



Skipper Mahmudullah Riyad's 36-ball 59 propelled Khulna Titans to a nine-run victory over Rangpur Riders in their BPL fixture at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



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Riyad special takes Titans to top

SAKEB SUBHAN from Chittagong

The Chittagong leg of the Bangladesh Premier League started off yesterday with the formbook holding sway as an accomplished half-century from skipper Mahmudullah Riyad proved to be the key performance in Khulna Titans' nine-run defeat of fifth-placed Rangpur Riders, who despite a great rearguard partnership from Ravi Bopara and Nahidul Islam lost the opportunity to leapfrog Sylhet Sixers. Fittingly, the innings that propelled Mahmudullah to the top of the run charts also helped Khulna, who jumped over Dhaka Dynamites and Comilla Victorians to pole position in the seven-team ladder with their fifth win from eight matches.

Khulna put up 158 for eight after Rangpur skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza chose to field first, and the Bopara-Nahidul fifth-wicket stand took them from 45 for four to 145 in the last over, which started with fast bowler Junaid Khan defending 15 runs. Nahidul marked his first match of BPL 2017 by scoring a 43-ball 58 and Bopara hit a 44-ball 59, but an excellent over gave up only five as both set batsmen departed and Rangpur ended on 150 for six in the first match of the day at the Zahur Ahmed

Chowdhury Stadium.

Rangpur were on the back foot early when Brendon McCullum departed in the second over, caught in the deep off Afif Hossain. It was the 18-year-old Khulna native's stingy and incisive bowling that set the game up. Chris Gayle lost a battle with Abu Jayed in the third over as he edged behind after hitting two fours and a six, and Mohammad Mithun was run out by a direct hit from Carlos Brathwaite in the fifth. Then, Afif

scored at the top of the order by young left-hander Nazmul Hassan. The skipper came to the crease early with the score on 24 for two after three overs following Afif's dismissal, bowled by a searing Rubel Hossain yorker.

The right-handed Mahmudullah was undeterred by the dismissal of Nazmul, caught off Mashrafe, to bring the score to 49 for three in the seventh over. He unfurled his full and enviable range of strokes in a classy innings. There was the cheeky scoop to a ball on off stump, off Mashrafe in the 11th over; a pull off Thisara Perera over square leg for four; a bash over Rubel's head and the coup de grace: a shimmy down the track to Perera followed by a magnificently timed lofted cover drive that comfortably sailed over the extra cover boundary.

Nicholas Pooran gave him company in a fourth-wicket stand worth 43 and after the West Indian's dismissal Ariful Haque hung around as Khulna reached 130 when Mahmudullah fell to a combination catch at the midwicket boundary off the bowling of Rubel in the 17th over, with McCullum tossing the ball back to Nahidul just before the former ran over the boundary ropes. Ariful departed to Rubel in the same over, leaving Joffra Archer, Brathwaite and Junaid to take them past the 150 mark.

BPL'S HIGHEST RUN-GETTERS									
Player	M	Inn	R	HS	Ave	SR	100s	50s	
Mahmudullah	58	54	1336	62	29.04	115.37	0	7	
MushfiquRahim	53	49	1292	86	34.91	128.81	0	8	
TamimIqbal	37	36	1069	75	32.39	117.08	0	12	
ShakibAlHasan	55	54	1058	86*	25.19	133.41	0	3	
ImrulKayes	46	46	1051	67	24.44	114.61	0	4	

bowled Fazle Mahmud in the eighth over to have figures of two for four from two overs, and it seemed that Rangpur were in for a heavy defeat, but the 100-run fifth-wicket stand ensured that the eager Chittagong crowd witnessed an exciting match.

Before all that, Mahmudullah's 36-ball 59 was the score of note in Khulna's innings. No one else from Khulna crossed 20, which was

Australia fight back

AFP, Brisbane



Skipper Steve Smith led a rescue mission to revive Australia's fortunes after a top-order batting collapse in the Ashes Test against England in Brisbane on Friday.

Home hopes rested on Smith to mount a fighting rearguard after the loss of four wickets in a faltering chase after England's first innings of 302 at the Gabba.

At the close on the second day, the Australians were 165 for four and trailing by 137 runs, with Smith unbeaten on 64 and Shaun Marsh not out 44.

It left the match intriguingly poised once again after England ended day one in a similar position before collapsing before lunch on Friday.

Smith was then thrust into another high pressure situation after Australia suffered a now-familiar malfunction at the top of the order.

