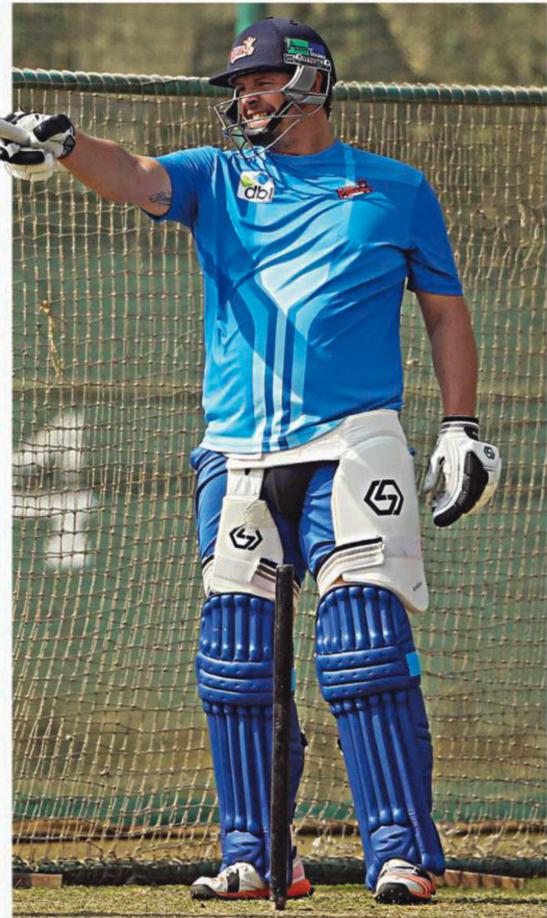


SPORT



With Dhaka Dynamites set to square off against Chittagong Vikings in the BPL Eliminator today, the Dynamites brought in English all-rounder Luke Wright (L) in a bid to reach the second qualifier while the Vikings will bank on the returning Robbie Frylinck, who has won the side a number of encounters with his all-round performances.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Chittagong, Dhaka fight for survival

Rangpur, Comilla vie for final berth

SPORTS REPORTER



After flying starts to the sixth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), Chittagong Vikings and Dhaka Dynamites lost their way in the middle before making it to the playoff stage as the third and fourth teams respectively.

Those poor performances mean that Mushfiqur Rahim's Vikings and Shakib Al Hasan's Dynamites are just one underwhelming display away from being booted from the tournament as they prepare to face off in the first eliminator at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today.

The winner will have one more shot at a place in the final when they face the loser of Qualifier 1 to be contested between top-ranked Rangpur Riders and second-placed Comilla Victorians in the day's second fixture.

Dhaka started off the tournament as one of the hot favourites and won their first four games but then fell to five consecutive defeats before beating Khulna Titans in the last league match. Dhaka lost both league games against Chittagong and much will depend on whether Shakib can deliver with the bat, which he has not done to the extent he is capable of so far.

Shakib has taken 21 wickets in 12 games but managed to score just 275 runs at an average of 25. Dhaka also have big hitters like Andre Russell, Keiron Pollard and Sunil Narine in the ranks.

Chittagong will also rely on their in-form skipper Mushfiqur, who has struck three half-centuries while scoring 418 runs in 12 games. The Vikings will be

boosted by the return of South African all-rounder Robbie Frylinck, who missed the last few games due to injury. Mosaddek Hossain, who is also in good touch, survived an injury scare yesterday and was later declared fit to play.

Meanwhile, both Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's Rangpur and Imrul Kayes's Comilla will look to seal a place in the final today. Rangpur are on a roll, having won five consecutive matches. They will also have a world of confidence when taking on Comilla, who they shot out for 63 and 72 in their league clashes.

Rangpur, however, will miss two of their most explosive stars in the injured Alex Hales and AB de Villiers, who completed his six-match contract by the end of the league phase. In their absence, they will depend heavily on Rilee Rossouw, who is the top run-scorer of the edition with 514 runs at 85.66 and five fifties and a hundred. The incomparable Chris Gayle has not done much so far, having hit just one fifty, but he has a penchant for big-match performances and if he does what he did to Dhaka with 146 in last season's final, Comilla will be in big strife.

For Comilla, Tamim Iqbal will once again need to fire with the bat alongside their arsenal of foreign stars like Shahid Afridi, Evin Lewis and Thisara Perera. All of them have the ability to change the game irrevocably when they fire, which they need to do to avoid a repeat of the last season's Qualifier, when Comilla were beaten handily by Rangpur. On the bowling side, young off spinner Mahedi Hasan, pacers Mohammad Saifuddin and Wahab Riaz have been terrific with the ball for Comilla and will need to put their best feet forward today.

Taskin out for a month and a half

SPORTS REPORTER

In just over a week, Bangladesh pacer Taskin Ahmed experienced the euphoria of being recalled to the national side for the New Zealand tour before suffering the crushing disappointment of an unfortunate injury all but ruling him out. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) chief physician Debashish Chowdhury said yesterday that it was unlikely that the tall pacer, who still sits atop the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) wickets charts with 22 scalps, 'will be able to do functional sports activity before a month and a half has passed'.

With that timeframe, Taskin, who also impressed in domestic longer-version cricket and was included in both the ODI and Test squads, is almost certain to miss the entirety of the New Zealand tour that will end with the third Test on March 20.

