



They will be foes today when the Chittagong leg of the BPL begins, but yesterday the players from Chittagong Vikings and Sylhet Sixers were on more friendly terms, enjoying an animated *adda* at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Will the tide turn in the port city?

SAKEB SUBHAN from Chittagong

Competitions like the Bangladesh Premier League progress at break-neck speed – 24 matches across the Dhaka and Sylhet legs have gone by in the blink of an eye since the tournament started on November 4. It is in such a frenzied environment when the briefest of respites can make a world of difference, and as the fifth edition's Chittagong leg starts today with Khulna Titans taking on Rangpur Riders in the day match and Chittagong Vikings squaring off against Sylhet Sixers in the evening encounter, three of the four teams will hope that a change in venue brings about a change in results.

There is precedent for this. The BPL started off in Sylhet this year and the home team made a flying start, winning three of their four matches in front of an adoring

POINTS TABLE						
TEAM	M	W	L	N/R	PT	NRR
Comilla Victorians	6	5	1	0	10	0.756
Dhaka Dynamites	8	4	3	1	9	1.524
Khulna Titans	7	4	2	1	9	-0.045
Sylhet Sixers	8	3	4	1	7	-0.672
Rangpur Riders	6	3	3	0	6	-0.294
Rajshahi Kings	7	2	5	0	4	0.805
Chittagong Vikings	6	1	4	1	3	-0.638

and excited crowd. However, their mojo seemed to have been lost in transit when the scene shifted to Dhaka, where the Sixers have succumbed to three consecutive losses. That is why they have slipped from top position at the end of the Sylhet leg and are currently fourth.

Last year, when the Chittagong leg began, the top three were Dhaka Dynamites, Barisal Bulls and Khulna Titans. By the time the Chittagong leg ended, Dhaka had slipped to third,

Rangpur shot up from fourth to first with an all-win record in the port city and Khulna held their own to rise to second.

There is the possibility of a similar uprising this time too in Chittagong. Through some sort of serendipity, second-placed Dhaka will play just two matches in Chittagong and table-toppers Comilla Victorians, led by local hero Tamim Iqbal, will play three. Bottom-placed Chittagong Vikings, meanwhile, will have ample opportunity to start a stirring fightback buoyed by home support as they will be playing four matches over the next week, the most among the seven teams.

"The points table we have now may well change," said Tamim during practice at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, the venue for the matches, yesterday. "It will depend on the results. Those who are on top will be breathing easy because they played well in the first half of the tourna-

ment. At the end of the day this is cricket, anything can happen in this game."

Another kind of change is already underway. For much of the tournament, a common complaint was that local players were not pulling their weight in an edition that reverted to the five-foreigners-per-team quota, with no local player making it to the top five in the run-scorers' list. But Comilla Victorians opener Imrul Kayes and Khulna Titans skipper Mahmudullah Riyad have made it to numbers four and five respectively on that list, while Mahmudullah's teammate Abu Jayed, Dhaka Dynamites' pacer Abu Hider and Dhaka skipper Shakib Al Hasan occupy positions one, three and four in the wicket-takers' chart.

With the tournament nearly halfway through and the locals starting to come to the party, it may be a very different points table when the T20 festival makes its way out of the port city.

Fizz in good shape to return

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



Rajshahi Kings, currently wallowing in sixth spot in the seven-team Bangladesh Premier League, will likely receive the boost they need as their star bowler, Bangladesh's celebrated left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman, has seemingly regained full fitness after badly twisting his left ankle before the ODI leg of Bangladesh's ill-fated tour of South Africa in September-October.

The man affectionately called Fizz for his beguiling cutters was seen bowling as many as five overs at full tilt yesterday during the Kings' practice session at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong. Team physio Bayzedul Islam Khan said that he has been bowling for four sessions, including yesterday's one, and has had no complaints so far.

"He has been with the Rajshahi Kings squad since November 8. After the initial period of rehabilitation we have completed work with all rehabilitation procedures," said Bayzedul yesterday. "Today, he bowled at full pace during four sessions without any complaints. He also completed running and fielding exercises. Let's see what happens next."

