

SPORT



Young Mohammad Saifuddin (L) was the best bowler on the park for Comilla Victorians yesterday as he helped stop the Chittagong Vikings innings dead in its track with a three-wicket haul in their BPL match at the Sylhet International Stadium yesterday.

Victorians outclass stuttering Vikings

MAZHAR UDDIN from Sylhet

Comilla Victorians cashed in on some poor cricket from Chittagong Vikings during their opening game of the Bangladesh Premier League to seal a comfortable eight-wicket win at the Sylhet International Stadium yesterday.

After Comilla skipper Mohammad Nabi won the toss and elected to field, Chittagong's innings was one of two highly contrasting halves.

The Vikings started strong, reaching 91 for one after the first 10 overs, but the match took a drastic turn from then on as they added just 52 in the second half for the loss of six wickets to finish on 143 for seven.

Kapali made no mistake in swooping low to take the catch.

Soumya, who ended on 38 runs off 33 balls featuring three fours and a six, seemed to reply to his chances a bit too much and paid the price for it when he was bowled trying to scoop Mohammad Saifuddin.

When the time came to bowl the youngster, who not long ago was struck for five sixes in an over by David Miller during the second T20I against South Africa, bowled right lines and lengths and stemmed the flow of runs. Saifuddin went on to scalp three wickets in total to end on match-winning figures of three for 24 while Bravo took two for 29.

Sri Lankan Dilshan Munaweera's 21 was the other notable performance from the Vikings as skipper Mishah (6) and Luis Reece (9) were unable to make an impact with the bat.

In reply, the Victorians faced no problem whatsoever as, with the help of some wayward bowling from Chittagong, English opener Jos Buttler top-scored for his side with 48 of 42 balls featuring three fours and two sixes and laid the foundation for an easy win.

West Indies batsman Marlon Samuels landed some lousy blows at the end, remaining unbeaten on 35 off 18 balls with the help of four boundaries and a six while Imrul Kayes was not out on 33 off 31. However, it was Liton Das's quick 14-ball 23 alongside Buttler's innings that provided the much needed fire-power at the start of the chase.

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ANTI DIRTY 7

BERGER Travel World

SCOREBOARD

CHITTAGONG VIKINGS		R/B	4s/6s		
Ronchi	40/21	4/3			
Soumya/Saifuddin	38/33	3/1			
Munaweera/Saifuddin	6/11	0/0			
B Bravo	21/22	0/1			
Kapali	3/6	0/0			
Mishah/Ali Amin	6/11	0/0			
Reece/B	9/9	1/0			
Raza not out	10/13	2/0			
Soumya/Saifuddin/Saifuddin	3/4	0/0			
Saifuddin not out	1/1	0/0			
Extras (B-4, LB-1, W-3)	4				
Total (For Pakistan 20 overs)	144				
Did not bat: Soumya, Joshi, Fildes					
Full of wickets: 1-63, 2-101, 3-106, 4-107, 5-116, 6-124, 7-131					
COMILLA VICTORIANS		R/B	4s/6s		
Liton Das/Saifuddin	23/14	3/1			
Burton/Ronchi/Saifuddin	48/42	3/2			
Munaweera	35/31	1/0			
Saifuddin not out	35/18	4/1			
Extras (B-1, LB-1, W-3)	5				
Total (For Pakistan 20 overs)	144				
Did not bat: Kapali, Nabi (c), Bravo, Saifuddin, Rashid, Afridi, Ali Amin.					
Full of wickets: 1-43, 2-100					
Bowler		O	M	R	W
Arafat	2	0	19	0	
Ali Amin	4	0	28	1	
Bravo	4	0	29	2	
Nabi	2	0	18	1	
Ronchi	4	0	21	0	
Saifuddin	2	0	14	3	
Result: Comilla Victorians won by 8 wickets.					
Player-of-the-match: Mohammmad Saifuddin.					

'Learnt a lot from SA tour'

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

The memory of being struck for five sixes in an over by David Miller in the second T20I against South Africa last month might have had a good effect on young Mohammad Saifuddin. The 21-year-old seems to be learning to soak up the pressure of bowling in the shortest format—a development that was evident when playing for his side Comilla Victorians against Chittagong Vikings yesterday.

"To be honest I was a bit nervous in the first game as I am only playing my second BPL. But I enjoyed it this time around as I was able to learn a lot of things during the South Africa tour and gained the experience," Saifuddin told the media yesterday.

Vikings were in full swing, having added 91 in the first 10 overs, but Saifuddin remained calm when he was introduced into the line of fire. He deflated the dangerous Soumya Sarkar's attempted scoop off a slower delivery and rattled the stumps to bring his side back into the game.

"He [Soumya] was well set at the crease and was striking boundaries. I tried to bowl dot balls to him, which eventually worked. It's normal in T20 that bowlers will go for runs, and sometimes they also check the run-rate. We were not worried about their flourishing start. We had a talk during the drinks break and said that if we could take a wicket quickly, we might be able to restrict them under 150, which we did," Saifuddin said.

