

Onik makes a bright start

SAKEB SUBHAN from Chittagong

AKS BPL 120
One of the things missing from this year's Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) was the emergence of a new local cricketer who against all odds came out from obscurity and rubbed shoulders with big international names. Last year, it was Rajshahi Kings' Afif Hossain who took a five-wicket haul on his debut against Chittagong Vikings late in the tournament. It is quite a coincidence that, at a similar stage in the tournament, the same two teams were the backdrop for the debutant performance of BPL 2017.

19-year-old Qazi Onik ran in to bowl the eighth over of the innings, and his first in the BPL, as Chittagong were chasing 158, and far from feeling nervous, produced a slower bouncer to remove Anamul Haque in his first over. He bowled 3.2 overs for figures of four for 17 and, judging by the little jig he did after taking each wicket, he is primed for the big stage.

"Of course I would be nervous, it's a live match and the BPL is pretty high-level," the Bangladesh Under-19 left-arm pacer said after the match. "But then I told myself that it won't do being nervous; I have to keep my focus on the ball and bat."

"[Darren] Sammy liked me when he saw me bowl in the nets, and he told me after the

match that I should keep bowling like this if I get more chances."

He had done most of his bowling with another left-arm pacer at the other end by the name of Mustafizur Rahman, who stands as an example of how to go from



strength to strength after a bright start. There are others in the BPL who have enjoyed good beginnings like Afif, Abu Hider Rony and Mehedi Maruf, to name a few. Not many have taken off, so it remains to be seen whether Onik -- who is set to represent Bangladesh in the Under-19 World Cup at the end of next year -- can build on this auspicious start.



Debutant Qazi Onik's four for 17 helped Rajshahi Kings to a 33-run victory over Chittagong Vikings in their BPL fixture at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Rajshahi Kings stay afloat



Rajshahi Kings' Mushfiqur Rahim picked up a slight knock on his left index finger during their BPL match against Chittagong Vikings yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

AKS BPL 120
Rajshahi Kings did themselves and the tournament organisers a huge favour by winning yesterday's Bangladesh Premier League match against the beleaguered Chittagong Vikings by the considerable margin of 33 runs, which means that the playoff line-up is still not set in stone and the remaining eight league matches will not lose their relevance for the time being. More importantly, the match also produced a breakout local performance as 19-year-old left-arm pacer Qazi Onik came away with superb figures of 17 for four from 3.2 overs on his BPL debut.

If Rajshahi lost the match they would have been out of the running for the playoffs, and with Chittagong and Sylhet Sixers also almost certainly out it would have meant that the remaining four teams would have had the playoff places almost by default. As it stands now, Chittagong is out of the running and Rajshahi have given themselves a lifeline.

Slightly diminishing Onik's otherwise stellar efforts in dismissing Anamul Haque, Stiaan van Zyl, Tanbir Hayder and Sunzamul Islam was the fact that Chittagong's batting, in the words of captain Luke Ronchi, was 'rubbish' in the endeavour to chase down a below-par score

of 158. The chase was doomed from the start as Ronchi, Chittagong's most effective and consistent player this season, left for eight in the first over to a catch on the midwicket boundary off Mohammad Sami. Mustafizur Rahman, who enjoyed his first decent match this season, then got Soumya Sarkar to hole out for 13 in the sixth over.

Onik then came on for the first time in the eighth over and had joy almost immediately as Anamul, on 27, gloved a pull to keeper Zakir Hasan off a slower bouncer. Van Zyl stuck around for 29 deliveries to score 27, but wickets kept tumbling around him, and when he was sixth out in the 16th over with the score on 105, not much hope was left for Chittagong. Mustafizur got rid of Rayad Emrit in the following over, before Onik came back to clean-bowl Sunzamul with an inswinger and have Tanbir caught. He however missed out on a five-wicket haul as Taskin Ahmed was run out off the second ball of the last over to bring an end to Chittagong's sorry innings on 124.

Earlier, after choosing to bat first, Rajshahi put in a below-par performance that relied heavily on captain Darren Sammy's 25-ball 40, with three sixes and two fours. They were in trouble on 86 for four in the 12th over after Mushfiqur Rahim's dismissal, but a 69-run fifth-wicket stand between Sammy and James Franklin took them to 157 for six.

Victorians defuse Dynamites

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

AKS BPL 120
Comilla Victorians, the form team of the tournament, took their place at the top of the table after beating their two closest rivals on consecutive nights with the second being a 12-run win over holders Dhaka Dynamites in the last match of the Chittagong leg at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday.

