



HALF HEADINGLEY, HALF MIRPUR: It was an unusual pitch that greeted North Zone and East Zone on the first day of their BCL fifth-round match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. A major portion of the wicket was as grassy as any strip in England, but it was as dry and barren as any subcontinent surface near the crease. Presumably prepared to help the pacers, four of the five wickets however fell to spin.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

# Nazmul, Ebadat revel on grass

SPORTS REPORTER



The pitch has been the centre of attention in both venues as the fifth round of the Bangladesh Cricket League started on green, grass-covered decks that have certainly encouraged the bowlers on the first day yesterday.

The pitch in Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium was lush green for most of its entire length, except for the full-length area around the crease which was dark brown. The North Zone batsmen however made a fair fist of it against East Zone, reaching 204 for five at the end of the first day.

At the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi, South Zone batsmen faced the music on the sporting track after being asked to bat. Central

Zone pacer Ebadat Hossain's career-best figures of four for 32 from 12 overs along with another four-for from left-arm spinner Mosharraf Hossain helped bundle out South for 191.

Central Zone ended the day's play on 154 for two, trailing by 37 runs. Opener Shadman Islam will resume batting on the second day on 66 off 99 balls alongside Marshall Ayub on 14.

Off-spinner Nayeem Hasan took the wicket of young opener Saif Hasan, who scored 30, while Abdul Mazid was trapped leg-before after scoring 44 runs.

Earlier, despite a flying start by openers Anamul Haque and Fazle Mahmud that realised 64 runs for the opening wicket inside 11 overs, South Zone lost their way. Right-arm pacer Ebadat removed both openers, trapping Fazle leg-before for 40 off 41 balls with eight fours,

before having Anamul caught for 23.

Almost all the South Zone batsmen got starts but were unable to capitalise. Imrul Kayes, returning to the side after missing the fourth round to perform Umrah, fell to Salauddin Sakil after scoring 26.

In-form Tushar Imran also fell cheaply, for 14, to Mosharraf while Ebadat picked up the wickets of Mohammad Mithun (18) and Nurul Hasan (28) as South Zone were teetering on 167 for seven.

Mosharraf then removed the tailenders and ended up with figures of four for 57 from 19.5 overs. Mosaddek Hossain remained unbeaten on 21 runs.

"We all know that we are used to playing on flat tracks in such tournaments but this wicket was difficult for the batsmen to adjust on initially. But I think these types of wickets will actually help batsmen to learn how to survive on such pitches, but at the same time I think our batsmen were unable to apply themselves," Mosaddek told reporters after the days' play in Rajshahi yesterday.

In Mirpur, seeing the green on offer East Zone skipper Mominul Haque did not hesitate to field first after winning the toss.

However, it was the off-spin of Shohag Gazi and Mohammad Ashraful that bagged two wickets each, while pacer Saifuddin -- the kind of bowling the pitch was presumably prepared to assist -- took one wicket for the bowling side.

Gazi removed both openers Junaid Siddique [7] and Mizanur Rahman (46 off 74 balls, five fours) while Saifuddin removed Farhad Hossain for seven.

Rain also played its part after lunch, causing a stoppage of over two hours. North Zone's young left-hander Nazmul Hossain Shanto then displayed great patience and skill to negotiate the dual bounce on offer -- with the ball keeping low at times -- to reach his fifty after play resumed.

North Zone however suffered a double blow from Ashraful as the disgraced former national captain removed Nazmul leg-before for 73 off 109 balls with 11 fours, and then followed it with a similar dismissal of Dhiman Ghosh for one.

Skipper Jahurul Islam batted sensibly and remained unbeaten on 43 alongside Ariful Haque on 17.

## BCB to merge HP, A teams

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Cricket Board chief selector Minhajul Abedin announced yesterday that they are going to merge the High Performance squad and A team training camps and that the new camp will begin on May 23. Players from the HP team will also feature for the A team.

The A team's next assignment is a series against Sri Lanka A at home, followed by a tour of Ireland and Minhajul said that they will utilise a mixture of experience alongside youth in the second string national side for those fixtures.

"We are merging the HP with the A team. We will choose a 20-22 member squad for the HP, and add a few A team players to that. The HP programme will start from the 23rd of next month, and we will start the A team work with that as well," Minhajul told reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

He also informed that the board are searching for cricketers who can immediately replace national team players and also those who can make it to the national level within one to two years.

"It will be a combination of seniors and juniors. I can't say the names. Let us prepare the team first, we will sit and decide after the BCL who will go to HP and who will go to A team. Two weeks later there is a national training camp, and we will have to choose a preliminary squad for that as well. We can give the details next week," he added.

Tushar Imran, the first Bangladeshi player to score 10,000 first-class runs, has been in terrific form recently with three centuries on the trot to his name for South Zone in the BCL. And naturally, since Tushar played for Bangladesh between 2001 and 2007, it was asked whether the 34-year-old could make a comeback to at least the A team. However, the chief selector was noncommittal on the issue.

Minhajul added that the national cricketers are supposed to report by May 13 to begin the conditioning camp the following day.

## No system for foreign staff

SPORTS REPORTER



National cricketers have been falling victim of injury one after the other, with wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiquur Rahim becoming the latest casualty to join Tamim Iqbal, Taskin Ahmed, Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Nasir Hossain. The Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) medical team under the guidance of Dr. Debashish Chowdhury has been looking after the injury issues but many are curious to know where the national team physiotherapist Thihan Chandramohan is.

