

SPORT

North muster fight while East surrender

SPORTS REPORTER

BCB North Zone thrived on twin tons to fight out a creditable draw against Prime Bank South Zone. But Islami Bank East Zone failed to take a leaf out of North's stubborn resistance and suffered a huge 227-run defeat against Walton Central Zone on the final day of the Bangladesh Cricket League's fourth round yesterday.

North were under more pressure of the two teams fighting to save their games. Resuming the final day on 154 for two North, who were following on after being dismissed for 242 in reply to South's massive first-innings total of 501, battled gamely at the BKSP in Savar with overnight batsmen Naem Islam and Farhad Hossain hitting brilliant centuries.

Farhad transformed his overnight 64 to 119 that contained nine fours and three sixes. He featured in a 134-run third wicket stand with Naem, whose unbeaten 129 eventually saved the match for North. A resolute Naem, who resumed the day on 24, batted for the whole three sessions of the day when his team finished on 403 for eight. The former national middle-order batsman hit 11 fours and a six in his unconquered innings.

Although off-spinner Nahidul Islam took his second five-wicket haul in the match, his effort was not enough for his side to enforce a result.

At the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium

in Fatullah, East Zone collapsed like a pack of cards after Central declared their second innings on 282 for seven and set them a stiff target of scoring 400 runs to win.

East were bundled out for 172 in 56.2 overs with off-spinner Shuvagata Hom ripping through the middle and tail with four for 46 after the new-ball pair of Kamrul Islam Rabbi and Mohammad Sharif struck at the top. Alok Kapali fought a lost battle with 71 but support from the other end was few and far between.

The win capped off a brilliant

POINTS TABLE					
Teams	Mat	W	L	D	Pts
North Zone	4	1	0	3	12
South Zone	4	1	0	3	12
Central Zone	4	1	2	1	9
East Zone	4	1	2	1	9

turnaround for Central after they were struck by an Abu Jayed storm on the first morning when they were reduced to 105 for five. Central had two outstanding performers in the match --national team's reserve wicketkeeper-batsman Nurul Hasan, who hit 65 in the first innings and followed it up with 45 in the second, and an ageless Mohammad Sharif who hit a crucial 70 in the first innings and finished the match with six wickets.

The next round of the four-team BCL will commence on February 26.



Chittagong Abahani and Mohammedan players fight for possession during their Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup encounter at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. The match ended in a goalless draw leaving both teams with a chance to progress. PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Mohammedan hold hosts

ANISUR RAHMAN from Chittagong



Mohammedan SC kept their hopes of making it to the semifinals of the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup alive by playing out a goalless draw against holders Chittagong Abahani after Shaheen Asmayee FC bounced back to hand a 3-1 defeat to Manang Marshyangdi Club.

The draw puts hosts Chittagong Abahani on top with four points from two outings, one point ahead of joint-second place teams Shaheen Asmayee and Manang Marshyangdi while Mohammedan lie at the bottom with one point.

All four teams from Group B still have a chance to make it to the semifinals with the final round of matches to be played Friday.

Buoyed by a 3-0 win over Shaheen Asmayee FC, Abahani were expected to dominate against Mohammedan, who came into the match after a 0-2 defeat to Manang Marshyangdi Club.

However, the scenario at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong was totally different as Chittagong Abahani chased Mohammedan for most of the match.

The Black and Whites showed their character as they put up a spirited performance and the hosts had a few close shaves, but Mohammedan could not cash in on the opportunities as Chittagong Abahani goalkeeper Ashraf Islam Rana made a string of brilliant saves. He first denied Towhidul Alam Sabuj, before twice keeping Gambian marksman Dawda Ceasay's efforts at bay in the first half.

Chittagong Abahani also exposed Mohammedan's backline once when Haitian forward Augustin Walson darted into the box after evading three players, but his cutback to his Nigerian partner Kingsley Chigozie came a bit too late and Mohammedan goalkeeper Mamun Khan easily pounced on the ball.

Mamun also made an acrobatic save to the left to stop a goal-bound

free-kick from Walson.

After resumption, Chittagong Abahani took control of the midfield and pressed for the lead, coming close to doing so in the 63rd minute, but captain Mamunul Islam's powerful drive from outside the box came back off the woodwork.

Chittagong Abahani carved out their last, and perhaps their

CTG ABAHANI 0 - 0 MOHAMMEDAN	
ASMAYEE 3 - 1 MANANG	
Amiruddin 36, 65, 77	Bimal 72

simplest, chance in the 83rd minute but midfielder Jamal Bhuiyan failed to tap into an open net from touching distance and the hosts had to settle for the draw.

