



Abdur Razzak (C) seems relaxed now but the left-arm spinner put in scintillating performances to help South Zone clinch their fourth Bangladesh Cricket League title. Razzak picked up a 12-wicket match haul as South defeated North Zone by nine wickets in their sixth round encounter to seal the triumph yesterday. PHOTO: PRIME BANK

South rise to fourth title

SPORTS REPORTER



South Zone clinched their fourth Bangladesh Cricket League title as skipper Abdur Razzak's five-for ensured their nine-wicket triumph over North Zone on the fourth day of the final and sixth round of the tournament at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

The left-arm spinner ran riot as he scalped all the wickets that fell on the day, finishing the match with figures of 12 wickets for 144 runs -- his best match haul in this edition of the tournament. After Razzak's heroics helped bundle North out for 280, it was an easy task for the South batsmen as they reached the 33-run target in just 7.1 overs.

Even though it was skipper Razzak's bowling that helped South defeat North in the final round, it was an all-round team effort both with bat and bowl that brought them success in the tournament.

South banked on their slower bowlers throughout the tournament as two of their spinners -- Razzak and off-spinner Mahedi Hasan -- featured in the list of highest wicket-takers. The captain finished on top with 34 wickets in six matches while Mahedi secured third position as he scalped 23 wickets from the same number of matches.

With the bat, it was also one of South's players -- opener Anamul Haque -- who finished as the highest run-getter in the tournament with 658 runs. He was one of the consis-



Razzak's 12 seals fourth title for South

ROLL OF HONOUR

SEASON	WINNERS	RUNNERS-UP
2012-13	Central Zone	North Zone
2013-14	South Zone	North Zone
2014-15	South Zone	East Zone
2015-16	Central Zone	East Zone
2016-17	North Zone	South Zone
2017-18	South Zone	North Zone
2018-19	South Zone	East Zone

tent performers for South as he scored three fifties and two tons, the latest of which came in the final match against North -- 180 off 314 balls, which was also his highest score of the league.

Mahedi, who made a big impact with the ball for South, also shone with the bat as he was the fifth highest scorer this season, scoring 459 runs.

As the franchise-based tournament comes to a close, one thing that was different from previous editions is that the pacers were given plenty of overs this time around, especially on Bogura's green-top which was rightly exploited by the quicks.

Two pacers -- North's Ebadat Hossain and East Zone's Abu Zayed -- accounted for about 285 overs between them and they ended fourth and fifth in the wicket-takers' list with 21 and 20 wickets respectively, playing five matches each in the tournament.

BOXING DAY TESTS

Boult destroys SL

AFP, Christchurch

Chief destroyer Trent Boult felt he was "in the groove" as his sublime six-wicket spell, backed by half-centuries from Tom Latham and Jeet Raval gave New Zealand a vice-like grip on the second Test against Sri Lanka in Christchurch on Thursday.

At the close of the second day, New Zealand were 231 for two, holding a commanding 305-run lead in their second innings with eight wickets in hand.

Sri Lanka's hopes of taking the series-deciding Test were severely dented in a 15-ball masterclass of swing bowling from Boult when he took six wickets for four runs to give New Zealand a 74-run first innings advantage.

"It is probably one of the best swing bowling grounds in the country. It was quite still out there and the ball was in good nick as well," Boult said.

"It is nice to get the ball moving around, making the most of it."

"It's all about rhythm for me anyway. I suppose getting into a groove, a couple of wickets gives you a bit of confidence and just lets you go about your thing. Sometimes you're not really thinking about much and it's kind of happening for you."

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: First innings 178
SRI LANKA: First innings 104 all out (Mathews 33 not out, Silva 21; Boult 6-30, Southee 3-35)

NEW ZEALAND: Second innings 231 for 2 (Raval 74, Latham 74 not out, Williamson 48)



India batsman Cheteshwar Pujara celebrates after reaching his century on the second day of the third Test against Australia in Melbourne yesterday. PHOTO: AFP



New Zealand's Trent Boult took six wickets for four runs on the second day of the second Test against Sri Lanka in Christchurch yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Kohli, Pujara put India on top

A 170-run stand between century-maker Cheteshwar Pujara and captain Virat Kohli put India in a dominant position in the third Test Thursday as Australia's openers survived half a dozen nervy overs before the close.

Dogged Pujara stroked 106 and Kohli 82 before they both fell soon after lunch on what until then had been a lifeless Melbourne pitch.

Rohit Sharma was not out 63 after notching his 10th Test half-century when Kohli called a halt to the innings late in the day at 443 for seven as India go in search of a crucial 2-1 lead in the four-Test series.

That gave the tourists' attack six overs before stumps to target Australian openers Marcus Harris and Aaron Finch, who battled through to be eight without loss.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: First innings 443 for 7 decl (Agarwal 76, Pujara 106, Kohli 82, Rahane 34, Sharma 63 not out, Pant 39; Starc 2-87, Cummins 3-72)

AUSTRALIA: First innings 8 for no loss.

QUICK SINGLES

The following are a few samples of stories that did not make the print edition. However, if they pique your interest, you can always read them online on The Daily Star website by simply scanning the QR codes listed below:

Kings still unsatisfied

Newcomers to the country's

top-flight football hardly ever found success in their debut seasons, that is until

Bashundhara Kings surprisingly broke the trend by lifting the Independence Cup title last Wednesday after enjoying success at two other tournament finals within one month.



Smith to be allowed to play in BPL

Australia's former

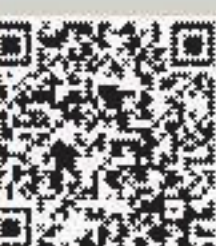
skipper Steve Smith could yet feature for BPL franchise

Comilla Victorians after the tournament's governing council decided that franchises will be allowed to include one player each in their squad from outside the players' draft.



