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SPORT

Abahani winger Rubel Mia leads the celebrations after scoring the team's second goal from the centre circle of the pitch in their 2-0 victory over Bengaluru FC in the AFC Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

No dissent allowed

AL-AMIN

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Tuesday closed an extraordinary chapter of embarrassment with the strongest possible signal that it would go the distance to bring the perpetrators to the book.

Embarrassed and exposed to the watching world after two incidents involving two second-division matches where one bowler conceded 69 runs off seven deliveries and another bowler conceded 92 runs off four balls the following day -- something the cricket world noticed with a lot of amusement and curiosity -- the BCB got its acts together and punished those culprits and their promoters in the strongest possible terms. The two bowlers were banned for 10 years each. The two clubs they represented have been stripped of their affiliation with the board.

While recommending the punishment the three-member committee "concluded that both the incidents were pre-planned and deliberate with the intention of damaging the image of the BCB at home and abroad especially at a time when Bangladesh cricket was going through the most encouraging phase in its history."

Interesting observation indeed and if those acts were 'pre-planned and deliberate with the intention of damaging Bangladesh cricket' then the two bowlers and their promoters might face possible sedition charges. After all they betrayed the emotions of a cricket-crazy nation.

Sujon Mahmud of Lalmatia Club, the bowler who gave away 92 runs, and Tasnim Hasan of Fear Fighter Sporting Club -- who conceded 69 off seven balls -- are not sure what is coming next. But one thing has already been guaranteed; their careers as cricketers are over.

It is always easy to punish a Sujon or a Tasnim because the established world will not rally behind them or the protest they manfully demonstrated against all odds. The committee has certainly asked them why they bowled so many wides and no balls and it has also got the answers.

Unfortunately however, there is nothing in the recommendation or in the observation that they bowled badly as a mark of protest against biased umpiring -- an evil practice which has been growing like an epidemic especially in the lower tier of the Dhaka league.

It is a badly-kept secret that matches in Second Division, Third Division or in First Division are settled outside the playing field. A vested group in the club circle actually decides who to be promoted or relegated at the start of the season. And when it comes to the election year of the board this evil practice gets more open and ferocious with the most important councillorships at stake.

Although the umpires committee is independent and has the authority to appoint its panel of umpires, the committee simply caves in to the pressure of that vested group -- powerful even in the board. The BCB will possibly go for elections later this year or early next year. And in that election Dhaka clubs will have a major say in electing the board of directors. And that framework has already been drawn out at the cost of grassroots cricket where a Sujon is a victim for his defiance.

Any judgement should ideally seek to correct or prevent similar mistakes in the future. However, what this judgement seems to have done is punish the dissenters who were protesting a corrupt practice, while allowing the corrupt practice itself to carry on unfettered.

Mamic hails Abahani spirit

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani coach Drago Mamic hailed his side's stunning victory over Bengaluru FC in the AFC Cup as he felt his charges played a technically brilliant game. The Croat also heaped praise on winger Rubel Mia, who set up the first goal before scoring the second with a 45-yard strike.

"It's not easy to win against the strongest team in the group after you lost the first three matches," Mamic said in his post-match reaction. "The boys played a technically brilliant match. We tried not to concede a goal after Saad [Uddin] scored the first. Rubel played terrifically well and scored such a wonderful goal."

The 63-year-old, who oversaw three defeats in first three matches of this continental tussle, also praised goalkeeper Shahidul Alam and the entire defence for putting up such a dogged effort as his side scored two goals after being reduced to ten men.

While Abahani are still at the bottom of the table alongside Mohun Bagan with three points each and Bengaluru and Maziya FC are on nine points each, the result still keeps the group mathematically open.

"Abahani have improved much after their defeat against us in the previous match," Bengaluru FC coach Alberto Roca Pujol said.

The Spaniard, who guided his side to a 2-0 victory in the home fixture last month, believes the Sky Blues are still in the race for qualification for the final round. "We never underestimated Abahani, we knew we would have a tough game ahead. Still two games to go for Abahani, so they still have a chance to qualify," Pujol added.

Ten-man Abahani stun Bengaluru FC

Sky Blues beat Indian giants 2-0 to taste first win

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Premier League champions Abahani put an end to their losing streak in the AFC Cup when the 10-man hosts handed a stunning 2-0 defeat to the group leaders and last edition's runners-up Bengaluru FC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Substitute teenage forward Saad Uddin broke the deadlock in the 87th minute before winger Rubel Mia struck from 45 yards to give Abahani their first points following three defeats. And all that happened after the hosts had been reduced to ten men.

