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e-mail: sports@thedailystar.net
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SPORT

Bangladesh players celebrate the dismissal of New Zealand's Neil Broom during the last match of the tri-series at the Clontarf Cricket Ground in Dublin yesterday. Bangladesh restricted the Kiwis to 270 before chasing down the target with five wickets in hand and 10 balls to spare.

PHOTO: NZC

Rubel back in his element

SPORTS REPORTER

Rubel Hossain is not the most economical bowler in the Bangladesh ranks -- he is at times a bit expensive. But the right-arm pacer with a slinging action is the fastest among the lot and perhaps tailor-made for big occasions. His devastating exploits against England in the 2015 World Cup is something many will remember for a long long time. But he had gone through torrid times after the World Cup on and off the field and was dropped after a successful home season that saw Bangladesh win ODI series against Pakistan, India and South Africa.

Rubel went for a rehab after picking up a knee injury but his reluctance to follow strict regimentation and his mooted desire not to play the demanding Test matches eventually cost him his rightful place in the team. It actually took him a lot of hard work to win back the heart of the team management. He travelled with the team to New Zealand but did not play a single ODI, went to Sri Lanka only to warm the reserve bench.

In the Ireland tri-series he made his return to the team as a third seamer and at the expense of an equally impressive Taskin Ahmed. There is a strong argument that both Taskin and Rubel are supposed to form the best pace trio with Mustafizur Rahman had the inspirational captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza not been around.

But that debate apart Rubel, the only Bangladesh bowler with the ability to reverse-swing the ball, is by far the best first-change pace bowler in Bangladesh. He bowled 10 overs in the first game against New Zealand during the Ireland tri-series and took two wickets. He was impressive with his pace and was very effective with the old ball.

Mustafizur may be the man any captain would depend on when the team is in crisis, but the captain can have faith on Rubel when it comes to bowling in the death overs. Yesterday, in what was a re-match against the Black Caps, Rubel hurled 12 searing yorkers in his last two overs. And apart from the one, which turned into a full toss, rests were almost perfect. He conceded a four but that was a frustrating boundary off an inside edge, finishing his spell with figures of 10-0-56-1. But it could have been a second wicket and the most satisfying one for him had Mahmudullah not dropped Ross Taylor at mid-on.

Rubel's three good outings ahead of the ICC Champions Trophy is certainly a positive that Bangladesh can take before heading for England to play the hosts in the opening game on June 1. And Rubel will certainly relish that prospect after his famous exploits down under.

MSC dominate high-scoring round

Abahani and Prime Doleshwar win through D/L

SPORTS REPORTER

The Dhaka Premier Division Super League campaign began with a bang yesterday. The batsmen continued their dominance in the scorching heat, although sporadic rain interrupted two matches, to produce high-scoring matches in the first-round clashes at three venues. Gazi Group Cricketers failed to turn the tide of their sudden loss of form in the latter stage of the first phase as Mohammedan Sporting Club drew blood, showing that although they came to the Super League as the lowest-placed side they were not ready to just make up the numbers as they beat Gazi Group by seven runs at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

Abahani handed a 60-run defeat in the D/L method to Prime Bank Cricket Club at the BKSP to go level with Gazi at the top of the six-team table while Prime Doleshwar secured a 40-run victory, also through the D/L method, against Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club at another BKSP venue.

A number of batsmen impressed in the opening round and Doleshwar's Imtiaz Hossain was the most successful, making the lone hundred, but Abahani's in-form opener Liton Das, Nazmul Hossain and Mohammad Mithun contributed heavily for their team while Mohammedan's Rony Talukdar and Shamsur Rahman also made great contributions.

Liton Das's 73-ball 85, Nazmul Hossain's 57-ball 65 and Mohammad Mithun's 52-ball 60 lifted Abahani to 321 for six in an innings curtailed to 47 overs due to rain interruptions.

Liton, who struck eight fours and four sixes, along with Saif Hassan, added 100 for the second wicket to give a good platform for Nazmul and Mithun to accelerate and the latter batsmen capitalised by sharing 107 runs for the fourth wicket.

In reply, Prime Bank were all out for 273 runs in 43.3 overs as most of their batsmen got starts but failed to carry on. Zakir Hasan's 55 was the highest score.

