

# SPORTS



Dhaka Dynamites pacer Rubel Hossain (R) is pumped up after dismissing Rangpur Riders' Rilee Rossouw, immediately after getting rid of Chris Gayle, during the second qualifier of the BPL at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Rubel's four for 23 helped bowl out the defending champions for 142, which the Dynamites chased down with five wickets in hand.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## No all-rounders cost us: Mash

SPORTS REPORTER



Even after finishing the league stage of the sixth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) on top of the table, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's Rangpur Riders could not make it to the final as they lost by five wickets in the second qualifier against Dhaka Dynamites at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Mashrafe said it was the dearth of all-rounders in the Rangpur squad that played the key role in the franchise's exit in the penultimate stage of the tournament.

Mashrafe is the most successful captain in BPL history having won it four times as captain. He won the first three times in a row playing for Dhaka Gladiators in 2012 and 2013 and for Comilla Victorians in 2015 before guiding Rangpur Riders to the title the last time around.

However, against Dhaka Dynamites, who had the luxury of featuring four top all-rounders -- Shakib Al Hasan, Andre Russell, Sunil Narine and Kieron Pollard -- Rangpur felt the need for such multi-skilled players in the squad.

"Having four all-rounders... it is difficult. Actually it is also difficult for the team who have them because the captain starts having doubt about who to go with during bowling. But they have Russell and Narine; they are world class players and can be the turning point in a game at any moment. So they had this huge advantage. In T20 matches everyone likes to have multi-skilled players in the side who can bat and bowl and also play big shots."

Mashrafe also felt that Rangpur Riders were missing all-rounders that a team needs to be a balanced side from the very beginning of the tournament.

"We did not have any all-rounder. So we had the gap in the team; a gap for balance in the team from the beginning. It was also there [lack of balance] the previous year too. If you can remember you will see that [Shohag] Gazi opened for the side, I played in number three position. We played in that fashion last year. We had the same problem this year too. In other teams players like [Shahid] Afridi and Thisara [Perera] come to bat at seven or eight but in our team it is me or Farhad Reza who bat there. So there is a big problem there for our team. We managed it till we had AB [de Villiers] and [Alex] Hales but we had problems after they left."

Although this edition of BPL will not see any more of the fantastic Mashrafe, the national team's ODI skipper gave his fans reason to be hopeful before he left the press conference.

"I always had the desire to play cricket at least for 20 years. Not only international cricket but also tournaments like Dhaka League and BPL. These are big leagues in our country, so I had a desire for a long time to play for 20 years. But I don't know if I can but I do want to."

## Gayle's wicket was the key: Rubel

SPORTS REPORTER



Pacer Rubel Hossain dismantled the Rangpur Riders top order including Chris Gayle early which laid the foundation for Dhaka Dynamites to eventually knock the defending champions out and reach the final of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) with a five-wicket win in the second qualifier of BPL at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The right-arm seamer ended up with figures of four for 23 from his 3.4 overs to restrict Rangpur to a modest total of 142 and in reply Andre Russell, who remained unbeaten on 40 off just 19 deliveries, finished it off in style with three sixes to reach the target with twenty balls to spare.

All eyes were on Gayle, who promised a return to form by striking two sixes off

Russell, but his poor run of form continued as he was caught behind off Rubel for a 12-ball 15.

Rubel was in vicious form and struck arguably the most crucial blow when he removed this edition's highest scorer, Rilee Rossouw, off the very next delivery and found himself on a hat-trick.

The man-of-the-match Rubel said it was the wicket of Gayle among his four scalps that he would put right up at the top. "Definitely it was the wicket of Gayle which was very important as he struck two sixes in the previous over so I will put that wicket at the top," the Bangladesh pacer said at the post-match press conference.

The 31-year-old has picked up 21 wickets in 13 games and yesterday's four-wicket haul was his best this season. He gave credit to Sunil Narine and Shakib Al Hasan for providing the support in the bowling

**SCORES IN BRIEF**

**RANGPUR RIDERS v DHAKA DYNAMITES**

**RANGPUR:** 142 all out in 19.4 overs (Nadif 27, Mithun 38, Bopara 49; Russell 2-31, Rubel 4-23, Onik 2-21)

**DHAKA:** 147 for 5 in 16.4 overs (Rony 35, Shakib 23, Russell 40 not out; Mashrafe 2-3)

**Result:** Dhaka won by 5 wickets.

**Player-of-the-match:** Rubel Hossain.

department. "We had a meeting the day before the game where we were told that we have to win to reach the final. When they were 40-odd runs, Shakib bhai came to me and said that I need to bowl to pick wickets and I tried accordingly," he said.

Ravi Bopara's 49 was the highest score for Rangpur while apart from Rubel, Russell and Qazi Onik chipped in with two wickets

each for Dhaka.

Rangpur got early breakthroughs as skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza removed Upul Tharanga for four while Nazmul Islam dismissed Narine for 14 to leave Dhaka struggling on 41 for 2 after four overs.

Rony Talukdar, however, kept the tempo of runs and dispatched the odd delivery to the fence alongside skipper Shakib and at one point it seemed Dhaka would cruise to the target.