"He's number one batter in the world, he knows his game better than anyone else and he goes out there and sticks to a plan and a process and it works for him, so hats off to our captain," said Australia spinner Nathan Lyon.

England had done their homework, encircling Smith with fielders and trying to frustrate the fidgety Australian captain into playing a rash shot.

But Smith, Test cricket's top-rated batsman, stepped up to the challenge with a defiant knock off 148 balls.

Marsh, 34, recalled for an eighth time to the Test team, provided stout support to his skipper off 122 balls to share in an unbroken 89-run stand.

"As a team we're happy. We've done a lot of research and a lot of work on our plans to each batter. We executed them well today," England paceman Jake Ball said.

The tourists had the Australians on the ropes with three batsmen out in the middle session, including the prized scalp of David Warner.

Warner attempted to pull newcomer Jake Ball through the leg-side only to find Dawid Malan at short mid-wicket for 26 off 43 balls.

Earlier, England lost their last six wickets for 56 to fold for 302 all out in their first innings at lunch.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 302 all out (Stoneman 53, Vince 83, Malan 56, Moeen 38, Broad 20; Starc 3-77, Cummins 3-85, Lyon 2-78)

AUSTRALIA: First innings 165 for 4 (Warner 26, Smith 64 not out 64, Marsh 44 not out; Anderson 1-26, Broad 1-18)

ZACS decked out

AMIR HASAN SHAHRIAR, Chittagong



If there was any doubt about regional loyalties in the Bangladesh Premier League, the first day of the Chittagong leg debunked it as the port city fans turned up in full force to cheer their team, even though the home team had not done much to write home about in the BPL before yesterday.

The locals were vociferous in their support for Chittagong Vikings, currently at the bottom of the table, at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium (ZACS).

Mannan, a cricket enthusiast and a diehard Vikings and Luke Ronchi fan, expressed his support for the team. "Vikings will of course win today. We will make them win."

Their zeal proved impenetrable when the second match began. A gallery full of spectators turned their smartphones into fireflies as the batsmen hit the Sylhet Sixers pretty hard.

Another Vikings fan, Javed said that he would not come to the stadium for the rest of the tournament if his team did not beat the Sixers.

The crowd was comparatively timid during the day's first game between Rangpur Riders and Khulna Titans. Most fans seemed to

support Rangpur but at the end they stayed in their seats in hopes of seeing their home team win against the Sixers.

The performances of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's team and the stars in his side – such as the big-hitting Chris Gayle and Brendon McCullum – were attraction enough for thousands gather despite the huge queues outside.

When McCullum enchanted the gallery with his cutting-edge fielding, causing the fall of Mahmudullah Riyad, the audience broke out into a wild cheer.

But a little later, a disappointed man named Mohammad Kashem was seen leaving the gallery. The reason? Gayle was out.

By the end of the match, spectators agreed that it was the superb bowling of Junaid Khan that cost Rangpur the match, a sentiment echoed after the game by Rangpur's Nahidul Islam, who nearly won the match for his team.

It had all reached a crescendo in the last over, off which Rangpur needed 15. Soon however, the enthusiasm turned into woe as dusk descended, but the night ended in triumph for Chittagong, so one can expect a similarly festive atmosphere throughout the rest of the leg.

WHAT THEY SAID



The environment is fantastic
This is my fifth or sixth time in Bangladesh. I think the environment is fantastic; it's noisy, which is exactly the way you want it to be. This place has got all the ingredients for any cricketer to enjoy playing cricket. I'd like to think so [about this being the start of a turnaround for Chittagong], but we'll take it one game at a time. Plus, the crowd behind us plays a huge role.
-- Player-of-the-match **Sikandar Raza** on the home support for Chittagong Vikings.



NCL batting helped in BPL
Batting in the National Cricket League helped me a lot as there is a scope to bat for long periods there. In the last Dhaka Premier League [for Legends of Rugganj in the last season] my batting was not good. But I am trying to improve day by day. There is no alternative but to win today [against Chittagong Vikings].
- Rangpur batsman **Nahidul Islam** after hitting 58 in his first BPL 2017 match.



Raza lords over Sylhet Sixers

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



Buoyed by vocal home support at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday, lowly Chittagong Vikings turned things around in spectacular fashion by putting the highest total of the fifth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League on the board, courtesy of a boundary-filled 95 from Sikandar Raza, as they defeated Sylhet Sixers by 40 runs to bring up their second win of the edition and their first in five matches. The win takes them up a place to sixth spot in the seven-team table while Sylhet remain rooted to fourth place with their winless streak extending to five matches.

