

SPORT



Dhaka Dynamites' Aliss Al Islam became the first player to take a hat-trick on BPL debut, bowling a match-changing 18th over that derailed Rangpur Riders' chase in a BPL encounter in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Aliss in wonderland from blunder-land

SPORTS REPORTER



An unknown entity among Bangladeshi cricket lovers, 22-year-old Aliss Al Islam bagged a brilliant hat-trick under pressure in his debut Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) match, which initially seemed likely to end as a bitter

and hollow experience. Things started badly when he dropped Mohammad Mithun twice in the eighth over of the Rangpur Riders innings. He revived himself by bagging the wicket of the dangerous Rilee Rossouw before his hat-trick in the 18th over. Asked to bowl the last over, he then successfully defended 14 runs to repay the faith shown by skipper Shakib Al Hasan.

Only last year, he was playing first-division cricket and had been playing second division cricket for a few years prior to that. He started this BPL as a net bowler for Dhaka Dynamites and impressed coach Khaled Mahmud sufficiently to enter the first eleven. Informed just a day prior to the match, he was ready for the challenge.

"Sir told me to be mentally and physically ready. I was ready but playing in this big a stadium and in such a big tournament, I was naturally nervous, but recovered later," the youngster, who became the first cricketer to bag a hat-trick on BPL debut and only the second player to achieve the feat in the tournament, remarked.

"After the dropped catches, the teammates and coach supported me a lot and encouraged me. That helped," said Aliss after his first match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

There was, however, a dark cloud hovering. According to BPL governing council technical director Jalal Yunus, he was in a list of bowlers with suspect actions but had been cleared. Even so, Rangpur Riders brought his action into focus following the match in an official press release: "It seems his arm bends more than the tolerance limit of 15 degree, especially when he is bowling his 'Dusra' [sic] deliveries."

All that aside -- from dropped catches to turning the match on its head -- yesterday Aliss was really in 'wonderland'.

TALK ON



Obviously he [Aliss Al Islam] bowled well. He has got variation in his bowling. It is also good for him that he could come on at a crucial moment on such a big stage and help them [Dhaka Dynamites] win the match. We were alright till the end and handled it [his bowling] well. We lost the match due to our mistakes at the last moment but he deserves credit because he held his nerve at that moment and was able to deliver.

MASHRAFE BIN MORTAZA
RANGPUR RIDERS CAPTAIN

Debut hat-trick headlines thriller

SPORTS REPORTER



The best match of the Bangladesh Premier League's sixth edition took place on the best wicket so far and coincided with the largest crowd in Mirpur, which witnessed history as a bowler doing the low-profile first-division rounds just last year became the first to take a hat-trick on BPL debut yesterday. At the end of it all, the first match of the tournament's first Friday ended in a twist-filled two-run win off the last ball for a rampant Dhaka Dynamites, who were given their toughest examination yet by defending Champions Rangpur Riders.

The second match was not quite as exciting and nowhere near as high-scoring as Rajshahi Kings stumbled to their third defeat in four games, going down by five wickets with eight balls to spare to Comilla Victorians. Former Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi was the star of the show, breaking the Kings' backs with a lethal spell of three wickets for 10 runs off four overs.

In the first game, star-studded Dhaka, who have now won all of their three matches so far, owed the win to their least experienced member in off-spinner and debutant Aliss Al Islam, who turned the nightmare of dropping two of the simplest chances into the triumph of a match-winning hat-trick on debut.

After Dhaka rode on a 26-ball 62 from big-hitting Kieron Pollard to post 183 for six, Rangpur's hopes were dealt a big blow when West Indian opener Chris Gayle was dismissed by the best combined fielding -- coincidentally by West Indians -- display of the tournament so far. Gayle hit Shuvagata Hom in the air towards the long off boundary where Andre Russell -- airborne and falling backwards over the rope -- caught the ball and chucked it back to Pollard just before making contact with the ground.

However, a 121-run third-wicket stand between Mohammad Mithun and Rilee Rossouw put Rangpur in command when Aliss was called upon by Dhaka skipper Shakib Al Hasan to bowl the 16th over, which started with the score on 142 for two. His confidence may not have been very high as in

the eighth over he dropped the simplest of chances at short fine leg to relieve Mithun twice -- on 16 and 17 -- off Shuvagata.

