



After leading his side to a four-wicket victory over Sylhet Sixers, Rangpur Riders skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (R) shares a light moment with Comilla Victorians captain Tamim Iqbal, who later went on to lead his side to a nine-wicket drubbing of Khulna Titans in the BPL in Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



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Riders continue resurgence

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

The change of venue from Dhaka to Chittagong did not bring a change in fortune for Sylhet Sixers as they joined Chittagong Vikings on the side-lines of the race to the Bangladesh Premier League playoffs by losing yesterday's match against Rangpur Riders by four wickets at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium.

Sylhet have now lost four matches in a row and have seven points from 10 games. Rangpur, meanwhile, after losing three of their first four matches have now notched their fifth victory in nine games.

The match went down to the wire, but it was Rangpur's talismanic captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza who once again proved to be the difference in his night job as a hard-hitting batsman as he simplified the equation of nine to win off the last over with a six over long on in the first ball, which was a full toss. Off-spinner and handy lower-order batsman Nahidul Islam then hit another Tim Bresnan full toss over mid off

for four to take the side home in their chase of 173 with two balls to spare.

The chase was set up by Brendon McCullum's 38-ball 43 and the early impetus provided by Ziaur Rahman after the

local hard-hitter was promoted to open the batting with Chris Gayle. Although Gayle departed in the first over, caught at mid off off Sohail Tanvir for five, Ziaur made up for the Jamaican's absence by striking an 18-

ball 36 with five boundaries and two sixes.

McCullum, demoted to number three, was uncharacteristically subdued and seemed to be eager to take the team home. However, when he was fourth out with the score on 117 in the 15th over, caught at the boundary off an Abul Hasan slower ball, a Sylhet comeback looked likely. Ravi Bopara played a crucial innings of 33 off 24 balls to take the Riders within touching distance, but Sylhet only have themselves to blame for the loss as they dropped Bopara twice, both times by Shuvagata Hom in the deep, off Tanvir in the 17th over when on 22 and 31.

Earlier, after Mashrafe chose to field, Sylhet's 173 for five was powered by 54 from Babar Azam and 44 from icon player Sabbir Rahman. Babar hit four boundaries and a six in his 37-ball innings and Sabbir played the same amount of deliveries to hit five fours. Their 74-run fourth-wicket stand was the backbone of the Sixers' innings. Left-arm spinner Nazmul Islam was the best bowler for Rangpur with figures of three for 18 off four overs.

Complaint on 7-ball over

Sylhet Sixers lodged a complaint with the BPL governing council after their loss to Rangpur Riders against umpire Mahfuzur Rahman, who made Sylhet pacer Kamrul Islam Rabbi bowl a seven-ball over in the 16th over of Rangpur's chase.

"Rabbi bowled an extra ball in the 17th (16th) over," said a visibly down-beat and frustrated Nabil Samad, Sylhet's left-arm spinner. "Rabbi reminded the umpire of the number of balls before bowling the extra delivery, but that did not change anything. I don't know if the umpire checked with

the third umpire at the time."

"We have lodged a complaint," added Sylhet media manager Tamzidul Islam. "Our captain pointed out the error during the match on the field. The third umpire cross-checked and told us to lodge a written complaint."

Tamzidul also informed that upon Kamrul reminding umpire Mahfuzur that he had bowled six balls already, the umpire checked with third umpire Gazi Sohel, who at the time concurred with his on-field colleague and said that Kamrul had one ball left.

Victorians thrash Titans

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

In a clash of the form teams of the Bangladesh Premier League, table-toppers Khulna Titans were handed a thrashing by the now second-placed Comilla Victorians, who won the match by nine wickets with as many as 6.1 overs to spare at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Comilla Victorians now move above holders Dhaka Dynamites into second spot with their sixth win from eight matches.

It was an utter batting failure from Khulna Titans, who are still on top of the seven-team table on 13 points despite yesterday's chastening loss, as the Mahmudullah Riyad-led team were bowled out for a paltry 111, a failure that was made more embarrass-

ing because of the batting-friendly wicket. Comilla skipper Tamim Iqbal made light work of the chase with a serene and untroubled 64 off 42 balls, an innings laced with 12 high-quality boundaries.

Against the run of play, Khulna extracted the wicket of Tamim's opening partner Liton Das when the wicketkeeper-batsman sliced a catch to midwicket in the eighth over after putting on 64 runs with his skipper. Tamim, who had plenty of support from his native Chittagong crowd that has been disappointed with the performance of the local team, reached his second half-century of BPL 2017 off his 30th ball with a down-the-wicket slap past bowler Kyle Abbott in the 10th over. After that, Imrul Kayes (22 not out) gave his captain company as Comilla cantered to the win.

Earlier, after Mahmudullah Riyad

won the toss and elected to bat it was a dismal procession of Khulna batsmen. They were chopped down to two for eight and later five for 50 as Shoaib Malik and Al-Amin Hossain got among the wickets. With their bankable scorers like Mahmudullah, Rilee Roussow, Afif Hossain and Carlos Brathwaite not scoring, a top-heavy Khulna batting line-up seemed clueless. After Mahmudullah was fifth out, caught off Mohammad Saifuddin for 14, Brathwaite and Ariful Haque put on 21 runs but it was the big hitter's dismissal in the 11th over, caught at deep midwicket off Al-Amin, with the score on 61 that was the final nail in Khulna's coffin.

Ariful hit the team-highest 24, but it might have been more embarrassing for Khulna if not for a pair of 16s from lower order batsmen Abbott and Shafiu Islam. Malik and Al-Amin took three wickets apiece for Khulna.