Chandramohan is now on leave. The other foreign support staff of the national team are also enjoying holidays at a time when there is no international assignment for the Tigers.

BCB's cricket operations committee, who are taking care of all the affairs regarding the national team, is supposed to chalk out the programmes detailing the duties of the staff, including when they each will go on vacation and what they will do during the national team's down time. It may be mentioned here that the BCB CEO approved the leaves.

In reality however, the cricket operations committee know hardly anything regarding these important issues and that is the reason why there was no answer when asked why Chandramohan has been enjoying such a lengthy break -- since the Nidahas Trophy that ended on March 18 -- and is absent at such a crucial time.

It is very natural that the foreign staff will go on leave as per the terms and conditions in their contracts, but according to sources there is no system in place during such injury gluts and the board has hardly any plans and off-time programmes to follow.

It was learnt that a system was in place before former Bangladesh coach Chandika Hathurusingha assumed complete authority over all national team affairs, including who will go on leave and when.

Despite the Sri Lankan leaving the job in October last year, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is yet to put a proper system in place and the cricket operations committee, under the leadership of former national skipper Akram Khan, also failed to take the initiative to make sure that there will be a proper plan and programme throughout the year.

This issue may come up for discussion during today's board meeting at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur in an attempt to reinstate the system. With the host of injuries to national players, there is little doubt that the matter deserves proper attention beside all other important agendas.

## Sonali Bank in semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Sonali Bank confirmed their semifinal berth in the Khaza Rahmatullah Club Cup hockey tournament with a massive 10-1 win over newly promoted Bangladesh Police Hockey Club while Victoria SC kept their semifinal hopes alive by beating Ajax SC 2-0 yesterday.

At the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium, Sonali Bank led the first half 2-0 before adding eight more goals, with Din Islam Emon scoring a hat-trick. Tanzim Ahmed and Fazle Hossain struck a brace each while Irfanul Haque, Razib Das and Prosenjit Roy also got their names on the scoresheet.

With successive defeats, Police were eliminated from the group stages while Abahani and Sonali Bank will play the group-deciding match tomorrow.

Meanwhile, smarting from a massive 8-0 defeat at the hands of Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club, Victoria SC bounced back to hand a 2-0 defeat to Ajax SC in the day's first match. Ajax will face title contenders Mariner Young's Club tomorrow.

After a barren first half, Rimon and Rakib netted one goal apiece for Victoria SC.

## Neymar out of action till May 17

AFP, Sao Paulo

Brazilian superstar Neymar said Tuesday that he won't be back playing at least until the second half of May, when he is scheduled to have his final medical exam following foot surgery.

"The last exam is on May 17 and from there I will see," the Paris Saint-Germain and Brazil forward told a press conference in Sao Paulo. "It has not been decided."

The timing leaves the world's most expensive footballer in a tight race to feature again for PSG with the freshly crowned French champion's season ending on May 19 with a game against Caen.

"I hope I won't watch the World Cup on TV," Neymar joked, calling the tournament a "dream".

## Rohit stars in MI's first win

PTI, Mumbai



Captain Rohit Sharma struck a brilliant 94 before his bowlers produced a clinical performance as Mumbai Indians beat Royal Challengers Bangalore by 46 runs in their IPL match on Tuesday.

Put into bat, Mumbai recovered from a shock start of 0 for 2 to post 213 for 6, their highest score of the season, mainly through the splendid batting of Rohit (94 in 52 balls) and opener Evin Lewis (65 in 42 balls).

Then, the Mumbai bowlers led by left-arm spinner Krunal Pandya (3/28) stopped RCB at 167 for 8 in 20 overs to notch up their first win in their fourth match of the season.

RCB captain Virat Kohli's typically aggressive 62-ball 92 not out was the lone bright spot in the visitors' run-

chase of 214 as they lost their way after a promising start.

Kohli, who opened the RCB innings, slammed 4 sixes and 7 fours in his unbeaten knock but none of his batting colleagues gave him support. The next best was that of the other opener Quinton de Kock who made 19 from 12 balls.

RCB's defeat at the Wankhede Stadium was also third in four games this season.

RCB made an encouraging start in pursuit of the daunting target when Kohli and de Kock put on 40 runs before a twin strike in three balls by left-arm pacer Mitchell McClenaghan (2/24) in the fifth over arrested their progress.

The New Zealander bowled de Kock for 19 and then struck another big blow by having another South African A B de Villiers (1) caught in the deep to

make it 42 for two.

There was a brief revival with Kohli adding 32 runs with Mandeep Singh (16) before Krunal Pandya grabbed two wickets off successive balls. Krunal dismissed Mandeep and Corey Anderson (0) to push the visitors firmly on the back foot at 75 for four.

Earlier, Mumbai Indians made a grand recovery from a shock start through sparkling half centuries from captain Rohit and Lewis.

SCORES IN BRIEF

MUMBAI INDIANS: 213 for 6 in 20 overs (Lewis 65, Sharma 94, H Pandya 17 not out; Yadav 2-36, Anderson 2-47)

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE: 167 for 8 in 20 overs (Kohli 92 not out, De Kock 19; Bumrah 2-28, K Pandya 3-28, McClenaghan 2-24)

Result: Mumbai Indians won by 46 runs.



Skipper Rohit Sharma's scintillating 94 off 52 balls helped Mumbai Indians score a season-high 213 in an IPL match against Royal Challengers Bangalore at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP