

# Sheikh Russel stay perfect

SPORTS REPORTER

Former champions Sheikh Russel KC maintained their hundred per cent record with a 3-0 win against falling giants Mohammedan SC at the Sylhet District Stadium last night.

The win equalled Sheikh Russel's feat of a 3-0 win against the same opposition in the 5th Bangladesh Premier League in 2012 while maintaining their unbeaten record against the Black and Whites since 2013.

On the other hand, it was the third straight defeat in the league for Mohammedan and their ninth defeat against Sheikh Russel in 22 meetings of the professional football league.

The win took Sheikh Russel to the top of the table with nine points alongside Bashundhara Kings, Abahani, Arambagh KS and Saif SC even though Sheikh Russel and Bashundhara Kings have played a match less than the others. Mohammedan, meanwhile, slipped to 10th position with three points from four matches.

Hosts Sheikh Russel took the lead in the seventh minute when Raphael Odoyin chested down a cross from Biplu Ahmed before volleying it home from the six-yard box before defender Alison Udoka volleyed to double the lead after a header from Odoyin came off the crossbar in the 42nd minute.

Uzbek striker Azizov Alisher wrapped up the victory in the 86th minute with a placed shot after playing a neat one-two with Odoyin.



Sheikh Russel striker Raphael Odoyin (C) leads the celebration after opening the scoring against Mohammedan in their Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Sylhet District Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

# Famoussa powers Muktijoddha

SPORTS REPORTER

A brace from Ivorian marksman Ballo Famoussa brought Muktijoddha Sangsad back to winning ways in the Bangladesh Premier League with a 2-0 win over newcomers NoFeL SC at the Shaheed Bulu Stadium in Noakhali yesterday.

The win was second in four matches for the All Reds, who had finished second from bottom last season. And their good start owes a lot to the form of Famoussa, who had scored the league's first hatrick against Sheikh Jamal, to lead the scorers' chart on five goals, followed by Sunday Chizoba, Zahid Hossain and Nabib Newaj Jibon on three goals each.

"We prepared our game plan around Famoussa and we also give importance to him in practice sessions. He is really good in the attacking third and we are keeping our hopes on him. If Famoussa plays well, Muktijoddha Sangsad get results," said the

club's coach Abdul Kayum Sentu over phone.

Smarting from a 2-0 defeat against defending champions Abahani, Muktijoddha Sangsad did not waste much time to break the deadlock as Famoussa headed home a free-kick from Japanese midfielder Youssef Kato in the very third minute.

On an uneven pitch, both sides struggled to control the ball resulting in the absence of build-up football, but NoFeL SC came close to levelling the margin in the eighth minute, only to be denied by Muktijoddha Sangsad goalkeeper Nahid Uddin.

Muktijoddha Sangsad doubled the lead in the 61st minute as Kato ran down the left flank to cut the ball back for Mohammad Soheli, who drove inside the box and Famoussa tapped in from close range.

NoFeL SC could have reduced the margin in the 90th minute had a header from Eleta Benjamin not come off the post. It was the third straight defeat for the club from the South Eastern part of the country.

# Real close gap at the top

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid gained ground on both Barcelona and Atletico Madrid in La Liga as Karim Benzema and Vinicius Junior each scored in a 3-0 win over Alaves on Sunday.

Benzema, Vinicius and Gareth Bale started together for the first time and two thirds of the newly-dubbed 'BBV' delivered as Madrid capitalised on Barca being held by Valencia and Atletico losing at Real Betis.

Mariano Diaz, on as a substitute, added a third late on.

After 22 rounds, this is the first in which Madrid have been the only winners from the established three clubs, which is as much an indication of their own inconsistency as the sturdiness of Atleti and, particularly, Barca.

Madrid could now overtake Atletico if they win the city derby next weekend but the difference behind Barcelona, whom they face in the Copa del Rey on Wednesday, is still a considerable eight points.

"We will fight for everything until

the end," Solari said. "Today there was a real hunger to cut the gap."

It may have been the 5-1 loss to Barca in October that proved the final straw for Julen Lopetegui but Alaves' 1-0 victory at Mendizorrotza, their first



Real Madrid striker Karim Benzema celebrates after scoring the opening goal against Alaves during their La Liga encounter at the Bernabeu on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

over Real in 87 years, was perhaps the team's rock bottom.

Benzema has been the revival's ringleader since and his latest goal was his sixth in four games, his best streak since January 2016. The only La Liga player to have scored more in all competitions this season is Lionel Messi.

He did it starting alongside both Bale and Vinicius but it was the latter, not the former, that looks to be Benzema's most dangerous partner.

Bale endured one of his quieter nights and it was noticeable that while Benzema and Vinicius both departed to rousing ovations late on, there was a scattering of disgruntled whistles when the Welshman was replaced by Marco Asensio shortly after the hour.

"It was difficult," Solari said. "Alaves defended very well, they were determined and there weren't many spaces."

It was Vinicius' clever reverse pass through the legs of Carlos Vigaray that led to Benzema's opener as Sergio Reguilon was set free down the left, his cross ensuring the Frenchman could not miss.



## Niketan win district phase

SPORTS REPORTER

Mukul Niketan High School became the champions of the district phase of the Young Tigers National School Cricket Tournament by defeating Mymensingh Zilla School by six wickets in the final in Mymensingh yesterday.