Aliss landed the ball in good areas and varied the turn just enough to beat the flailing bat, which is what led to Rossouw being stumped for a 44-ball 83. Shakib dismissed Ravi Bopara cheaply in the next over, but it was the 18th over that truly turned the match. Off the third ball, Aliss managed to drift one away to beat Mithun's slog-sweep and rattle timber, off the fourth he did that to Rangpur skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who had to wait for the third umpire's signal because the ball just kissed the leg bail and dislodged it before the keeper attempted a stumping. The historic hat-trick was completed by perhaps the best ball of the lot -- pitching on off and spinning less than Forhad Reza expected to take the edge towards first slip where Shakib, to his credit given the state of the match, had positioned himself for just that outcome.

From 146 for two in the 16th and requiring just 38 runs from 22 balls before Rossouw was out, Rangpur crashed to 170 for nine at the end of the 19th over which saw Sunil Narine dismissing Shohag Gazi and Benny Howell. There was another twist as number 10 Shafiu Islam started the last over by cracking two boundaries off Aliss, but the 23-year-old rookie kept his cool and allowed just two more to be scored off the last four balls.

In the second match, new Rajshahi skipper Mehedi Hasan Miraz continued to take responsibility by opening the batting after scoring a 50 from number three in the Kings' lone win in the last match and scored 30 but he was the first of Afridi's victims and started the slide. They fell to 63 for seven but recovered to 124 all out through a 27 from Zakir Hasan and 32 from Isuru Udana.

It was not enough, however, to stop the Victorians -- led by Imrul Kayes in the absence of injured skipper Steven Smith -- from riding on a good start from Anamul Haque, Evin Lewis and Tamim Iqbal to notch their second win in three matches. Player-of-the-match Afridi finished the match in perfect fashion with a six over point off Mustafizur Rahman.



PHOTO: STAR



(Top) Comilla Victorians' Shahid Afridi scalped three Rajshahi Kings wickets and set up a five-wicket win in Mirpur yesterday. (Left) In the higher-octane first match of the day, Dhaka Dynamites' Andre Russell leapt over the boundary, caught the ball and flicked it back over to Kieron Pollard (not pictured) to complete a stunning dismissal of country-man Chris Gayle of Rangpur Riders.

SCORES IN BRIEF

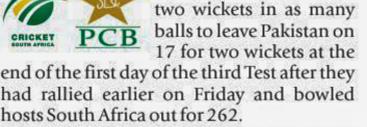
DHAKA DYNAMITES v RANGPUR RIDERS
DHAKA: 183 for 9 in 20 overs (Pollard 62, Shakib 36; Shafiu 3-35, Howell 2-25, Sohag 2-28)
RANGPUR: 181 for 9 in 20 overs (Rossouw 83, Mithun 49; Islam 4-26, Narine 2-40, Russel 1-26)
Result: Dhaka won by 2 runs.
Player-of-the-match: Aliss Al Islam.

SCORES IN BRIEF

COMILLA VICTORIANS v RAJSHAHI KINGS
RAJSHAHI: 124 all out in 18.5 overs (Udana 32, Mehedi 30; Afridi 3-10, Dawson 2-17, Saifuddin 2-25)
COMILLA: 130 for 5 in 18.4 overs (Anamul 40, Lewis 28, Tamim 21; Qais 1-21, Mustafizur 1-24)
Result: Comilla won by 5 wickets.
Player-of-the-match: Shahid Afridi.

SA edge ahead on Day 1

REUTERS, Johannesburg



Vernon Philander took two wickets in as many balls to leave Pakistan on 17 for two wickets at the end of the first day of the third Test after they had rallied earlier on Friday and bowled hosts South Africa out for 262. Philander removed Shan Masood for two runs and then had Azhar Ali out first ball to bring to nine the number of wickets in a dramatic final session on what was supposed to be a docile wicket at the Wanderers. South Africa, with a foundation of 90 runs from Aiden Markram and handy contributions from Hashim Amla, Theunis de Bruyn and debutant Zubayr Hamza, were 226-3 at tea but collapsed after and lost seven wickets for a paltry 33 runs as Pakistan's bowlers found reverse swing to seize the initiative. But hopes of then capping a fine come-

back with a solid start to their innings was spoilt by Philander.

