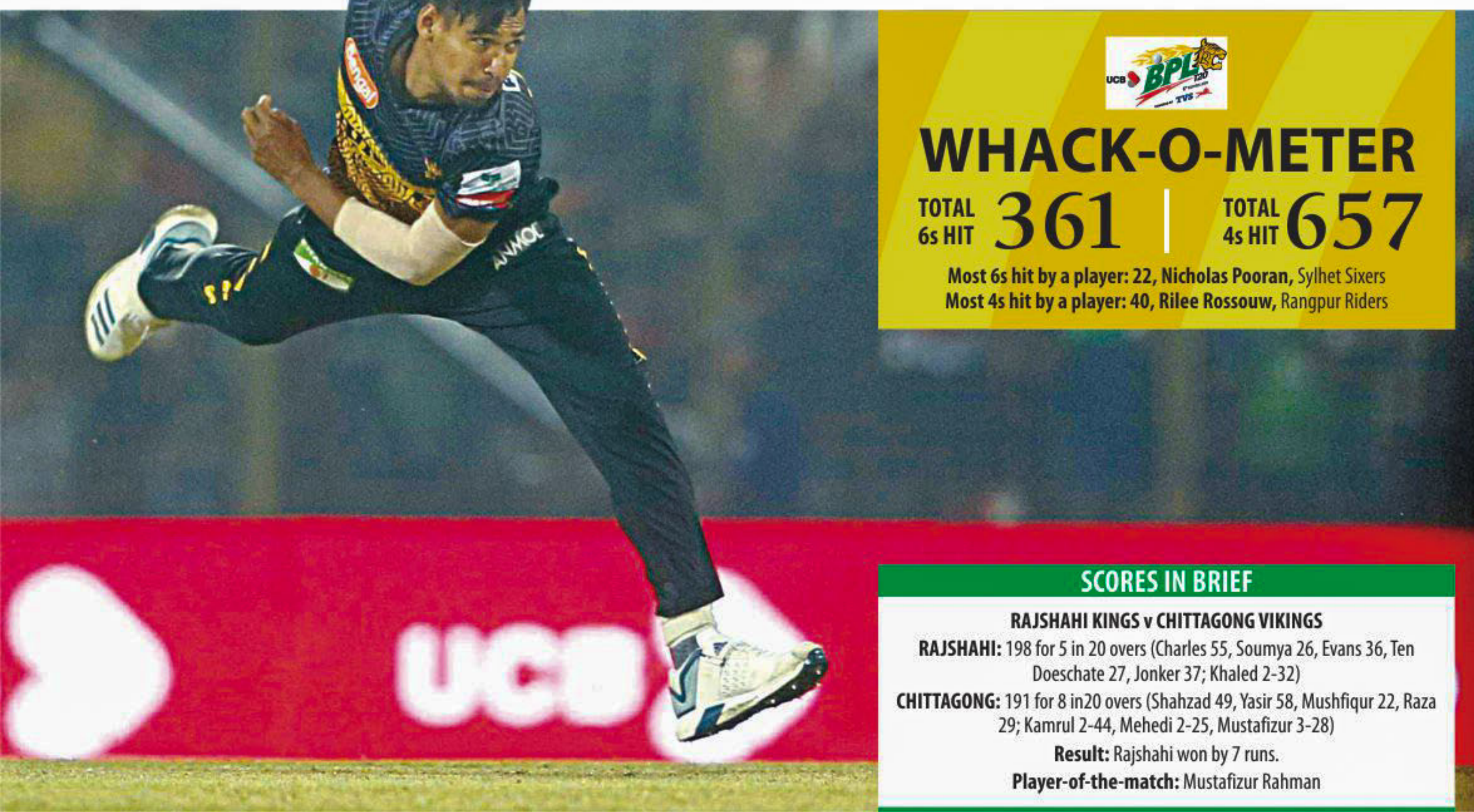


## SPORT



## WHACK-O-METER

TOTAL 6s HIT **361** | TOTAL 4s HIT **657**

Most 6s hit by a player: 22, Nicholas Pooran, Sylhet Sixers  
Most 4s hit by a player: 40, Rilee Rossouw, Rangpur Riders

