

SPORT



Bangladesh under-15 girls' team celebrate their triumph in the Jockey CGI Youth Football Tournament in Hong Kong as expatriates join the celebration at the Siu Sai Wan Sports Ground yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

U-15 girls clinch first away title

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh under-15 women's football team emerged as unbeaten champions in the four-nation Jockey CGI Youth Football Tournament with a resounding 6-0 win over Hong Kong in their third and final game yesterday.

The girls in red and green won all three of their matches convincingly -- this win coming on the back of 10-1 and 8-1 wins against Malaysia and Iran respectively -- as the Bangladesh U-15 team won their first overseas title and their second overall after clinching the SAFF Championship title at home last December.

However, this is Bangladesh's fourth title in women's age-group football. Guided by Golam Rabbani Choton, the Bangladesh under-14 team had previously won the AFC regional titles in 2015 and 2016. They had also won the regional qualifiers of the AFC Women's U-16 Championship in Dhaka in 2016.

Striker Saraban Tohura bagged her second hat-trick of the competition while Sajeda Khatun, Shamsunnahar Jr and Anuching Mogini scored one apiece for Choton's charges in the one-sided affair.

Tohura, who became the top-scorer of the competition with eight goals, started the rout in the fourth minute before Sajeda doubled the lead in the 39th minute. Tohura scored her second a minute later as Bangladesh went into

the break with a 3-0 lead.

Shamsunnahar added the fourth in the 67th minute while Anuching scored the fifth in the 72nd minute. Tohura deservedly capped off the victory with her third of the game two minutes later.

The coach was happy with such a convincing campaign. "I am very pleased with our overall performance in this tournament. We dedicate this trophy to all the martyrs of the Liberation War and the freedom fighters of Bangladesh," he said.

The coach said this was a just reward for the team's hard work. "The team got reward for the hard work that has been put over the last few months. They have improved technically, physically and mentally within this time. They have played attacking football

right through the competition and hardly gave the opposition a chance. They played here just like the way they did during the SAFF Championship at home last year."

Hattrick hero Tohura said, "I am very very happy for winning the title and becoming the highest scorer in this tournament and also scoring three goals in today's match. We all gave our full effort in this match against Hong Kong to clinch the championship title for Bangladesh."

Shamsunnahar, who became the most valuable player of the competition, said, "I am very happy to become the most valuable player in this tournament and for the team becoming champions."

The victorious Bangladesh team will return home at the early hours of Tuesday.

'I still dream of nat'l return'

Ashraful hits third ton on the trot, but Kalabagan relegated

SPORTS REPORTER



Although Mohammad Ashraful became the first Bangladeshi batsman to strike three consecutive centuries in List A cricket by smashing an unbeaten ton in Kalabagan Krira Chakra's Dhaka Premier League relegation playoff match yesterday, his side confirmed their relegation after suffering a six-wicket defeat against Brothers Union at the BKSP-3 in Savar yesterday. Ashraful's fifth hundred of the season was overshadowed by a blistering 115 from Brothers opener Mizanur Rahman.

After coming in at the fall of the first wicket in the second over of the match, Ashraful occupied the crease for 137 deliveries and reached his hundred with his 10th four off the last ball of the innings. Kalabagan however managed to post a modest 253 for three in 50 overs, which Brothers chased down with 33 balls and six wickets to spare.

Mizanur's second hundred of the season was a 104-ball 115 with six sixes and 11 fours. After his dismissal, Yasir Ali took the team home with an unbeaten 45. The losing team



Kalabagan skipper Mohammad Ashraful completed a hat-trick of centuries yesterday with an unbeaten 102 against Brothers Union, but his innings could avert neither defeat nor relegation for his side.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

of the last relegation game between Brothers and Agrani Bank on April 4 will be relegated alongside Kalabagan.

It has been a mixed bag for former Bangladesh skipper Ashraful as three of his five centuries have come in losing causes. However, since returning from his match-fixing ban last year, this was the right hander's most successful season where he is now the leading run scorer with 655 runs in 13 games at an average of 66.50.