Faheem Ashraf, one of three changes to the Pakistan side after losing the first two Tests, took 3-57 as South Africa crumbled after tea.

The hosts were 132-1 as Markram and Amla put together a 126-run partnership in an attacking start after stand-in skipper Dean Elgar had won the toss and elected to bat.

Markram's availability was only confirmed after a late fitness test but he showed no signs of discomfort from a thigh injury as he rushed to 78 not out at lunch.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 262 all out (Markram 90, Amla 41, de Bruyn 49, Hamza 41; Amir 2-36, Abbas 2-44, Hasan 2-75, Ashraf 3-57)
PAKISTAN: First innings 17 for 2 (Imamul 10 not out; Philander 2-1)

'Can't condone sexist remarks'

Kohli says on inappropriate comments ahead of first ODI vs Aus

AFP, Sydney



India captain Virat Kohli Friday distanced his team from controversial comments deemed sexist by all-rounder Hardik Pandya on a TV chat show that sparked social media outrage.

Pandya bragged about his prowess with women during an interview on the Indian show that also involved opening batsman KL Rahul, sparking concern about the culture within the squad.

Both have been handed suspensions by the BCCI pending an inquiry following their controversial comments. The two players, who are a part of the ODI squad in

Australia, will miss the opening game on Saturday at the SCCG.

Kohli was pressed on the matter

in a pre-game media conference and made clear the comments were not acceptable.



India skipper Virat Kohli (R) and his Australian counterpart Aaron Finch got a hold of the ICC Cricket World Cup trophy, which is being toured, at the Sydney Cricket Ground yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

"From the Indian cricket team point of view, any inappropriate comments that are made in that scenario are something that we definitely don't support," he said.

Kohli added that the two players "have understood the magnitude of what's happened".

"Definitely it has to hit hard, they will definitely understand the things that have not gone right."

Meanwhile, Australia promoted Alex Carey as opener while veteran Peter Siddle returns from the one-day wilderness.

"It's just an opportunity to see Alex play in a position he's done quite bit of now in Big Bash and one-day cricket," fellow opener Finch told reporters Friday.

WHACK-O-METER

TOTAL 6s HIT 92 | TOTAL 4s HIT 212

Most 6s hit by a player: 7, Hazratullah Zazai, Dhaka Dynamites
Most 4s hit by players: 9, Rilee Rossouw, Rangpur Riders and Paul Stirling, Khulna Titans

BPL GC talks up production

SPORTS REPORTER



Over the first seven days of the sixth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) that started on January 5, one of the major points of contention has been the overall quality of the broadcast. The initial absence of Ultra Edge, Snickometer or Hot Spot technology in the tournament's Decision Review System (DRS) suite grabbed headlines but besides that there were many instances of errors in the broadcast.

There have been numerous instances of commentators mispronouncing players' names and getting the names of fielding positions wrong. More seriously and embarrassingly, there have been significant graphical errors -- Comilla Victorians' Shohag Gazi was once identified as Abu Hider Rony; Mehedi Maruf's average was shown to be an inhuman 585 and on numerous occasions the runs required and balls remaining stats were incorrect, directly detracting from the viewers' experience of the product.

However, in a press conference held yesterday by BPL governing council (GC) member-secretary IH Mallick along with BPL technical committee chairman Jalal Yunus and BPL GC acting chairman Sheikh Sohel in Mirpur to address some of those issues, Mallick praised the improvement in the production of the tournament.

"This kind of technology can only be seen in the IPL final, semifinal and in the World Cup," Mallick said. "We have almost 35 cameras whereas previously we had 24; we are happy with the production."

Mallick tried to separate the graphical errors from the 'production' aspect, but relented when it was pointed out that 'production' meant the whole package that is broadcast. At numerous points, he had to admit that there were things that could be improved.

Aside from the DRS -- Ultra Edge was added yesterday -- the other issues are nothing new for a tournament in its sixth edition. It seemed that all the press conference proved yesterday was that more money has been spent this time around, but the planning and execution has been the same as previous editions.