

SPORT



Solomon King Kanform (R) is chased by his teammates after the Sheikh Jamal striker sealed victory against Sheikh Russel with a stoppage time strike during their Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Solomon denies Sk Russel

SPORTS REPORTER
Substitute Gambian forward Solomon King Kanform struck a stoppage-time goal to help Sheikh Jamal Dhanomdi Club post their third straight victory in the Bangladesh Premier League with a 2-1 win over Sheikh Russel KC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Sheikh Russel's Khalekuzzaman had cancelled out a ninth-minute strike from another Gambian, Momodu Bah, in the 36th minute before Solomon netted the winner two minutes into stoppage time to put Sheikh Jamal on top of the 12-team table alongside Chittagong Abahani. Both teams have nine points from three matches while Sheikh Russel, with a defeat and a draw following their opening game win, have four points.

Momodou put Sheikh Jamal ahead with a towering header on a corner from Enamul Haque in the ninth minute of the game. The youthful side from Dhanomdi stepped up their attack, keeping Sheikh Russel defenders on their toes as they came close to doubling the lead in the 23rd minute, but Nurul Absar squandered

the opportunity with only goalkeeper Ziaur Rahman to beat.

Despite facing heavy pressure from the opposition, Sheikh Russel tried to find some space and hit back on a counter-attack in the 36th minute, thanks to an eye-catching strike from Khalekuzzaman, who shrugged off his marker and let loose a sudden but powerful shot from the left

SK JAMAL (MOMODU BAH)	2 - 1	SK RUSSEL (KHALEKUZZAMAN-36)
BROTHERS UNION	0 - 1	RAHMATGANJ (MOHAMMAD ELIAS-23)

side of box into the far corner of the net, giving goalkeeper Mitul Hasan no chance to react.

Sheikh Jamal kept on pressing to restore the lead after resumption and came close to getting it in the 55th minute, but Raphael Odovin failed to connect a low cross from Momodu from inside the six-yard box.

Sheikh Russel then took control of the midfield and created two good opportunities.

On the hour-mark, Biswanath Ghosh whipped in a nice cross from the left flank for Dawda Gessy, who saw his volley narrowly miss the target while seven minutes later substitute Mobarak Hossain squandered a scoring opportunity off a Dawda cross with a miscued attempt from a one-on-one situation.

Sheikh Jamal's Nigerian coach Joseph Afesi sent Solomon in place of Raphael for the last 15 minutes and the move paid off as the Gambian scored the winning goal – a left-footer from inside the box after availing a header from Momodu.

Meanwhile Rahmatganj MFS returned to winning ways with a 1-0 victory over Brothers Union in the day's second match.

Brothers, who came into the match on the back of two successive draws, seized the control in the second but could not break the five-man defence of the Old Dhaka outfit, guided by Kamal Babu.

Local presence a fillip for domestic game

SPORTS REPORTER

As Bangladesh's national team mature and go from strength to strength on the world stage, there will soon arise a need for that progress on a higher level to be matched in the lower levels of the domestic game, and there are some signs of that happening in the team's ongoing training camp.

The official coaching staff – comprising assistant and fielding coach Richard Halsall, bowling coach Courtney Walsh, batting consultant Mark O'Neill, trainer Mario Villavarayan and physio Thian Chandramohan – are busy fine-tuning the cricketers before the start of the all important homeseries.

But apart from the foreign staff there were two local coaches in Mizanur Rahman and Sohel Islam assisting the national team.

Khan Kham, former national captain and chairman of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) cricket operations committee, informed that the main idea behind including local coaches in the national set-up is to assist the coaching staff, but at the same time it will help them to gather more knowledge, which they can share and disseminate when they return to coaching at the age levels and

the domestic circuit.

"As we have a big set of players in the national camp we have included local coaches to assist the coaching staff. But at the same time the knowledge and experience they are gathering from the foreign coaches will certainly help when they return to the age levels and domestic circuit. Obviously it's a good opportunity for them to learn and I think they will benefit from this," Akram told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

Mizanur, who coached the Under-19 team that was led by Mehedi Hasan Miraz in the last ICC Under-19 World Cup, is a familiar face among the local cricketers.