It was his intelligent bowling which put the skids on Chittagong as he ended up with the match-winning figures of three for 24 from four overs.

Sylhet's perfect three

SPORTS REPORTER

Upul Tharanga and Andre Fletcher tapped into their rich vein of form for the third game in a row to set the tone of a perfect home leg for Sylhet Sixers in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

The left-right pair entertained the full-house crowd at the Sylhet International Stadium yesterday with a flamboyant 101-run opening stand in just 10.3 overs against Rajshahi Kings. The robust start was enough for the BPL debutants to rack up 205 for six, the highest total so far in the fifth edition of the glamorous T20 competition.

Rajshahi, in their chase for a massive total, could manage 172-8 in their share of 20 overs and recorded a 33-run defeat. Former England opener Luke Wright with a 39-ball 56 and James Franklin with 35 tried to match the ever-increasing run-rate. But their efforts were not enough to avoid a defeat.

Earlier, Sri Lanka captain Tharanga hit a sublime 50 off 37 balls that contained five fours and a six. It was the left-hander's third fifty in a row after his unbeaten 69 against Dhaka Dynamites and 51 against Comilla Victorians.

West Indian right-hander Fletcher fell two runs short of what could have been his second fifty in three games. But his 30-ball blitzkrieg that featured five fours and three sixes laid the solid platform for Sylhet to build on.

Interestingly, Sylhet once again relied on their foreign imports in their pursuit of three wins on the trot and a

pole position before moving to Dhaka for the second leg.

Sabbir Rahman was the only Bangladeshi batsman who joined run fest. Unfortunately the contribution of the right-hander in the total was a disappointing 16 off 14 balls. It was actually the help of Sri Lankan in the team, Danushka Gunathilaka, who took charge after the quick dismissals of both openers. The left-hander played some magnificent shots including a scoop over the wicketkeeper's head for a six during his power-packed 22-ball 42. He struck three sixes and a couple of fours.

It then fell on the English pair of Ross Whiteley and Liam Plunkett to muscle the score past the 200-mark. Whiteley hammered an unbeaten 12-ball 25. The left-hander smote three sixes including two against medium pacer Forhad Reza's off successive deliveries in the penultimate over. He also brought up the 200 by hitting West Indian pacer Kestrick Williams for a massive six in the final over.

Although Sylhet skipper Nasir Hossain is a very useful batsman down the order, the right-hander wisely decided on power-hitters to accelerate the runs and it worked. Sylhet's first and second fifties came off 31 balls; their third fifty needed 37 deliveries, but the fourth fifty came off only 20 deliveries.

Sylhet are one of the two unbeaten teams in the tournament so far. They thrashed defending champions Dhaka in the opening match by nine wickets. They then pulled off a thrilling last-over victory over Comilla.

Sylhet will play Khulna Titans today for a perfect ending on their home turf.

WHACK-OMETER

TOTAL 65 HIT	74	TOTAL 45 HIT	116
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Most 6s hit by a player: 8, Andre Fletcher, Sylhet Sixers
Most 4s hit by a player: 15, Upul Tharanga and Andre Fletcher, Sylhet Sixers

MOMENTS

PILOT OF BBC RAJSHAI

Comilla Victorians all-rounder Saifuddin was busy answering questions in the post-match press conference yesterday, when suddenly from the back of the room a certain famous personality raised his hand to ask a question. The questioner was none other than the former Bangladesh captain Khaled Masud. "How did you feel being followed in the first game and winning this one?"

The young Saifuddin became a little nervous at this unconventional turn of events, not prepared for something like this from a former captain. "I missed you a lot," came the polite and shy reply. Masud was not willing to let the rookie off so easy. "There was huge pressure, right?" he asked. By then Saifuddin had adjusted to the wicket and gave a more assured, smiling reply. "I was not as nervous as you can see. I had a game I did not fear anything from in the team. We won the game today and hope to continue this." After the press conference Masud was asked which media house he works for. "BBC Rajshahi," was the light-hearted reply. The former captain then praised the youngster and said that Saifuddin has a bright future ahead.

RONCHI TIMES, THEN POWERS

Luke Ronchi is not the most famous name in the T20 mercenaries of world cricket, but two shots yesterday showed just why he is a regular in most franchise leagues around the world. Dwayne Bravo ran up to bowl his first over, the fifth of Chittagong Vikings' innings, and soon enough the West Indian bowled the slower off-cutter that has flummoxed many batsmen. It fooled Ronchi too, but the Kiwi batsman adjusted to the change in pace and went on to score a century. He did just what he needed to do: he hit a six and just uncorked his wrist at precisely the right moment. The shot itself looked like it would produce a single to midwicket, but it sailed over the midwicket fence for six.

The wily Bravo delivered another slower in the next ball, but Ronchi was prepared for it, and this time it was a conventional slog—the result, however, was the same.