## SCORES IN BRIEF

## RAJSHAHI KINGS v CHITTAGONG VIKINGS

**RAJSHAHI:** 198 for 5 in 20 overs (Charles 55, Soumya 26, Evans 36, Ten Doeschate 27, Jonker 37; Khaled 2-32)

**CHITTAGONG:** 191 for 8 in 20 overs (Shahzad 49, Yasir 58, Mushfiqur 22, Raza 29; Kamrul 2-44, Mehedi 2-25, Mustafizur 3-28)

**Result:** Rajshahi won by 7 runs.

**Player-of-the-match:** Mustafizur Rahman

Rajshahi Kings' Mustafizur Rahman bowled a superb last over taking two wickets to restrict Chittagong Vikings to 191 in a BPL match at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday. Mustafiz had match figures of 3 for 28 as his team won by 7 runs.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## 'Imrul's exclusion unfortunate'

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram



When Imrul Kayes was excluded from the Bangladesh team for the ODI and Test series against New Zealand, it raised a few eyebrows. Form may have not been his friend in recent times but the left-handed batsman was the highest scorer for Bangladesh in the 2016 away series against the Black Caps.

Aside from that he came good when the side needed him, especially against Afghanistan in

the Asia Cup, playing a vital 72-run knock to get Bangladesh out of trouble. Imrul followed up with his best ever batting performance during the home ODI series against Zimbabwe, becoming Bangladesh's highest run-scorer in a three-match series by striking 349 runs and beating Tamim Iqbal's haul of 312 in 2012 against Pakistan. Such was the ripple effect of his performances that he had created a timely competition for the opening slot alongside Liton Das and Nazmul Hossain during Tamim's absence due to injury.

Tamim understood the misfortune of his once

opening partner quite well but reiterated that opportunities will eventually arrive.

"It is unfortunate," Tamim said strongly when asked if it was unfortunate for Imrul to be left out. "He scored 350 [349] in a series, then he had two failures in ODIs but that has to be accepted because that's how cricket goes. Many times due to the team combination or the team's position, things do not go accordingly. Obviously he was in the mind of the coach, captain and the selectors but I'm sure they also had different ideas, which is why it [Imrul's inclusion] did not happen.

"Opportunities keep coming and when another one comes, I'm sure he will grab it with both hands," he continued.

None of the Tigers' openers or top-order have been making steady runs in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League with Soumya Sarkar's form of particular concern.

Asked to comment on the players' forms ahead of the New Zealand, which will be a vital series to gauge their capabilities for the World Cup, Tamim explained the need to stay among the runs.

"The format is different but being amongst runs will help you in any format. It will be good for the players to get some runs," he said.

He emphasized that the conditions and format will be different in New Zealand but hopes that the Tigers can begin their visit with some confidence they can bank on.

"Look, Taskin has bagged 17 [20 now] wickets and Mushfiqur is the second-highest run-getter in the BPL. I think it's not very important what the format is, since if you are batting well and bowling well then you will definitely have some confidence," he concluded.



Comilla Victorians opener Tamim Iqbal attends a net session at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chattogram yesterday ahead of their BPL encounter against Khulna Titans tomorrow.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Championships end with Sohagi's record

SPORTS REPORTER



The Walton National Athletic Championships ended on a high note as Sohagi Akter secured a new national record in the women's 200m sprint event on the concluding day at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Sohagi of Bangladesh Navy clocked 25.06 seconds (electronic time) to bag the gold medal as well as eclipse the previous best of 25.13, which was registered by Zakia Sultana of BKSP in 2013.

The achievement meant that this, the 42nd edition of the championships, produced four new records after the feats of Mohammad Ismail of Bangladesh Navy in 100m sprint, Zahir Rayhan in 200m sprint and Mohammad Ibrahim of Bangladesh Navy in shot-put.

