



Sylhet Sixers pacer Taskin Ahmed leaps for joy after scalping one of his four wickets in a BPL encounter against Chittagong Vikings in Mirpur yesterday. (Inset) Player-of-the-match Nicholas Pooran's unbeaten 52 off 32 balls set up the five-run win.



MUSHY wants another T20 tournament for locals

SPORTS REPORTER



There has been some talk about the performance of local players in the Bangladesh Premier League not quite matching that of the foreign stars.

However, Chittagong Vikings skipper Mushfiqur Rahim said that it is always difficult for local players to adapt right away to the demands of the shortest format of the game because they lack experience in T20 cricket. The ex-national captain also urged for more T20 tournaments in order to get good output from locals.

"It's difficult for those who are out of the national team as they only play BPL once a year and even then they don't get to play practice matches. If you compare with us -- we play all over the year across formats and we also play in Bangladesh."

"I think if a slot is created for a tournament other than the BPL not only for those who are outside the national team -- but also including us -- it will help. Maybe we are busy with national duties but those who are outside the team, if they can play such tournaments it will be easy for the teams to form a good side too. We did give a proposal previously and maybe [BCB director Ismail Haider] Mollick bhai has also said that there might be a T20 tournament comprising the top six-seventeen teams of the Dhaka [Premier] League. If that happens it will definitely help us," Mushfiqur told reporters yesterday.

There has also been talk about the Mirpur pitch after quite a few low-scoring affairs in the ongoing BPL, but Mushfiqur informed that it is important for players to adapt their game according to the wicket.

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CHITTAGONG VIKINGS CAPTAIN



Locals step up for Sixers and Kings

SPORTS REPORTER



While yesterday's Bangladesh Premier League matches were contrasting in terms of the scores posted, they shared one similarity in that local players matched the performances of the higher-profile foreign stars for the first time in the sixth edition. Also for the first time on the fourth day of matches the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium witnessed a real humdinger as Chittagong Vikings' Robbie Frylinck nearly pulled off a great escape with four sixes in the last two overs, but Sylhet Sixers absorbed the pressure and registered their first win with a thrilling five-run victory.

Rajshahi Kings and Khulna Titans were both searching for their first win of the season in the second game of the day, and it was Rajshahi -- riding on stellar contributions from Isuru Udana, Mustafizur Rahman, skipper Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Mominul Haque -- who romped home by seven wickets with seven balls to spare in a low-scoring encounter.

In the day's first game, needing 24 runs off the last over Frylinck took the game down to

SCORES IN BRIEF

SYLHET SIXERS V CHITTAGONG VIKINGS

SYLHET: 168 for 5 in 20 overs (Warner 59, Afif 45, Pooran 52 not out; Frylinck 3-260)

CHITTAGONG: 163 for 7 in 20 overs (Delport 38, Ashraful 22, Raza 37, Frylinck 44 not out; Taskin 4-28)

Result: Sylhet Sixers won by 5 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Nicholas Pooran.

the wire, striking two sixes off pacer Al Amin Hossain and at one point Chittagong needed nine runs from two balls. But Frylinck could manage just a couple and a single to remain unbeaten on a valiant 24-ball 44 as Chittagong end their 20 overs on 163 for seven in chase of Sylhet's 168 for seven.

Before that, two local youngsters in Afif Hossain and pacer Taskin Ahmed lifted Sylhet through their contributions. Electing to bat first, Sylhet faced early blows after Frylinck removed Liton Das and Sabbir Rahman early and were struggling on six for three. Afif then held the ship with skipper David Warner and added 71 runs for the fourth wicket. Warner was cautious initially while Afif was the aggressor

SCORES IN BRIEF

KHULNA TITANS V RAJSHABI KINGS

KHULNA: 117 for 9 in 20 overs (Junaid 23, Malan 22; Udana 3-15, Mustafizur 2-18, Soumya 1-6)

RAJSHABI: 118 for 3 in 18.5 overs (Mominul 44, Mehedi 51, Soumya 11 not out; Zahir 1-18, Stirling 1-9)

Result: Rajshahi Kings won by 7 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Isuru Udana.

sor before the latter was dismissed for 45 off 28 balls which included three sixes and five fours.

Warner then paired with player-of-the-match Nicholas Pooran and added another 70-run stand. Warner was dismissed for 59 off 47 balls while Pooran remained unbeaten on 52 off 32 balls, which featured three sixes and as many fours.

In reply, Taskin Ahmed removed Afghan opener Mohammad Shahzad in the first over before Cameron Delport and Mohammad Ashraful added 62 runs for the second wicket.

