

SPORT



The two stalwarts -- Shakib Al Hasan (L) and Mushfiqur Rahim -- were in fine touch but only one ended up having the last laugh as Mushfiqur's Chittagong Vikings ended their three-match losing streak by defeating Shakib's Dhaka Dynamites by 11 runs and in Chattogram yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Vikings' late surge and Sylhet's exit

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Chattogram

The pressure of playing in front of their home crowd transformed into inspiration yesterday as Chittagong Vikings bagged the third playoff place with an 11-run win over Dhaka Dynamites at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram.

In the second game of the last day of the Chattogram leg of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), Rajshahi Kings kept their playoff hopes alive by making a mockery of a stiff target of 190 set by Sylhet Sixers, which they chased with five wickets and two overs to spare. Rajshahi's last group game left them in fourth place with 12 points, two more than Dhaka. Dhaka, however, have two games in hand and a much superior net run rate, so they could still realistically go past Rajshahi with one more win.

For Sylhet, their seventh loss in 11 games meant that they were out of the playoff race.

Both sides came into the day game on the back of three consecutive losses.

Chittagong were still missing key man Robbie Frylinck but they overcame that lack of impact in the batting order with Cameron Delpert playing an anchor role after Chittagong elected to bat first.

The left-hander started slowly but carried his bat almost to the end of the innings. Skipper Mushfiqur Rahim had been off colour in the recent defeats but he

changed the tempo with a brilliant knock, playing some magnificent shots to up the ante. Delpert got into gear from the 10th over onwards and accelerated with Mushfiqur to put on a 79-run partnership for the third wicket. Andre Russell's hat-trick in the 20th over restricted Chittagong to a challenging total of 174 for five.

During Dhaka's chase, Chittagong pacer Abu Jayed -- now

SCORES IN BRIEF

CHITTAGONG VIKINGS v DHAKA DYNAMITES
CHITTAGONG: 174 for 5 in 20 overs (Shahzad 21, Delpert 71, Mushfiqur 43; Russell 3-38, Narine 2-20)
DHAKA: 163 for 9 in 20 overs (Shakib 53, Nurul 33, Russell 39; Jayed 3-25, Shanaka 2-34)
Result: Chittagong won by 11 runs.
Player-of-the-match: Cameron Delpert.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SYLHET SIXERS v RAJSHAHI KINGS
SYLHET: 189 for 5 in 20 overs (Afif 29, Sabbir 45, Pooran 76 not out; Kamrul 2-30)
RAJSHAHI: 190 for 5 in 18 overs (Charles 39, Evans 76, Ten Doeschate 42; Tanvir 2-27, Kapali 2-41)
Result: Rajshahi won by 5 wickets.
Player-of-the-match: Laurie Evans.



Dhaka all-rounder Andre Russell dismissed Chittagong's Mushfiqur Rahim, Cameron Delpert and Dasun Shanaka in consecutive balls to register BPL 2019's third hat-trick in Chattogram yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

behind only Sylhet's Taskin Ahmed in the edition's wicket-takers' list -- showed his mettle with the new ball, bagging the two early wickets of Sunil Narine and Rony Talukdar to put pressure on Shakib Al Hasan's struggling side. Shakib and Nurul Hasan then stepped on the accelerator with a 50-run fourth-wicket stand before Delpert trapped the latter in front.

With Andre Russell, Shakib steered them close but even after a poor fielding display, Chittagong clawed their way back and came away with a win. Shakib's side must now find a means to stop the rot and with two games to come in Dhaka, they must correct deficiencies in the top order. Hazatullah Zazai came on strongly in the first half of the tournament but his powers have

waned at the business end while Sunil Narine did not deliver as Dhaka would like him to. Their hopes rest on Shakib, Kieron Pollard and Andre Russell while Rubel Hossain's consistency should give the Dynamites cause for hope for the Dhaka phase.

The night game promised to be as exciting as the day one after Nicholas Pooran's 31-ball 76 powered Sylhet to 189 for five. That total seemed a tough one when Rajshahi fell to 64 for three in the ninth over, but Laurie Evans (76 off 36) and Ryan ten Doeschate (42 off 18) swiftly changed the complexion with a 109-run fourth-wicket stand in just 7.3 overs. Even after both were out in the 17th over, Rajshahi needed just 13 runs off 22 balls, which they managed without fuss.

