

SPORT



Abahani skipper Mamun Mia is being shoved away by Saif Sporting Club players while Tapu Barman lays on the ground during the opening match of the Walton Federation Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

RABBI shoots to silver

SPORTS REPORTER

BAKU 2017 Young shooter Rabbi Hasan Munna brought the first medal for Bangladesh on the first day of action in the 4th Islamic Solidarity Games in Baku, Azerbaijan yesterday.

The 21-year-old, who was under the shadow of his more illustrious compatriot Abdullahel Baki, surprised all to grab the silver medal in his pet event of 10m air rifle with a score of 245.5 points. Omer Akgun of Turkey won gold with a score of 249.8 points while Saidkhon Sayfuddinov of Uzbekistan settled for bronze.

Rabbi's silver win was quite a surprise for all as the Bangladesh contingent were pinning their hopes on the experienced Baki, who had won a silver medal in the Commonwealth Games in 2014. While Baki made it to the final round in sixth position and eventually finished fifth, young Rabbi from Tangail held on to his qualifying position of second and finished the final round behind the gold medallist. Rabbi scored 624 points in qualification, 0.9 points behind Akgun.

"I am very happy with this result even though I'm a bit disappointed at not having won the gold," Rabbi said when contacted over phone last night. "I started with a lead in the final round, but after first five shots I slipped behind a bit. However, I came back in the last few shots and closed the gap with the others to secure the silver."

The other Bangladeshi participants, meanwhile, failed to get themselves on the podium, despite a couple of them being in contention for medals.

In the women's 10m air rifle event Syeda Atkiya Hasan finished sixth while Mahfuza Jannat Jui finished 14th.

Swimmer Mahfuza Khatun Shila, who won two gold medals in South Asian Games last year, finished her 50m breaststroke event in sixth position, taking 34.81 seconds to



Silver medal winner Rabbi Hasan Munna (L) of Bangladesh stands on the podium alongside gold medallist Omer Akgun (C) of Turkey and third-placed Saidkhon Sayfuddinov of Uzbekistan after the men's 10m air pistol event. PHOTO: ISG

finish. The timing was 0.47 seconds more than her personal best set in the SA Games.

Ariful Islam was eliminated from the semifinals of the men's 50m breaststroke event, securing 12th position among 16 semifinalists. Naïma Akter was also eliminated from the semifinals of the 100m backstroke after clocking 1:12.12sec. In the women's 800m freestyle event, Nazma Khatun became seventh after clocking 10:49.98sec.

Gymnast Saddam Hossain finished 18th out of 18 competitors in all three of his events.

Saif hold Abahani in fiery opener

SPORTS REPORTER



Defending champions Abahani were held to a 1-1 draw by newcomers Saif Sporting Club in an insipid yet fractious opening match of the Walton Federation Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The opening fixture saw a goal apiece in either half with Emeka Darlington giving the Sky Blues the lead in stoppage time of the first half and young winger Ibrahim scoring for Saif Sporting Club in the 69th minute, but it was the lack of quality and the fractious nature of the affair which should grab the headlines.

With the bad blood between the two sides caused over the transfer of five national team footballers from Abahani to Saif Sporting, a feisty encounter was always on the cards. Abahani had suspended five of its former footballers -- Ariful Islam, Tapu Barman, Shakil Ahmed, Hemanta Vincent Biswas and Jewel Rana -- after they did not turn up for the club's pre-season training camp and the Dhanmondi based outfit lodged an appeal with

the local game's governing body to uphold the suspension after those five booters joined newcomers Saif Sporting. However, they lost the appeal and four of those five players started yesterday's match against their former club.

The match started with a flurry of fouls before Tapu -- the highest paid player in the transfer window -- kicked his national teammate and Abahani defender Mamun Mia on the foot in an off-the-ball incident in the 12th minute of the

ABAHANI	1 - 1	SAIF SPORTING CLUB
EMEKA 45+1		IBRAHIM 69'

match. Both sets of players joined in on the scuffle while Mamun retaliated by stamping his boot on Tapu's knee. Both players were justifiably sent off before the ten-men teams tried to curb their angst and concentrate on football.