"We are measuring his progress through tests and he has done well. Since he has not complained I think we can decipher that he does not have any problems."

The noise coming out of the camp is that he will likely play the Kings' next match, against table-toppers Comilla Victorians, tomorrow if all goes well in practice today.

"I bowled today; I think everything is fine. There is no problem," said Mustafizur, a man of few words if there ever was one.



After missing out on the Sylhet and Dhaka legs due to injury, Mustafizur Rahman is ready to bolster the Rajshahi Kings' attack starting with their match against Comilla Victorians tomorrow.

PHOTO: STAR

WHAT THEY SAID



I am lucky because I do not have to play against Chittagong (in the Chittagong leg of BPL). But since I am a hometown boy here, I hope that I will have local support regardless of which team I am playing for. And the good thing about Bangladeshi spectators is that they support good cricket. That is a great thing.

Chittagong's favourite son and Comilla Victorians skipper
Tamim Iqbal



I think the opportunity to play against them is a good challenge. Facing challenges is part of the job description of a cricketer. Playing five foreigners per team is a good thing in a way, because we are now faced with a different kind of challenge. But it is important for local cricketers to perform too, and I think the locals are in good touch now.

Khulna Titans skipper **Mahmudullah Riyad**



The whole world knows about Lasith Malinga's bowling. I am trying to learn how he bowls in the death overs. I want to know how he bowl yorkers so adeptly in the death overs. I am trying to learn in practice too. He also has a different grip for the slower. I am working on that, but I am not trying it out yet. I will try it after a few days. He does not use one of his fingers at all. I tried it, but I am having some problems. I will be able to master it though.

Bangladesh fast bowler **Rubel Hossain** on his Rangpur Riders teammate



Although the home ground does not matter that much in premier league tournaments, but audience favour is a very important aspect, which benefited the Sixers at Sylhet. It doesn't matter who we play. You don't have to think that much about your opposition. The batsmen need to bat fair and the bowlers need to deliver. We had many plans before which we could not execute properly. We want to rectify the mistakes and make good use of the opportunity we will get in the next match [against Sylhet]. We are not in a good position, we need to win as many game as possible.

Luke Ronchi, opener of bottom-placed Chittagong Vikings



Australia's Nathan Lyon (2nd from L) celebrates the run out of England batsman James Vince (C) with teammates on the first day of the first Test in Brisbane yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Late rally restricts Eng

AFP, Brisbane



England's James Vince was left kicking himself after he was spectacularly run out close to an Ashes debut century, as Australia struck late to leave the first Test finely balanced after day one on Thursday. Captain Joe Root and Alastair Cook both fell cheaply before the tourists reached 196 for four when bad light ended an attritional, rain-affected day at Brisbane's Gabba ground.

Vince top-scored as the tourists went along slowly, blunting Australia's much-vaunted pace attack at a venue dubbed 'The Gabbatoir'.

But Australia loosened England's hard-earned advantage when they dismissed Vince late on, just prior to the key wicket of Root who went lbw to Pat Cummins.

At stumps, Dawid Malan was batting on 28 along with Moeen Ali, whose 13 included the day's only six.

Vince, on 83, scampered for a quick single off Josh Hazlewood but a brilliant off-balance throw from Nathan Lyon prowling in the covers caught him well out of his ground.

It was a moment of triumph for the spinner, who is normally taciturn but who

gained notoriety for telling the tourists that Australia aimed to "end careers" in the Ashes series.

"It was a good piece of fielding. In hindsight I wouldn't have taken the run, but it was a good pick-up and throw to be fair," Vince said.

"I'm sure lying in bed I'll have a few thoughts about it (missing out), but at the same time if you had offered me scoring 80-odd I probably would have taken it."

Vince, who was earlier put down by recalled wicketkeeper Tim Paine off Lyon, led a fighting English rearguard with Mark Stoneman after the early loss of Cook.

It took a special piece of fielding from Lyon to end Vince's 170-ball, four-hour vigil and give the Australians hope on a rugged first day on an unresponsive Gabba pitch.