"I had belief [in myself] to produce a good result and win the gold medal but I never thought of making a new record," said Sohagi, who was eliminated after making a false start in the last National Athletic Championships in December, 2017.

"Now I feel really good about creating a new

record," the sprinter continued.

It could be mentioned here as well that Sohagi won a gold medal in 200m sprint at the Summer Athletic Championships last July.

Zahir Rayhan also got a double delight, bagging the 200m sprint gold medal with a time of 21.78 seconds. He had earlier won a gold medal in 400m run with a record breaking performance on Friday.

"I was a bit tired after running the 400m run yesterday [Friday]. There was a good chance to make another record today but I could not finish well in last moment as the muscle was weak and I had an almost sleepless night. I am not satisfied with this performance," said Rayhan, who was named as the best male athlete of the tournament.

Sumi Akter of Army became the best female athlete by winning four gold medals, helping Army regain the championship title with 16 gold, 13 silver and 17 bronze medals.

Bangladesh Navy finished second with 15 gold, 21 silver and nine bronze medals while Bangladesh Jail finished third with two gold, one silver and four bronze medals. BKSP finished fourth with two gold and one silver medal.



Sohagi Akter of Bangladesh Navy points to her new national record timing after bagging the 200m sprint gold medal on the concluding day of the Walton National Athletic Championships at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



## Sabbir, Sixers grab a shot at redemption

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Chattogram



When Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza spoke to the press ahead of the announcement of the squad for the Test and ODI series against New Zealand on January 23, he had mentioned a few names from amongst those in the Bangladesh team who were making a mark in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) this season.

That he had his eye on Sabbir Rahman, who had just come off a blistering 51-ball 85 against none other than Mashrafe's Rangpur Riders, could be gleaned from his words. Sabbir, then in the fifth month of a six-month international ban for threatening a fan on social media, was included in the squad for the ODI series against New Zealand after the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) reduced the ban by a month.

While there is a lot to be said about the process behind his inclusion, the same scorn cannot perhaps be shown for Mashrafe wanting to solve a national team jigsaw puzzle by filling a vital role with a player he admitted during the press conference that he 'had a lot of hope for'.

"It was not a demand, but an opinion," he later said after assertions were made that he had 'strongly demanded' Sabbir's inclusion.

However, for Mashrafe and many others in the team, Sabbir's inclusion is not an individual issue but about fulfilling the needs of the side. The number seven position is an uncertain one for the Tigers as the top six looks more or less settled. The team is looking for someone who can launch an assault in the death overs.

Responsibility however has not been his strength. While Sabbir's Sylhet Sixers were getting ready for a pivotal game against the

Khulna Titans yesterday, not so far away Tamim Iqbal, talking to reporters at the MA Aziz Stadium, remarked: "My good wishes for him will be he won't repeat his past mistakes and I think he understands that himself. I personally share many things with him. I hope that he will return a changed man."

The way Sabbir constructed his innings yesterday – an unbeaten 29-ball 44 that helped Sylhet remain in contention for a top-four finish with a 58-run win over Khulna Titans that lifted them one rung higher to fifth position – perhaps hinted at a player willing to grab the chance he has been provided.

He had not found things easy when he came in; timing was especially diffi-

## SCORES IN BRIEF

## SYLHET SIXERS v KHULNA TITANS

**SYLHET:** 195 for 4 in 20 overs (Afif 49, Sabbir 44 not out, Mawaz 39 not out; Taijul 3-30, Junaid 1-48)

**KHULNA:** 137 all out in 18.1 overs (Taylor 34, Ariful 24, Junaid 20; Nabil 3-20, Taskin 2-6)

**Result:** Sylhet won by 58 runs.

**Player-of-the-match:** Mohammad Nawaz.

cult. He stuck around; picked up singles. When Sylhet needed him to, he stepped up the scoring. The last five overs produced 76 runs.

