

SPORT



Rajshahi Kings' Kamrul Islam Rabbi (L) jumps in the air to celebrate a wicket with teammates Mustafizur Rahman and Arafat Sunny. The Kings halted Dhaka Dynamites' perfect run in the tournament, defeating them by 20 runs yesterday in Sylhet.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Sixers dazzle after Kings ascend

SAKEB SUBHAN from Sylhet



The Sylhet leg of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) sprang into life yesterday in two contrasting matches at the Sylhet International Stadium. Both games had repercussions for the seven-team table as Rajshahi Kings moved up to fourth spot with a 20-run defeat of high-flying Dhaka Dynamites in a low-scoring day match before Sylhet Sixers lifted themselves from the bottom with a 27-run win over the power-packed Rangpur Riders in the night game that saw the highest total of the season so far.

Sylhet opener Liton Das hit a sparkling 43-ball 70 studded with nine fours and a six to get them off to a flyer after they were asked to bat first. If Liton started well, skipper David Warner ended in genius fashion

SCORES IN BRIEF

SYLHET SIXERS v RANGPUR RIDERS

SYLHET: 187 for 5 in 20 overs (Liton 70, Sabbir 20, Warner 61 not out, Pooran 26; Shafiul 3-31)

RANGPUR: 160 for 6 in 20 overs (Rossouw 58, Mithun 35, Mashrafe 33 not out; Mehedi 2-40, Taskin 2-34)

Result: Sylhet won by 27 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Liton Das.



Sylhet Sixers' exquisite opener Liton Das (L) and devastating left-hander David Warner were a treat to watch yesterday as their 56-run second-wicket partnership helped the side win the match by 27 runs against Rangpur Riders.

PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka's first defeat of the season in the Dynamites' fifth match, proving that a T20 match can be swung in favour of the weaker team if the bowling attack is on the same page and if someone, like left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny, excels.

Rajshahi compiled 136 for six after electing to bat first, riding on an attractive 31-ball 45 from Marshall Ayub, playing his first BPL match since 2013. Marshall, who came in to the side in place of Soumya Sarkar, put on a 75-run second-wicket partnership with Shahriar Nafees -- who was playing his first BPL 6 game -- that

formed the backbone of the innings.

Rajshahi's successful defence was founded on a disciplined bowling performance in the Powerplay overs. Mehedi caught Sunil Narine plumb in front in the first ball of the second over. Udana then bowled Hazratullah Zazai with a yorker in the third over and then Sunny came in and changed the game. He had Russell caught at mid-on off his first ball in the fourth over. Two more tight overs from Kamrul Islam and Mustafizur Rahman left the score on a sub-par 32 for three after the first six overs.

Sunny then got the prize wicket of

Shakib in the ninth over, caught off a slog sweep, before claiming his third in his third over by skidding an arm ball through Rony Talukdar's defence to end with superb figures of three for eight from four overs.

From 53 for five after 11 overs the last hope was Kieron Pollard and he holed out in the 18th over off Kamrul. Nurul Hasan reduced the margin with a 14-ball 21 before holing out off Mustafizur in the last over as Dhaka ended on 116 for nine.

Back to the evening match, it seemed that it would be another one-sided contest after Rangpur's first three wickets -- Gayle, Mehedi Maruf and Alex Hales -- fell to Sohail Tanvir and Mehedi Hasan Rana to leave them reeling on 11 for three in the third over. Rilee Roussow then continued his good form with 58 off 32 balls that included three fours and four big sixes in an 89-run fourth-wicket stand with Mohammad Mithun. What

SCORES IN BRIEF

RAJSHAHİ KINGS v DHAKA DYNAMİTES

RAJSHAHİ: 136 for 6 in 20 overs (Nafees 25, Ayub 45, Zakir 20; Narine 3-19, Aliss 1-29)

DHAKA: 116 for 9 in 20 overs (Russell 11, Rony 14, Shakib 13, Pollard 13, Naim 17, Nurul 21; Mehedi 2-18, Sunny 3-8)

Result: Rajshahi won by 20 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Arafat Sunny.

seemed headed to be a close match turned back Sylhet's way when he was bowled by Taskin Ahmed with a ball that kept low and was followed by Mithun in the 14th over. Mashrafe Bin Mortaza hit 33 but that, like Nurul's innings earlier in the day, only served to reduce the margin.

BPL SPICE

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

DIFFERENT STYLINGS OF WARNER

If there was any doubt about the wealth of talent that Australia, currently struggling in a home series against India, were missing out on by not having David Warner in their midst, one only had to tune into last night's BPL game between Sylhet Sixers and Rangpur Riders. In the 19th over of Sylhet's innings, sent down by Chris 'Universe Boss' Gayle, Warner showed that there was more than one boss in Sylhet.

Having faced 32 balls to score 47, the left-handed Warner suddenly decided to take guard as a right-hander. Before being slapped with a one-year international ban for tampering, Warner was known to hit a few switch hits, but taking guard with the opposite hand before the bowler bowled was new even for the innovative Warner. He proved that it wasn't idle improvisation by tonking his first ball as a right-hander straight over Gayle's head for six. He then swept Gayle, as a right-hander, for four. Just to prove that he hadn't forgotten his switch-hitting prowess, he then became a left-hander after Gayle delivered and swept a four to fine leg... or reverse-switch-swept to third man. The English language can only go so far.

A STRATEGIC BATHROOM

BREAK GONE WRONG

At the end of the 15th over of Dhaka Dynamites' chase of Rajshahi Kings' 136 for six, the teams decided to take the strategic break. Kieron Pollard was batting with young Mohammad Naim, and seemed comfortable enough during the two-and-a-half minute interval. However, when Naim holed out off Mehedi Hasan Miraz at the end of the 16th over, Pollard was seen sprinting off the field like the proverbial racehorse who needs to relieve itself. Next batsman Nurul Hasan had come in and along with the Rajshahi fielders, waited for around six minutes before the big West Indian lumbered down the pavilion steps again. Whether it was to get some sly extra advice from the management, or whether



On a day that saw the novel practice of Rajshahi players donning jerseys with their mothers' names, Isuru Udana pays tribute to his mother Heema after bowling Dhaka's Hazratullah Zazai yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Mehedi's off-spin had suddenly caused a nervous bladder, none of it helped. Pollard hit his first ball back in the air to long on, where Ryan ten Doeschate and Soumya Sarkar combined for a smart relay catch. Pollard walked off, probably thinking that he may as well have waited three balls.



TALK ON



We saw in the last match in Sylhet that the ball was spinning a lot, like in Dhaka. We are ready for all kinds of conditions. Let's see what happens in Sylhet in the next match. I spoke to the local guys who said the wicket was good for batsmen. But we saw in the last match it was almost the same as Dhaka. It doesn't matter. We will try our 100 per cent on any wicket.

MOHAMMAD SHAHZAD
CHITTAGONG VIKINGS
WICKETKEEPER-BATSMAN

Champaka eyes another harvest

SPORTS REPORTER



With a new set of players in the Under-19 team, Champaka Ramanayake is looking to prepare a new crop of fast bowlers for the future, much like he did during his previous tenure with Bangladesh.

However, the Sri Lankan was reluctant to single out any special talents and informed that was a lot of talent in the side who has the ability to do well in the coming days.

"It is always challenging to play against an international team. They are in good shape and at times they tend to make a lot of mistakes. But that is the nature of being young. Let's see what I can do. I don't want to say any names because that is not good, but we have five to six fast bowlers in the U-19 team who are quite capable of taking wickets," Champaka told reporters yesterday.

During Ramanayake's tenure as the fast bowling coach of the Bangladesh team from 2008 to 2010, there was significant improvement among the likes of Rubel Hossain, Shafiul Islam and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza.

The Sri Lankan returned to the country after being appointed the bowling consultant for the High Performance squad in 2017 and the 54-year-old is currently working with the Bangladesh Under-19 team ahead of their home series against England which starts on January 27.

With the upcoming ICC Under-19 World Cup in South Africa next year, where seamers will play a vital role given the conditions, Champaka said that the young Tigers were heading in the right direction, especially as there was still a lot of time before the mega-event.

The preparation for the next World Cup begins with the upcoming home series against England, which will feature a lone T20, three youth ODIs and a two-match youth Test series.



'Want to be a superpower'

AGENCIES, Adelaide



Virat Kohli has laid out his vision for the Indian team, saying he wants them to be a superpower in the sport, and that the size of India's fan base could make Test cricket great again.

Earlier this month, Kohli became the first Indian captain to lead a side to a Test series victory in Australia. His sides impressed in preceding tours to South Africa and England as well.

Kohli isn't satiated though. He won't rest till India attain absolute domination on the field. "I wouldn't say goal but I would rather speak of a vision, which is for India to be a superpower in Test cricket or a very, very strong side in Test cricket in the years to come," he told Star Sports.

"I think if Indian cricket respects Test cricket, and Indian players respect Test cricket, then Test cricket will stay at the top because of the fan base that we have all over the world.

"If we focus too much on shorter formats -- yes, they're important -- but if we solely focus and look at them as an escape or an excuse to not be in the kind of situations that Test cricket presents to you, then there'll start being a mental problem with the cricketers coming up."

Kohli believed to reach that end, it was imperative for the team culture to be maintained and passed on to next generations. "As long as you're willing to wake up every morning for five days and do the hard yards and go do the dirty work -- if you're willing to bat for two hours and not score a run for the team -- that is

what people should prepare (for)," he said.

"That will require the team to lay out certain things that needs to be done and for the next lot to keep following. So the next lot that comes in, they have to maintain that vision and then the people coming in will follow.

"I hope that continues and I will try my level best for as long as I can to keep that culture going."

Kohli also lauded Ravi Shastri, the India Head Coach, and credited his own evolution as captain to the feedback he received the from 56-year-old. "Because he's done so much commentary, and he's seen the game so much and has played so much himself -- just watching the game -- he knows where the game is heading," Kohli said.

"So just getting feedback from him constantly has been the biggest help for me, in terms of moulding my own personality into captaincy. He's someone who has never tried to change me just to be able to fit into the captaincy mode."



VIRAT KOHLI

Shankar to make debut in third ODI?

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Vijay Shankar could replace Mohammed Siraj for the third ODI against Australia on Friday.

Siraj looked completely out of sorts when he conceded 76 runs in 10 overs in the second ODI.

Shankar has shown decent form with the bat in the India A series against New Zealand. He is yet to make an ODI debut.

Media hail Dhoni

AFF, New Delhi

India's Mahendra Singh Dhoni won plaudits on Wednesday for a match-winning knock against Australia that raised expectations the veteran will play his fourth 50-over World Cup this summer.

The Indian Express headlined its report "Dhoni finishes, the Mahi way", using his nickname, and the Mail Today said the former captain's innings was "Just Like Old Times".