



## MESSI STATS

<b>How he scored them:</b>	Andres Iniesta	34
Left foot	Xavi Hernandez	31
Right foot	Pedro Rodriguez	25
Head	Luis Suarez	25
Other	2	
<b>Where he scored them</b>	<b>Who conceded them</b>	
<b>(Top 5):</b>	<b>(Top 5):</b>	
Camp Nou	Diego Alvez	21
Santiago Bernabeu	Gorka Iraizoz	18
Vicente Calderon	Iker Casillas	17
Riazor	Andres Fernandez	15
Mestalla	Andres Palop	12
<b>Who assisted him (Top 5):</b>	<b>Percentages when Messi scores:</b>	
Dani Alves	Win	275 (86.7%)

## 500 GOALS FOR SINGLE CLUB

GOALS	PLAYERS	CLUB
643	Pele	Santos
566	Gerd Muller	Bayern Munich
544	Fernando Peyroteo	Sporting CP
534	Joseph Bican	Slavia Praha
522	Jimmy McGrory	Celtic FC
517	Jimmy Jones	Glenavon
507	Uwe Seeler	Hamburger SV

# Devaluing first-class cricket



SPORTS REPORTER

While the national cricketers witnessed around a 60 per cent increase in their salaries earlier this week, there is a chance that the country's first-class cricketers, a number of whom are under the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) contract, may not get any

monthly salaries from next season. According to BCB director Khaled Mahmud, the board in its last meeting had discussed a proposition to stop providing monthly salaries to those under first-class contract and increase their match fee instead.

A salary system for the first-class players was introduced in 2012 when more than 100 players, apart from those playing in the national team, were brought under the BCB. This was done in order to help decentralise cricket.

However, as the years progressed, the number of players under that contract gradually decreased. That number may go down to zero next season.

"Firstly, this is just something we had discussed and it's not confirmed as yet. But why we thought of this is because there are a number of first-class cricketers who do not get to play for their divisions and still earn a monthly salary.

"That's not fair to those players [who are not under contract] who play for four days and just walk away with a match fee. If we increase the match-fee by a great deal then it will increase competition among the players and it will also give the deserving players more money," Mahmud told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Again, this is just in the initial stage. There is a mixed opinion regarding this move in the board," he added.

Having heard of the possible move, a few first-class players expressed caution.

"Our first-class cricket has improved a lot and we are at a stage where we see players scoring double hundreds and teams scoring more than 600 runs and bowlers doing well

Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi proudly displays his jersey to the crowd after scoring the winning goal, his 500th for the club, during their La Liga El Clasico against Real Madrid at the Bernabeu on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

# 500-up Messi silences Bernabeu

REUTERS, Madrid

Lionel Messi delivered a majestic Clasico display to silence the Santiago Bernabeu as the Argentine scored his 500th

Barcelona goal to snatch a thrilling 3-2 win at Real Madrid on Sunday.

Messi scored twice with his stunning second strike settling a pulsating clash in the last minute of stoppage time, drawing Barcelona level with Madrid on 75 points at the top of La Liga, although Los Blancos have a game in hand.

The stand-out player in a magnificent match, Messi was a nightmare for Real Madrid whose captain Sergio Ramos was sent off for a hasty two-footed lunge at the Argentine while Casemiro was lucky to avoid red for repeated fouls on the No. 10.

Barcelona struggled on the night but Messi led them through the game and was the decisive figure on a dramatic occasion that leaves the Spanish

title race wide open.

"(Messi) even makes a difference when he's at home having dinner," joked Barcelona coach Luis Enrique after the game.

"He's the best of all time and I have seen a lot of football matches and videos. Now people are better prepared and he

makes the difference. And this was his 500th goal.

"Just imagine, his 500th goal coming here, a winner in the 92nd minute at the Santiago Bernabeu. It's very nice for Leo and it's nice for everyone associated with Barca."

Casemiro went into the book

for a foul on Messi in the 12th minute as Barcelona's all-time top scorer frequently dropped into midfield to help the team develop moves.

"He allowed us to have superiority in midfield, we wanted him on the ball as often as possible," added Luis Enrique.

Messi was singled out for praise by several team mates after his virtuoso performance helped Barcelona take three points from a game in which they were under pressure for long periods.