The way he stepped down to Junaid Khan in the 18th over and drove him through cover for four showed that he had the ability and perhaps the willingness to fulfil what Sixers required. He played a part in the win – just what the situation demanded.

Like Sylhet who have to win every match from now on, Sabbir too has to show responsibility and utilise every opportunity following his return to the Tigers' squad and become that changed man to seize upon what he termed as his 'second life'.



Sabbir Rahman (L) remains the centre of attraction following his controversial return to the national fold. The right-hander seems to be heeding advice from Bangladesh coach Steve Rhodes and chief selector Minhajul Abedin (R) after his sensible knock of 44 runs helped Sylhet win by 58 runs against Khulna Titans yesterday in Chattogram.

PHOTO: STAR

## 'Fed must take responsibility'

*Golam Ambia was once a household name in athletics for his supreme dominance in 100m sprint, having created a national record in 1991 by clocking 10.54 seconds (hand-time). The 54-year-old former athlete, who was the fastest man of the country from 1991 to 1996, watched from the judges' panel as Mohammad Ismail broke his 27-year-old record at the Walton National Athletic Championships on Thursday, clocking 10.20 seconds. The former army man spoke to The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday about the past and present state of athletics. The excerpts of the interview:*

**The Daily Star (TDS):** What are you doing now after retiring from your job and athletics?

**Golam Ambia (GA):** Since my retirement from Bangladesh Army in 2011, I have been looking after my agricultural farms in Madanganj of Netrokona district. I came here to perform as a judge after a five-year gap.

**DS:** How did it feel when Mohammad Ismail broke your 27-year-old record in front of you?

**GA:** To be honest, I am not very satisfied (with his record) because the way the timing was recorded was not the standard way. During our time, the clock (hand time) started when smoke was seen from the barrel rather than the gunshot was heard fraction of a second later. But the time is now counted with the sound of wooden block or gunshot, handing today's athletes an advantage. Still, I welcomed Ismail to break my record as I want to see new sprinters on the horizon and it would be fantastic if he can bring laurels to the country from the South Asian (SA) Games.

**DS:** How was it that your record was sustained for so long?

**GA:** I think there are many reasons behind it – a lack of proper training, shortage of talented athletes and the new generation's lack of interest in athletics. I think federation officials must take the responsibility.

**DS:** What's your take on how athletics differs now from then?



**GA:** That time, the galleries were full of spectators but today, there is not a single spectator. We had to take part in heats, semifinals and finals. There were eight to nine heats for a single event following the huge turn-up of athletes from across the country but now-a-days there are many events which are completed directly through the final.

**DS:** How can the past glory of athletics be revived?

**GA:** The federation must arrange training for athletes and make sure they utilize the available quality coaches rather than only trying to stay in power to make financial gains. The lack of initiatives from the District Sports Associations (DSAs) is also another reason behind the sordid state of

athletics.

**DS:** Bangladesh have not secured a gold medal in any regional games since Mahabub Alam won the 200m gold in the 1995 SA Games in Madras. Why has the country failed to produce gold-winning athletes for so long?

**GA:** Things have been changed a lot, so the federation has to invest more to produce quality athletes in the country. See, in our time we had met our own daily expenses but these days athletes need a minimum Tk 600 to Tk 700 per day to meet all their daily needs and this is not possible for many athletes. The athletes also have to take the responsibility of resting properly by keeping away from different engagements such as the internet, hanging out, negative thinking etc. The athletes must keep their targets clear and keep cool to work hard and achieve their targets. The federation and the government must come forward with proper planning to produce quality athletes so that we can overcome the drought of gold medal winning athletes at international events.

**DS:** Do you have any regrets about not winning a gold medal in the South Asian Games?

**GA:** No, I don't have any regrets, rather I am very happy to be Golam Ambia of athletics. No one could know me had I not come in athletics. It is my pleasure that I get honoured everywhere. People hug me, people shake hands with me and give Salam to me. It has been possible because of athletics.