



Even though he did not pick up many wickets, Rajshahi Kings pacer Mustafizur Rahman was vital in his team's three wins from six matches in the ongoing BPL. With the second Dhaka leg set to begin today with a clash against Comilla Victorians, the Kings will hope for the left-arm seamer to be at his peak.

## 'No point in playing like this'

Club refuses to play in protest against umpiring

MAZHAR UDDIN



There has been a lot of criticism of allegedly biased umpiring and corruption in the first and third division of the country's domestic cricket, leading to Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan announcing recently that the board would take strict action.

However, the picture has not changed as allegations continue to be made in the ongoing second division cricket league, with a club actually refusing to continue playing yesterday.

In protest of allegedly biased umpiring, Dhanmondi Progoti Sangha refused to play their game against Azim Cricket Club at BKSP-3 ground yesterday.

The incident took place during Progoti Sangha chase of a 207-run target and, according to the Progoti club officials, the umpires gave three wrong leg-before decisions against their batsman, one of whom was given out despite the ball being well above waist height during impact.

Struggling on 30 for four inside nine overs, Progoti officials eventually decided to call the players off the field in protest against what they saw as biased umpiring, alleging the two on-field umpires Shah Alam and Saidur Rahman of favouritism.

"During the previous meeting between club officials, BCB CEO [Nizamuddin Chowdhury] and the president, had announced that they will take a zero-

tolerance stance against biased and poor umpiring in the lower leagues. However, things have not changed and we have seen favouritism in the second division leagues continuously. Umpires are giving leg-before decisions even if the ball hits the batsman's waist. There is no point playing like this.

"That is the reason we have refused to continue playing today [Sunday] to let the BCB president know that the image of Bangladesh cricket is being tarnished due to some people and everyone should know about this. The match referee said that we refused to play and announced Azim Club as the winner of the game. But we have nothing to do," Riazuddin Ahmed Raju, the team manager of Dhanmondi Progoti Sangha, told The Daily Star yesterday.

According to Alamgir Hossain, the coordinator of the second division league committee of Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metroplis (CCDM), the CCDM are aware of Progoti Sangha's allegations and refusal to play. He informed that the umpires committee and the match referee will file report about the matter later.

It was not the first time in the ongoing second division league that allegations of biased umpiring have been made. Recently, there were accusations that Purbachol Sporting Club were favoured by the umpires against Amber Sporting Club on January 15.

Despite there being mention of biased and poor umpiring in the captain's report, according to the club's officials, there was no action taken.

## Can Sylhet's finish be Dhaka's start?

SPORTS REPORTER



Followers of this season's Bangladesh Premier League can hope to see some entertaining cricket from Rangpur Riders' dashing batsman Chris Gayle when the tournament resumes at Mirpur today. However, the 'Universe Boss' has been nowhere near his trademark self in the last five matches he played for Rangpur.

The absence of two Australians -- Steve Smith and David Warner -- will definitely be felt in the competition but to everyone's relief, South African AB de Villiers arrived to help light up the crowds.

Expectations will be high for the second Dhaka leg following the two high-voltage matches which closed out the Sylhet leg.

Today, however, is not the day for Gayle or de Villiers to shine as the two will have to wait for tomorrow, when Rangpur Riders will take on bottom-side Khulna Titans in the first match before Dhaka Dynamites faces Comilla Victorians at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

POINTS TABLE					
Team	M	W	L	PT	NRR
Dhaka Dynamites	6	5	1	10	1.942
Chittagong Vikings	5	4	1	8	0.356
Comilla Victorians	6	4	2	8	0.226
Rangpur Riders	7	3	4	6	0.246
Rajshahi Kings	6	3	3	6	-0.75
Sylhet Sixers	7	2	5	4	-0.809
Khulna Titans	7	1	6	2	-0.945

It will be interesting though to see how well stalwarts Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal carry their form from Sylhet when Shakib's Dhaka Dynamites square off with Chittagong Vikings and Tamim's Comilla Victorians lock horns with Rajshahi Kings.

Tamim returned to form with a 42-ball 73 against Khulna Titans in Sylhet while Shakib's much desired second half century in the competition came against Sylhet Sixers, drawing further enthusiasm from the fans. It is also nice to see local players contributing in this edition but consistency was still a far cry aside from Chittagong Vikings captain Mushfiqur Rahim.

Still, Liton Das, Mustafizur Rahman, Taskin Ahmed and Mehedi Hasan Miraz made their marks alongside Sabbir Rahman, whose superb 51-ball 85 against Riders in Sylhet most probably brought a big smile to the national team management.

Although Bangladesh head coach Steve Rhodes pointed out that the BPL is far from ideal preparation for the upcoming challenges in New Zealand, Sabbir's big score has special significance as it is no secret that the team management are desperately looking to bring the right-hander back to national duty ahead of the New Zealand tour in February.

