

SPORT



Archrivals Abahani and Mohammedan will lock horns in a Dhaka Premier League match at the BKSP today and form batsmen Abhishek Mitra of Mohammedan (L) and Abahani's Shadman Islam, both of whom are coming off stellar innings in their last matches, will be counted upon to come up with a defining performance.

PHOTO: STAR FILE

Abahani to clash with Mohammedan today

Rugganj face Khelaghar; Doleshwar take on Victoria

SPORTS REPORTER



The eighth round of the Dhaka Premier League will begin with a clash between rivals Mohammedan and

Abahani at the BKSP. Although the rivalry is not as celebrated today as in the past, there still remains plenty of excitement among the players when these two teams go head to head.

At the moment, Abahani are in second place with 10 points. Mohammedan also have 10 points but are in fourth place and are behind due to the run-rate.

Abahani enjoyed a good run when their national players were present. However, as soon as they left, they lost two games on the trot. They however, managed to recuperate a bit by winning their last game courtesy of Shadman Islam.

Mohammedan, on the other hand, started off with defeats, but ended up winning four consecutive matches and at the moment seem to be slightly ahead of Abahani in this encounter, although they are below them on the table. The key player for Mohammedan will be

Taijul Islam, who is currently the second highest wicket-taker of the tournament with 16 scalps. It was his six-wicket haul against Legends of Rugganj, one match ago that helped them bundle Rugganj out for 84 and win a low-scoring contest.

With both teams evenly balanced, signs point to a good game at the BKSP.

On the other hand, the other game at the BKSP between Prime Doleshwar Sporting Club and Victoria Sporting Club is expected to be a one-sided affair. Prime Doleshwar are currently in sixth place with eight points and will be looking to get two crucial points from this game. They are expected to amble past Victoria, who have lost all their seven games so far.

Meanwhile, at Fatullah, Legends of Rugganj will take on Khelaghar Samaj Kallyan Samiti. With Rugganj on eight points and Khelaghar, who have found a new sense of confidence courtesy of Robiul Islam Robi's two consecutive centuries, on six, this game is expected to be a thriller. Robiul at the moment is the tournament's highest run-getter and the kind of form that he is in, it won't be a surprise if he gets his third ton on the trot.

India to play

AFP, New Delhi



Holder India will take part in the Champions Trophy next month, the cricket board said Sunday, ending

weeks of speculation over their participation in the event organised by the sport's world governing body.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), which is embroiled in a revenue-sharing row with the International Cricket Council (ICC), announced the decision after a special general meeting in New Delhi.

"The BCCI SGM unanimously decided that the Indian cricket team will participate in the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy," it said in a statement.

The squad for the 50-over tournament would be named on Monday, it added.

The eight-nation Champions Trophy will be played in England and Wales from June 1. India won the trophy during the last edition in 2013.

The BCCI had skipped the April 25 deadline for announcing a squad and threatened a pullout over its dispute with the ICC.

This stems from the ICC's decision last month to amend rules so

that less money and power was held by cricket's "Big Three" -- England, India and Australia.

The powerful BCCI stands to lose \$277 million in revenue over the next eight years under the sweeping changes approved by ICC members.

The BCCI said it was keeping its legal options open, indicating the row was far from over.

"The Board unanimously authorised the acting honorary secretary of the BCCI to continue negotiations with the ICC in the best interest of the BCCI while keeping its legal options open," it said in the statement.

The BCCI's use of the Champions Trophy as a bargaining chip with the ICC had come in for criticism. Indian cricketing greats including Sachin Tendulkar urged the side to compete in the prestigious event.

A panel of administrators appointed by India's top court to oversee the scandal-ridden BCCI had also asked the board to take a swift decision on the event.

Cricket's massive popularity in India has helped the BCCI become by far the wealthiest of all of cricket's national boards, netting massive money from sponsorship and TV deals.

Its last television rights deal with the Star network was worth a reported \$750 million.

Tapu tops the money league

ANISUR RAHMAN



Though the popularity of the country's football is gradually declining, the payment of footballers is surprisingly seeing an

upsurge as the Bangladesh Premier League, especially the established teams, do not hesitate to splash the cash on signing players.

An estimated Tk 46 crore was reportedly spent by 12 premier league clubs in the recently concluded players' transfer window, where the national team's defender Tapu Barman, who signed up for newcomers Saif Sporting Club, has reportedly surpassed Mamunul Islam of Chittagong Abahani as the highest paid footballer for the upcoming season.