"We were lucky not to lose this game because Mohammedan could have won the match. They had the mental approach to win the match, which was absent in my boys. The players did not play according to the plan which was frustrating for us," said Chittagong Abahani coach

Saiful Bari Tiu.

"It was a do-or-die match for us to stay in the race and we should have won the match. I am really disappointed to not have won this match," said MSC coach Abdul Kaiyum Sentu.

In the day's other match, captain Amiruddin Sharifi scored a hat-trick to power Shaheen Asmayee to a 3-1 win over Manang Marshyangdi.

The Afghani outfit had no alternative but to win the match to stay alive in the race for the semis and they came out strong against their Nepalese opponents, who were hoping to ensure a semifinal berth with a second win after their victory over Mohammedan.

Amiruddin struck in the 36th and 66th minutes to put Shaheen Asmayee ahead, but hopes of a comeback were ignited when Bimal Basnet scored for Manang Marshyangdi in the 72nd minute. However, Amiruddin put a dagger in the Nepalese's hearts with his third goal just five minutes later.



SHUVAGATA ... 4 for 46



NAEM ... 129 not out

SCORES IN BRIEF

CENTRAL ZONE: 328 and 282 for 7 dec (Marshall 73, Taibur 57, Nurul 45; Mominul 2-39, Ebadat 2-47, Kapali 2-52)

EAST ZONE: 211 and 172 all out in 56.2 overs (Kapali 71; Shuvagata 4-46, Sharif 2-19, Kamrul 2-40)

Result: Central Zone won by 227 runs.

SOUTH ZONE: 501

NORTH ZONE: 242 and 403 for 8 [F/O] (Naem 129 not out, Farhad 119, Junaid 46, Dhiman 41, Sohravadi 26; Nahidul 5-130, Rubel 1-24)

Result: Match drawn

Full Member status not a guarantee: ICC

STAR SPORT DESK

The concept of permanent Full Member Nations in the International Cricket Council (ICC) could be upended under proposed changes to the constitution of the governing body, an ESPNcricinfo report stated yesterday.

An email circulated among ICC members and obtained by the website revealed that there will be a clear path for Associates -- whose status will come under review every two years -- to become Full Members, while the latter's permanent status will be discontinued. Full Members' status will come under review every five years.

"Full Member status is not enshrined forever," the email states. "A Full Member may be re-classified as an Associate Member upon the recommendation of the Membership Committee where it fails to meet the Retention Criteria."

The Membership Committee, comprising both Full Member and Associate representatives, will decide on the promotion or demotion of members and will make decisions independent of the Executive Board, which will be limited to ensuring that due process is followed.

"The new Constitution will also provide for regular reviews of the membership criteria to ensure that Members are compliant, failing which they may be reclassified," the email stated. One of the main criteria, according to the report, is likely to be some degree of financial transparency.

Much more pressure in Tests: Taskin

SPORTS REPORTER



Not too long ago, Taskin Ahmed was used sporadically even in T20Is. He was given breathers in between ODIs in order to prevent any recurring injuries.

Compared to that phase, what Taskin has managed to do recently is quite spectacular. From being an injury-prone player, the 21-year-old has gone on to bowl 94 overs in the last three Tests. That's almost 13 overs per innings.

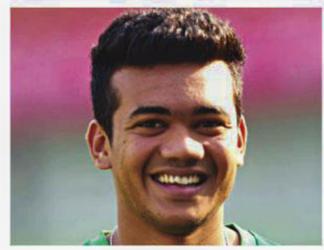
It has been hard on Taskin's body, he admits, but he claims to enjoy learning the new craft of Test bowling.

"By the grace of God, I am doing well at the moment. I am having to maintain a lot of things. It's difficult to stay fit. There's a lot more pressure while playing Tests than T20Is and ODIs.

"It's very crucial to stay physically fit. But what's more important is to be

mentally strong. For that, I am talking to the senior players. I have spoken to Mashrafe [Bin Mortaza] bhai as well. The biggest thing is to be mentally strong," explained Taskin.

The start to his Test career has not been too prolific. He has taken 5



wickets in the 94 overs he has bowled. That is as many as he had taken in his debut ODI alone.

But that is to be expected. Prior to the three Tests, he had only played 10 first-class games. Frequent injuries hurt his longer-version career and the

current phase is probably the first time in his life that Taskin finds himself capable of playing all three formats. He counts himself to be very lucky.

