begin on March 25, with the practice match set to take place on March 22. As such, the ODI team will be announced a little later.

Meanwhile, the team management will be waiting on Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who had injured his thumb during the New Zealand series.

Back then the medical team had said that Mashrafe would be out for six weeks, which are about to come to an end today.

Shahid to go under knife

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh pacer Mohammad Shahid will fly to Australia today to undergo a surgery on his right knee. Shahid has been out of action ever since he suffered an ACL tear in late November last year.

As per the guidelines of the Bangladesh Cricket Board's medical team, Shahid was kept under observation for a few weeks. After that, it was decided that he would be sent to Australia to be operated on by Dr David Young.

Dr Young has operated on the likes of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Tamim Iqbal in the past. Shahid was initially selected as one of Bangladesh's lead pacers for the New Zealand series. He however, had to be replaced after his injury.

Abahani fall at first hurdle

ANISUR RAHMAN from Chittagong



Five-time Bangladesh Premier League champions Abahani made a frustrating start to the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup as they suffered a 1-0 defeat at the hands of TC Sports Club at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Ibrahim Mahudhee Hussain scored the decisive goal in the 16th minute and Abahani now find themselves in a precarious situation as they will have to face strong opponents in the form of Kyrgyzstan's FC Alga and South Korea's Pocheon Citizen FC in their next two matches.

Although Abahani enjoyed the lion's share of possession throughout the game, they failed to breach the solid-backline of TC Sports in the absence of striker Sunday Chizoba and attacking midfielder Lee Tuck, key components of Abahani's Premier League triumph.

Sheikh Jamal's Emeka Darlington was drafted upfront but the Nigerian failed to find any support from the midfielders, who were finding it hard to take control of the ball in the face of a high-pressing system from TC Sports Club.

That pressing football led to the visitors' first goal as Hassan Niaz nicked the ball from defender Tapu Barman and delivered a nice low cross for Ibrahim, who flicked the ball home from the six-yard box to put TC Sports Club ahead.

Abahani then found some footing and controlled the rest of the game but the failed to pull a goal back, while TC Sports Club were a bit unlucky not to get two more goals from flowing counter-attacks.

ABAHANI	0	-	1	TC SPORTS CLUB
POCHEON FC	0	-	3	FC ALGA

Earlier, in the opening match of the tournament, Pocheon Citizen FC got off to a fine start with a convincing 2-0 win over FC Alga at the same venue.

Pocheon may be a third-tier side in South Korea, but the All Orange proved why they were better than Kyrgyzstan's first-tier club with their skill, movement and control over the ball.

FC Alga were heavily-favoured against the unknown Pocheon side, who are playing their first international tournament, but the five-time

Kyrgyz Premier League champions were not up to the standards of the team from South Korea, a country that played the FIFA World Cup semifinals in 2002.

Pocheon took the lead against the run of play through a long-range strike from Jang Young IK in the 14th minute before Ji Kyeong Deuk doubled the lead six minutes later from inside the box.

Pocheon also created three more chances after the break but Kim Chan Heui and Jang Young IK squandered the opportunities while FC Alga failed to break through the Pocheon's backline and were reduced to trying their luck from distance. However, the shots from Erzattoktoaliev and Ildar Amirov went wide of the post.

"We are happy to show our ability in the match as we have come here with good preparation knowing that FC Alga may take the advantage of their physique," said Pocheon coach Kim Jae Young adding that his charges were ahead of FC Alga in terms of technique.

"It was a very difficult match for us because the Korean team is better than us. They play in the World Cup and we play in the Asian Cup, but we will try to be better in our next matches," said FC Alga coach Alexander.

Tamin, Shakib fail to shine

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh cricketers Tamim Iqbal and Shakib Al Hasan, who are playing for Peshawar Zalmi, failed to make a mark with the bat in the Pakistan Super League yesterday. Tamim was caught at mid-off for four, while Shakib was dismissed by Amad Butt in the 11th over at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium.

Despite their failures, Peshawar Zalmi managed to reach 136, courtesy of knocks from Shahid Afridi and Wahab Riaz towards the end.

In reply, Islamabad United overhauled Peshawar's total in the last ball of the match with Smith scoring a breezy 72 not out. Shakib Al Hasan took 1 wicket for 24 runs in his allotted 4 overs.

Earlier, Mahmudullah Riyad too didn't have much of a role to play during the game between the Lahore Qalandars and the Quetta Gladiators. Although his side, the Gladiators won, courtesy of a brilliant 88 from Kevin Pietersen, who smashed eight sixes and three fours, Riyad wasn't called into action with the bat.

With the ball, he bowled two overs and gave away 23 runs. The Gladiators successfully chased down Lahore's total of 200 in just 18.5 overs thanks to Pietersen and Sarfraz Ahmed, who scored 45 off 25 balls.

