

# SPORT

## 'Best chance to beat Lanka'

SPORTS REPORTER

The rain in Colombo yesterday prevented the Bangladesh team from doing any sort of outdoor training. A number of the players instead decided to spend their time sweating it out in the gym.

"We were scheduled to have a practice session but couldn't do anything because of the weather. There wasn't much activity. The pacers spent most of their time in the gym. That's pretty much it," team manager Khaled Mahmud told The Daily Star yesterday.

There was, however, some time for a few press meets and the coaches of both teams spoke to the media regarding the series.

Bangladesh coach Chandika Hathurusingha exuded confidence and was also happy that the Tigers were touring Sri Lanka.

"I am happy that we are touring Sri Lanka. It gives me an opportunity to see my mother. I have got a lot of support over the years and a lot of motivation as well," said Hathurusingha.

"When I was playing for Sri Lanka, we were in a similar scenario like Bangladesh. We went through a steep learning process and it all changed for us in the mid 1990s. I would say Bangladesh are in a similar position at the moment," he further said.

Sri Lanka coach Graham Ford said that he expects the series to be a competitive one.

"We had Bangladesh in Sri Lanka in 2013 and it was very competitive. We were fortunate to get over the line on that occasion. They have a few players who were a part of that squad still playing for Bangladesh and this will be another competitive series," he said.

Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim, meanwhile, was in confident mood. "This is our best opportunity to beat Sri Lanka but we also have to remember that they whitewashed Australia here last year."

Sri Lanka captain Rangana Herath, who will be leading Sri Lanka in place of the injured Angelo Mathews, said that he was worried about the Sri Lankans in Bangladesh's camp.

He was referring to head coach Chandika Hathurusingha, batting coach Thilan Samaraweera and trainer Mario Villavarayan. He also reckons that this team would be the toughest Bangladesh side visiting the island.

"I would say that the way Hathurusingha thinks about the game has helped me too. With so many Sri Lankans in their camp, they have a good idea about our team and our game."

"I would say that this is the best team from Bangladesh that has come here. They beat England as well a few months ago, but their recent form is not that great with defeats to New Zealand and India," Herath said.

"I believe that in Test cricket they have still got work to do. They have improved no doubt, but there's still work to be done. The good thing for them is that they have a very experienced batting line-up. So I believe it will be a challenge for us."

Bangladesh will begin their series with a two-day warm-up game against a Sri Lankan Cricket Board team tomorrow at the Moratuwa Cricket Stadium.



Chittagong Abahani players are visibly frustrated as Pocheon Citizen FC players celebrate a goal during the second semifinal of the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. The Korean side won the match 2-1 to set up a final against TC Sports Club of Maldives.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

## Chittagong Abahani bow out

### Pocheon Citizen FC set up final against TC Sports Club on Friday

ANISUR RAHMAN from Chittagong



Holders Chittagong Abahani surrendered a lead and crashed out of the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup after suffering a 1-2 defeat to Pocheon Citizen FC in the second semifinal at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday.

The defending champions' elimination means Friday's final will be an affair between two foreign outfits -- Pocheon Citizen of South Korea and Maldives' TC Sports Club.

Yesterday's was a battle between a top-tier side from Bangladesh and a third-tier side from South Korea, but the visitors clearly had the edge in terms of approach, skill, movement, fitness and technique which helped them come out on top despite falling one goal behind.

Chittagong Abahani coach Saiful Bari Titu made three changes to the squad that played out a 2-2 draw with Manang Marsyangdi Club and the 4-5-1 formation seemed to be working well initially as the hosts went ahead in the first half. However, as they dropped the line and defended deep after taking the lead, they faced tremendous pressure from Pocheon.

Abahani burst out of the gates and came close to taking the lead in the fifth minute when Mamunul Islam released a pass from outside the box, but Brazilian striker Thiago Tyson squandered the chance despite Pocheon goalkeeper Choi Ang Seong's late reaction.

However, Abahani did take the lead in the 24th minute as Jamal Bhuiyan tapped in a corner-kick from Mamunul. After that, the home side went on the defensive,

allowing Pocheon to pile on the pressure.