"By the grace of God, I am feeling good. I am bowling 30 to 35 overs in every game. This was something I couldn't do before. I am good now. Pacers can never be a hundred per cent fit. There is always some pain or the other. We have a good trainer. They are advising me. If things go well, hopefully everything will go well.

"Honestly speaking, I am very lucky. Injuries can happen at any moment. You might twist your leg while walking on the stairs. I have worked very hard. But the main thing is God's blessings. That is the main thing. I now think less about injuries. It's important to be strong mentally.

"I am inspired by Mashrafe bhai in this case. He asked me not to think much about injuries. Mashrafe bhai is my mentor in everything. My lifestyle, everything... I miss Mashrafe bhai in Test cricket," said the youngster.

Do or die for Abahani against FC Alga

Sky Blues banking on TC Sports-Pocheon result

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



Dhaka Abahani's hopes of ensuring a semifinal berth in the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup are hanging by a thread, but the Sky Blues will still be holding onto those hopes and aiming for a victory against FC Alga of Kyrgyzstan at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong today.

TC Sports Club, who have already qualified for the semifinals, are top of Group B with six points and they will play South Korea's Pocheon Citizen FC -- who are second with four points -- in the opening match of the day. A stalemate between Pocheon Citizen and TC Sports Club will see both teams through and turn the day's second match between Abahani and FC Alga into an academic affair.

However if Pocheon Citizen lose to TC Sports Club by any margin, Abahani will have a chance to leapfrog Pocheon to second, but to do so they must win by a convincing margin in order to go through

by virtue of a better goal difference.

"We have little chances to move into the semifinals as it also depends on the result of Pocheon and TC Sports Club. Whatever the result is in the first match, we will go there [to our match] for a win," said Abahani captain Ariful Islam yesterday.

After suffering a 1-0 defeat to TC Sports Club, Abahani showed character in their second match against Pocheon as they played out a goalless draw and Croatian coach Drago Mamic believes that the bold performance against Pocheon will help Abahani play confidently.

FC Alga were tipped as the pre-tournament favourites but they were surprisingly eliminated after suffering two successive defeats and they are now determined to end their campaign on a winning note.

"We did not come here as favourites; rather we took this tournament as part of our pre-season preparations. As we lost the first two matches, we are looking to end the tournament with a victory over Abahani," said FC Alga coach Alexander Beldinov.

Record Taylor ton ends SA streak

AFP, Christchurch



A record-breaking century for Ross Taylor steered New Zealand to a gripping six-run win over South Africa in the second one-day international in Christchurch on Wednesday.

Taylor scored an unbeaten 102 as New Zealand batted first and set a target of 290, with South Africa coming close thanks to a late 26-ball half-century from Dwaine Pretorius.

The result snaps a 12-match ODI winning streak for South Africa and levels the five-match series in New Zealand at 1-1.

Taylor completed his ton in dramatic fashion with a boundary off the last ball of the innings, claiming a New Zealand record of 17 ODI centuries.

The 32-year-old, who had shared the record of 16 with Nathan Astle, has been in a rich vein of form since returning from eyesurgery in early January.

"Nath was one of my idols growing up... so it's a little bit embarrassing from that point of view but records are there

to be broken," he said.

Taylor, who also became only the fourth New Zealander to score 6,000 ODI runs, received solid support from captain Kane Williamson and all-rounder Jimmy Neesham.

Neesham scored an unbeaten 71, while Williamson notched 69 -- a return to form for a batting line-up which has been over-reliant on tail-end contributions recently.

South Africa captain AB de Villiers blamed "sloppy" batting for the defeat.

"We've got a few things to work on," he said. "There were quite a few

soft dismissals, including mine, and not enough good partnerships."

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: 289 for 4 in 50 overs (Brownlie 34, Williamson 69, Taylor 102 not out, Neesham 71 not out; Pretorius 2-40)

SOUTH AFRICA: 283 for 9 in 50 overs (De Kock 57, Duminy 34, De Villiers 45, Miller 28, Pretorius 50, Phehlukwayo 29 not out; Boult 3-63, Santner 2-46)

Result: New Zealand won by six runs and level 5-match series 1-1.

Player-of-the-match: Ross Taylor.



Ross Taylor celebrates record 17th ODI century for New Zealand during the second ODI against South Africa in Christchurch yesterday. PHOTO: AFP