Eighteen runs later, Root fell leg before wicket to Cummins for 15 off 50 balls after a review, in another huge scalp for the toiling Australians.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 196 for 4 (Stoneman 53, Vince 83, Malan 28 not out; Cummins 2-59)

AUSTRALIA: Warner, Bancroft, Khawaja, Smith (capt), Handscomb, Marsh, Paine, Starc, Cummins, Hazlewood, Lyon.

Jamal win battle of the Sheikhs

SPORTS REPORTER



Zahed Parvez Chowdhury scored directly from a corner kick to help Sheikh Jamal DC secure a 2-1 win over Sheikh Russel KC in their Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Zahed has turned into a key player for Sheikh Jamal following the decisive roles he played during two crucial matches earlier this season against Mohammedan SC and Abahani. The 29-year-old former national midfielder assisted twice in the 3-0 win over Mohammedan and was the lone scorer in his side's 1-1 draw against Abahani.

This, their 10th win from 14 matches, helped Sheikh Jamal close the gap with league leaders Chittagong Abahani, who are just two points ahead on 35 points. Sheikh Russel on the other hand, remain glued to fifth place position in the 12-team table with 19 points following a fifth defeat in 14 matches.

Sheikh Jamal got off to a flying start, taking the lead in just the third minute when defender Yeasin Khan played a long-ball to Raphael Odoyin, who shrugged off his marker to enter the box before shooting the ball into the far post from a difficult angle.

SK JAMAL RAPHAEL 3, ZAYED 53	2 - 1	SK RUSSEL SARHAN 45+2
BROTHERS ZUNAPIO 25 & 83, MESBAH 53	3 - 0	RAHMATGANJ

However, Sheikh Russel looked the better side as they pressed hard for an equaliser. Sheikh Russel were finally rewarded for their efforts in the first-half's stoppage time as Egyptian striker Zaki Sarhan headed in a Sohail Rana cross from inside the six-yard box to equalise.

After resumption, Sheikh Jamal scored the winner eight minutes in when Zahed Parvez, playing only his sixth league match of the current season, curled an effort from the right-hand corner flag into the back of the net.

To be fair though, had Sheikh Russel goalkeeper Muksudur Rahman Mustaq not failed to judge the flight of ball, the spectacular finish may have been prevented.

The rest of game saw Sheikh Russel dominate possession and create a few good scoring opportunities but Sheikh Jamal goalkeeper Mitul Hasan stood tall and foiled all the attacks.

Sadly for Sheikh Russel, this defeat is almost identical to the one handed to them by the same opposition in the first-leg.

In the day's second match, Brothers Union handed an emphatic 3-0 defeat to Rahmatganj MFS. With the win, Brothers jumped to eighth position in the 12-team table while Rahmatganj MFS, with a sixth defeat from 14 matches, slipped a spot and now sit in tenth.

Congolese striker Siyo Zunapio struck a brace while Mohammad Mezbah also got his name on the scoresheet in a match where Rahmatganj conceded all three goals due to sloppy defending.

India aim to extend dominance

2nd Test starts today

AGENCIES, Nagpur

After narrowly missing out on a win in the opening Test at the Eden Gardens, a confident India will be aiming to extend their dominance over Sri Lanka when the two sides face off in the second Test here from Friday.

Inspired by the performance of the fast bowlers in the first Test and keeping in mind the upcoming tour of South Africa early next year, the hosts are once again set to test the Sri Lankans on a fast and green track.

Captain Virat Kohli confirmed reports that team management had ordered fast pitches, instead of the traditional spin-friendly tracks, to get used to South Africa-style conditions.

"Yes, because unfortunately we get only two days before we fly to South Africa after this series is over," Kohli told reporters.

"So we have no choice but to be in game situations and think of what's coming ahead for us... As usual cramped for time, which I think we needed to assess in future as well."

The Indian pace trio of Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Umesh Yadav and Mohammed Shami shared all the 17 Sri Lankan wickets which fell during the first Test. But with Bhuvneshwar set to tie the knot, he was released from the squad for the remainder of the series.

Pacer Ishant Sharma, a veteran of 77 Tests, looks set to join the pace battery for the series.

Sri Lanka captain Dinesh Chandimal called it a "good Test wicket" and backed his top spinner Rangana Herath to come good in Nagpur, after he went wicketless in Kolkata.