It has been learnt that Tapu will get approximately Tk 58 lakh for his 12-month contract even though Saif SC managing director Nasiruddin Chowdhury claimed the amount agreed upon is a little more than Tk 55 lakh.

National team's captain Mamunul slipped to second position with Tk 55 lakh after enjoying the highest paid footballer's tag for the last five seasons. Mamunul claimed that he is getting Tk 5 lakh less than what he got last sea-

son, which was reportedly Tk 60 lakh.

Another defender of the national team, Yeasin Khan, is expected to be the third highest paid footballer as he is being retained by Sheikh Jamal DC for Tk 50 lakh. While there are quite a few players to get between Tk 40 lakh and Tk 50 lakh, it has been learnt that Abahani midfielder Emon Babu and goalkeeper Shahidul Islam Sohel will get Tk 40 lakh each. Russel KC midfielder Shahedul Alam Shahed of is supposed to get Tk 35 lakh while Mohammedan's highest payment, Tk 35 lakh, went for purchasing defender Nasirul Islam.

"I don't know who has got the highest payment this season but if it is me, then I am really happy because such opportunity does not come often for a defender," Tapu Barman said when asked about his reaction at being the highest paid footballer. "Such payment will definitely encourage me to do even better in future."

The 23-year-old centre-back from Narayanjanj however believes he deserves the amount he is getting this season as he performed well to help Abahani win the league and the federation cup title last season, apart from helping the side to a second-place finish in the Independence Cup.

"Our club's policy was not to rope in

foreign defenders, so we were searching for local quality defenders instead of foreigners. Hence we agreed to pay Tapu more than Tk 55 lakh," said a Saif Sporting Club official explaining the justification of Tapu's price.

Despite getting less than the last season, Mamunul Islam is happy and believes the club is paying him this amount as they are satisfied with his last season's performance.

"All the footballers are not getting big amounts. The number of players getting big paycheques is very small. But I think those who are being signed up for big money do deserve that payment. If you compare the value of currency of the '80s and now, I think the payments are quite justified," opined the midfielder.

A top official of a club reasoned that the local defenders are drawing big money signings because they are performing far better compared to local midfielders and strikers.

While the top names in domestic football, especially the national team players, are drawing big bucks, the ones who are usually not on the fringes of the national team are getting much less, which is also reflected in the total payments of clubs which usually occupy the mid and lower part of the table. According to club officials, the highest payment for clubs like Team BJMC, Bothers, Muktijoddha Sangsad, Arambagh KS and Rahmatganj MFS ranges between Tk 7 lakh and Tk 15 lakh.

Tigers reach Belfast

STAR SPORT DESK



The Bangladesh cricket team's tour of England and Ireland moved to Belfast yesterday as they reached the Northern Ireland capital at around 11:00am local time

(4:00pm Bangladesh time).

The flight from Gatwick airport in London, scheduled to take off at 7:50am, was delayed by around an hour and 40 minutes, with the Tigers spending 70 minutes in the aircraft before getting off as a technical issue was resolved, informed a Bangladesh Cricket Board official on tour with the team.

Bangladesh will play a tri-series involving the hosts and New Zealand in Ireland, starting on May 12 with a match against Ireland in Dublin. They will then travel back to England to take part in the Champions Trophy, which will begin when Bangladesh take on England in the opener on June 1.

The team departed from Dhaka on April 27 to take part in a 10-day training camp in Sussex, which involved to practice matches against the Duke of Norfolk's XI and a Sussex XI. Pacer Mustafizur Rahman and all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who recently concluded their Indian Premier League stints, joined the team yesterday in Brighton.

ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who had travelled back to Dhaka to be with his ailing wife, also joined the team in Belfast at noon yesterday. The team will have their first practice session in Ireland today.

Lalmatia captain asks BCB to lift ban

SPORTS REPORTER



Faisal Ahmed, who had captained Lalmatia Club in the game that witnessed Sujon Mahud concede 92 runs in four balls as a form of protest against allegedly biased umpiring, yesterday went to the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in order to request the Bangladesh Cricket Board

(BCB) to withdraw his suspension from the game.

Apart from Sujon, who was banned for 10 years, Faisal and the team's coach were also suspended for five years by the BCB.

"I have come here today to ask the BCB to forgive me and let me continue playing cricket. I want to do something great in this game and I want to play," Faisal told reporters in Mirpur yesterday.

"I wanted to inform the board that I was captain for only that game and I really didn't have anything to do with the incident. I had told Sujon not to bowl that way, but he did not listen to me," he added.

When asked why he was not able to handle the situation on the field, he said: "I couldn't do anything until he had bowled six balls in that over."

Faisal spoke to BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury and he was then asked to submit a written letter to the board.

While the board announced to the media the steps they had taken against the second division players, they are yet to communicate the verdicts to the players officially.

The BCB, last week, announced that it has banned Sujon Mahmud from Lalmatia Club and Tasnim Hasan from Fear Fighter Sporting Club for 10 years. It also banned the captains, coaches and team managers of Lalmatia and Fear Fighter for five years. It also suspended the two clubs indefinitely.

For their inability to handle the game, umpires Azizul Bari Babu and Shamsur Rahman Jacky were suspended for six months.

Maria sets up Bouchard encounter

AFP, Madrid

Maria Sharapova set up a mouth-watering second-round clash with Eugenie Bouchard at the Madrid Open after battling back from a set down to beat Mirjana Lucic-Baroni 4-6, 6-4, 6-0 on Sunday.

Bouchard called the Russian "a cheater" last week and suggested she should have been banned for life -- rather than 15 months -- after testing positive for meldonium at the 2015 Australian Open.

And the Canadian said she would "have a bit more motivation" against her former idol Sharapova after registering a first win on the WTA Tour since January against Alize Cornet on Sunday to set up the grudge match.

After reaching the semi-finals on her return from her doping ban last week in Stuttgart, Sharapova showed impressive levels of fitness to dig deep after a tough couple of opening sets against world number 20 Lucic-Baroni.

Narine blitzes RCB Kings undone by Lions

PTI, BENGALURU



Sunil Narine smashed the joint fastest IPL fifty in his sensational knock of 54 as Kolkata Knight Riders thrashed Royal Challengers Bangalore by six wickets to seal a play-offs berth in Bengaluru yesterday.

Narine (54 from 17 balls) reached his fifty in just 15 balls, the same number of deliveries his KKR teammate Yusuf Pathan had consumed in 2014 against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Narine and his opening partner Chris Lynn put on 105 runs from just 6.1 overs in as KKR chased down the target of 159 in a jiffy with 4.5 overs to spare.

Earlier, Travis Head smashed a brilliant unbeaten 75 after Mandeep Singh's 52 as RCB recovered from a top-order collapse to post 158 for six after being put in to bat.

The big names like Chris Gayle, Virat Kohli and A B de Villiers were dismissed cheaply as RCB slumped to 34 for three in the fifth over.

In the other game of the day, Dwayne Smith struck a whirlwind 74 as Gujarat Lions defeated Kings XI Punjab by six wickets in an Indian Premier League game.

Sent into bat, Hashim Amla played a brilliant knock to notch up his second century of the ongoing IPL and power Kings XI Punjab to a challenging 189 for three.

Amla, thus, became the second batsman after Virat Kohli to register two centuries in a single IPL season. Later, Smith turned out to be the architect of the victory for Gujarat with a whirlwind 74 off just 39 deliveries to get Gujarat off to a flier while chasing a challenging 190 for win.

Together with Ishan Kishan (29 off 24 balls), Smith shared 91 runs for the opening partnership to lay the foundation for the chase.

Dinesh Karthik (35 not out off 23 balls) played a short cameo towards the end as Gujarat Lions reached 192 for four in 19.4 over in their pursuit of 190.



The Bangladesh cricket team wait for their luggage after touching down in Belfast yesterday, before moving on to Dublin where they will start a tri-series on May 12 involving hosts Ireland and New Zealand.

PHOTO: BCB

England sweep series

AFP, London



Jonny Bairstow's quickfire 72 not out set up England's 85-run win over Ireland in the second one-day international at Lord's yesterday.

Victory saw England take the two-match series 2-0 after they had launched their build-up to next month's Champions Trophy tournament with a comfortable seven-wicket win at Bristol on Friday.

Ireland, in their first ODI at 'the Home of

Cricket', fought hard with the ball but suffered a batting collapse after a promising start and were dismissed for 243 chasing 329 to win.

Ireland captain William Porterfield did however make 82, the top score of the match, as his side restored some pride.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: 328 for 6 (Morgan 76, Root 73, Bairstow 72; McCarthy 2-61, Chase 2-69)

IRELAND: 243 all out in 46.1 overs (Porterfield 82, Stirling 48, Dockrell 28; Plunkett 3-23)

Result: England won by 85 runs.