The Bangladesh Women's A team won both warm-up matches against Karnataka State Cricket Association in Bangalore. Rumana Ahmed's troops will travel to Belgaum today where they will play the first of the three-match one day series from December 2.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Stokes plans to play in NZ

AFP, Sydney

Suspended England all-rounder Ben Stokes plans to play first-class cricket in New Zealand, officials said Tuesday, potentially paving the way for a dramatic Ashes call-up.

Social media went into overdrive late Monday when a picture showing Stokes leaving London's Heathrow airport sparked speculation he was set to join his England teammates in Australia.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) poured cold water on the suggestion, saying the 26-year-old was simply heading to New Zealand to visit family.

But it soon emerged Stokes aims to play first-class cricket for Canterbury during his trip to the South Island, keeping him in shape if required for the Ashes.

WHAT THEY SAID



Gayle's second fiddle to Mash

Of course, he [Mashrafe Bin Mortaza] always has a plan. When in the last match [against Chittagong Vikings on Saturday] he went out to bat with Chris Gayle at the crease, the plan was that Mashrafe bhai will be the one to attack. Gayle would hand him [Mashrafe] the strike because as long as Gayle is at the wicket the bowlers are under pressure. And bhai

[Mashrafe] is in very good touch — everything is coming off.

- Rangpur Riders' player of the match **Nazmul Islam** reveals that Chris Gayle played second fiddle to skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza



Small mistakes cost us

The result has not come in our favour because of some small mistakes. There were one or two matches where we went very close but could not finish the match. Today, if we availed some of the chances or bowled better in the death overs then maybe we could have won. We always take the field to win, whether we qualify or not will come later, but we will play to win the next two matches.

- Sylhet Sixers left-arm spinner **Nabil Samad** on being on the brink of elimination from the playoffs race.


MOMENTS

EYE OF AN EAGLE, FEET OF LEAD

Having reached 57 and in the midst of a 75-run partnership with Sabbir Rahman, it was imperative that Babar Azam stay at the crease if Sylhet Sixers were to reach a match-winning total instead of a middling one. In the 16th over, Sabbir played an off drive to Rangpur Riders' skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza. Azam just wandered out of his crease at the non-striker's end and took his time regaining his crease when Nazmul Islam hurled it back at the stumps. Azam put in a stretch at the last second as the ball hit the stumps. The umpire called for the third-umpire to adjudicate, but Azam knew the state of play and began trudging off, not even giving a backward glance. The replays proved that the Pakistani batsman had a keen eye for line decisions. Unfortunately for Sylhet, that sharpness apparently did not extend to judging whether a throw will hit the stumps.

STRATEGIC TIME-PASS

It will be hard to convince anyone that there is much cricketing value to the two strategic time-outs that have



WHACK-OMETER

TOTAL 6s HIT	357	TOTAL 4s HIT	721
Most 6s hit by a player: 26, Evin Lewis , Dhaka Dynamites			
Most 4s hit by a player: 28, Andre Fletcher , Sylhet Sixers			

become staples of these 20-over matches. It is a source of irritation for spectators at home and at the ground that the flow of an innings that lasts just 20 overs is twice disrupted mainly, if we are being frank, to maximise

BCB more focused on profile

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury revealed yesterday that the board is currently looking for a new head coach for the Bangladesh national team who is 'similar to Chandika Hathurusingha'.

"We are looking at overall [performance] as we had an experience with Hathurusingha and got a flavour from him. We are looking for someone like Hathurusingha with the type of method and technique so we are taking that as a high profile. Mainly we are focusing on profile rather than only going for big names and are more interested in their coaching career," Nizamuddin told reporters at the BCB headquarters in Mirpur.

Nizamuddin added that the BCB is trying to rope in a new foreign coach ahead of the home series against Sri Lanka in January but most of the high profile candidates are otherwise engaged until after the 2019 World Cup in England. Meanwhile, BCB president Nazmul Hassan informed earlier that there is a good chance that Khaled Mahmud will become the interim head coach until they find a suitable replacement for the demanding position.

Nizamuddin also revealed that the board is indeed still in touch with Hathurusingha and that the training plans devised by the Sri Lankan for after the Bangladesh Premier League remain intact. He went on to say that the BCB expects to receive a report of the South Africa series from Hathurusingha before completing the final formalities of his departure.

However, Nizamuddin believes that, regardless of the consequences, there was nothing at all unprofessional about Hathurusingha's exit.

"We had a contract with him till the 2019 World Cup but there was also a three month notice period in the contract which was applicable at any given time. I don't think there was anything unprofessional. I think there was no 'best time' for him to resign by applying the three month notice period. So I think this was the best time for him to resign," said Nizamuddin to reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National stadium.

After news emerged that Hathurusingha had tendered his resignation halfway through the South Africa tour, questions arose over the Sri Lankan's professionalism as he was contracted to coach the Tigers till the 2019 World Cup.

Hathurusingha, who emailed his letter of resignation after Bangladesh's defeat in the second Test on October 8, was expected to return to the country and personally inform the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) about his reasons behind the decision. However, the BCB is still awaiting Hathurusingha's arrival.

Reports then began to circulate that Hathurusingha was all set to become the next head coach of Sri Lanka. This information turned out to be true though as Sri Lanka Cricket president Thilanga Sumathipala confirmed it when he sent a letter to BCB president Hassan seeking a full release from any current contractual obligations, on behalf of Hathurusingha, last week.