SA v Pak Test

Day-2



What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

New Zealand v Sri Lanka

Second Test, Day Four

Live from 4:00am (Saturday)

SONY ESPN

South Africa v Pakistan

First Test, Day Three

Live from 2:00pm

SONY SIX

Australia v India

Third Test, Day Four

Live from 5:00am (Saturday)

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

YEAR END 2018 SPECIAL



Bangladesh U-18 girls celebrate their SAFF Championship glory in Bhutan.

ATIQUÉ ANAM

As we wrap up 2018 and look forward to a new year, Bangladesh's search continues for a sport or sporting icon, barring cricket, which we can feel really proud of. There were sporadic successes in several sports at the regional level this year, but unfortunately we are yet to find an individual or a team that can give us an assurance of sustained success at the international level. And signs are that the status quo is not likely to change soon as 2018 brought more news of disappointment than celebration. To make matters worse, there were a few truly dark incidents taking place within the sporting community that posed serious questions about the integrity and dignity of the sporting establishment.

THE GOOD

Most of the good news in sport came from football, more specifically from age-group football. The boys' triumph in the SAFF U-15 Men's Championship, the girls' in the SAFF U-18 Women's SAFF Championship and a runners-up finish by the girls in the SAFF U-15 Women's Championship, followed by the same team's qualification for the second round of AFC U-16 Women's Qualifiers were some of the brighter points of footballing success. There was also notable success at the senior level as the Bangladesh Olympic team for the first time in history reached the second-round of the Asian Games, beating Qatar after holding Thailand to a draw following an opening-game defeat against Uzbekistan. Bangladesh were eventually beaten by last edition's runners-up North Korea in the last 16, but their performance gave the booters belief that they could fight shoulder-to-shoulder against opponents of much higher calibre.

Although the national team could not quite replicate the performance of the Olympic team in the two subsequent campaigns at home, the spirit and heart shown by them in the SAFF Championship and the Bangabandhu Gold Cup was a refreshing change to

football fans after a few years of disappointment.

The hockey team's performance in the Asian Games, where they finished sixth for the first time since 1978, was another bright spot.

Among the other notable achievements were FIDE Master Fahad Rahman earning his first IM norm and Bangladesh doing relatively well in regional handball, volleyball,



The women's team were the saving grace in kabaddi in a miserable year for the sport.

basketball and archery events. From an organisational point of view there were quite a few positives, including the hosting of a number of international events and successfully staging the first Bangladesh Youth Games.

The most notable success from individual sports came from shooting in the Gold Coast Commonwealth

Games in Australia, where the country's best shooter, Abdullah Hel Baki, followed up his silver medal in the 2014 Games with a silver medal in men's 10m air rifle event, narrowly missing out on a maiden gold, while Shakil Ahmed won a silver medal in men's 50m pistol event.

THE BAD

To be fair, the Commonwealth Games remains a league far below world standard, with many of the top performers of the world not present there. So the hype surrounding the two silver medals earned in shooting was quickly ended when the Bangladesh shooting team failed miserably in the Asian Games in Indonesia, with none of the shooters making it to the eight-man finals in any of the events.

And that theme recurred across 14 of the disciplines that Bangladesh participated in at the Asian Games, with a total of 117 athletes taking part.

Kabaddi, the national sport, was the epitome of the decadence of our sporting achievement. A saving grace for the past 32 years, kabaddi this time failed to earn a medal from Asia's biggest multi-discipline sporting event, thereby extinguishing hopes of any medal for Bangladesh from the games for the first time since 1982.



The Bangladesh Olympic team made history reaching the second round of the Asian Games in Indonesia. Here they celebrate their victory against Qatar.

THE UGLY

The Commonwealth Games revealed a picture of callousness and negligence of Bangladesh officials as two participating boxers were suspended from taking part due to sheer negligence of the team coach. The coach forgot to attend the technical meeting the day before the events, prompting the Games' authority to exclude Bangladesh from the roster.

One of the members of Bangladesh's journalist contingent went missing soon after reaching Australian shores. It was later found out that the missing person was not a journalist at all, rather a random individual who had used the Games as a means for illegal migration by forging documents with the assistance of a sports journalist.

In July, a member of Bangladesh's Special Olympics Unified Football team went AWOL from his team hotel in Chicago, only to be found a few days later at the home of one of his relatives in Ohio. The transgressor was sent home by the Bangladesh contingent, but these two incidents left a black spot on the image of the country, reviving memories of a time when defecting from foreign tours used to be commonplace among sports representatives from the developing world.

However, the worst revelation that hit the sporting fraternity came in November when a Bengali daily unearthed the case of an alleged rape, which had taken place a couple of months previously in the confines of the country's apex sporting establishment, the National Sports Council. The victim was a teenage weightlifter and the alleged perpetrator an office assistant of the Bangladesh Weightlifting Federation.

The details of the incident and its aftermath were chronicled by leading newspapers, much to the shock and horror of the public even though it is common knowledge that such incidents have taken place in the past under the eyes of the powers that be or, in cases, by the ones who yield power.

It is believed that the incident revealed by the family of the victim, who underwent treatment for mental trauma, is only tip of the iceberg, with a great majority of such incidents being swept under the carpet.

These transgressions take place because most of the athletes of our country come from needy families, clinging on to the sport that they feel can give them a life worth living. It is perhaps high time that the financial and personal security of these sporting individuals is ensured before expecting success from them.

