

A GLIMMER OF HOPE

NABID YEASIN

A relatively small ground with an uneven pitch in the middle and unkempt grass all around -- it sounds like the description of a ground where amateur school level tournaments are usually held. But unfortunately the above description is of the Gulshan Youth Club Sports Ground, where the Dhaka First Division Women's Cricket League, organised by BCB, is currently being held.

However, cheers like "Come on. You are doing so well. Just keep on hitting" could be distinctively heard from the dugout of the City Club Women cricket team even in this poor cricketing environment.

The batter, pumped up by all the cheers and support, came down the track and obliged as she struck a boundary the very next ball. The incredible buzz going around the ground and the loud cheers after every shot being played or every diving effort from a fielder to save a run in such a poorly facilitated ground could only mean that there is still a glimmer of hope for the Bangladesh women's

tournament after having signed contracts with different clubs. Such a player is City Club's Sabekur Nahar Choyti, who hails from Rajshahi. Choyti, an admirer of Bangladesh's star batsman Mahmudullah Riyad, opined that a lot more quality players would emerge from different districts only if more tournaments were organised by BCB.

"I think more players will emerge if tournaments are organised more frequently in different districts," said Choyti.

The Bangladesh women cricket team's journey in the ICC Women's World T20 ended early as the Tigresses finished bottom of their group after being unable to register a single win in the tournament. While this is a very concerning issue for a cricket loving country like Bangladesh, the impressive cricketing attitude displayed by the players during a game between the Dhaka Assets and the City Club could be a relieving factor.

One of the main reasons behind the Tigresses' failure in the World T20 in the West Indies was surely a lack of big hitters in the side, owing to which



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

The Women's First Division League is being held in conditions more reminiscent of an amateur league than a BCB-sanctioned event.

cricket team in the future, provided these players are nurtured and aided with better facilities.

Surprisingly, the players participating in the tournament are happy with the current conditions and the facilities provided to them. The captain of Dhaka Assets, Rokeya Ahmed Roya, informed The Daily Star that she has been playing First Division cricket for the past three years and is willing to continue playing in future. Like Roya, the enthusiasm displayed by all the other players on a field that needs far more grooming to even be prepared for a school level tournament, shows that the girls of our country are more than happy only by getting an opportunity to play.

Players have come from different districts of Bangladesh to play in this

they failed to stretch their score past 80 even once in the tournament. A total of 79 for five against South Africa in their last match was the highest score by the Tigresses in the competition.

An indication of why no proper big hitters have emerged in the side that were crowned champions of Asia in June this year could be found in this shoddily prepared ground in Gulshan. A field no more than 40 meters on both sides could never help create a player that can play big shots regularly on foreign turf.

Provided better facilities and more frequent tournaments in a proper cricketing environment, the girls can surely bring some good results in the future; otherwise the horrors of the last World T20 may keep repeating.

M O M E N T

CHATTOGRAM REARGUARD

No, this is not Bangladesh Test skipper Shakib Al Hasan turning away just as a West Indies fielder finds an unlikely target. In the 53rd over, Shakib under-edged a Kumar Roach delivery that then cannoned into the turf and bounced above Shakib's head. Ever the street-smart cricketer, Shakib found the ideal body part to protect his stumps while also softening the blow.



PHOTO: BCB



A combination of pictures showing Brazil captain Neymar (L) leaving the pitch injured during the international friendly against Cameroon in Milton and France superstar Kylian Mbappe holding his shoulder in pain after getting injured during the international friendly in Paris on Tuesday. Both Brazil and France recorded 1-0 victories.

PHOTO: AFP

Dynamic duo in race against time

AFP, Paris



Paris Saint-Germain forwards Neymar and Kylian Mbappe are both in a race against time to recover from injuries in time for the crucial Champions League clash with Liverpool, the French club said Wednesday.

PSG said a scan had showed that Neymar strained an adductor muscle in his groin in Brazil's 1-0 friendly win against Cameroon on Tuesday.

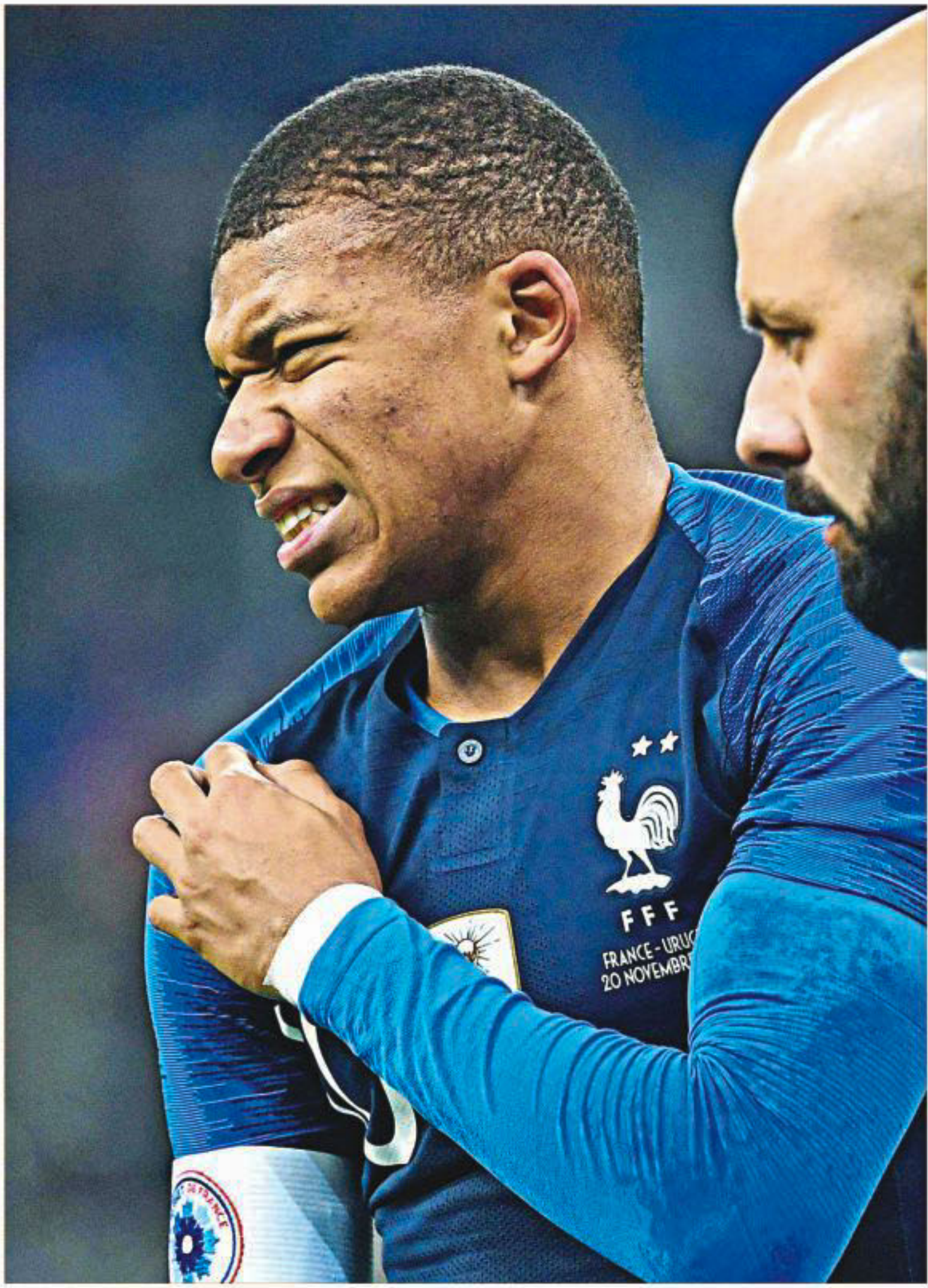
And Mbappe has a shoulder contusion after falling heavily in France's 1-0 win over Uruguay at the

Stade de France.