Consistency has been the biggest question about Ashraful's batting, and according to Test cricket's youngest centurion, it was Bangladesh ODI skipper and his friend Mashrafe Bin Mortaza who inspired him to work on his weakness at the start of the season.

"To be honest after scoring two ducks I had a chat with Mashrafe and the type of realisation he helped me reach worked really well for me. I have trained on my skill over the past four years but hadn't worked on my fitness and food habits. Mashrafe told me that I have the skill but I should work on my fitness. I then concentrated on my food habits and at the same time worked on my batting, did a lot of throwdowns. So there was luck, motivation... it all came together at the same time, which really helped me score consistently," Ashraful told The Daily Star yesterday.

The 33-year-old, who last played for the national team in an ODI against Zimbabwe in May 2013, still harbours hopes of returning to the national team.

"I have received the maximum amount of opportunity in the national team because of my ability to score big runs. I always had the habit of scoring big and converting my fifties into hundreds. To be honest I do dream of playing for the national team again and for that I have to do something exceptional and I have always thought of doing something different, such as smashing a pull shot off Brett Lee or Shoaib Akhtar, and that was the reason why everyone like me," he said.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Kalabagan KC: 252 for 3 in 50 overs (Waluiul 79, Ashraful 102 not out, Munim 35, Faruque 28 not out; Suhrawardi 2-53)
Brothers Union: 253 for 4 in 44.3 overs (Mizanur 115, Kapali 27, Yasir 45 not out, Sadat 32 not out; Jaimul 3-47)
Result: Brothers Union won by 6 wickets.

BCL to resume from April 10

SPORTS REPORTER



The remaining three rounds of the sixth edition of the first-class Bangladesh Cricket League is scheduled to resume from April 10 across different venues, the Bangladesh Cricket Board announced through a press release yesterday.

After the end of the first three rounds, defending champions North Zone lead the table with 34 points with one win and two draws. East Zone, South Zone and Central Zone lie in 2nd, 3rd and 4th place with 30, 26 and 19 points respectively.

Owing to a change in venues, the fixture list was revised and the fourth-round match between North Zone and Central Zone will be played at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra, while South Zone and East Zone will face off at the Sylhet International Stadium from April 10.

The fifth-round matches between North Zone and South Zone will take place at the Sheikh Abu Naser stadium in Khulna from April 17. The East Zone-Central Zone game will take place at the Sheikh Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi from the same day.

The sixth and final round of the BCL will commence from April 24, with North Zone taking on South Zone in Khulna and East Zone squaring off against Central Zone in Rajshahi.



A version of Jabbarer Boli Khela, a 109-year-old competition staged in Chittagong around the Bengali New Year, was held at the Pabna Edward College campus on March 31. It was an effort to spread the heritage of the popular wrestling competition beyond the port city.

PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR

Zone-specific curators next

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is planning to create four different curator zones for the next season in order to prepare pitches keeping in mind the upcoming international assignments of the national team and domestic cricket across the country.

The BCB has already started the process and appointed curator Pravin Hinganikar for two years while another curator Sanjeev Agarwal, who has given the interview on March 28, is also set to be appointed by the BCB next month.

According to BCB vice-president and chairman of the grounds committee Mahubul Anam, the board is planning to appoint a third curator under chief curator Gamini Silva so that the quartet can work in unison to improve the standard of pitches across the country. The board has seven purpose-built cricket venues in the country.

"Our plan is to create four zones so that the four curators can make a concerted effort to develop grounds in their respective zones. They will also develop the skills of the local curators. They will also supervise the improvement of local grounds and pitches in their respective zones," Anam told The Daily Star over the phone last night.

He said that the target is to make sporting wickets so that the national team will get the advantage of pitches both home and away.

"We will prepare wickets keeping in mind our international commitments and next year's World Cup in England. Besides, we will also make sure domestic matchers are being played on sporting wickets," added the seasoned cricketer-turned organiser.

