

# SPORT



## Muktis pile misery on Arambagh

**SPORTS REPORTER**  
Muktijoddha Sangsad handed a 2-0 defeat to Arambagh KS in their Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

After a barren first half, Amzad Ali broke the deadlock in the 60th minute with a header while Arambagh defender Arafat Hossain struck own net in 90th minute to ensure Muktijoddha's second victory in three matches. The Reds now have six points while Arambagh remain on the bottom of the 12-team table alongside Mohammedan SC following three straight defeats.

A youthful Arambagh side, who earned four points in the first three matches of last league, lost their strength due to the mass exodus of players during the pre-season transfers, and they have continued to struggle since the start of the league this time.

The charges of Maruful Haque, however, dominated the first half of yesterday's match and created a few chances but failed to reap any rewards.

Goalkeeper Uttam Barua denied Arambagh's Mohammad Jewel on the half-hour mark before Shahriar Bappy wasted two scoring chances in the last five minutes of the first half.

Muktijoddha regrouped in the second half and took control of the game before grabbing the lead on the hour-mark when Tanvir Rana whipped in a well-judged cross for Amzad, who headed from close range without facing any

<b>MUKTIJODDHA</b> (AMZAD-60, ARAFAT OG-90)	<b>2 - 0</b>	<b>ARAMBAGH</b>
<b>FARASHGANJ</b>	<b>0 - 1</b>	<b>SAIF SC</b> (TAPU-55)

resistance from goalkeeper Akkas Sheikh.

Arambagh strengthened their attack by sending on former national striker Sohail Rana, who found a nice opportunity to level the margin in the 89th minute, but the tall striker blasted the ball over the bar with the goal at his mercy.

Muktijoddha's win was sealed in the 90th minute when Arambagh defender Arafat struck his own net while trying to clear a forward pass from opposition midfielder Motiur Rahman.

Meanwhile, a second-half header from defender Tapu Barman powered newcomers Saif Sporting Club to a single-goal win over Farashganj SC in the day's second match. The second successive win means Saif SC joined holders Abahani, Muktijoddha and Rahmatganj on six points each, three less than joint leaders Sheikh Jamal DC and Chittagong Abahani.

Fresh from a 1-0 win over Abahani, Farashganj came into the match with the hope of causing another upset, but their performance yesterday was hardly a match for their previous match's performance. The charges of Abu Yousuf, however, gave a run for the money to national-player-studded Saif SC before conceding the lone goal in the second half.

Though Saif SC could not expose Rahmatganj's defence in the first half, they were able to break it in the second half on a few occasions, cashing in one of those opportunities in the 55th minute. Defender Riyan ran down the right flank and whipped in a cross for Tapu, who saw his drop-header embrace the net.



Pacer Shafiul Islam (L), a regular member of the national reserve bench, came good with a five-wicket haul for Bangladesh Green on the first day of the three-day practice match against Bangladesh Red at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday, while teammate Mustafizur Rahman (R) continued his search for peak form with an economical spell that yielded a solitary wicket.



PHOTOS: ANURUP KANTI DAS

## Shafiul impresses in practice

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong**

Since making his international debut back in 2010 pacer Shafiul Islam has not been able to cement his place in the Bangladesh team. Despite a few outstanding performances every now and then, his fitness has always remained a major concern.

The right-arm seamer had a good outing on a rain-affected first day of the three-day practice match, picking five wickets as Mushfiqur Rahim's Bangladesh Red team declared their first innings on 140 for nine. In reply Tamim Iqbal's Green team ended the days' play on 49 for one at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Rain delayed the start as the game finally started after the lunch break at 12:40 pm but the pitch, which was covered due to

overnight rain, offered a lot of movement and pace to the fast bowlers.

Skipper Tamim opted to field, keeping the overcast conditions in mind and reaped immediate rewards as Shafiul, who was incisive from the start, picked up the three top-order batsman in his first spell. Soumya Sarkar was the first to go, edging to second slip for one. Imrul Kayes (5) was the next to face the music, managing only to knock a Shafiul delivery to the wicketkeeper while Mahmudullah Riyad had no clue when he was bowled without troubling the scorers.

Young Nazmul Hossain Shanto and skipper Mushfiqur tried to steady the ship, adding 70 runs for the fourth wicket, but the latter offered a return catch to off-spinner Sanjit Saha after scoring 30.

The batting side never recovered and Shafiul went on to complete his five-for with the wickets of Taijul Islam and Rubel Hossain, while Nazmul ended up top-

scoring with 53 off 86 balls with the help of six fours and a six as Mushfiqur declared their innings closed in the 48th over.

Shafiul's figures were an excellent five for 17 from 7.1 overs. It was also a good outing for fast bowling sensation Mustafizur Rahman who bowled in good areas and picked up a wicket from his nine overs giving away just 15 runs.

In reply, the Green team lose the wicket of Liton Kumar, who was caught off Rubel for five. Tamim will resume the second day on 23 alongside Mominul Haque on 19 runs.

According to chief selector Minhajul Abedin, Shafiul's display proved why he is always in the selectors' plans despite not being a regular member of the playing eleven.

"I think he bowled outstandingly -- especially the first three wickets he took came through sheer pace. This has been the reason why we have always kept Shafiul in

our plans as he has the ability," Minhajul told The Daily Star over phone yesterday.

The 27-year-old, who played his last Test in Chittagong against England last year informed that he is working on his accuracy and looking to bowl according to the demands of the pitch.