"Before the match, the coach gave me an indication that he might send me on and since then I was mentally prepared to take the opportunity," former under-16 national team striker Saad said after the match. "I know very well about Jonathan's [David] crosses as I had scored from such situations in practice matches, so I took the right position to perfectly connect to the ball when he went deep inside the box for the chip."

Saad came into the field in place of midfielder Emon Babu in the 75th minute, but soon switched to the left wing position following the marching order to defender Nasir Chowdhury in the 81st minute. And the youngster made his second international match a memorable one by side-volleying Jonathan's chip to send the crowd into rapture.

However Rubel, who justified coach Drago Mamic's decision to play him in place of Nabib Newaj Jibon, was the star of the show, wrapping up the victory with an outrageous strike.

The stocky winger mustered a long-range shot from close to the centre-circle of the pitch to find the deserted Bengaluru net after goalkeeper Amrinder Singh was disposed inside the Abahani half by Emeka Onuhua, who provided the final pass to Rubel.

ABAHANI 2 - 0 BENGALURU
SAAD UDDIN 87'
RUBEL MIA 90'+2'

Rubel had initiated the attack for the first goal as the former Chittagong Abahani player gave a perfect forward-pass to Jonathan who entered the box to tee it up for Saad.

Rubel had shown signs of a spirited performance from the beginning as he narrowly missed the target in the 13th minute when he let loose a powerful shot from outside the box before proving a through ball for Emeka Darlington, who saw his close-range flick to the near post go narrowly wide.

While Jonathan and Rubel were busy building attacks for Abahani, it was their long-serving defender Samad Yussif who marshalled the backline with aplomb.

Abahani enjoyed the upper hand in the first half but they faced trouble in the second half after Bengaluru coach Alberto Roca brought two changes to his eleven.

The visitors thought they took the lead through a close-range strike from Sanesh Jhingan in the 70th minute, but it was ruled off-side, much to the relief of the hosts. Abahani survived two more close calls when substitute Alwyan George squandered two sitters from inside the box in the 71st and 79th minutes.

With the visitors pressing hard for the lead, Abahani fell into more trouble following the marching order of Nasir, but the scenario completely changed once Saad scored the opener from a counter attack before another such attack ended in Rubel striking from distance and Abahani notching three valuable points.

Tigers working to acclimatise

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh opener Soumya Sarkar said that they have been working hard to cope with the conditions since starting their camp in Sussex seven days ago.

The Tigers are doing all they can to capitalise on the time in the camp despite rain sometimes limiting them to indoor practice. Rain also spoiled the second session of their first warm-up game against Duke of Norfolk XI on Monday after stand-in skipper Mushfiqur Rahim hit an unbeaten hundred.

"We came 10 days early just to adjust to the weather and conditions here. We are trying to adjust to the weather and are trying to properly utilise the time during batting and bowling skill sessions," said Soumya yesterday.

"We believe that the faster we can adjust to the conditions, the better it will be for the team," he continued.

He also added that they were not worried about the rain as it was not in their hands; they were instead focused on making full use of the time they have to prepare for the challenges ahead.

ALL HANDS ON DECK SOON

The national team is also likely to witness its first training session with all the members of the squad this Saturday as the missing members -- Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shakib Al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman -- are likely to be present in Sussex along with the camp by then.

Mustafizur returned home from India yesterday evening after his short stint in the Indian Premier League. He is likely to leave for Sussex tonight. Mashrafe, who had to make a sudden return back home for his ailing wife, is also likely to leave tonight. According to sources, Mashrafe's wife was brought back home late on Tuesday night. However, Mashrafe's return has not yet been finalised.

Shakib will fly a day later since he has to attend his younger sister's wedding, which is set to take place tonight. Shakib is expected to arrive today and is scheduled to leave tomorrow morning. The Tigers will play their second and final warm-up game against a Sussex XI tomorrow before leaving for Ireland where they will play a tri-series involving New Zealand and hosts Ireland.

After that they will come back to England again to take part in the ICC Champions Trophy from June 1.