With their seventh win in nine matches they went to 14 points, one above Khulna Titans who the Victorians beat by nine wickets on Tuesday night. Dhaka remain in third spot with 11 points from 10 matches.

It was again the Comilla bowlers, who shot out Khulna for 111 the previous night, who were the stars of the show as Dhaka were kept to 155 for eight in chase of Comilla's 167 for six. Shoaib Malib was once again stingy, giving away just 26 in four overs for the all-important wicket of Evin Lewis.

But it was Dwayne Bravo who provided the breakthroughs at the most pivotal times, getting rid of Shakib for seven in the 10th over before dispatching danger man Kieron Pollard off the first ball of the 18th over, which started with 44 needed off the last three, an imminently possible target with the

big man at the crease, which was the decisive blow. Jahanur Islam hit a hattrick of boundaries off Hasan Ali in the next to reduce the margin, but Mohammad Saifuddin bowled him in the last over and kept his head, despite a Rony Talukdar six, to seal the win.

Earlier, after Dhaka won the toss and asked Comilla to bat, a top-heavy batting display followed but it was a strange one as instead of capitalising on a fast start provided by skipper Tamim Iqbal, the innings inexplicably slowed down after his dismissal for a 23-ball 37. Fellow opener Liton Das scored a sedate 34 off 30 balls and put on just 29 runs for the second wicket with Imrul Kayes before being stumped off Shakib in the 12th over.

With the score on 89, the platform was set for Imrul and Marlon Samuels to cash in and take the total as close to 200 as possible. But they added just 25 in 21 balls before Imrul became Kevon Cooper's first victim for a 24-ball 26 in the 16th over.

Samuels hit a 27-ball 39 featuring five fours and two sixes, the last of which he hit in the last over before falling to compatriot paceman Cooper. The last over produced two sixes, a four and two wickets, the second one being that of Jos Buttler. 54 runs came off the last five overs, and despite the earlier go-slow that proved to be enough.

Windies look to end 22-year NZ drought

AFP, Wellington

The West Indies harbour hopes of their first away win over New Zealand in 22 years as the loss of Tim Southee and BJ Watling put pressure on the Blacks Caps ahead of Friday's first Test in Wellington.

Without strike bowler Southee, and a lack of experience among the New Zealand middle order batsmen, West Indies captain Jason Holder sees the key to success as the swift removal of senior batsmen Kane Williamson and Ross Taylor.

New Zealand are returning to the Test arena after an eight-month break while the battle-hardened West Indies are coming off a 2-1 series loss to England, including a dramatic victory at Headingley, and a 1-0 win over Zimbabwe.

"We've been on the road together for a while (and) we're doing some good things but we need to be pushing the consistency button more to keep heading in that upward direction," Holder said.

New Zealand have delayed making a decision on whether Lockie Ferguson, with his extreme pace, or the consistent Matt Henry will replace the 57-Test new-ball bowler Southee, who will miss the Test due to the impending birth of his second child.

Tom Blundell has already been confirmed to make his debut as wicketkeeper with Watling failing to recover from a thigh injury.

Unlike the West Indies, who have had a recent diet of Test cricket, New Zealand are fresh from a limited overs series in India and

have not worn their whites since the 1-0 series loss to South Africa in March.

Openers Jeet Raval and Tom Latham did play for New Zealand A in the West Indies warm-up match with Raval's unbeaten 32 in the second innings their best score.

The tourists dominated the first two days of that match, posting 451 for nine declared when they batted first, with Shai Hope posting 110 while Sunil Ambris, pushing for his first Test selection, made 157.

But in their second innings they were rolled for 186 with Kraigg Braithwaite's unbeaten 88 the only score of note.

With Watling out of contention and a middle order of Henry Nicholls, Mitchell Santner, Colin de Grandhomme and Blundell having only 35 Tests and 48 innings among them, the West Indies quicks will be keen to make early inroads.

Holder said they will be formulating plans to remove Williamson and Taylor cheaply.

"We know the calibre player both of them are. It's just a matter of us being patient and sticking to our plans. Over the next few days, we'll sit down and have some discussion around those two players," he said.

"I think they're their main players, but you can't rule out a guy like Tom Latham. He's done well in the past for New Zealand and he's carrying some current form as well."

The West Indies have not tasted a Test victory in New Zealand since February 1995 when they won by an innings and 322 runs at the Basin Reserve on the back of a 660 for five declared first innings headed by Brian Lara (147) and Jimmy Adams (151).

BCCI fined \$8m

AFP, New Delhi

India's competition watchdog on Thursday fined the country's powerful cricket governing body \$8 million over a multi-billion dollar broadcasting deal for the Indian Premier League.