Business end springs to life

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram



The Chittagong leg of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) produced the most exciting cricket out of all the legs in the tournament. The Dhaka leg had not lived up to expectations and the Sylhet leg did not meet the standards it set in the previous edition, but the Chattogram leg saw crowds thronging to the matches and they were treated to some good T20 cricket.

Chittagong Vikings were expectedly the crowd favourites but the likes of Rangpur Riders and Comilla Victorians also drew a lot of fanfare. Big runs were scored by big names. The first day of the Chattogram leg saw the highest score ever posted in the BPL as Rilee Rossouw and Alex Hales were in domination mode against Comilla Vikings. The previous legs had produced just one ton -- Laurie Evans hitting the season's first in Dhaka -- but this leg produced four in just six matches.

Rossouw and Hales picked up twin tons as Riders posted 239 for four. The wickets provided here offered plenty of opportunities for shot-making. The second-highest total was also notched as Evin Lewis struck a stormy ton, even though he was not a hundred per cent, as Comilla posted 237 for four against Khulna Titans. The best came from 'Mr. 360' AB de Villiers as he reigned supreme with some extraordinary shots against Dhaka Dynamites. Hales, his partner at the other end showed relative restraint as AB took the lime-light and together the duo notched the world record for the highest third-wicket partnership.

Among the locals, Sabbir Rahman was in the headlines after his six-month ban was reduced by a month to accommodate him in the national team. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan travelled to Chattogram to watch the BPL and dropped a truth bomb, saying: 'I think it would have been better for Sabbir to take some time and think deeply before the comeback'. It was the last chance for him, Hassan said. It was also the last chance for his side Sylhet Sixers, who were tottering at the bottom. Sylhet came back into the thick of things with two crucial wins to remain in playoff contention.

Chittagong and Dhaka however were facing conundrums of their own. Chittagong eventually made it through to the playoffs a day after Rangpur and Comilla. The Dynamites were still hanging on and would look to qualify in Dhaka. That the wickets here produced exciting cricket at the business end of the season should give organisers food for thought as the Chattogram leg came to an end with good vibes.

WHACK-O-METER
TOTAL 6s HIT: 473 | TOTAL 4s HIT: 833
Most 6s hit by a player: 28, Nicholas Pooran, Sylhet Sixers
Most 4s hit by a player: 45, Rilee Rossouw, Rangpur Riders

Aus want to do better

Second & final Test against SL starts tomorrow

REUTERS, Canberra

Australia finally have the chance to bring some cheers to their fans after an egregious 2018 when Tim Paine's men take on Sri Lanka at the Manuka Oval from Friday with a series victory beckoning the beleaguered hosts.

The 4-0 Ashes victory in 2017-18 seems like a distant past for an Australian side who have since been beaten away by South Africa and Pakistan and lost their first ever home series to India earlier this month.

The tumultuous trip to South Africa not only resulted in a 3-1 drubbing for Australia, but they

Sri Lanka's preparations for the final Test against Australia suffered further setbacks when coach Chandika Hathurusingha was stripped of his team selection responsibilities and their batting coach returned home for personal reasons.

also lost their two best batsmen in captain Steve Smith and his deputy David Warner due to a ball-tampering scandal.

Australia beat Sri Lanka by an innings and 40 runs in Brisbane for

only their second Test victory of the summer and the hosts are determined not to take their foot off the pedal in the second and final Test.

"We had a great game in Brisbane but I think we can get better," Australia spinner Nathan Lyon told reporters on Wednesday.