Robiul gives Khelaghar rare success

All-round Sheikh Jamal win big; Gazi Group clinch a close one

SPORTS REPORTER

A maiden century from Robiul Islam Robi gave Khelaghar Samaj Kallyan Samity their second win of the Dhaka Premier League in the sixth round as they beat Victoria Sporting Club by 57 runs at the BKSP.

Batting first, Khelaghar rode on Robiul's 115-ball 107 to post 303.

Robiul hit 15 fours and a six during his three-hour knock. He was well supported by Salauddin Pappu, who scored a 51-ball 60 with five sixes and five fours. The duo put on 102 runs for the opening wicket.

Nazimuddin and Masum Khan, with scores of 40 and 31 not out respectively, marshalled the middle order after the departures of Robiul and Salauddin. Dolar Mahmud, who had scored a half-century in the previous game came in towards the end to provide a few late hits to help them cross the 300-run mark. He hit 25 off 12 balls with two sixes and two fours. Rubel Mia, who finished with figures of three for 58, was the leading wicket-taker for Victoria.

Rubel, who opened the batting for Victoria was also a key figure with the bat, scoring 46 off 65 balls. However, Victoria kept losing wickets regularly during the chase and were eventually restricted to 246 for nine in 50 overs. Mohammad Arafat, who came in to bat at seven was their highest run-getter with 47 off 41 balls.

Khelaghar's foreign recruit, Sri Lankan Suraj Randiv, was the team's key wicket-taker, finishing with figures of three for 34.

In the day's other game, Partex Sporting Club went down to Gazi Group Cricketers by four wickets. This was the club's sixth straight defeat of the competition. While they lost this game, their batsmen managed to put up a fight yesterday.

Half-centuries from Jatin Saxena and Irfan Sukkur helped them post a commendable 270. While Jatin scored 61 off 52 balls with one six and nine fours, Irfan hit 69 off 77 balls with seven fours.

However, a brilliant knock from Jahurul Islam, who scored 96 off 122 balls with 11 fours and a six before retiring hurt, prevented Partex from getting their first win of the competition.

Jahurul's knock helped Gazi Group reach their target with one over to spare. He first put on a 68-run stand with Anamul Haque at the top and then shared a 49-run stand for the second wicket with Mominul Haque.

Jahurul played the role of the anchor alongside Sohrawadi Shuvo as the duo put on 74 runs for the third wicket. However, soon after he retired hurt in the 38th over.

By then, the target was well within reach and the middle order ensured that there were no major hiccups, reaching the target in 49 overs.

At the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah, a powerful performance from Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, led by Prashant Chopra's 106, helped them score a massive 92-run win over Brothers Union.

Chopra's 106 off 116 balls, combined with Fazle Mahmud's 78 off 75 led them to 309.

After the exchange, Tanbir Hayder scalped a five-wicket haul to help bundle Brothers out for just 217 in 43.5 overs. Tanbir finished on five for 41.

Leg-spinner Tanbir Hayder lets one rip during his five-wicket haul at Fatullah yesterday which led Sheikh Jamal to a thumping win over Brothers Union. (Inset) Khelaghar's Robiul Islam Robi scored his maiden List A ton and helped his team to their second win. PHOTOS: STAR

SCORES IN BRIEF

PARTEX SC V GAZI GROUP
PARTEX SPORTING CLUB: 270 for 9 (Irfan 69, Jatin 61; Hossain 2-21, Hider 2-64)
GAZI GROUP CRICKETERS: 271 for 6 in 49 overs (Jahurul 96, Anamul 36; Jubair 2-32, Rajibul 2-39)
Result: Gazi Group Cricketers won by four wickets.
Player of the match: Jahurul Islam

SHEIKH JAMAL V BROTHERS UNION
SHEIKH JAMAL: 309 for 7 (Prashant 106, Fazle 78, Abdullah 59; Saddam 2-57, Nihaduzzaman 2-68, Kazi Kamrul 2-51)
BROTHERS UNION: 217 all out in 43.5 overs (Farhad 70, Mizanur 31; Tanvir 5-41, Gazi 2-44)
Result: Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club won by 92 runs.
Player of the match: Prashant Chopra

KHELAGHAR SKS V VICTORIA SC
KHELAGHAR: 303 for 7 (Robiul 107, Salauddin 60, Nazimuddin 40; Rubel 3-58, Islamul 2-44)
VICTORIA: 246 for 9 (Arafat 47 not