Holdings launch title defense

Ctg Abahani face Shaheen Asmayee today

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



Hosts Chittagong Abahani had been complete outsiders in the last edition of the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup tournament, but they stunned everyone as they clinched the title in the inaugural edition with a squad consisting of players from different clubs. This time around, they are more organized and determined to defend the title with a squad that has already proven its worth in the domestic circuit with a win in the Independence Cup and a second-place finish in the professional football league.

The second edition promises to be a tougher competition but Chittagong Abahani are considered one of the favourites and are ready to face their first test against Shaheen Asmayee FC of Afghanistan today.

The Premier League runners-up have struggled a bit upfront in the domestic circuit and in a bid to overcome that problem they have roped in Brothers Union's striking pair

of Nkowcha Kingsley and Augustine Watson - who together struck 27 goals in the Premier League. Apart from that, their ranks have been further bolstered by the inclusion of three more foreign players - Brazil's Tyson Silva, and the Nigerian duo of midfielder Adam Jankasa and defender Mufta Lawal.

Chittagong Abahani have also strengthened their midfield with Jamal Bhuiyan, Mohammad Abudullah, Jafar Iqbal, Mannaf Rabbi and Chowmirin Rakhaine, while they have proven campaigners in Sohel Rana, Mamunul Islam, Rubel Mia, Mohammad Ibrahim and Zahid Hossain, who was one of the key architects behind Chittagong Abahani's success in the inaugural edition.

"We have to play better and produce better results as defending champions. I am optimistic with the striking pair, who are in peak form. We also have good wingers who are capable of scoring," said coach Saiful Bari Titu.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Mohammedan will play the opener against Nepal's Manang Marshyangdi Club with hopes of a positive start.

BD women need big win

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh play Sri Lanka today in the last round of the ICC Women's World Cup Qualifier 2017 and they face an uphill task ahead. For them to make it to the ICC Women's World Cup 2017, they will need to beat Sri Lanka by a huge margin, which seems unlikely, going by their current form.

Bangladesh will have to beat Sri Lanka by 85 runs if they hope to make it ahead of Sri Lanka. In case they are chasing, Bangladesh will have to do it in quick time, depending on the target. For example, if Sri Lanka scores 200, Bangladesh will have to get to the target in 27.1 overs in order to edge out the opposition.

Bangladesh's run-rate at the moment is -1.006, while Sri Lanka's run-rate is -0.055. While Bangladesh are currently in fifth place, Sri Lanka are sixth.

The top four finishers of the ICC Women's World Cup Qualifier will join the four other teams who have already qualified to play the mega event later in the year.

A total of eight teams will be taking part in the World Cup. So far India and South Africa have booked their places, while Pakistan and Sri Lanka are the favourites to book the other two spots.

They will join England, New Zealand, Australia and West Indies.

Nat'l players to play 4th round

SPORTS REPORTER



Some national players will be playing in the fourth round matches of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) which will begin today at two venues.

Left-handed opener Imrul Kayes will play for Prime Bank South Zone against BCB North Zone at BKSP to assess his fitness. Imrul had pulled his thigh muscle while fielding during a practice match which forced him to miss the one-off Test match against India in Hyderabad.

"I will play the match to assess my condition," Imrul told The Daily Star over phone while travelling to BKSP last night.

Soumya Sarker and Mosaddek Hossain will play for South Zone according to captain Abdur Razzak.

"It will be crucial for Imrul because his appearance in the league will give us an idea about his condition. What I know

is that Mushfiqur Rahim has been given a rest along with pacers Taskin Ahmed and Mustafizur Rahman, but others are free to play," selector Habibur Bashar said yesterday.

"It's nice to see that players like Soumya and Mominul Haque willingly decide to play the four-day match Mominul's recent statement regarding the importance of playing longer-version domestic cricket is really encouraging for our cricket. There is no platform better for players than the longer-version domestic competition to correct mistakes and boost confidence," he continued.

South Zone skipper Abdur Razzak was also impressed by the change in attitude of the players towards longer-version domestic cricket.

"It's really encouraging as our players are now interested to play longer-version domestic cricket willingly; which was not case earlier," said Razzak.

In the other match at Fatullah, Walton Central Zone will take on Islami Bank East Zone.



Major General AKM Abdullahil Baque, vice-president of Kurmitola Golf Club, and Chairman of Prime Bank Azam J Chowdhury graced the opening ceremony of the three-day Prime Bank Cup and Prime Bank Challenge Cup Golf Tournament 2017 at the Kurmitola Golf course on Friday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



Encapsulating the hunger of the new breed of Tigers, Soumya Sarker -- along with other national players -- has decided to play the fourth round of the Bangladesh Cricket League instead of taking rest. He will hope to make an impression for South Zone and get in some practice ahead of Bangladesh's tour to Sri Lanka.

PHOTO: STAR