Chasing 212 to win, it seemed for a long time that Sylhet had the legs to topple the mammoth score as Andre Fletcher and Babar Azam struck up a high-octane 80-run partnership in just 9.2 overs after the opening stand between Fletcher and Gunathilaka realised 43 runs in 4.1 overs. However, Fletcher (71 off 46) and Azam (41 off 32) were dismissed in successive overs by Taskin Ahmed and Stiaan van Zyl respectively and when icon player Sabbir Rahman departed in the same over as Azam to leave the score on 129 for four after 15, the scoreboard pressure proved too much for the Sixers.

They eventually limped to 171 for eight.

Earlier, on a pitch that the dew had quickened from the sluggish surface seen during the day match, Zimbabwean Raza hit 95 off 45 balls with the help of nine fours and six sixes, and was Chittagong's last wicket to fall in the 20th over, being caught off Kamrul Islam Rabbi after having scored 41 of the team's 64 runs off the last five overs. It was delayed justice for Kamrul as he had a chance to dismiss Raza for six as early as the 10th over, but Sylhet skipper Nasir Hossain spilled a tough chance that would not have been called a chance if he had not gotten his hand to a pull at midwicket through a spectacular effort.


That seemed to be the signal for Raza to go berserk, which he did from the next over, hitting Nasir for a six and a four before repeating the dose to Gulam Mudassar and Abul Hasan in the overs that followed.

Raza reached his fifty off his 30th delivery in the 15th over with a four off Taijul Islam. Chittagong were then 147 for four after 15 overs. Batting on 54 off 31, Raza then hammered 41 runs off his next 14 deliveries. While many of Raza's six sixes were slogs occasioned by the format, most of the fours were classy shots and he deserved a hundred; his dismissal in the last over was met with stunned silence from the partisan crowd, but that was swiftly followed by thunderous applause for the innings they had witnessed.



Chittagong Vikings batsman Sikandar Raza hits one over cover during his scintillating knock of 95 off just 45 deliveries against Sylhet Sixers at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



WHACK-OMETER

TOTAL 6s HIT 272 | **TOTAL 4s HIT 554**

Most 6s hit by a player: 14, Evin Lewis, Dhaka Dynamites
Most 4s hit by a player: 26, Andre Fletcher, Sylhet Sixers

MOMENTS

DON'T HIT RUBEL FOR FOUR

Khulna Titans' youngster Afif Hossain hit Rangpur Riders' Rubel Hossain for two fours in the third over. The ball after the second boundary was a bouncer that nearly took Afif's head off. The one-two punch was complete when Afif was bowled in the next ball by a yorker of pinpoint accuracy. In the 17th over, Mahmudullah Riyad hit his Bangladesh teammate for a four straight down the ground. One ball later, Mahmudullah was walking back as he skied a slower ball to deep midwicket. Ariful Haque hit a sliced boundary through point off the next ball, and off the next he was caught plumb in front with a fast and full delivery. BPL batsmen should now think twice about hitting Rubel for four.

GAYLE FALLS FOR RIYAD'S BLUFF

In the third over, Rangpur Riders' Jamaican six-machine Chris Gayle was in a hurry to bring the asking run rate to heel. The second ball from Abu Jayed just managed to clear mid on for four. The third ball, a slower, caught the outside edge and ran away for four to third man. The next one was convincing, though, as it was deposited for over long off for a 106-metre six. Khulna skipper Mahmudullah had an extended discussion with his bowler. He then brought himself in from long on to mid on and dropped midwicket back, leaving long off out. Jayed went around the wicket and for all money it seemed that the ball would be on the pads, and Gayle thought so too apparently. He was stuck to the crease as Jayed bowled it wide outside off, and Gayle could only get an outside edge through to the keeper.

SOUMYA ZONED OUT, NURUL TUNED IN

In the third over of the night game, Chittagong Vikings opener Soumya Sarkar threw his bat at a Nasir Hossain delivery outside off but could only connect a bottom edge. The ball thudded into the pitch and bounced away to Sylhet wicketkeeper Nurul Hasan's left. Apparently clueless about where the ball had gone, Soumya walked out of his crease, but Nurul -- arguably the best keeper in the country -- was quick to grab the ball and whip off the bails, a pretty apt dismissal -- a batsman who can sometimes lose focus outdone by a keeper who is always on the ball.