Proteas in command

REUTERS, Johannesburg



South Africa opener Dean Elgar dropped anchor to steer his side to 134 for three in their second innings at the close of the third day of the fourth and final Test against Australia on Sunday, giving the hosts a daunting lead of 401 runs.

Elgar amassed 39 from 158 balls in a patient knock that has been the glue for South Africa's second innings, as they look to build an unassailable lead with two full days remaining at the Wanderers.

Australia need victory to avoid a first series defeat in South Africa since 1970, but have been rocked by the ball-tampering scandal that saw former captain Steve Smith, his deputy David Warner and batsman Cameron Bancroft sent home and slapped with hefty bans after the third Test in Cape Town.

Elgar will resume on the fourth morning, with his captain Faf du Plessis on 34, as the pair look to increase the lead towards the 500-run mark.

With so much time left in the Test, a declaration at that point would make South Africa heavy favourites to win or secure a draw at the very least.

The wicket is beginning to misbehave with variable bounce and there is sideways movement to assist the bowlers, which has brought Australia some success.

The excellent Pat Cummins (2-35) removed in-form Aiden Markram (37) when he edged to Peter Handscomb at second slip, but not before the opener, playing just his 18th Test innings, went past 1,000 runs in the five day game, the second fastest to reach that mark for South Africa behind Graeme

Smith (17 innings).

Hashim Amla (16) was caught at backward short leg by Mitchell March from a Nathan Lyon delivery, while AB de Villiers (six) gloved a rising Cummins ball to wicketkeeper Tim Paine.

South Africa had earlier bowled Australia out for 221 in their first innings with a rush of wickets after lunch having been frustrated in the morning session by Paine (62) and Cummins (50), who put on 99 for the seventh wicket.

New Australia captain Paine batted bravely with a stress fracture on his thumb to score a valuable half-century, his fourth in Test cricket, but was the last man out as Elgar took a brilliant running catch at mid-off from a Kagiso Rabada (3-53) delivery.

Cummins was the only wicket to fall in the morning session when he was trapped leg before wicket by spinner Keshav Maharaj (3-92), but South Africa ran through the tail after lunch.

The home side have a fitness worry as seamer Morne Morkel, playing in his final Test before retirement from international cricket, was forced from the field with a left side strain, but he did return to the pitch after the interval and will be monitored overnight.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 488
AUSTRALIA: First innings 221 (Khawaja 53, Paine 62, Cummins 50; Philander 3-30, Rabada 3-53, Maharaj 3-92).
SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings 134 for 3 (Markram 37, Elgar 39 not out, Du Plessis 34 not out; Cummins 2-35)

Red tape stalls stadiums

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan informed yesterday that the board is still waiting for the land allocation for the proposed cricket stadium in Purbachal. Moreover, it was the first time that the BCB boss sounded a note of discontent regarding not yet receiving the land allotment papers from the government for the Sheikh Kamal International Stadium in Cox's Bazar, saying that the BCB will be stopping further investment into the country's southernmost cricket venue.

"Actually the Prime Minister has given the instruction to give the land of Cox's Bazar stadium to us a long time back [in 2013] but we are yet to get that," Nazmul told reporters during a programme at the Volleyball Federation yesterday. "So we are not going for further investment into the Cox's Bazar stadium. But it's not as if the BCB will have to build the stadium; the government can also build it."

With regards to the stadium in Purbachal, Hassan said the matter is now at the Prime Minister's office.

"In the last meeting I had with the authorities, where the finance minister was also present, a total of 32 acres of land was marked for the stadium. So it's still there and we have given an application to the ministry of Housing and Public Works, which was later sent to the Sports ministry and is now at the Prime Minister's office as far as I heard."

"We have already finalised the outlook of the stadium and hopefully we will be able to start the work. There was talk about whether we can build the whole complex on our own expense, but that includes the condition that we get the land free of cost or even at a token price. Only then will we build the stadium; otherwise, the National Sports Council will build the stadium in Purbachal. I think it's a lucrative offer for the government as well."