Goalkeeper Ashraful Islam made two nice saves to keep Abahani's lead intact, but he could not deny Jang Yong IK, who stepped up to the spot and levelled the match after Mutfal Lawal had brought down Park Seong Ryeol inside the box in the 43rd minute.

Chittagong Abahani conceded a second goal just one minute into the second half as Park Seong Ryeol, who was later adjudged man-of-the-match, struck the back of the net following a goal-mouth-melee.

With their hand forced, Chittagong Abahani went all-out and carved a couple of opportunities, but Haitian striker Augustin Walson and defender Nasir Chowdhury wasted the chances. Walson failed to tap home from close range, while

Nasir headed wide in the 87th minute.

The home side failed to find the equaliser despite Pocheon being reduced to 10 men after 85 minutes, but Titu pointed to their frailty in defense as the reason behind the loss.

"If you can't defend well, it is not possible to win the match and today's [Tuesday's] match was evidence of that. Despite taking the lead, we lost the match due to silly mistakes. We could not stop the Korean attacks from our left-side because our players could not keep up with their quick rotations, false runs and quick movements," the Chittagong Abahani lamented at the post-match briefing.

"We did not play defensive football. I have to admit that we suffered defeat against a better side," added Titu.

"It was a difficult match as expected but we came out victorious and moved into the final. However, we played better today compared to our last two matches," Pocheon coach Kim Jae Young said.

CTG ABAHANI	1-2	POCHEON
Jamal Bhuiyan 23'		Jang Yong IK 43' Park Seong 46'



Bangladesh Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim (R) shakes hands with his Sri Lankan counterpart Rangana Herath prior to a press conference in Colombo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Sri Lanka pick 15 for Tests

### Gunaratne, Dickwella included

CRICINFO, Colombo



Batsmen Asela Gunaratne and Niroshan Dickwella have been named in Sri Lanka's squad for the two-Test series against Bangladesh, following their success in limited-overs internationals over the past month.

Gunaratne hit two match-winning fifties in the recent T20 series in Australia, and had also struck a maiden ODI hundred in South Africa earlier in last month. Dickwella, meanwhile, has been effective at the top of the order in the shorter formats, but had also had some first-class form behind him in recent domestic outings.

Among those omitted from the squad include Kusal Perera, who has been in poor form in both international and domestic cricket over the past few months, and

#### SQUAD

Rangana Herath (Captain), Dimuth Karunaratne, Niroshan Dickwella, Upul Tharanga, Dhananjaya de Silva, Kusal Mendis, Asela Gunaratne, Dinesh Chandimal, Suranga Lakmal, Lahiru Kumara, Nuwan Pradeep, Vikum Sanjaya Bandara, Dilruwan Perera, Lakshan Sandakan, Malinda Pushpakumara.

opener Kaushal Silva.

Dimuth Karunaratne, the other opener, remains in the squad, however. This is thanks in part to his 212 for Sri Lanka A against England Lions over the weekend. He had also hit Sri Lanka's only half-century in their most recent Test at the Wanderers.

The selectors sprang no major surprises on the bowling front. Malinda Pushpakumara, whom SLC had already announced would be part of the squad, is the only first-time addition. Lahiru Kumara,

Suranga Lakmal, Nuwan Pradeep and Vikum Sanjaya - all right-armers - make up the seam-bowling options, while Rangana Herath leads a strong spin contingent featuring Dilruwan Perera and Lakshan Sandakan in addition to Pushpakumara. Fast bowler Dushmantha Chameera has not played competitive cricket since late last year, and, as such, is unavailable.

Gunaratne's inclusion in this squad was largely expected. He had prospered in his first Test series in Zimbabwe over October and November, and had only left the squad to make way for the return of Angelo Mathews, who had been injured for that series. With Mathews out of the side again for this series, Gunaratne is a potential replacement at no. 5, capable of providing a slow-medium bowling option for captain Herath.

The Test series begins on March 7 in Galle.