But since Delport was run out on 38 by a direct hit from Sandeep Lamichhane, Chittagong lost their way. Taskin was venomous and went on to pick three more

wickets -- those of Ashraful, Sikandar Raza and Nayem Hasan -- to finish with figures of four for 28 from his four overs.

In the second game, Mahmudullah Riyad's Khulna Titans were kept to a sub-par 117 for nine after left-arm pacers Udana and Mustafizur combined to scalp five wickets for 33 runs from their eight overs. Mustafizur started the rot after a 40-run opening stand between Paul Stirling and Junaid Siddique by dismissing the former and adding the crucial wicket of Mahmudullah. Udana dismissed Junaid, David Wiese and Subashish Roy.

The chase was shepherded by captain Mehedi, a bowling all-rounder who promoted himself to number three and scored a cool 45-ball 51. His 89-run partnership with opener Mominul Haque decisively swung the match in the Kings' favour on a difficult wicket.

"Today was an example that batsmen need to bat sensibly. We were thinking that 140 was a good score on that wicket and no one took responsibility to do that," said Khulna coach Mahela Jayawardene after the match. "Mehedi Hasan Miraz showed how to bat on these types of wickets and there is a lot to learn from his batting."

rather than [blame] the pitch as there are always big scores in other T20 tournaments worldwide. But it's different in Mirpur and we know what the condition is and how it [the pitch] behaves. I think we should be able to become habituated to the conditions and if we can play accordingly, then we can see big scores which will also encourage the spectators," he said.

Talking of spectators, when asked about the empty stands over the first four days of the tournament, Mushfiqur said: "Empty stands are expected as people can now watch matches live through their mobile phones and even watch games at work on the TV. I would like to urge supporters as there are so many big names like [David] Warner, [Steven] Smith, [Kieron] Pollard, [Andre] Russell and what better place to watch these players from than in the stands?"



WHACK-O-METER

TOTAL 6s HIT 71

TOTAL 4s HIT 157

Most 6s hit by a player: 7, Hazratullah Zazai, Dhaka Dynamites
Most 4s hit by players: 8, Rilee Rossouw, Rangpur Riders and Paul Stirling, Khulna Titans

Hamza set for debut

Elgar to stand in as captain in third Test

REUTERS, Johannesburg



South Africa are set to hand a debut to batsman Zubayr Hamza in the third and final Test against Pakistan starting at the Wanderers on Friday as they seek a clean sweep of the series against a battered touring side.

Hamza, 23, will be a replacement for captain Faf du Plessis, who is serving a one match suspension for a slow over-rate in the nine-wicket victory in the second test in Cape Town.

Uncapped opening batsman Pieter Malan, 29, has also been brought into the squad as injury cover for Aiden Markram, who is nursing a thigh problem and will face a late fitness test.

The loss of Du Plessis, a centurion at Newlands, is a significant blow for the home side, especially with Markram's potential absence, and fellow middle-order batsman Theunis de Bruyn out of form and averaging just 19.33 after eight tests.

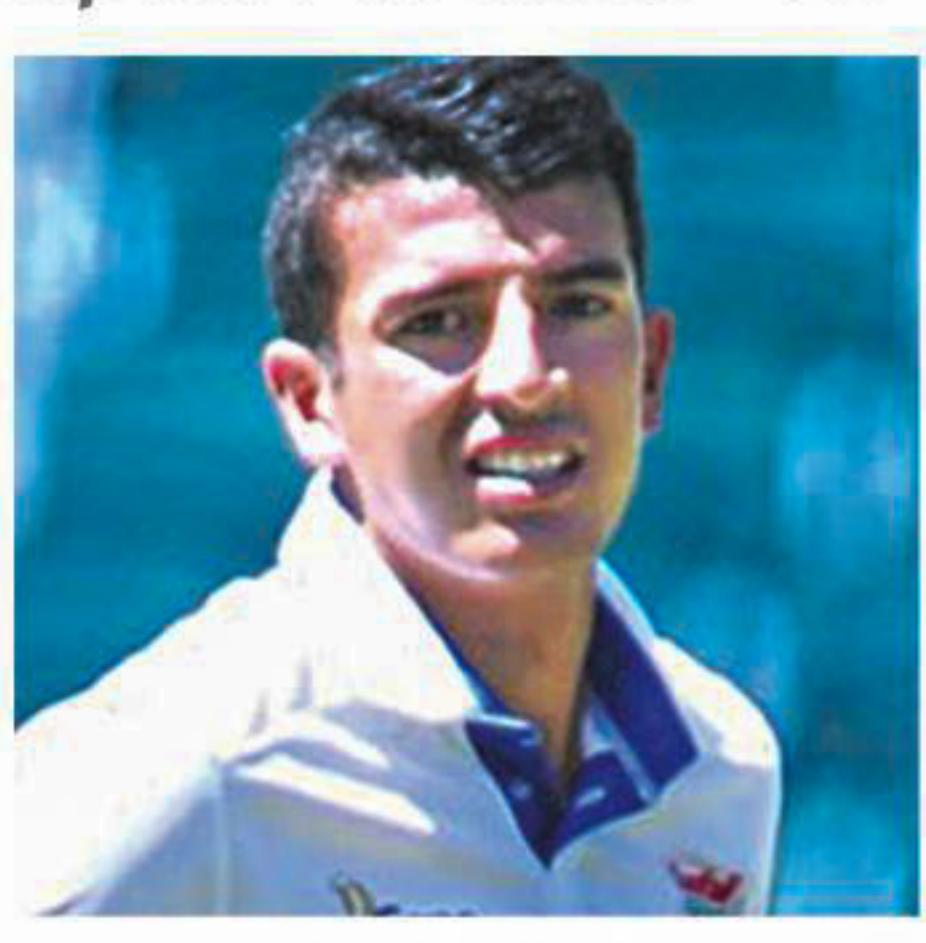
It could see a shuffle of the batting order with Temba Bavuma moving to number four, De Bruyn to five and Hamza taking his place at six.