There was a run fest at Fatullah and Mohammedan finally defended their 324 to make sure Gazi Group suffered their third consecutive defeat.

Mohammedan amassed 324 for eight thanks to Talukdar (92) and Shamsur (74), who added 148 runs for the second wicket. Chasing the challenging target, Gazi Group were off to a flying start as Anamul Haque and Munim Shahriar took charge with a 61-run opening stand in 6.4 overs.

Kamrul Islam broke the partnership in the seventh over removing Anamul, who made 36 off 22 balls. Mominul Haque fell soon after, but Shahriar repaired the damage with identical stands of 64 for the third and fourth wickets with Jahurul Islam and Parvez Rasool respectively.

Shahriar fell for 88 in the 39th over, after which Suhrawadi Shuvo kept Gazi afloat with a 51-run seventh-wicket stand with Mahedi Hasan but ultimately, Gazi lacked the boundaries at the crucial times and ended up with 317 for eight.

In another curtailed game at the BKSP-3 Ground in Savar, Imtiaz Hossain's career-best 128 powered Prime Doleshwar to put up 274 for seven in 46 overs.

Imtiaz, who smote 17 fours and four sixes, made most of the runs for his side and put on 176-run second-wicket stand with Shahriar Nafees, who hit 67. Sharifullah later made a valuable late contribution with a 27-ball 35.

In reply, Sheikh Jamal were bowled out for 251 after their batsmen failed to convert their starts.

Jamal had desperately needed a big score but three of their batsmen made 40s, including Tanbir Hayder, who top-scored with 46, while Ziaur Rahman made 37.

SCORES IN BRIEF

MOHAMMEDAN: 324-8 in 50 overs (Rony 92, Shamsur 74, Nazmul 47; Shahzada 2-52, Abu Haider 2-78)

GAZI GROUP: 317-8 in 50 overs (Munim 88, Suhrawardi 57 not out, Rasool 40; Kamrul 2-59, Bipul 2-60, Sajedul 2-68)

Result: Mohammedan Sporting Club won by 7 runs.

PRIME DOLESHWAR: 274-7 in 50 overs (Imtiaz 128, Nafees 67, Sharifullah 35; Tanvir Haider 2-58)

SK. JAMAL: 251-10 in 42.2 overs (Tanvir 46, Mahbubul 44, Chopra 43; Chathuranga 2-38, Sunny 2-41, Habibur 2-55)

Result: Prime Doleshwar Sporting Club won by 40 runs in D/L method.

ABAHANI: 321-6 in 50 overs (Liton 85, Nazmul 65, Mithun 60; Al Amin 2-43, Ariful 2-70)

PRIME BANK: 273-10 in 43.3 overs (Zakir 55, Nahidul 43, Easwaran 43; Manan 3-54, Shuvagata 2-33, Afif 2-48)

IMTIAZ HOSSAIN ... 128

RONY TALUKDER ... 92

LITON DAS ... 85

BD-NZ SCOREBOARD

NEW ZEALAND	R/B	4s/6s
Latham b Nasir	84/92	11/0
Ronchi c Shakib b Mustafizur	2/5	0/0
Broom c Mashrafe b Nasir	63/76	7/0
Taylor not out	60/56	6/0
Anderson c Mahmudullah b Shakib	24/32	3/0
Neesham c Mahmudullah b Mashrafe	6/10	0/0
Santner b Shakib	0/6	0/0
Munro c Mushfiqur b Mashrafe	1/2	0/0
Henry b Rubel	5/14	0/0
Patel not out	7/7	0/0
Extras: (lb-14, w-4)	18	
Total: (For 8 wkts in 50 overs)	270	

Did not bat: Bennett

Fall of wickets: 1-23, 2-156, 3-167, 4-208, 5-224, 6-225, 7-226, 8-258.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mashrafe	10	0	52	2
Mustafizur	10	0	46	1
Rubel	10	0	56	1
Nasir	9	0	47	2
Shakib	8	0	41	2
Mosaddek	3	0	14	0

Bangladesh	R/B	4s/6s
Tamim c Bennett b Santner	65/80	6/1
Soumya c Anderson b Patel	0/1	0/0
Sabbir run out	65/83	9/0
Mosaddek lbw b Patel	10/13	2/0
Mushfiqur not out	45/45	3/1
Shakib c Santner b Bennett	19/32	2/0
Mahmudullah not out	46/36	6/1
Extras (lb-2, w-19)	21	
Total (For 5 wkts in 48.2 overs)	271	

Did not bat: Nasir Hossain, Mashrafe Mortaza, Rubel Hossain

Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-143, 3-148, 4-160, 5-199

BOWLER	O	M	R	W
Patel	10	0	55	2
Henry	10	0	49	0
Bennett	9.2	0	47	1
Anderson	5	0	37	0
Santner	10	0	53	1
Neesham	4	0	28	0

Result: Bangladesh won by five wickets

Player-of-the-match: Mushfiqur Rahim

Player-of-the-series: Tom Latham

Toss: Bangladesh

Morgan, Ali lift Eng to 339

AFP, *Leeds*

England captain Eoin Morgan led from the front with a superb century as his side posted 339 for six in their day/night first one-day international at Headingley on Wednesday.

His 107 was his 10th ODI hundred for England and came off 93 balls, including five sixes.

Morgan's innings helped England recover after they had slumped to 198 for five against South Africa, the world's top-ranked 50-over side.

He received excellent support from fellow left-hander Moeen Ali, who made 77 not out off 51 balls.

'More intense than the World Cup'

AFP, *Mumbai*

Indian skipper Virat Kohli said Wednesday his side would be ruthless in defending their Champions Trophy title next month, describing the competition as tougher even than the World Cup.

India won the last Champions Trophy in 2013 and head into June's tournament in England and Wales as favourites after a hugely successful home season with 10 Test wins.

They are number one in the Test rankings after series victories over New Zealand, England, Bangladesh and Australia, and hope to carry that form into the 50-over Champions Trophy event.

"The hunger to win and ruthlessness is what we speak about all the time. In Test cricket we have done well with that mindset," Kohli told reporters in Mumbai before the squad's departure for England.

"That goes a long way in a tournament like this. If we think in that manner, we will get the results we want more often than not."

India will play South Africa, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in Group B, while England, Australia, Bangladesh and New Zealand form Group A. The two top sides from each group will progress to the semi-finals.

Kohli, who was part of Mahendra Singh Dhoni's side in 2013 that claimed the Trophy, said the eight-team event offered little room for error.

"I think because the tournament is much shorter and you have got top eight teams in the world, the competitiveness is much higher from the word go," said Kohli.

"In a World Cup you have league games and you have time to get into the tournament and dominate in the later half. But in Champions Trophy you need to be on the top of your game from game one. If not, then your chances go down pretty soon."

India have retained eight members of their title-winning squad that overcame England in 2013.

Kohli described wicketkeeper-batsman Dhoni and veteran batsman Yuvraj Singh as "the two pillars" of the current Indian side.

"They have so much experience that if you give them freedom to play their own game in the middle order then I am sure they are the best judge of how to win a game," said Kohli, who assumed the one-day international captaincy from Dhoni in January.

India begin their Champions Trophy campaign against arch-rivals Pakistan on June 4 in Birmingham, but Kohli played down the hype surrounding the hotly-anticipated clash.

"As a cricketer you can't even think of the non-striker when you are facing a ball, so forget about things that are not in our control," Kohli said of playing Pakistan amid a tense political climate between the rivals.

"Yes, an India-Pakistan game is always exciting for all the fans watching but for us as cricketers, it's just a game of cricket."

Kohli suffered a shoulder injury during the Australia series to miss the final game. He then returned to skipper Indian Premier League side Royal Challengers Bangalore, only to see them end last in the ladder.

Aus fight shifts to image rights

AFP, *Sydney*

Australian cricketers Wednesday unveiled plans to take back their own image rights, firing the latest salvo in an ongoing pay battle with the country's cricket board.

It is the latest power play in an increasingly bitter stand-off between Cricket Australia and the Australian Cricketers' Association over a plan to scrap revenue-sharing.

With the current deal expiring on June 30, the ACA disclosed plans to form a new business to help male and female players directly negotiate sponsorship deals.

Establishing "The Cricketers' Brand" was necessary due to "the uncertainty of all parties regarding IP matters should the players be unemployed post June 30".

"When players are threatened with unemployment and when they learn they receive zero per cent of the digital revenue they generate they are naturally concerned," said ACA chief executive Alistair Nicholson.