SOUMYA'S REVERSE PSYCHOLOGY

Soumya Sarkar came up with a strategy to amuse the bowler and reverse Sarkar. The stylish left-hander, who spends a lot of time practicing the shot in the nets, implemented that in the game immediately. He started with a powerful reverse-sweep for a six to left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny in the third over when he swivelled quickly to get into position and snacked a length delivery for six over point. He smashed another boundary and just uncorked his wrist at precisely the right moment. But it seemed like he was trying the shot quite often—at least six times before he was eventually dismissed trying to scoop a slower delivery from Saifuddin only to miss the line and was bowled after scoring 38 off 33 balls, with 10 runs coming from the reverse-sweep.

A TORRID DEBUT

Debutants are auspicious omen for cricketers, and yesterday was a debut for pacer Hossain Ali that went away. He made his maiden BPL appearance for Rajshahi Kings against Sylhet Sixers yesterday and the 19-year-old from Narshingdi bowled the third over of the innings; and was the victim of some brutal hitting by in-form Sylhet openers Upul Tharanga and Andre Fletcher. He started off with a wide and tried to bowl fast but most of his deliveries were misdirected as he was hit for four boundaries in his first over. Hossain was unable to make an impact in the game and ended up giving away 36 from his three overs. Indeed a debut he would want to forget.

India clinch T20I series

AGENCIES, Thiruvananthapuram

Indian bowlers defended a modest-looking 67 with admirable discipline as the hosts pinned New Zealand by six runs in the rain-hit third and final T20I of the series 2-1 on Tuesday.

India made 67 for 5 with Manish Pandey hitting 17 off 11 balls and Kohli 13. Both hit a six and a four in quickfire innings that New Zealand just could not match.

Pandey went to a spectacular catch off Trent Boult. He fired the ball toward the long-on boundary producing a full length away by Mitchell Santner who deflected the ball to stop it going over the line and set up the catch by Colin de Grandhomme.

Though the result could have gone either way with just two balls remaining, New Zealand reached just 61 for 6 with de Grandhomme making an unbeaten 17. India's Jasprit Bumrah, the player-of-the-match, bowled brilliantly giving away just nine runs from two overs. "You would be lying if you said you were not tense," said Indian coach Ravishastri. "They saved the best for the last, the electricity was there."

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: 67 for 5 in 8 overs (Sharma 8, Dhawan 8, Kohli 13, Pandey 17, Pandya 14 not out; Southee 2-13, Sodhi 2-23)

NEW ZEALAND: 61 for 6 in 8 overs (Munro 7, Williamson 8, Phillips 11, De Grandhomme 17 not out; Bumrah 2-9, Yadav 1-10)

Result: India won by 6 runs and clinched 3-match series 2-1.

Player-of-the-match: Jasprit Bumrah

Player-of-the-series: Jasprit Bumrah

SCOREBOARD

SYLHET SIXERS		R/B	4s/6s		
Tharanga/Saifuddin	50/37	5/1			
Fletcher not out	48/30	5/4			
Whiteley/Saifuddin	16/14	0/1			
Gunathilaka/Farah/Wright	42/22	2/3			
Whiteley not out	25/12	1/3			
Plunkett not out	6/1	0/0			
Hossain/Fletcher/Williams	0/1	0/0			
Abdullah not out	5/2	0/0			
Extras (B-4, LB-1, W-6)	11				
Total (For Pakistan 20 overs)	205				
Did not bat: Ronchi, Saiki, Karmali, Williams not out					
Full of wickets: 1-93, 2-106, 3-140, 4-168, 5-192, 6-203					
Bowler		O	M	R	W
Farah	4	0	41	1	
Williams	4	0	39	2	
Hossain	3	0	36	0	
Munro	2	0	20	0	
Pandi	3	0	25	0	
Franklin	4	0	38	1	
RAJSHAHIS KINGS		R/B	4s/6s		
Wright/Plunkett/Kestrick	50/39	3/4			
Munaweera/Hossain/Fletcher	24/16	1/2			
Rony/Saiki/Plunkett	0/2	0/0			
Munaweera/Saiki/Plunkett	10/12	0/0			
Plunkett/American	0/1	0/0			
Franklin not out	15/13	3/2			
Soumya/Saiki/Plunkett	9/9	0/1			
Farah not out	35/20	3/1			
Munaweera/Saiki/Plunkett	6/7	0/0			
Williams not out	12/10	0/0			
Extras (B-1, LB-1, W-9)	13				
Total (For Pakistan 20 overs)	172				
Did not bat: Hossain Ali					
Full of wickets: 1-50, 2-50, 3-78, 4-79, 5-133, 6-143, 7-158, 8-161					
Bowler		O	M	R	W
Nasir	4	0	33	0	
Whiteley	4	0	54	1	
Tajul	4	0	31	0	
Abul	4	0	22	3	
Plunkett	2	0	29	3	
Result: Sylhet Sixers won by 33 runs.					
Player-of-the-match: Danushka Gunathilaka.					



Opener Upul Tharanga scored his third consecutive half-century for Sylhet Sixers during their BPL fixture against Rajshahi Kings at the Sylhet International Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR