

SPORT

'Hungry' Mehedi bags best haul

SPORTS REPORTER

WALTON 17th National Cricket League, 2017-18
Khulna Division wasted no time in getting into the driving seat on the back of Mehedi Hasan Miraz's career-best first-class bowling figures as the national off-spinners' seven-wicket haul helped bundle out Dhaka Division for just 113 on the first day of the title-deciding Tier-1 game in the final round of the National Cricket League at the BKSP-3 ground yesterday.

It was a welcome homecoming for Mehedi after a barren outing in the only Test he had played in South Africa in late September.

Dhaka's batsmen found the going extremely difficult and lost wickets at regular intervals after being asked to bat in overcast conditions on a damp wicket as the game started three hours late due to fog. There were however no complaints from Dhaka skipper Mohammad Sharif when asked whether the pitch was an unplayable one.

Rakibul Hasan's 28 was the highest score for the batting side as Mehedi ended with figures of seven for 24 from 11.4 overs while fast bowling sensation Mustafizur Rahman also picked up two wickets in his five-over opening spell.

In reply, Anamul Haque (12) and Soumya Sarkar (11) made a cautious start as Khulna ended the first day on 23 without loss and with a first-innings deficit of 90.

"The wicket was soft and the overcast, foggy condition helped me as I was able to grip the ball and also got a lot of turn from the pitch. Interestingly, this was my first NCL game since my international debut [October 2016] but there was a hunger inside me. When I got a wicket after 70 overs [66 in the first South Africa Test, four yesterday] today [Wednesday] I was relieved and gained confidence as the game progressed," Mehedi told the Daily Star yesterday.

In the other Tier-1 game Sohag Gazi was dismissed just one run short of his eighth

first-class century against Rangpur as Barisal ended the first day on 280 for six in Chittagong.

Gazi becomes the fifth batsman in the ongoing NCL to fall in the nervous nineties when he went for a checked pull shot to left-arm pacer Sajedul Islam but only managed to top-edge to Nasir Hossain at short mid-wicket after scoring 99 off 104 balls with 13 fours and a six.

Nuruzzaman and Al Amin struck fifties for Barisal while pacer Subashis Roy and leg-spinner Tanbir Hayder took two wickets for Rangpur.

In the day's only game that started on time, Chittagong were all out for 215 after being asked to bat by hosts Sylhet in the Tier-2 game with Yasir Ali top-scoring with 81 off 136 balls with 12 fours. Opener Sadikur Rahman added 46 while pacer Abul Hasan and left-arm spinner Enamul Haque bagged three each.

Sylhet however were in a spot of bother and ended the day on 54 for three and will

HIGHLIGHTS OF DAY 1

Mehedi Hasan Miraz takes career-best first-class haul of 7 for 24 against Dhaka Metro.

Sohag Gazi becomes the fifth batsman in the ongoing NCL to fall in the nervous nineties and the only batsman to be out on 99 against Rangpur Division.

resume the second day 161 behind.

In the other Tier-2 game, Dhaka Metro finished the day on 210 for four against hosts Rajshahi. Opener Sadman Islam top-scored with 75 off 121 balls with 11 fours and two sixes while skipper Marshall Ayub added 67. Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam bagged three wickets while Mohammad Ashraf (22) and Mehrab Hossain (22) will resume the second day.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KHULNA V DHAKA DHAKA: 113 all-out in 38.4 overs (Rakibul 28, Shuvagata 21; Mehedi 7-24, Mustafa 2-16) KHULNA: 23 without loss in 4.5 overs (Anamul 12 not out, Soumya 11 not out)	RANGPUR V BARISAL BARISAL: 280 for 6 in 77 overs 319 (Sohag 99, Nuruzzaman 51, Al-Amin 50; Subashis 2-31, Tanbir 2-50) RAJSHAHI V DHAKA METRO METRO: 210 for 4 in 53 overs (Sadman 75, Marshal 67; Taijul 3-67)	SYLHET V CHITTAGONG CHITTAGONG: 215 all-out in 67.4 overs (Yasir 81, Sadikur 46; Abul 3-34, Enamul 3-44) SYLHET: 54 for 3 in 18.1 overs (Sayem 16 not out; Mehedi 1-10, Shakhawat 1-10)
--	---	--



They can't see but their radiant expressions reflect how happy they are to have the country's first Grand Master Niaz Murshed with them. It was a momentous occasion for some visually impaired chess enthusiasts at the Dhaka University Teachers' Club yesterday, where they took part in a day-long competition as part of the 10-year celebration of Sparsha Braille Publication – the lone publisher of books in the country for the visually impaired. Sparsha also distributes books and other publications for free.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Sheikh Jamal in pole position

SPORTS REPORTER



The title race of the Bangladesh Premier League heat up after three-time champions Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club grabbed solo lead with a 3-2 win over Brothers Union at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Following on Chittagong Abahani's defeat against Muktiyoddha Sangsad on Tuesday, Sheikh Jamal had the perfect opportunity to go top of the table and the Dhanmondi giants grabbed it with both hands, taking three valuable points from the high-scoring fixture.

Sheikh Jamal now has 43 points from 18 matches, one ahead of both Chittagong Abahani and defending champions Abahani with four games remaining for each side. With Saif Sporting Club far behind the trio, the fight for the title is a three-horse race, but will likely go down to the wire.

It was Sheikh Jamal's Gambian striker Solomon King, who took the game away from Brothers Union by scoring a brace in the first half before Nigerian forward Raphael Odoyin netted

the other. Brothers Union, who stayed in eighth position with 15 points, showed some character too as they pulled two goals back.

Sheikh Jamal came into the match on the back of two big wins against Muktiyoddha Sangsad and Arambagh KS and they continued from where they had left in the previous game. The Dhanmondi-

FARASHGANJ 3 - 0 RAHMATGANJ MINHAJ8, MATHEW 72, MAHMUDUL 90+5	BROTHERS 2 - 3 SHEIKH JAMAL ZUNAPIO 45+2, BISHAL 81
---	---

based outfit took only five minutes to break the deadlock when Javed Khan lobbed one from the right-hand touchline for Solomon, who rose high to head in from inside the six-yard box.

Solomon, who also scored a brace against Brothers in their first meeting, doubled the lead in the 44th minute with a placing shot after taking the control of a Nurul Absar cross from the left side.

Brothers pulled one back in the stoppage time of the first half, with Congolese Siyu Zunapio converting a spot-kick.

Odoyin, however, restored Sheikh Jamal's two-goal advantage with a side-volley after playing a one-two with Solomon in the 78th minute. It was the 14th goal for the top-scorer of the league. Substitute Bishal Das reduced the arrears with a brilliant header in the 81st minute before Zunapio wasted a great opportunity to level the margin despite getting opposition goalkeeper Mitul Hasan in a one-on-one situation.

Meanwhile, like the title-fight, the relegation battle also got very intense after bottom-of-the-table Farashganj SC pulled off a 3-0 win against neighbours Rahmatganj MFS and brought the latter into the dreaded zone.

Minhazul Abedin, Chinedu Mathew and Mahmudul Biswas Munna scored one goal apiece for Farashganj, who now share the last position alongside Rahmatganj with 13 points from 18 matches.

Muktiyoddha Sangsad are on 14 points while Arambagh are a further point above.



Khulna off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz (L) got rid of his South Africa hangover with a career-best haul in the NCL Tier-1 match against Dhaka at BKSP-3, while Barisal all-rounder Sohag Gazi (R) fell agonisingly short of an eighth century in their Tier-1 match against Rangpur in Chittagong yesterday.



PHOTOS: COLLECTED

Gayle fails to fire, in doubt for 2nd ODI

STAR SPORT DESK



Hot on the heels of a red-hot Bangladesh Premier League campaign with Rangpur Riders, anticipation was at a fever pitch when Chris Gayle turned out in the maroon apparel of West Indies, but the big-hitting batsman scored just 22 as West Indies lost the first ODI against New Zealand by five wickets in Whangarei yesterday.

The situation turned worse for West Indies and Gayle as he did not field for the entirety of their defence of 248 for nine -- which was powered by a 100-ball 76 from opener Evin Lewis -- due to an illness and is now in doubt for the second ODI in Christchurch on Saturday. "He took ill," West Indies coach Stuart Law said after the match. "He's going to seek further medical advice once we arrive in Christchurch tomorrow. At this point in time I can't give you any further details of what's going on."