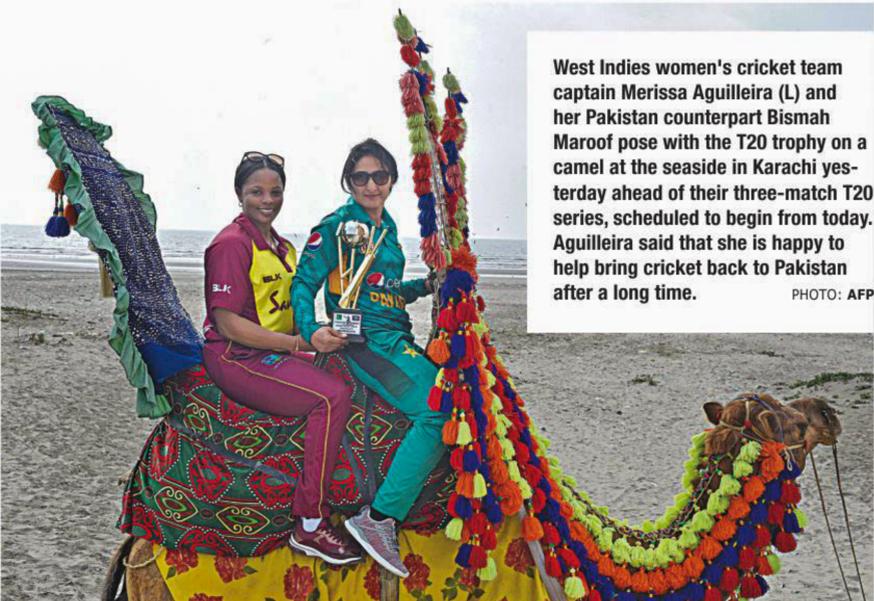
Sri Lanka have lost all-rounder Angelo Mathews and paceman Nuwan Pradeep through injuries even before the first Test and their bid to level the series has been jolted with fast bowlers Lahiru Kumara and Dushmantha Chameera also joining them in the sidelines.

Sri Lanka have called up 22-year-old paceman Chamika Karunaratne but their pace attack has already been robbed of much of its firepower.



Sylhet Sixers batsman Nicholas Pooran took the Rakshahi Kings bowling by storm during an unbeaten 31-ball 76, featuring six sixes and as many boundaries, to power his team to a challenging total of 189 in Chattogram yesterday. However, his knock went in vain as Sylhet lost the game by five wickets.

PHOTO: STAR



West Indies women's cricket team captain Merissa Aguilera (L) and her Pakistan counterpart Bismah Maroof pose with the T20 trophy on a camel at the seaside in Karachi yesterday ahead of their three-match T20 series, scheduled to begin from today. Aguilera said that she is happy to help bring cricket back to Pakistan after a long time.

PHOTO: AFP

Mohabaj thrash Nuriya

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohabaj School registered a whopping 231-run victory in a Prime Bank Young Tigers National School Cricket Tournament match against Nuriya High School, courtesy of a sparkling 114-ball 111 from Mohabaj batsman Basir and bowler Semanto's five-for in Barishal yesterday.

Asked to bat first, Mohabaj School were reeling on 44 for five in 6.3 overs. However, the next two batsmen -- Basir and Ashrafal -- steadied the ship and strung together a 147-run sixth-wicket stand before Ashrafal was dismissed for a 64-ball 53. Mohabaj School then finished on a high, posting a 297-run total.

In defence of the substantial total, Semanto ran riot with figures of five wickets for 12 runs helping to bundle out Nuriya for a paltry 66.

In the day's two other matches, Khulna Lion's School won by 114 runs against Khulna News Print Mills School thanks to Abdul Ahad's five for 30, while Amjhupy Secondary School defeated Technical School and College by 10 runs.

NZ look to salvage pride

Fourth ODI against India today

AGENCIES, Hamilton



Having already lost the series, hosts New Zealand will play for pride in the fourth one-day international against India on Thursday even as the visitors may look to test their bench strength.

A 3-0 lead for India in a five-match series has jolted New Zealand's ICC World Cup preparations. It hasn't just been the losses that have hurt the Kane Williamson-led side, but the manner of those defeats.

On two occasions New Zealand were dismissed for sub-200 scores and in the third game at the Bay Oval, where they eventually crossed 200, India chased the total down in just 43 overs.

Batting has been the main cause of concern for the hosts. The middle-order trio of Kane Williamson, Ross Taylor and

Tom Latham have got starts -- Taylor went on to score 93 in the third ODI -- but it's the top and lower-middle order that haven't lived up to expectations.

For India, it will be a brief period without regular captain Virat Kohli, who has been rested from the final two ODIs as well as the Twenty20 International series to follow. Rohit Sharma will lead the side.

Kohli's departure also opens a top-order slot in the batting order, and the most suitable candidate is the young Shubman Gill, who received his maiden ODI call-up before the series, but hasn't played a game yet.

In the bowling department, India may look to rest their front-line seamers Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Mohammed Shami and give opportunities to Mohammed Siraj and Khaleel Ahmed, the two pacers on the bench who may look to push their case for the ICC World Cup later this year.