But Benny Howell picked up the important wicket of Shakib for a 20-ball 23, bowling the left-hander off a deflection from his pads. Mashrafe then picked up his second wicket, that of Kieron Pollard for 14, to bring Rangpur back into the game.

Rony was run out after scoring 35 off 24 balls following a mix-up with Nurul Hasan, but Russell ensured Dhaka cruised to victory to set up a final clash against Comilla.

## ICC boss in town

SPORTS REPORTER

The International Cricket Council's (ICC) chairman Shashank Manohar arrived in Dhaka for a three-day visit yesterday.

Manohar is expected to visit the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium (SBNS) in Mirpur today to have a meeting with Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan. The ICC chairman is also expected to watch the final of the Bangladesh Premier League on Friday.

Manohar's visit is also expected to include a meeting with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"Shashank Manohar will visit the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on Friday to watch the final. He came at the invitation of the BCB," BCB's media committee chairman Jalal Younus told the media yesterday evening.

## Abahani to start against Manang

SPORTS REPORTER



Federation Cup champions Abahani will begin their AFC Cup venture on April 3, taking on Nepalese champions Manang Marshyangdi Club in Kathmandu, as per the fixtures released by the continental governing body of football.

The six-time professional league champions have been placed in Group E, which also features Minerva Punjab of India and a yet-to-be-decided team from one of India, Bhutan or Sri Lanka.

The Sky Blues will host Minerva Punjab in Dhaka on April 17 before playing away to the third team of the group on May 1. The return legs will take place on May 15, June 19 and June 26. The top team from the group will qualify for the inter-zone semifinal playoff.

Abahani will look to seal a place in the second round of the continental competition for the first time after having failed to do so in their previous attempts. Last year, they finished third in the group with four points as Bengaluru FC of India sealed progression to the inter-zone semifinal playoffs with 15 points.



Stylish Batsman Sabbir Rahman (L) and pacer Mustafizur Rahman were part of Bangladesh cricket team's eight-member first contingent which left for New Zealand for a month-long tour yesterday.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Eight depart with positive intent

SPORTS REPORTER



The eight members of Bangladesh's 15-man ODI squad, whose Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) journeys ended after their respective franchises were eliminated, departed for New Zealand yesterday to prepare for the upcoming tour that is set to begin with the first ODI on February 13.

While each player who left yesterday would probably have individual targets, the collective challenge for Bangladesh would be to get some positive results from the three-match ODI series and the ensuing three-Test series against the hosts.

Sylhet Sixers' Sabbir Rahman -- whose inclusion in the ODI squad raised questions about the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) professionalism for cutting the right-hander's six-month ban a month short to clear his way for the tour -- will have a lot to prove.

"Obviously, this is a big opportunity for me and this might be my second chance. I will try to return as the previous Sabbir. It is not about

giving a reply; I will just try to play well. I don't have a position in mind, I will just play wherever the team wants me to play," Sabbir told reporters at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday, choosing to keep any individual goals to himself.

All-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz -- the youngest skipper in the ongoing

BPL, where he led Rajshahi Kings to a fifth-placed finish -- was much more expressive about his personal goal.

"It is a big challenge for me. Spinners usually do well in the sub-continent but don't seem to have that impact when they travel overseas. If you spinners can dominate and if we support the pacers well, it will be

easier for the bowlers. At the end of the day, we will play as a team and we will try to do something good."

While seniors like Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad did not speak to the media, they too must have a to-do list for the tour. Mushfiqur will be looking to carry his excellent form in all formats into the tour, while Mahmudullah would be desperate to leave the bad memories of the BPL behind after his franchise Khulna Titans ended at the bottom of the table.

Bangladesh were whitewashed in all three formats on their last tour of New Zealand in 2016-17. However, head coach Steve Rhodes thought that with the World Cup starting at the end of May, the objective would be to win some games in New Zealand and prepare for the big event.

"It will give us an indication where we are in world cricket, whether we are on target to the World Cup. I hope we win some games. It's not easy as was proved last time. We will be doing our very best in the ODIs. Test matches... very difficult. Again we are little bit better equipped now to play away. Hopefully we can produce some result in the Tests."

## BCB add Rhys to coaching staff

SPORTS REPORTER

Former New Zealand first-class cricketer Rhys Morgan will join Bangladesh's coaching staff ahead of the three-match Test series against New Zealand, soon after the Tigers complete their three-match ODI series against the same opposition on February 20.

Morgan will work with the members of the ODI squad who will stay behind in New Zealand for the Test series. Morgan is expected to have a short-term

general coaching role.

"As four to five cricketers will remain in New Zealand after the ODI series while the rest of the Test squad reach New Zealand, we have decided to include Morgan as an additional support staff to work with the players during that time. It's a very short-term appointment of 10 to 12 days," BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday.

The first of three Tests against the Kiwis will start from February 28 in Hamilton.



Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan receives ICC president Shashank Manohar with a bouquet of flowers at his office in Mirpur yesterday. The chief of the game's global body is on a three-day visit to Bangladesh. PHOTO: BCB