The Competition Commission ruled that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), the world's wealthiest national cricket body, abused its position by agreeing to broadcasters' demands that it would not allow a rival to the IPL.

The commission ordered the BCCI to pay 520 million rupees (\$8 million) within 60 days.

Sony Pictures Networks has held the rights since the IPL started in 2008.

But in a major coup, Rupert Murdoch's Star India channel in September bought the rights for 2018-22 for \$2.55 billion -- a 150 percent increase on the previous deal -- confirming the league as one of the world's hottest sports properties.

The anti-trust commission made an initial ruling in 2013 that the BCCI's deal with Sony was illegal because of a clause which prevented the BCCI from allowing any other 20-over league to compete with the IPL.

The cricket body won a court order forcing a review of the case.

But the commission's new ruling came to the same conclusion and ordered the same fine.

The BCCI had pleaded that bidders for the television deal had insisted on the no-competition clause.

"BCCI has not provided any justification as to how this self-imposed restriction of not organising, sanctioning, approving or supporting another T20 cricket event that will be competing with IPL, is connected to the interest of cricket," the competition commission said however.

The commission said that "in the absence of any plausible explanation" it had found that the clause was intended to "enhance the commercial interest of the bidders of broadcasting rights" and the revenues received by BCCI.

In addition to the fine, the commission said the BCCI must not place any "blanket restriction" on the organisation of professional leagues to rival the IPL.

MOMENTS

TAMIM LAUGHS LAST

Apart from yesterday's match being among arguably the two best teams of BPL 2017, the reason that a Comilla-Dhaka match ignites the passions of cricket fans is that it pits two of Bangladesh's preeminent cricketers against each other. And one suspects that it excites Tamim Iqbal and Shakib Al Hasan too for similar reasons.

With that in mind, Comilla skipper Tamim would not have been a happy man when it was Shakib who took his wicket, which at once diminished his side's chances and gave his Tiger rival first blood. But the last laugh would be his; in the 10th over of Dhaka's chase, with the game in the

balance, Shakib miscued a ball from Dwayne Bravo straight to Tamim at mid off. Tamim threw the ball down in angry triumph, hinting that while they may be friends in red and green, it is an altogether different thing in the BPL.

GOOD SPIRIT ALL AROUND

In the 18th over of Dhaka's innings, a collision had star all-rounder Dwayne Bravo on the floor. Dhaka's Kevon Cooper missed a Bravo delivery and bumped into his smaller compatriot, seeming to hurt him badly. Cooper was too concerned about Bravo to complete the run and the fielders took off the bails at the other end. But after some consideration, Tamim called Cooper back in a display of gentlemanly spirit.

WHAT THEY SAID

MOMENTS

Dressing down in the dressing room?

Before today we have been trying to stay positive the whole time. But after today, it might be the flipside and I might go in there and get into people a bit more and say 'how can you perform in such a manner with such a chase and such a low total?'

Wherever you are in the world, if you are on top of them too much and degrade people too much it's quite hard to get back from that. But maybe, every now and then, that's what people need.

— Chittagong Vikings skipper Luke Ronchi hints that he may have some choice words to say to his underperforming team.

Keeping the moves a secret

This is something that someone from our U-19 team did after wickets. I picked it up and whenever I got wickets I did the move. In the six-a-side matches in Hong Kong, we performed the dance as a team. No, I think it's better if the player remains unnamed.

— Rajshahi Kings' BPL debutant Qazi Onik keeps the source of his little jig a secret.

SCORES IN BRIEF

RAJSHAHI V CHITTAGONG

RAJSHAHI KINGS: 157 for 6 in 20 overs (Wright 25, Zakir 17, Mushfiqur 31, Franklin 30, Sammy 40; Reece 3-33)

CHITTAGONG VIKINGS: 124 all out in 19.2 overs (Soumya 13, Anamul 23, Van Zyl 27, Raza 17, Tanbir 13; Mustafizur 18, Onik 4-17)

Result: Rajshahi Kings won by 33 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Darren Sammy.

COMILLA V DHAKA

COMILLA VICTORIANS: 167 for 6 in 20 overs (Tamim 37, Liton 34, Imrul 26, Samuels 39; Cooper 3-42, Shakib 2-23)

DHAKA DYNAMITES: 155 for 8 in 20 overs (Denly 49, Pollard 27, Mosaddeq 17, Jahurul 17; Bravo 3-31, Saifuddin 2-18)

Result: Comilla Victorians won by 12 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Dwayne Bravo.