Captain Andres Iniesta said: "Leo's greatness doesn't stop surprising us. He is an honour for us and a blessing for the club. We all have to stay with him to have a chance of lifting the title."

Marc-Andre ter Stegen, who made several important saves to keep Real Madrid at bay in the second half, also hailed Messi.

"He's the player that makes the difference, a very special player," said the German goalkeeper. "The rest of us made a very big effort and together we earned the victory."

## MESSI HAILS Clasico win

Lionel Messi on Monday hailed Barcelona's dramatic 3-2 Clasico victory over arch-rivals Real Madrid as an "important step" in the race for the La Liga title.

Messi's last-gasp goal marked his 500th for Barcelona and blew the La Liga title race wide open at Real Madrid on Sunday.

Victory takes Barca top of the table thanks to their better head-to-head record with both sides locked on 75 points, but Madrid have a game in hand.

"We went to the Bernabeu to win and to continue to fight for La Liga," the five-time Ballon d'Or winner said on his Facebook page.

"There is still a long way to go, but we left with the joy of having taken an important step," added Messi, the top scorer in La Liga with 31 goals, alongside a photo of himself celebrating one of his goals.

Barcelona are bidding for a third straight La Liga and Spanish Cup double. They play Alaves in the Cup final on May 27.



PHOTO: STAR FILE

too. Whatever move the board takes, it should make sure that it does not demotivate the players," said former national opener Shahriar Nafees.

"If they do scrap the salary system, they should provide a major increase in the match fee, so that the players can earn as much or more than what they do now including the match fee and the monthly salary," he added.

Left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak echoed Nafees's sentiments. "Honestly speaking it's too early to comment on this issue. But the monthly salary helps a lot. I don't know if there will be a good enough increment in the match fee in order to cover the money earned through the salary," he said.

On an average a first-class cricketer earns around Tk 2,40,000 a year because of the monthly salary. That figure goes up to Tk 3,90,000 from the National Cricket League a year after including the match fee, if they play all matches.

Certain first-class cricketers have said that if the match fee is not increased enough first-class cricketers might have to resort to taking part in amateur tournaments, some of which pay quite heavily.

"Why should we struggle so much to play four-day cricket if we can earn that much by playing a local T20 game?" summed one cricketer.

## Shakib, Fizz to return in early May

SPORTS REPORTER

Rumours regarding Mustafizur Rahman's early return from the Indian Premier League surfaced ever since the left-arm was dropped from Sunrisers Hyderabad after his disappointing first game.

There was talk about how the pacer would cut his trip short, come back to Dhaka and fly to Sussex with the team tomorrow.

However, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officials yesterday confirmed that the left-arm will in fact return home in the first week of May along with Shakib Al Hasan before flying to Sussex to join the national team.

"Shakib and Mustafizur will most likely return to Dhaka on May 4 and then fly out from here," BCB director Khaled Mahmud said yesterday.

Both Mustafizur and Shakib are available to play four more matches in the competition before they depart for their national duty.

## Five booters cleared

Manik asked to pay Chittagong Abahani back

SPORTS REPORTER



Five footballers were cleared of a year-long suspension imposed by their former club, Abahani, as the Players' Status Committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) found no rational reason to suspend the players in question -- Ariful Islam, Tapu Barman, Shakil Ahmed, Hemanta Vincent Biswas and Jewel Rana.

"As per the FIFA regulations on the status and transfer of players' definition on season, Abahani's suspension decision on five footballers is not legal," stated a BFF press release yesterday after the committee reached the conclusion on Sunday following a series of meetings in which the club's officials and players appeared.

Bangladesh Premier League champions Abahani suspended the five booters from the domestic circuit for one year on disciplinary grounds in February after they failed to participate in a training camp for the ongoing AFC Cup. Later, the club appealed to the game's governing body to uphold their decision.

The Sky Blues actually lost their appeal due to faulty agreement documents made with the players regarding the contract's timeframe. The contract papers only mention the end of the season, and thus the committee took the aid of FIFA to define the season which begins with the first official fixture and closes with the last official fixture, of the league.