## North on the brink of victory

SPORTS REPORTER



Alauddin Babu took charge after Dhiman Ghosh's hundred as BCB North Zone were on the brink of victory against Walton Central Zone at the end of the third day of the fifth-round Bangladesh Cricket League match at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Central finished the day 127 runs behind with only two wickets in hand as

#### SCORES IN BRIEF

##### CENTRAL ZONE V NORTH ZONE

**CENTRAL ZONE:** 181 and 229-8 in 64 overs (Saif 70, Mazid 43, Tanbir 42 not out; Babu 4-55)

**NORTH ZONE:** 537 all out in 134.5 overs (Jahurul 35, Junaed 41, Naeem 142, Nazmul 123, Dhiman 113, Babu 54; Sharif 2-125, Mosharraf 3-125, Shahadat 2-111, Sharifullah 2-65)

##### SOUTH ZONE V EAST ZONE

**SOUTH ZONE:** 296 and 29-0 in 8 overs (Anamul 23 not out, Fazle 4 not out)

**EAST ZONE:** 523-7dec in 178 overs (Afif 137, Tasamul 98, Kapali 66, Yasir 35, Abul 41, Saifuddin 50, Rahatul 60; Razzak 2-135, Nazmul 2-98)

they were reduced to 229 for eight.

Resuming the day on 133, Naeem Islam could add nine more to his overnight score but Dhiman converted his half-century to a hundred while Babu contributed 54 as North Zone scored 537 runs before being bundled out with a huge 356-run first innings lead.

Facing a daunting task, Saif Hasan and Abdul Mazid made a confident start before Naeem removed Mazid for 43 runs to break the 70-run opening stand and paved the way for pacer Babu to instigate a middle-order collapse by taking four wickets.

Saif top-scored with 70 off 98 balls

with eight fours and two sixes.

At the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong, Islami Bank East Zone tightened their grip by declaring their first innings at 523 for seven. All the late-order batsmen contributed with the bat for East Zone, who resumed the day on 290 for four.

With a 227-run first-innings deficit, Prime Bank South Zone began their second innings confidently in the endeavour to achieve the best possible result, a draw, as they finished the day without any damage for 29 runs.



DHIMAN ... 113

## ICC critical of Pune pitch

AFP, New Delhi

Match referee Chris Broad has rated the Pune track as poor after the first Test between India and Australia ended inside three days on a sharply turning wicket, the ICC said on Tuesday.

Australia won the Test by 333 runs with spinner Steve O'Keefe claiming 12 wickets at Pune's Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium, which was hosting its first-ever Test.

India, the world's number one Test side, were bowled out for 105 and 107 on a pitch which took spin from day one, sparking criticism of the quality of the track.

## Production team backs out of PSL final

DAWN



Sunset and Vine, which has handled the broadcasting of the Pakistan Super League event so far this year, notified Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) management in the previous week about its intentions of not covering the Lahore event.

The PCB had already decided on Innovative Production Group in case Sunset and Vine showed reluctance on broadcasting the final in Lahore.

Firms that were hired to facilitate hawk-eye technology and spider-cam have also decided to not partake in the event. The final will be broadcast without the use of such technology with there being a strong likelihood of a drone camera being used instead of the spider-cam.

Additionally, the PSL is in the midst of replacing foreign commentators -- including Danny Morrison, Alan Wilkins and Mel Jones -- who have backed out from

covering the final, while Ian Bishop's contract is coming to an end.

The PSL management has also instructed all the teams to work on their own contingency plan in a scenario wherein their foreign players decide not to travel to Pakistan.

PCB Chairman Najam Sethi has assured the presence of foreign players in the final, noting that there is a backup list of players for a worst-case scenario. The Punjab government on Monday gave the go-ahead for the final to take place in Lahore following thorough consideration and evaluation of security conditions in the country following a series of bomb blasts in the preceding weeks.

As part of the preparations for the final, Gaddafi Stadium has been furnished with a media facility that can house up to 150 reporters.

Sethi also announced that the PSL would be using the decision review system (DRS) in the playoff matches, becoming the first T20 league in the history of cricket to use the review system.