"He has a lateral ligament injury in his left ankle. Since it's a Grade 3-plus injury it will take time," Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday. "Since we will follow a rehabilitation protocol, we will look at it on a weekly basis. We will give him non-weight-bearing rest for the first three weeks. After that we will start him on partial weight-bearing activities."

"Then we will see how he is taking it. I don't think he will be able to do functional sports activity before a month and a half has passed. And when he does start activity, it will take him time to reach match fitness."

It was an especially unfortunate turn of events for Taskin as he was injured playing a match for Sylhet Sixers against Chittagong Vikings on Friday that did not have any bearing on the tournament as the franchise were already eliminated from the playoff race. The injury occurred when he rolled his ankle on the boundary rope while trying to attempt a catch.

Chief selector Minhajul Abedin had said on Saturday that Taskin's replacement would be announced on Sunday, but there was no news till last night. It is believed that either one of Ebadat Hossain or Shafiqul Islam would take his place.

Mighty West Indies crush England

REUTERS, North Sound



Kemar Roach and captain Jason Holder took four wickets each as West Indies thumped England by 10 wickets in the second Test in Antigua to gain an unbeatable 2-0 series lead on Saturday.

With fellow pace bowler Alzarri Joseph chipping in with two top-order wickets, including the prized scalp of captain Joe Root, the hosts bowled out England for 132 in the second innings.

Joseph's performance came hours after his mother died following a long battle with a brain tumour.

West Indies needed only 14 runs in their second innings, and they polished them off quickly to win with more than

two days to spare. John Campbell clinched victory in appropriate Calypso fashion with a six over mid-wicket as batting great Viv Richards, after whom the stadium is named, grinned broadly in the crowd, ever the epitome of cool in his dark sunglasses.

West Indies lead the three-Test series 2-0. They won the first test by 381 runs in Barbados.

It is only the second time in the past 10 series that West Indies have won the Wisden Trophy.

England have dominated over the past two decades with seven series wins, while one was drawn.

Holder said his West Indies team had played to honour Joseph's late mother.

"We all rallied around one and other," he



West Indies skipper Jason Holder (R) carried off a stump after his side thrashed England by 10 wickets in the second Test at the Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium in North Sound, courtesy of a five-wicket match haul from the bowling all-rounder.

PHOTO: AFP

'Dedicated to Joseph's mum'

STAR SPORT DESK

All the jubilation of winning a series against England aside, West Indies' triumph was one tinged with poignancy because it was achieved the day following the death of young pacer Alzarri Joseph's mother.

Sharon Joseph had been suffering with a brain tumour and had passed away overnight. The young pacer however chose to take full part in the game, training beforehand and getting seven runs off 20 balls before bowling a searing seven-over spell that netted the wickets of Joe

Denly and Joe Root.

"It's difficult to describe the feelings," West Indies skipper Holder said after the match. "To see him [Joseph] in tears this

morning was even harder, and we came together in the huddle and we just wanted to do it for him and we dedicate this day to him, his mum and his family.

"It was up to him if he played. If he felt he could manage and perform then I wasn't going to deprive him of that.

For sure I knew he wanted to do something special for his mum and credit to him, he held his hand up high and did an exceptional job for us."



Pain of different kinds afflicted Taskin Hossain (L) and Mosaddek Hossain (top) as the former will likely miss Bangladesh's tour of New Zealand while the latter was passed fit for Chittagong Vikings' eliminator against Dhaka Dynamites today.

PHOTO: STAR

Khawaja strikes form to give Aus big lead

AFP, Canberra



Usman Khawaja finally found form to stroke a fine century Sunday and steer Australia into a massive lead over Sri Lanka as the tourists battle to stay in the second Test at Canberra.

At stumps, the visitors were 17 without loss, chasing a huge 516 to win with two days remaining after Tim Paine declared Australia's second innings at 196 for three.

Dimuth Karunaratne and Lahiru Thirimanne were both unbeaten on eight, weathering some 30 minutes before bad light stopped play slightly early.

Sri Lanka had resumed the third day at 123 for three and in a hostile morning session lost four wickets and Kusal Perera, who retired after being hit on the head by a bouncer.

Their resistance folded in the second over after lunch, with Mitchell Starc taking five wickets to leave them trailing by 319 after Australia's first innings 534 for

five declared.

Paine opted against the follow-on in Australia's last Test batting opportunity before the Ashes tour to England later this year.

Khawaja padded up knowing his place in that squad was in doubt after managing a high-score of just 72 across six Tests in a lacklustre summer.

He responded in emphatic fashion, smashing his eighth Test ton off 134 balls.

"Obviously getting a hundred and setting up another game that we can hopefully win, that's the ultimate feeling for the team and for myself," said Khawaja, who admitted it had been a tough few months on and off the field.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: First innings 534 for 5 decl and second innings 196 for 3 decl (Khawaja 101 not out, Head 59 not out; Rajitha 2-64)

SRI LANKA: First innings 215 and second innings 17 for no loss.



The West Indies women's team hold the trophy aloft after defeating Pakistan in a three-match T20 series in Karachi. West Indies already won the series 2-0 on Friday but lost yesterday's encounter by 12 runs.

PHOTO: AFP