According to FIFA's definition of a season, the contract of those footballers ended in January and hence they are no longer players of Abahani. And since by this definition they are free agents, the dhanmondi based outfit cannot impose any sort punishment.

The five players are believed to be joining Saif Sporting Club for the upcoming season. Similarly, Sheikh Russel KC midfielder Jamal Bhuiyan was also cleared of breaching his contract by playing for Chittagong Abahani in the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup as his contract ended last November.

On the other hand, the committee requested Sheikh Russel coach Shafiqul Islam Manik to reimburse the 6 Lakh taka he received from Chittagong Abahani last season. The committee warned the veteran coach to pay back the sum within the next 15 days otherwise he will not be permitted to coach any club.

Sheikh Russel were ordered to clear due payments, totalling 15 lakh taka, to six footballers within 15 days as well while Muktiyoddha Sangsad KC were given the same order to clear due payments with three footballers, worth 6.3 lakh taka. In the same timeframe, Chittagong Abahani were asked to clear the unpaid wages of two players, totalling 1.95 lakh taka.

In addition, Nurul Absar and Mufikar Uddin of Rahmatganj MFS, Shahidul Alam of Arambagh were asked to solve matters with their respective clubs immediately while two other Rahmatganj players -- Jahangir Alam and Syed Rashed Turzo -- have been suspended until their issues are resolved.

## U-16 women put a up better show

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh under-16 women's team held China under-14 women's team to a goalless draw in their third match in China yesterday.

The girls from Bangladesh put up an improved performance compared to their first match against the same opponents who had won that match 1-0.

According to a statement from Bangladesh Football Federation, the girls were competitive against the physically superior China U-14 side and the defence, especially Akhi, put up a brave performance to keep the opponents at bay while goalkeeper Mahmuda too was solid under the bar.

Striker Sirat Jahan Swapa found two scoring chances but the first effort was denied by the Chinese defenders while she mustered a weak shot on target on the second instance.

## MSC start training without coach

SPORTS REPORTER



Mohammedan Sporting Club began their preparations for the next football season at the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) artificial turf yesterday, without a head coach.

A few days ago, it was announced by the team management that Indian coach Syed Naemuddin would guide the Black and Whites in the upcoming season, which is set to get underway from May 12 through the Federation Cup. However, it is still unclear as to when the veteran coach will arrive.

Some 22 players were present on the first day of training where the players did some stretching and practised amongst themselves in small circles.

"I have been told that the coach [Syed Naemuddin] will join the training camp from tomorrow [Tuesday]," informed right back Nasirul Islam.

As the Black and Whites have never won the professional league since the league's introduction in 2007, and following poor results in last season, Mohammedan have assembled a few experienced and young players in a bid to revitalising their image.

Despite the official formalities of the players' registration yet to be completed, Mohammedan have confirmed players such as: Zahid Hasan Emily, Mithun Chowdhury, Nasir, Abdul Baten Komol, Minthu Sheikh, Mohammad Linkon, Mamun Khan, Enamul Haque Sharif, Shakil Ahmed, Faisal Mahmud, Toklish Ahmed, all of whom had featured in the national side previously. They have also enlisted some young recruits from Brothers Union, Sheikh Russel KC and a couple of other clubs.

"The team management have so far formed a good squad with a mixture of experienced and young players and I think we will fight against any team and not let any of them go easily," Nasir said, adding that Mohammedan would only be strengthened further with the inclusion of three foreign players.

## Mathews to lead, Malinga returns

AFP, Colombo

Angelo Mathews will return as Sri Lanka skipper for the Champions Trophy after missing the ODI series against South Africa, the tour of Australia and the home series against Bangladesh.

Sri Lanka Cricket Monday announced a 15-member squad led by Mathews, who cut short his tour of South Africa after twisting his ankle in January.

"I am 100 per cent fit now and I also hope to be able to bowl," said the all-rounder.

He said he was "very happy" with the squad chosen for the tournament and hopeful of making a good impression.

"I have got the best squad," he said. "We can do well with this team. I am very happy. I have a lot of confidence. We have an opportunity to bring an ICC trophy to Sri Lanka."

Chief selector Sanath Jayasuriya said Lasith Malinga was also being inducted into the squad after nearly two years and was fully fit to play in England.