"There is still a lot to learn and I am working on the accuracy and according to the demand of the pitch. At the same time I am working on swing as well," said Shafiul to reporters yesterday.

Meanwhile, all eyes will be on Mustafizur in the upcoming series and when asked about his performance, the chief selector said: "He was not bad and hopefully he will be fine by the start of the series," he added.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
BANGLADESH RED: 140/9 dec (Nazmul 53, Mushfiqur 30, Shafiul 5-17)  
BANGLADESH GREEN: 49/1 (Tamim 23 not out, Mominul 19 not out, Rubel 1/15)



Muktijoddha Sangsad's Amzad Ali (C) goes on a wild celebration after scoring the opening goal of their Bangladesh Premier League match against Arambagh KS at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

## Barisal's ejection leaves Fizz without a franchise

**SPORTS REPORTER**

The Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) governing council has ousted franchise Barisal Bulls from this year's tournament because of a failure to comply with financial terms. Apart from reducing the field for BPL 2017 from eight franchises to seven (Sylhet is slated for a return under a new name and new ownership), the decision means that star Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman is currently without a franchise for the lucrative T20 tournament scheduled to begin in early November.

Unlike most other franchises gearing up for this season, Barisal had not reached an advanced stage in planning or forming their squad, but they did confirm Mustafizur as their icon player. And unlike previous seasons, icon players for 2017 will not be decided at the player auction but instead be left up to individual negotiations

between the players and franchises.

The decision to jettison Barisal was taken at a meeting of the governing council at a club in the capital yesterday, where Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan was also present.

"Since they have not met the financial terms and conditions, we have decided not enrol them in this year's BPL," BPL governing council member-secretary IH Mallick told The Daily Star over the phone. "We had twice extended the deadline by seven days for them, and both times they failed to comply."

"We have not yet finalised it, but there will likely be an open auction where Mustafizur will be assigned a base price and the franchises will bid on him," Mallick added.

Recently, in mid-July, Barisal Bulls owner MA Awal Chowdhury made disparaging remarks about Mushfiqur Rahim, who led Barisal in 2016 and has now shifted to Rangpur Riders as its icon player for 2017.

## Sylhet floated as warm-up alternative

**SPORTS REPORTER**

The practice venue has suddenly become the centre of discussion ahead of the Bangladesh-Australia series. Australia were scheduled to play a two-day practice match at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium on August 22-23, but the venue is presently submerged and becomes waterlogged at the slightest hint of rain.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) put in an all-out effort to make the international venue fit for the tour game but with monsoon in full swing, many see little chance of that. The BCB has therefore been considering the BKSP in Savar as an alternative venue but the cricket operations committee chairman Akram Khan told reporters during the practice match in Chittagong yesterday that Australia are not willing to go to BKSP.

Akram and BCB president Nazmul Hassan however informed that they were also considering the Sylhet International Stadium as another option.

"Australia expressed a desire to play this match at Mirpur but it's not possible because you cannot prepare a wicket for a Test within three days as the first Test will start from August 27. They are not interested about the BKSP due to the time factor but we will try to send them within an hour. They are yet to give their final opinion. We gave another option, which is Sylhet," said Akram.

## Yadav excited & nervous

**AFP, Pallekele**

India's Kuldeep Yadav said Wednesday he felt both excited and nervous before the final Test against Sri Lanka as the left-arm wrist spinner prepared to fill in for suspended star bowler Ravindra Jadeja.

Yadav is expected to make the starting XI in the Test at Pallekele starting Saturday in place of Jadeja, who was handed a one-match ban for dangerous play in India's last Test against Sri Lanka.

The 22-year-old spinner made an impressive Test debut against Australia in India in March before going on to claim eight wickets in five one-day international appearances between June and July against the

West Indies.

"If I get a chance to play in Sri Lanka I will be very happy because I have been working hard and this will be a result of that. So obviously excited," Yadav told reporters.

"But also there is nervousness that I should be able to perform."

Yadav joined the squad for the three-Test series in Sri Lanka, but the presence of world-number one Test bowler Jadeja and Ravichandran Ashwin denied him a slot in the starting lineup.

Despite being overshadowed, the Kanpur-born player said exposure to these two star spinners had served him well. "Definitely you will have to wait for your chance if the number-one and number-two spinners are in the same squad as you," said Yadav.

## Bangladesh are dangerous: Smith

**AAP**

It's been two months since Steve Smith picked up a bat, but the Australian skipper is raring to return to cricket as the road to the Ashes begins.

Players will start a seven-day training camp in Darwin on Thursday in preparation for their two-Test series against Bangladesh later in the month.

While cricket's protracted pay dispute bubbled away in recent months, Smith spent time away from the game concentrating on fitness and strength.

With the bitter fight resolved, Smith



is relieved the focus is back on cricket.

"I haven't picked up a bat in about two months - and that's rare for me," Smith wrote in his column for Fox Sports.

"I haven't had a break like this in a

long while, so I'm excited to get back into hitting."

The Bangladesh tour may be the immediate goal, but the long summer's focal point will be five home Tests against arch-enemy England.

"You can never get your Ashes preparations started too early: it's a series that means that much to us," Smith said.

Despite Bangladesh being ranked ninth in the world, Smith isn't discounting them as easy beats.

"They've improved significantly over the past couple of years, particularly playing at home, and knocked England off at home in a Test last year," Smith said.

"They're certainly a dangerous side."