"A 48-hour period of treatment will be undertaken to assess their clinical evolution," PSG said.

It appears likely that both players will miss PSG's Ligue 1 match against Toulouse on Saturday, but their real target will be Wednesday's Champions League match against Liverpool at the Parc des Princes.

All four sides could still qualify for the knockout phase from Group C. Liverpool have the same number of points as leaders Napoli while PSG sit third, one point behind Liverpool and one point ahead of Red Star Belgrade.



Neymar played down his injury, saying in an Instagram message that "it was nothing serious".

In Tuesday's match, the Brazilian forward had treatment for an apparent groin problem after just five minutes and collapsed to the turf soon afterwards to boos from the crowd in the central English town of Milton Keynes.

Brazil team doctor Rodrigo Lasmar also said on Tuesday the 222-million-euro (\$253-million) player did not appear to have a serious problem.

"He felt discomfort," Lasmar said. "He will need a bit more time to evaluate it and take a scan, but in

principle it is not a serious injury."

In Paris, Mbappe hurt his right shoulder as he challenged Uruguay goalkeeper Martin Campana for the ball in the World Cup winners' victory.

France coach Didier Deschamps said Mbappe, the 19-year-old forward who shot to global prominence at the World Cup, "had some shoulder pain after his fall".

Neymar's replacement in the Brazilian lineup, Everton's Richarlison, headed in on the stroke of half-time to secure victory for the Selecao.

France won thanks to Olivier Giroud's 52nd-minute penalty.

SHORT CORNER

Kahn tipped to be Bayern's next president

Former Germany captain Oliver Kahn is emerging as the favourite to be the next president of Bayern Munich -- 15 years after he first put himself forward for the job.

In 2003, while he was still keeping goal for Bayern and Germany, Kahn said in an interview that he "could not imagine a better man than me" to one day take charge of Bayern.

Current Bayern president Uli Hoeness, 66, is due for re-election in November 2019. According to magazine Sports Bild, Kahn, 49, is Hoeness' preferred candidate to replace him when he eventually stands down.

The pair have stayed in contact since Kahn retired in 2008 after making 632 appearances for Bayern in 14 years, winning the Bundesliga title a joint record eight times.

--AFP

Venus reaches settlement in fatal traffic accident

Venus Williams has reached a settlement with the estate of a man who died in a traffic collision in Florida with a car driven by the tennis star.

The family of 78-year-old Jerome Barson filed a wrongful death suit against Williams following the June 2017 crash in Palm Beach, Florida.

No charges were filed by police against Williams or the driver of the other car over the accident.

The settlement reached last week does not reveal any of the terms of the agreement other than a stipulation that both parties will pay their own attorneys' fees.

Barson's wife was driving and he was in the passenger seat when the collision occurred with the car driven by Williams.

Barson suffered severe injuries and died two weeks later.

--AFP

Drogba calls time at 40

Former Chelsea striker Didier Drogba announced his retirement on Wednesday, calling time on a 20-year career in which the bullish centre forward won four Premier League titles and the 2012 Champions League.

Ivorian Drogba, who had been playing in the United States for Phoenix Rising, had two spells at Chelsea, scoring 164 goals in 381 games having spearheaded the west London club's revival under owner Roman Abramovich.

He went on to win three Premier League titles in his first eight years at Chelsea as well as four FA Cups and two League Cups.

Drogba, 40, began his career at French side Le Mans in 1998, but did not play top-tier football until he was 23 when he was signed by Guingamp in 2002.

--REUTERS

Manon becomes unbeaten champ

Candidate Master Manon Reja Neer became the unbeaten champion in the standard chess event of Open Under-8 Group as the Western Asia Youth & Junior Chess Championship ended at Tashkent, Uzbekistan yesterday.