The tournament organisers will however be more interested in seeing high scores like how Chittagong Vikings' put up 214 for four before Khulna Titans replied with 188 for eight in the last match of the Sylhet leg. Earlier on the day, Rangpur Riders had posted 195 for six after Sylhet Sixers managed 194 for 4 in a high scoring affair that brought a sigh of relief to the entire league.

In conclusion, if the next three days in Dhaka are entertaining then it could indeed incite further interest for when the BPL caravan will shift to Chattogram on January 25.



With Dhaka Dynamites sitting pretty on top of the BPL table, skipper Shakib Al Hasan (C) was surely discussing how to continue their fine form with coach Khaled Mahmud (L) and all-rounder Andre Russel yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

### TALK ON



I think our best strength is Mustafiz [Mustafizur Rahman]. If you look at our matches, you see he won matches for us. We have Mustafiz and Miraz [Mehedi Hasan], so I must say we have a good bowling attack. Our bowling attack with Mustafizur is a big plus point for us.

MARSHALL AYUB  
RAJSHAHI KINGS BATSMAN



England Under-19 team arrived yesterday to play a series comprising one T20, three one-dayers and two four-day matches against hosts Bangladesh Under-19 team. The series will kick off with the lone T20 in Cox's Bazar on January 27.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Test C'ship Pujara's priority

AGENCIES, New Delhi



Cheteshwar Pujara says India "will be even more confident" after their triumph in Australia, and that the ICC World Test Championship will be the "most important thing" for the team going forward.

Pujara was adjudged player of the series after scoring 521 runs at 74.42 to help India secure their first ever Test victory in Australia. He believes that the team's prime focus will now shift to the Test Championship, which starts in July 2019.

"I think the most important thing is the Test Championship, which is starting from this year," Pujara told

Cricket Next. "So, to win that as a team and continue the success which we had in Australia is the most important thing. We have started winning overseas. And whenever we play overseas now, I am very sure we will be a different unit.

"We will be even more confident as a team. And I think that the success mantra we have got in this tour will help us in the coming tours in the future."

Pujara's rock-solid game has earned him a reputation as a Test specialist, but the 30-year-old does see himself as a versatile player. "If you look at my List A cricket, the way I have batted, the number of runs that I have scored, is very good and when I played white-ball cricket for Yorkshire last season, I scored many runs.

"I think I had a hundred and three fifties in about four innings which shows I can play white-ball cricket.

"I personally have no doubt about it. I can play white-ball cricket, and it is something where I can get a little more exposure. If I get more opportunity then things will change.

"It is the mindset. The moment people start seeing me bat well in ODI cricket or T20 cricket, they will understand that this player can do it. Because if you look at my Test cricket (game), people had that opinion that this is the old-school cricket.

"But that opinion changed. And even with white-ball cricket, I think in times to come, it will change."

Pujara has scored almost all his Test runs -- 5426 at 51.18 -- at No.3 in the

## Ali Ahmed decimates South Point

SPORTS REPORTER

A blistering hundred from Abu Kawsar helped Ali Ahmed School and College post a mammoth 439-run total against South Point School and College and subsequently register a huge 283-run win in the Prime Bank Young Tigers School Cricket tournament yesterday.

Electing to bat, Kawsar struck a 98-ball 167-run knock laced with 24 fours and eight sixes while Abdullah Al Jubair added a quick-fire 39-ball 77 as Ali Ahmed School posted 439 for eight in 50 overs. In reply, South Point were all-out on just 156 runs in 24.5 overs.

## Kohli is greatest ever ODI batsman: Clarke

PTI, New Delhi,



That Virat Kohli is destined to be among the pantheons of all-time greats is an oft-repeated assertion but for former Australia captain Michael Clarke, the India skipper is already the "greatest ODI batsman to have ever played the game".

Kohli, the world's No.1 Test and ODI batsman, led India through a historic tour of Australia, during which the team won the Test and ODI rubbers and drew the T20 International series.

Kohli's India was the first team ever not to lose any series Down Under and along

the way, he continued to add to his rapidly-rising count of international hundreds.

"To me, Virat Kohli is the greatest batsman to have ever played one-day cricket. I have no doubts after seeing what he has achieved for India," Clarke, himself a former World Cup-winning captain, told PTI in an interview.

Kohli has already scored 10,385 runs in 219 ODIs with an astounding average of 59 plus, including 39 hundreds.

An unabashed Kohli fan, Clarke said that the 30-year-old Indian's passion is unmatched.

"You have to respect Virat's passion to win games for his country. Yes, he has aggression but no one can question his commitment, how much he has achieved. He is the greatest in ODIs," Clarke said.



After the successful tour of Australia the Indian cricket team, led by captain Virat Kohli, touched down in Auckland on Sunday ahead of their five-match ODI and three-match T20I series against New Zealand. The ODI series will begin in Napier on January 23, followed by two consecutive matches in Mount Maunganui. Hamilton and Wellington will host the final two matches. Wellington, Auckland and Hamilton are scheduled to host the three T20Is respectively.

PHOTO: COLLECTED