After electing to field, Niketan High's all-rounder Mahim and Sami shone brightly on the day with the former running riot as he bagged a fiver, ending with impressive figures of five wickets for 21 runs from 10 overs, which featured two maidens. Mahim's exploits helped Niketan High bundle out Mymensingh Zilla on a paltry 93-run total.

In turn, the chase proved to be easy as Sami authored an unbeaten 55-run knock to see his side over the line in just 24.1 overs. Niketan High were however reeling on 59 for four at one stage but an unbeaten 44-run fifth-wicket stand between Sami and Samsur ensured a comfortable win for the side.

## Gomez to undergo leg surgery

AFP, London

Liverpool's Joe Gomez is to undergo an operation in the hope of aiding his recovery from a lower leg fracture, the Premier League leaders announced Monday.

Gomez suffered the injury in a 3-1 victory at Burnley early in December.

Liverpool's initial assessment was that Gomez might be sidelined for six weeks, but have now refused to set a specific timescale for the England international's recovery, although he is expected to play again this season.

"Liverpool can confirm Joe Gomez is to undergo surgery to assist his recovery from a lower leg fracture sustained at Burnley on December 5," the club said in a statement.

## SHORT CORNER



### Perera the first in 81 years

Sri Lanka batsman Angelo Perera has become the second player in history to score two double-centuries in the same first-class game.

This has happened for only the second time in recorded history, the other way back in 1938, when Kent batsman Arthur Fagg, then 23, struck 244 and 202 not out against Essex, in Colchester.

The right-hander, who played four ODIs and two T20Is for Sri Lanka between 2013 and 2016, accomplished the notable feat at the famous Sinhalese Sports Club Ground in Colombo on Monday, captaining Nondescripts CC against SSC in the Super Eight stage of Sri Lanka's first-class Premier League tournament Tier A.

Both of the 28-year-old's double-hundreds were fast-scoring affairs, the first - 201 off 203 - coming at almost a run a ball, and the second only marginally slower, a 268-ball 231. The game was a high-scoring one across the board, with three other batsmen across both sides scoring centuries, and just 26 wickets falling across the four days as the match petered out to a draw.

AGENCIES

PSG's Lyon defeat must have pleased Solskjaer

Paris St Germain's first loss of the season must have pleased Manchester United's caretaker coach Ole Gunnar Solskjaer ahead of the Champions League last-16 clash between the teams, reckons PSG centre back Thiago Silva.

Solskjaer was among the spectators at the Groupama Stadium to witness Olympique Lyonnais prevail 2-1 against PSG who lacked steel in the midfield in the absence of injured Marco Verratti and missed the spark of Neymar, who will also miss the Feb. 12 first leg clash against United. "It's going to be a great clash against

Manchester," Silva, who fouled Moussa Dembele in the box to hand Lyon the winning penalty, was quoted as saying by French sports daily L'Equipe on Monday.

--REUTERS

### Zaniolo strikes again as Roma hold Milan

Teenaged midfielder Nicolo Zaniolo's second-half goal rescued a point for AS Roma as they secured a 1-1 draw with AC Milan in Serie A on Sunday.

Gennaro Gattuso's side maintained their place in the top four even though Krzysztof Piatek's 26th-minute strike was cancelled out by 19-year-old Zaniolo's effort after the interval. He became the youngest player to score three goals for Roma in Serie A since Francesco Totti in 1995.

Piatek scored his first league goal for Milan after joining from Genoa in the January transfer window.

The result leaves Milan fourth, and the final

joining the club," Shandong coach Li Xiaopeng told reporters. "But between his health and the game, we think that his health is the more important."

--AFP

### Body found underwater in wreckage of Sala's plane

British investigators said Monday they had spotted a body in the wreckage of a plane that disappeared in the Channel two weeks ago carrying Argentine footballer Emiliano Sala and his pilot.

Sala, 28, was flying from France to join his new club, Premier League side Cardiff City, when the light aircraft disappeared on January 21 north of the island of Guernsey.

A wreck was found on the seabed on Sunday and closer inspection by a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) confirmed both that it was the missing plane, and that a body was inside.

"Tragically, in video footage from the ROV, one



Roma midfielder Nicolo Zaniolo is ecstatic after scoring the equaliser against Milan during their Serie A match in Rome on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Champions League place, with 36 points from 22 games. Roma are one point behind in fifth.

--REUTERS

### Injury delays Fellaini's Chinese club debut

Marouane Fellaini's debut at Chinese club Shandong Luneng has been delayed to allow the former Manchester United midfielder treatment for a calf injury, his new coach said Monday.

The 31-year-old arrived in Hong Kong on Sunday to meet with teammates and sign autographs for fans, but missed training and flew home to Belgium that night for treatment. "Of course we are very happy that he is

occupant is visible amidst the wreckage," the British government's Air Accident Investigation Branch (AIB) said in a statement.

The AIB also released a grainy image showing a part of the fuselage with the aircraft registration. The depth indicated on the image was 67.7 metres (222 feet).

Sala's father Horacio earlier spoke of his shock that the plane had been found, after a private search organised by the family. "I can't believe it. It's a bad dream," he told Cronica TV from his home in Progreso, Argentina, before the news about the body was announced.

--AFP

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