Gayle fell victim to resurgent New

Zealand pacer Doug Bracewell, who was named player of the match after celebrating the end of a 15-month exile from the national team by claiming four wickets for 55.

Lewis, a batsman who Gayle tipped as the next 'Universe Boss' after the BPL final on December 12, hit seven fours and a six in a mature knock that held the innings together. Rovman Powell hit a 50-ball 59 to take them close to 250.

In New Zealand's chase, a 108-run opening stand between George Worker and Colin Munro set the tone for an easy victory. After that stand was broken, all the top four got handy runs and that was enough to overcome a modest target.

SCORES IN BRIEF
WEST INDIES: 248 for 9 in 50 overs (Gayle 22, Lewis 76, Hetmyer 29, Powell 59; Ferguson 2-49, Bracewell 4-55, Astle 3-33)

NEW ZEALAND: 249 for 5 in 46 overs (Worker 57, Munro 49, Williamson 38, Taylor 49 not out; Holder 2-52, Nurse 2-55)
Result: New Zealand won by 5 wickets.
Player-of-the-match: Doug Bracewell.



West Indies opener Chris Gayle walks off the field after being dismissed by New Zealand's Doug Bracewell during the first ODI at Cobham Oval in Whangarei yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

India thrash SL

AGENCIES



Leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal took four wickets for 23 runs as India thrashed Sri Lanka by 93 runs in the opening twenty20 international in Cuttack on Wednesday.

The 27-year-old scalped four of the more dependable Sri Lankan batsmen as the visitors got bowled out for 87 in 16 overs while chasing a mammoth total of 180. All-rounder Hardik Pandya took three wickets while Chinaman bowler Kuldeep Yadav took two wickets to dismantle the Lankan batting.

Earlier, Opener Lokesh Rahul's half-century and a late blitz from Mahendra Singh Dhoni fired India to 180. Rahul smashed 61 off 48 balls to lay a solid foundation in the first of the three matches.

But it was Dhoni (39) and Manish Pandey (32) who took the attack to the opposition bowlers during their unbeaten 68-run stand for the fourth wicket.

SCORES IN BRIEF
INDIA: 180 for 3 in 20 overs (Rahul 61, Dhoni 39 not out, Pandey 32 not out; Mathews 1-19, Perera 1-37)
SRI LANKA: 87 all out in 16 overs (Tharanga 23, Perera 19; Chahal 4-23, Pandya 3-29)
Result: India won by 93 runs.

Chandika eyes SL selection

AFP, Colombo



Chandika Hathurusingha said Wednesday he scents opportunity as the new head coach of Sri Lanka despite a string of humiliating defeats.

"It will not be pressure but an opportunity," the 49-year-old former Test batsman told reporters after being named to the post on December 8.

"I am proud to take this opportunity to coach my own country to maximise the potential that we see from outside."

Hathurusingha also said he would streamline the selection process which he believed could revive the sagging fortunes of the team. In his tenure as Bangladesh coach, from mid-2015 till his resignation in mid-October this year, Hathurusingha was also part of a selection revamp that inserted him into the process and led to some controversy.

Sri Lanka this year have turned in their worst performance since 1987. Out of a total

of 29 ODIs they won only five while losing 23.

In Tests, they lost eight matches including a 3-0 pasting at home at the hands of world number one India.

During their continuing tour of India, Sri Lanka lost a three-match Test series 1-0 and the subsequent one-dayers 2-1.

On Wednesday they were playing the first of a three-match Twenty20 series with India.

They travel next to Bangladesh for a tri-series also involving Zimbabwe, followed by a two-Test rubber with the hosts.

Hathurusingha resigned as Bangladesh's coach after guiding the national team through their most successful period in his three years in charge, mastering Test wins over England and Australia.

His contract with the Bangladesh Cricket Board was due to run until World Cup 2019 and made him one of the world's highest-paid cricket coaches on 40,000 dollars a month.

The Sri Lanka post had been vacant since South African Graham Ford quit in June.

Nic Pothas, the fielding coach, was asked to fill the position in the interim.