



Dhaka Dynamites spinner Sunil Narine (R) celebrates one of his wickets with captain Shakib Al Hasan during their BPL Eliminator against Chittagong Vikings in Mirpur yesterday. The West Indian picked up four wickets for just 15 runs to help his side win the match by six wickets

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Not an unhappy end for Mushy

SPORTS REPORTER



Elimination from a high-profile tournament is not something that any sportsperson would want, and Chittagong Vikings captain Mushfiqur Rahim was certainly frustrated after his side's meek surrender to Dhaka Dynamites, who won the Bangladesh Premier League Eliminator by six wickets at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

There was reason, however, for the wicketkeeper-batsman to consider it an agreeable ending not just because he scored substantial runs but also because the season will leave no bitter memories, unlike his past experiences with other franchises -- from the controversy with Barisal Bulls officials to Rajshahi Kings' decision to release him ahead of the ongoing sixth edition of the tournament.

The Vikings roped in Mushfiqur ahead of the players' draft as the icon player and the man from Bogura repaid the favour with interest by leading his side from the front with 426 runs in 13 games with three fifties. Mushfiqur rightly

and was unable to qualify for the top four, which is not a good feeling and I was not satisfied with my own performance.

"I am not overjoyed by my performance this season. There were a few instances where the result could have gone either way and playing well in those situations will certainly have boosted my confidence for the coming season. Overall, with the team we had, I am proud to have reached this far in the tournament," he said after the match.

Still, it could have been much sweeter for Mushfiqur had his side not scored a modest 135 for eight in a match which was expected to be a high-voltage affair and the Vikings skipper understandably blamed poor batting behind the one-sided affair.

"It was a do-or-die game for us, all of us expected tough competition and the wicket was also good. If we had scored over 160 runs we could have put pressure on Dhaka, which did not happen. Our top

order batsmen made some silly mistakes -- a few got out after getting set and it is always tough if you make so many mistakes against a big team like Dhaka," he opined.

And it was West Indian Sunil Narine who rose to the occasion for Dhaka with an all-round performance, first bagging four wickets for 15 runs and then providing a flying start with a 16-ball 31 before Upul Tharanga sealed the easy win with a half-century.

After electing to bat, Chittagong were 74 for two inside nine overs but it was Narine who removed Mushfiqur when the right-hander dragged a delivery on to the stumps after scoring eight. The early dismissal of Robbie Frylinck in the death overs, during which they added just 33 runs in five overs, was crucial.

Dhaka's win means that Shakib Al Hasan's side will get one more shot at a place in the final against Comilla Victorians if they beat Rangpur Riders in the second qualifier on Wednesday.

said that he was proud to reach the top four as there was less expectation from his side this season.

"Obviously, it feels bad both for the owners and also personally when your team fails to get a result. In the past two years I have played for Barisal Bulls and Rajshahi Kings,

which did not happen. Our top

order batsmen made some silly mistakes -- a few got out after getting set and it is always tough if you make so many mistakes against a big team like Dhaka," he opined.

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Chittagong Vikings captain Mushfiqur Rahim was literally and figuratively floored as his side lost the BPL Eliminator against Dhaka Dynamites by six wickets in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

'Will rest, then switch on for New Zealand'

SPORTS REPORTER



The BPL campaign ended for M u s h f i q u r Rahim yesterday and it was time to shift the focus to the upcoming big challenge in New Zealand, but the wicketkeeper-batsman said that he was looking for a break before turning on the switch.

With less than a week left to pack bags for the tour, where the Tigers will once again rely heavily on the right-hander in demanding conditions, the dependable cricketer said that being match-prepared always helps in the confidence department. It must also have been a welcome development that Mushfiqur carried his good international form into the BPL and in various situations guided his side across the finish line.

"If you could get a weeklong break it would have been good as we don't

have that much time left, but we need to take that in our stride, being professional players. There is nothing to be prepared for as I will rest for the next few days before turning on the switch for the New Zealand series. Regarding my performance it's better that you guys analyse that as I don't analyse my performances that much and instead just keep trying my best.

"Obviously I wanted to contribute and play match-winning knocks but overall I am happy with my performance, compared to previous editions. There were few situations which were very tough and I wanted to come out from those situations and prove to myself that I am good enough. I am a little satisfied at winning the battle against myself, but not that much," Mushfiqur told reporters yesterday.

Mushfiqur also expressed high hopes about the coming challenge as despite losing both the ODI and Test series during the Tigers' previous tour

of New Zealand back in 2016-17, the 31-year old was one of the brightest performers for the Tigers.

According to Mushfiqur, the tour of New Zealand will be ideal preparation for the upcoming ICC World Cup in England, scheduled to start at the end of May this year.

"If you noticed, we came very close in two ODIs -- which we should have won -- before losing in New Zealand in the last tour. If we played better in both Nelson and Christchurch, we may have won both games. But I think it's great preparation ahead of the World Cup and we may get some high-scoring matches. From that point of view, I think it will be challenging for us -- India may have won the ODI series recently but New Zealand put up a good fight," he said.

Bangladesh will play three ODIs, starting from February 13 in Napier, and three Tests during a tour that will last more than a month.

Starc burst seals whitewash

AFP, Canberra



A resurgent Mitchell Starc took five wickets as Australia wrapped up a confidence-boosting 2-0 series thrashing of Sri Lanka Monday, with the tourists skittled for 149 in the second Test at Canberra.