SCOREBOARD				
KHULNA V RANGPUR				
KHULNA TITANS	R/B	4s/6s		
Nazmul c Rubel b Mashrafe	20/20	3/0		
Rossouw b Shohag	11/4	1/1		
Afif b Rubel	9/7	2/0		
Mahmudullah c Nahidul				
b Rubel	59/36	6/2		
Pooran c Mithun b Malinga	16/20	1/0		
Ariful lbw b Rubel	16/15	2/0		
Brathwaite c Bopara b Perera	11/6	1/1		
Archer not out	10/8	1/0		
Junaid b Malinga	1/3	0/0		
Tanvir not out	0/1	0/0		
Extras: (b-1, lb-3, w-1)		5		
Total: (For 8 wkts in 20 overs)	158			
Did not bat: Jayed.				
Fall of wickets: 1-14, 2-24, 3-49, 4-92, 5-130, 6-134, 7-151, 8-153.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mashrafe	4	0	32	1
Shohag	4	0	30	1
Rubel	4	0	35	3
Malinga	4	0	27	2
Perera	4	0	30	1
RANGPUR RIDERS				
	R/B	4s/6s		
Gayle c Pooran b Jayed	16/9	2/1		
McCullum c Ariful b Afif	2/4	0/0		
Mithun run out	3/10	0/0		
Bopara c Afif b Junaid	59/44	4/1		
Mahmud b Afif	6/10	0/0		
Nahidul run out	58/43	0/0		
Perera not out	1/1	0/0		
Extras: (lb-2, nb-1, w-1)		4		
Total: (For 6 wkts in 20 overs)	149			
Did not bat: Mashrafe (c), Shohag, Rubel, Malinga.				
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-20, 3-29, 4-45, 5-145, 6-149.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Jayed	4	0	48	1
Afif	2	0	4	2
Junaid	4	0	20	1
Archer	4	0	33	0
Brathwaite	4	0	33	0
Tanvir	2	0	9	0
Result: Khulna Titans won by 9 runs.				
Player-of-the-match: Mahmudullah.				

SCOREBOARD				
CHITTAGONG V SYLHET				
CHITTAGONG VIKINGS	R/B	4s/6s		
Ronchi c Bresnan b Abul	41/25	6/1		
Soumya st Nurul b Nasir	1/2	0/0		
Anamul c Gunathilaka				
b Bresnan	3/4	0/0		
Van Zyl c Nasir b Kamrul	40/26	4/2		
Raza c Fletcher b Kamrul	95/45	9/6		
Najibullah not out	19/16	1/0		
Reece not out	4/3	1/0		
Extras: (lb-1, nb-1, w-6)		8		
Total: (For 5 wkts in 20 overs)	211			
Did not bat: Tanbir Hayder, Sunzamul Islam, Subhashis Roy, Taskin Ahmed.				
Fall of wickets: 1-26, 2-36, 3-65, 4-138, 5-206.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mudassar	2	0	31	0
Nasir	3	0	34	1
Taijul	3	0	30	0
Bresnan	4	0	38	1
Abul	4	0	42	1
Kamrul	4	0	35	2
SYLHET SIXERS				
	R/B	4s/6s		
Gunathilaka c Soumya b Sunzamul	10/7	0/1		
Fletcher c Raza b Taskin	71/46	8/4		
Babar c Najibullah b Van Zyl	41/32	2/1		
Sabbir lbw b Van Zyl	3/4	0/0		
Bresnan c Raza b Soumya	2/4	0/0		
Abul c Sunzamul b Soumya	0/2	0/0		
Nurul c Reece b Taskin	28/16	1/2		
Nasir c Subhashis b Taskin	8/4	0/1		
Kamrul not out	4/5	0/0		
Extras: (w-4)		4		
Total: (For 8 wkts in 20 overs)	171			
Did not bat: Mudassar, Taijul.				
Fall of wickets: 1-43, 2-123, 3-128, 4-129, 5-130, 6-131, 7-144, 8-171.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Sunzamul	4	0	24	1
Raza	1	0	13	0
Subhashis	2	0	30	0
Taskin	4	0	31	3
Reece	2	0	22	0
Tanbir	2	0	20	0
Soumya	3	0	17	2
Van Zyl	2	0	14	2
Result: Chittagong Vikings won by 40 runs.				
Player-of-the-match: Sikandar Raza.				