Opening batsman Dean Elgar will captain the side in the absence of Du Plessis.

"It is disappointing losing Faf, he plays an immense role in the team both on and off the field," South Africa coach Ottis Gibson told reporters, adding the team was determined to sweep the series.

"Last year we had a mission within the team to win 3-0 against India to help us get back to number one (in the test rankings), but then we got up to Johannesburg, changed the team and lost the test match.

"We are aware of that, and we have a



ZUBAYR HAMZA

mission to not only win the next test, but also the two against Sri Lanka (in February) as well. The squad is hungry to finish the series off on a high."

Pakistan showed signs of an improved batting performance in the second test but are likely to face another lively wicket at the Wanderers that will be well-suited to South Africa's barrage of seamers.

Coach Mickey Arthur has suggested there will be changes to the side for the series finale, which is followed by five One-Day Internationals and three Twenty20 matches.

One of these could see the return of 20-year-old all-rounder Shadab Khan, most likely for ineffective fellow leg-spinner Yasir Shah, who took just a single wicket in the opening two tests.

"Shadab is a genuine all-rounder," Arthur said. "It allows us, like we did at Lord's (in 2018), to have him at seven, Faheem (Ashraf) at eight, and then three bowlers, which can be any of the quicks or even Yasir Shah if we think the pitch is going to turn. It gives us that flexibility."

Rajshahi Kings captain Mehedi Hasan Miraz drives through the covers during a match-winning 51 that propelled them to a comfortable seven-wickets win over Khulna Titans in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Aus shuffle pack for SL Tests

REUTERS, Sydney

Top-order batsmen Matt Renshaw and Joe Burns have been recalled, while the highly rated Will Pucovski appears set to win his first cap as the Australia selectors culled four underperforming players for the two-Test home series against Sri Lanka.

Batsmen Aaron Finch, Shaun Marsh, Peter Handscomb and all-rounder Mitchell Marsh were all dropped from the squad that lost a home Test series against India for the first time.

Australia's top order failed to

form against India's versatile attack and selection panel head Trevor Hohns admitted that the side needed to be shaken up for the Sri Lanka series, which start in Brisbane on Jan. 24.

"Ultimately Aaron, Peter, Shaun and Mitch have not produced the performances expected of them with the bat at the Test level," Hohns told reporters on Wednesday. "They have been given good opportunity, but have not produced the scores we need."

"All four are very good players, and the door is by no means closed for them to return to play test cricket for Australia."

"The challenge now is for them to make

runs for Australia in the upcoming ODIs (one-dayers against India), and then to go back to the Sheffield Shield (domestic first-class cricket) and make more runs."

Opener Renshaw last played a Test on the tour of South Africa last March, when he was a late call-up after Cameron Bancroft and David Warner were stood down for their role in a ball-tampering scandal.

Squad: Marcus Harris, Joe Burns, Matthew Renshaw, Usman Khawaja, Travis Head, Will Pucovski, Marnus Labuschagne, Tim Paine (captain), Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Josh Hazlewood, Peter Siddle.

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SHOAIB MALIK
COMILLA VICTORIANS
ALL-ROUNDER