The Bangladeshi earned eight points from nine games after beating Komilov Johangir of Uzbekistan in the ninth and final round to achieve the gold medal.

In the Girls' Under-6 group, Bangladesh's Warsia Khusbu became the unbeaten champion to earn the gold medal.

--SPORTS REPORTER

'Premier League made me better'

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola believes the competitive nature and sheer unpredictability of the Premier League has presented him with the biggest challenge of his career.

Prior to his move to Manchester, Guardiola collected three La Liga titles and two Champions League trophies with Barcelona, before leading Bayern Munich to three consecutive Bundesliga crowns in competitions dominated by very few teams.

"I am a better manager than I was in Germany, and I am a better manager now than I was in Barcelona by far, just for the fact of being there," he said at the Peers Annual Lecture at Liverpool University.

--REUTERS

Mahmud falls short as bowlers take charge

SPORTS REPORTER



Fazle Mahmud could have become the fourth centurion after Abul Majid, Naeem Islam and Jahurul Islam but he fell six runs short as South Zone finished their first innings with one-run deficit against Central Zone on the second day of the four-day Bangladesh Cricket League match at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

The second day saw bowlers take charge as Mosharraf Hossain's four-wicket haul helped Central take the first innings lead. Meanwhile Mahmud Hasan's four-wicket haul stopped North Zone's run-spree and then two scalps from Ebadat Hossain and Sunzamul Islam put East Zone in trouble at the Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi.

Resuming the day on 29 without loss, South Zone's two overnight batsmen Shahriar Nafees and Anamul Haque looked set to carry on but Anamul was trapped in front by Shahidul Islam for 31 runs, bringing Mahmud to the middle. Nafees and Mahmud then combined for 78 runs for the second wicket to steady the ship before Shahidul again struck to dismiss Nafees, who scored 71 off 124 balls with 12 fours.

It was then the story of South losing wickets at regular intervals and they must



FAZLE MAHMUD... 94

thank number ten batsman Rubel Hossain for taking their innings close to their opponents' first essay. Rubel hit a 52-ball 30 while Mahmud scored 94 off 194 balls, a knock that contained 13 boundaries.

Central extended their lead second-innings lead to three runs as they were on two runs without any loss when stumps were drawn.

At Rajshahi, which enjoyed a run-fest on the opening day through Naeem Islam and Jahurul Islam's centuries, North Zone added 110 runs to their overnight score of 335-2 before being bundled out.

19-year old paceman Hasan Mahmud shone with the ball after Abu Jayed, removing Jahurul, who could add only four runs to his overnight score.

Naeem however scored 137 runs in his 246-ball essay after resuming the day on 111.

Hasan claimed four wickets for 84 runs.

In reply, East Zone finished the day with a 320-run deficit with six wickets in hand as they reached 125 for four at stumps. Opener Rony Talukdar hit 54.

SCORES IN BRIEF

CENTRAL ZONE V SOUTH ZONE

CENTRAL ZONE: 282 all out in 74.5 overs (Abdul Majid 141 not out, Shahidul 58, Shanto 23; Al-Amin 3-65, Razzak 3-70, Rubel 2-42) and 2 for no loss in two overs (Liton 2 not out, Saif 0 not out)

SOUTH ZONE: 281 all out in 87.1 overs (Nafees 71, Anamul 31, Fazle 94, Rubel 30; Robiul 2-72, Shahidul 2-28, Mosharraf 4-53)

NORTH ZONE V EAST ZONE

NORTH ZONE: 445 all out in 112.1 overs (Mizanur 92, Naeem 137, Jahurul 104, Ziaur 29; Jayed 2-81, Mahmud 4-84, Enamul 3-122)

EAST ZONE: 125 for four in 36 overs (Rony 54, Shamsur 24, Tasamul 24 not out; Ebadat 2-26, Sunzamul 2-17)