The inclusion of local coaches in the national camp with the presence of the foreign staff can help them gain more experience. The BCB has often stated its intent to enhance local resources for the future and undoubtedly this is a step in the right direction, which will boost the morale of local coaches. For the good of domestic cricket, it can be hoped that such steps will be replicated in the future.



Mizanur Rahman (R), along with Sohel Islam (not pictured), has been lending a local flavour to the coaching staff in the Bangladesh national squad's ongoing training camp.

PHOTO: STAR FILE

Bangladesh team leaving for Lyon tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh national bridge team will leave for France tomorrow to take part in the 43rd World Bridge Championships with the hope of moving into the second round in their maiden appearance in the global event, which is scheduled to get underway in Lyon on August 12.

Bangladesh qualified for the Championships by dint of finishing second in the South Asia and the Middle East zone, the qualifying phase for which took place in UAE in April.

The Bangladesh team, comprising six players – captain Mirza Sajid Ispahani, Shah Ziaul Huq Kamruzzaman Sobag, Rashidul Ahsan, Moshitur Rahman Naveem and Asifur Rahman Chowdhury Razib – will be playing in the main event, called the Bermuda Bowl, alongside 21 top teams from across the world. The top eight teams will advance into the second round.

Bangladesh and Guadelupe are the only teams among the 22 who are participating

in these championships that are amateurs.

"Though we have been playing bridge for a long time, this is first time that we are participating in the world championships which is a milestone in our country's sports because Bangladeshis hardly get any opportunity to represent the country in a world event like this," said Ziaul Haque.

The players claimed that a lot of students from Dhaka University and BUJET are now showing interest in bridge after Bangladesh qualified for the world event.

United Commercial Bank provided Tk1 lakh to each player as incentive while captain Sajid Ispahani is bearing all the expenses of the team for this championship.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Bridge Federation's (BBF) president Mushtaqur Rahman Mobon informed that they are planning to host a mega event, involving teams from the Asia Pacific Zone, in Cox's Bazar in March next year, which they hope will be a big boost to the game as well as tourism.

BBF's general secretary Abdu Kuddus and UCB's additional managing director Mirza Mahmud Rafiqur Rahman were, among others present, at the press conference at NSC conference room.



Officials of Bangladesh Bridge Federation and United Commercial Bank pose with the players of the national team, which will leave for France tomorrow to take part in the 43rd World Bridge Championships.

PHOTO: STAR

AUSTRALIA'S TOUR OF BANGLADESH Fine-tuning on & off the field

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh Test captain Mushtaqur Rahim will lead a team comprising Soumya Sarkar, Imrul Kayes, Nazmul Hasan, Mahmudullah Riyad, Nurul Hasan, Tujul Islam, Rubel Hossain, Al Amin Hossain, Subhasish Roy and Naem Hasan, while his deputy Tamim Iqbal will lead a team comprising Liton Das, Mominal Haque, Sabbir Rahman, Nasir Hossain, Tanbir Hayat, Sunzamul Islam, Taskin Ahmed, Kamrul Islam, Shafiqul Islam, Mustafizur Rahman and Saqlain Sajid.

Meanwhile, BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury informed yesterday that everything was going according to plan as far as successfully hosting the two-match series is concerned.

"Both venues are ready. Now we are just nursing the grounds. On the other hand, Fatullah is still our preference to host the tour match and we have kept

BKSP under consideration as an alternative venue," said Nizamuddin, adding that excessive rain had created problems with the Fatullah venue.

He also said that the Australia team will arrive on August 18 as scheduled, but an advance party comprising two-three players will come two days earlier as per their standard practice.

After the resolution of the pay dispute Australia's cricketers are scheduled to participate in a pre-tour training camp in Darwin from August 11 to 17 and they will get a chance to acclimatise to Bangladeshi conditions during a two-day practice match on August 22-23.