Abahani enjoyed the better share of possession in the opening half, with winger Rubel Miya proving a handful for Saif Sporting down the left flank. The young forward, who scored a wonderful goal against Bengaluru FC in an AFC Cup fixture at this venue earlier this month, saw his cross

headed way over the top by Emeka after Saif's Colombian recruit Valencia Olaya had wasted a similar opportunity minutes earlier.

However, Emeka was the one who broke the deadlock in stoppage time of the first half, guiding Rayhan Hasan's long throw-in into the net past Saif goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico, who had a terrible day between the sticks.

Saif Sporting got their act together after the restart and while there were hardly too many threatening moves, they did get the equaliser in the 69th minute when Ibrahim cleverly tucked in Jewel Rana's cross between two defenders and into the far corner of the net. There were no more goals to come as the teams settled for a share of the spoils.

While this encounter did see its fair share of promise, in the shape of youngsters like Ibrahim, Jewel, Saad Uddin and Rubel, the eligibility of only two foreign players in the playing eleven did seem to have its toll on the quality of football.

The second match of the day, between Brothers Union and Team BJMC, ended in a 1-1 draw too. Siyo Zunapio gave Brothers a 48th minute lead, but Yoko Samnick's spot kick in the 70th minute meant the two sides had to share points.

Approach the key on green wickets

SPORTS REPORTER



The lightweight of Ireland gave Bangladesh a real scare in the opening match of the tri-series on Friday. And had there not been a superb 87-run unbroken fifth-wicket stand between a composed Tamim Iqbal and an assured Mahmudullah Riyad, the Tigers could have headed for disaster in a game that was eventually washed out due to rain.

On a green top at Dublin where there

was a typical English wicket where

the way, the top-order should have at least learnt the tricks of a waiting game with the knowledge that the new-ball swings a bit more in these conditions. Shakib, who led the Tigers in the abandoned opening game in the absence of regular captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, said after the match 'it's easier to play in this condition when the ball gets older'. But unfortunately his words belied his application in the middle. It was expected that the captaincy tag might make him responsible but his injudicious shot at a crucial stage, when Bangladesh were desperately in need of rebuilding the innings, suggested that he was not ready to curb his attacking instinct no matter what the situation demands. Shakib scored a quick-fire 40 odd in Friday's practice game when Ian Callender, who was providing live commentary for CricketEurope Ireland, made an interesting comment after his dismissal.

"This could get ugly for Ireland here unless Bangladesh keep playing rash shots like this," Ian wrote. This statement is quite poignant as far as Shakib is concerned. But somewhere along the line Shakib has to change if Bangladesh are to do well in the tri-series and more importantly in the ICC Champions Trophy, which will commence in England from June 1.

However, the satisfying aspect of the washed out game is the approach of Tamim Iqbal. The left-hander looked like a man on a mission during his solid unbeaten 64. Mahmudullah also played the perfect foil at the other end with 43 not out. The 87-run stand between Tamim and Mahmudullah actually provided a strong statement that Bangladesh have come a long way from being a mediocre team to a strong one-day unit. The only thing they need is mental application from the other senior members if the Tigers are to do well in the tri-series and beyond.



Bangladesh batsman Sabbir Rahman hardly did any justice to his talents with the bat in the tri-series opener against Ireland on Friday. PHOTO: SPORTSFILE

was hardly any difference between the outfield and the wicket, Bangladesh got off to a horrible start, losing opener Soumya Sarkar and one-down Sabbir Rahman in successive overs of Peter Chase. Soumya could only edge a rising delivery behind the wicket, something many cannot complain about. But Sabbir's shot was a shocker. He attempted a wild heave and ended up offering a tame catch at deep third man. The centu-

ry was playing their first one-day international after eight years. But the application of the top-order certainly suggested that they still look green on a green wicket. It was however, nothing to do with the wicket since they had played in more hostile conditions in New Zealand five months ago. Besides, after a ten-day conditioning camp in Sussex and the few practice games they played along

'It's a shame that it rained'

AFP, Dublin



Shakib Al Hasan expects Bangladesh to improve the longer the tri-series in Ireland goes on after conceding it took time to get used to the conditions in their opening game against the hosts on Friday.

Bangladesh lost their first four wickets inside 15 overs but an unbroken stand of 87 between Tamim Iqbal and Mahmudullah put them back in control before rain ended the game after 31 overs.