In front of a sparse crowd on Day Four, Sri Lanka resumed on 17 without loss, needing a daunting 516 to win and ending 366 short.

There was little resistance from the under-strength visitors who wilted under a pace onslaught led by spearhead Starc, who ended with 5-46 and took 10 wickets in the game as he emphatically bounced back from a lean spell.

"It's nice to get some reward. I've said all summer this group has been working really hard," said skipper Tim Paine. "I think we're starting to build towards something so it's great to get some reward for the work we've been putting in."

He was especially pleased with his bowlers, who worked well as a unit.

Paine set the big run chase after declaring



Mitchell Starc celebrates after his 10-wicket match haul helped Australia register a 366-run win over Sri Lanka in the second Test in Canberra yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Australia's second innings at 196 for three, following their mammoth first innings 534 for five declared. Sri Lanka were bowled out for 215 in reply.

"We were outplayed as a team in all departments," Sri Lankan skipper Dinesh Chandimal said.

"Credit goes to Australia. They have played some outstanding cricket throughout the series. It was really tough. Especially in the last six months we couldn't get the right combination to finalise our best XI," he added.

Dimuth Karunaratne and Lahiru Thirimanne had survived a tough six overs on

It's in difficult times you see the characters you've got in your group. It's confirmed to us we've got some good characters, some strong characters, and some people we can build a really strong Australian cricket future on.

TIM PAIN
AUSTRALIA CAPTAIN

India are favourites, says Sachin

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Sachin Tendulkar, the former India captain, said a well-balanced Indian team goes into the ICC World Cup 2019 as the favourites and also singled out hosts England as the toughest contenders.

India have been in good form in ODIs over the past 12 months, winning ODI series against South Africa, the West Indies, Australia and New Zealand, and these victories put them in the hot seat as one of the favourites to win the World Cup in England and Wales this year.

"I have gone on record saying that we have a perfect balance in the team where we will be competitive in any part of the world or on any surface," Tendulkar told PTI on Monday.

"As far as our chances are concerned, I will not hesitate in saying that we are the favourites."

India's last ODI series was a 4-1 routing of New Zealand in a five-match away series, and the visitors competed in the last two games without regular captain Virat Kohli.

And while New Zealand were humbled at home and England recently lost a Test series to the Windies in the Caribbean, Tendulkar backed the two teams as "dark horses" and "toughest contenders", respectively.

"I think Australia at full strength will be a formidable side. With Steve Smith and David Warner back in the team and their other bowlers coming back into the ODI squad, it will be a competitive side," Tendulkar said.

Lewis lifts Comilla

SPORTS REPORTER



Comilla Victorians became the first team to book a place in the final of the sixth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), courtesy of an unbeaten 53-ball 71 from opener Evin Lewis that saw his side romp to an eight-wicket victory over defending champions Rangpur Riders at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Coming into the match on a six-match winning streak, Rangpur however made a solid start in the first BPL qualifier as Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's side posted a challenging 165 for five, which was powered by an unbeaten 28-ball 53-run cameo from all-rounder Benny Howell.

In chase of the stiff total, Comilla lost opener Tamim Iqbal early in the innings but a 90-run second-wicket stand between Lewis and Anamul Haque kept Comilla abreast of the required run rate before the latter saw his stumps rattled by a Shafiqul Islam delivery after scoring 39 runs off 32 balls. However, Lewis's unbeaten knock and Shamsur Rahman's fiery innings at the death, when the right-hander smashed 34 runs off 15 balls with four boundaries and two sixes, helped Comilla get over the line comfortably with seven balls to spare.

Earlier, it was Rangpur's depth in their pool of foreign players -- opener Chris Gayle, Rilee Rossouw and Howell -- that proved vital for

Rangpur relief after they fell to 76 for four and proved crucial in posting a challenging total. While Rossouw was dismissed in the 19th over off a Mohammad Saifuddin delivery, Howell remained unbeaten throughout as he and new batsman Nahidul Islam smashed 18 crucial runs in the last over from Wahab Riaz to help Rangpur finish with a flourish.

Despite the loss yesterday, Rangpur will benefit from finishing the league stage of the tournament as one of the two top teams as they will have a second shot at a final berth when they play in the second qualifier against Dhaka Dynamites tomorrow.



Comilla Victorians opener Evin Lewis hit an unbeaten 53-ball 71 to transform a stiff chase into an easy eight-wicket win against Rangpur Riders in their BPL Qualifier 1 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Sunday ahead of stumps, and they resumed with hopes high of taking the game into a fifth day.

But Karunaratne failed to add to his overnight eight with Starc, bowling at close to 145 kph, clipping his leg bail in only the third over of the day.

It was a big blow with the experienced opener their best batsman in the first innings before he was struck in the head by a Pat Cummins bouncer.

Chandimal also failed to deliver, struggling against the speed and bounce of a fired-up Starc, bowling at perhaps his best over the past year.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: First innings 534 for 5 decl and second innings 196 for 3 decl.

SRI LANKA: First innings 215 and second innings 149 all out (Thirimanne 30, Dickwella 27, Mendis 42, Karunaratne 22; Starc 5-46, Cummins 3-15)

Result: Australia won by 366 runs and clinched the 2-match series 2-0.

Player-of-the-match: Mitchell Starc.