The first Test will take place at the refurbished Sher-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur from August 27 and after that the teams will travel to Chittagong to play the second match from September 4.

Smith cool on O'Keefe's chances

REUTERS, Melbourne

Australia captain Steve Smith has cast doubt on Steve O'Keefe's chances of breaking back into the Test side as selectors look to develop younger spinners on the tour of Bangladesh.

"O'Keefe with 19 wickets, was Australia's joint highest wicket-taker while Ashton Agar in the four-match series against India but the 32-year-old was left out of the Bangladesh tour, which starts with the first Test in Mirpur on August 27."

The left-arm off-spinner's omission came two months after he was sanctioned for a drunken incident at a Sydney function in April, his second alcohol-fueled breach in 12 months, and he was also excluded from the list of nationally contracted players.

Smith said O'Keefe was overlooked for purely cricket reasons with selectors keen to give 23-year-old left-armer Ashton Agar another chance with a view to returning to India in four years' time.

"Smith said Agar would get the chance to impress in Bangladesh.

"Now is probably a chance to move on to someone else and Ashton Agar's going to get a chance to prove himself," Smith told cricket.com.au's website (cricket.com.au).

"(Agar) has been around for a while now and it's another chance for him to have a crack in spin-friendly conditions and hopefully he can go really well for us."

"I have (spoken to O'Keefe) and he was disappointed, which is fair enough. He understands where we're heading."

"He's getting a bit older now and our next tour back to India is in four years' time and we've got to find the right group of guys that we think to be there for that series."

Herath injury deepens SL woes

AFP, Colombo

Key bowler Rangana Herath has joined Sri Lanka's growing injury list ahead of the start of the third and final Test against India starting Thursday, in a blow to their hopes of a consolation win.

The 33-year-old spinner, Sri Lanka's number one and the world number three in Tests behind India's Ravindra Jadeja and Ravichandran Ashwin, is out with a back injury, chief selector Sanath Jayasuriya said.

"Herath will not be able to play in the third Test," Jayasuriya said. "He is suffering a stiff back."

Sri Lanka have already suffered crushing defeats in the first two Tests.

All-rounder Asela Gunaratne and bowler Nuwan Pradeep picked up injuries in the first and second Tests respectively.

Moeen hails Saqlain role

AFP, Manchester

Moeen Ali has paid tribute to the "amazing" Saqlain Mustaqur for his role in helping the England all-rounder enjoy a record-breaking Test series against South Africa.

Ali, a 30-year-old off-spinner and left-handed batsman, became the first man in cricket history to score more than 250 runs and take 25 wickets in a four-match Test series during the course of England's 3-1 victory over the Proteas.

Ali has often been regarded, even by himself, as a "second spinner" when the likes of Hampshire left-armer Liam Dawson have been in the England side.

But under the guidance of England spin-bowling coach Saqlain, a former Pakistan off-spinner and star of a Surrey side that won English County Championship titles at the turn of the century, Ali's bowling has improved markedly.

"Saqqy has been amazing for me in terms of helping with my fields, helping me understand

my bowling a lot more than I had done previously – and I think that has been the biggest difference," said Ali after bowling England to a 177-run win in the fourth Test at Old Trafford with more than a day to spare on Monday.

"Little things like that can make a big difference," explained Ali, who ended the match with two wickets in two balls for an innings return of five for 69 after finishing England's victory in the third Test at the Oval with a hat-trick.

"Before, I just bowled, (and) didn't really think too much," added Ali, who started the series with a 10-wicket haul in England's first Test in Lord's.

"Let the captain set the field. I would say I set the field a lot more throughout this series."

"I feel a lot more confident in my ability."

"I feel like it was building. I had been batting well over the last year, and the bowling was coming."

Joe Root, whose first series as England captain ended with a decisive victory, has been delighted by Worcestershire star's progress.



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