"It is different to what we are used to early on and it was not easy especially at the start of the innings, but as the ball got older and softer the ball was coming nicely onto the bat," said Shakib who was captaining the team in place of Mashrafe Mortaza, who was serving a one-game suspension.

"It was good experience. It's a shame that it rained and we couldn't finish the game, but that's how it is and you need to take that on your chin. We are now looking forward to the next game, against New Zealand [on Wednesday]."

Tamim Iqbal's hopes of scoring the first century of the series were cut short by the rain when he was 64 not out, but Shakib was impressed by his batting as the opener led his side's recovery after losing four wickets for 70.

"Tamim played beautifully," said Shakib. "The wicket wasn't easy, especially in the first seven to ten overs it was moving a bit, but I thought he applied himself really well and Mahmudullah (who was 43 not out) played a crucial part. That partnership changed the momentum and we started controlling the game."

Shakib believes that on the small Malahide ground, which will stage all four Ireland games in the six-match series, 300 is only a par score and they remained on course for that at 157 for four, with 19 overs remaining.



SHAKIB AL HASAN

New Zealand may have 10 players still involved in the Indian Premier League but Shakib expects them to provide formidable opposition when they meet on the next two Wednesdays.

"They have a new team, as they are still in the IPL so they will be missing some experience, but they are still the second ranked team and they will come hard at us," he added. "We played them a few months back, it wasn't a good memory as we didn't too well in New Zealand but these are different conditions, a different scenario and we are hoping to do well."

Windies hit back

AFP, Roseau

Pakistan's Mohammad Abbas claimed his first five-wicket haul in Test cricket to trigger a West Indies first innings collapse to 247 all out before lunch on the fourth day of the third and final Test at Windsor Park in Dominica on Saturday.

However the tourists lost two early wickets in seeking to build on a first-innings lead of 129 and will resume after the interval at eight for two in their second turn at the crease, an overall advantage of 137 runs with eight wickets in hand.

Increasingly impressive in his first Test series, Abbas took the last four wickets of the innings for three runs in a four-over spell after an early breakthrough from fellow pacer Mohammad Amir to finish with the excellent figures of five for 46 off 25 disciplined overs.

West Indies' tumble of lower-order wickets from the overnight position of 218 for five and Pakistan's early second-innings setbacks were in stark contrast to the tedious progress of the match with both teams combining for a pedestrian scoring rate of under two-and-a-half runs per over as only 15 wickets fell over the first three days' play.

SCORES IN BRIEF
PAKISTAN: First Innings 376
WEST INDIES: First Innings 247 (Chase 69, Powell 31; Abbas 5-46, Shah 3-126)
PAKISTAN: Second Innings 8 for 2 wickets

CHAMPIONS TROPHY 2017 Tigers' opener sold out

STAR SPORT DESK

Bangladesh's opening ICC Champions Trophy match against hosts England has already been sold out, an ICC media release read yesterday.

Bangladesh are set to play England on June 1 at the Oval in London in what is also the tournament's opening fixture.

The Tigers have fond memories of their last encounter against England in a major tournament, winning by 15 runs in a 2015 ICC World Cup group stage match.

Over 15,000 tickets for the Champions Trophy, scheduled to take place in England and Wales from June 1 have been sold, the release continued.

Speaking about the increase in demand, tournament director Steve Elworthy said: "The demand has been extraordinary so far but there are still limited tickets available for some matches."

'Fizz, Rashid good enough for BBL'

AGENCIES, Melbourne

Next summer's Australian Big Bash League could feature its first-ever players from Bangladesh and Afghanistan after Sydney Sixers captain Moises Henriques said that teams would be 'silly' to not look into talents like Mustafizur Rahman and Rashid Khan.

Rashid, the teenage spin sensation, has taken the lucrative T20 tournament by storm this year, picking up 14 wickets in 12 matches for Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Rashid also boasts an economy-rate of 6.52, which is the lowest of any of the top-10 leading IPL wicket-takers.

"I still can't pick him [Rashid] in the nets. He bowls nearly 100km/h and gets the ball to spin a little bit both ways. It is something definitely worth contemplating for the Sixers.

"I think teams will be silly to pass off the opportunity to not signing guys just because they are from developing cricketing nations. Players such as Rashid and also Mustafizur, I've been lucky enough to play with both of them and they have been able to mix it with the very best in the world and I'm sure they are good enough to be in the BBL competition."