

'A Bangladeshi changed the game'

SPORTS REPORTER



It had almost become a trend in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) that an overseas player would step up in big games and emerge as the match-winner for a franchise. The pattern was busted yesterday when Comilla Victorians opener Tamim Iqbal showcased the length and breadth of his talent by bludgeoning his maiden BPL hundred in the biggest game of all to help clinch his franchise's second title after a 17-run win over Dhaka Dynamites yesterday.

The dashing left-hander single-handedly hounded the Dhaka bowlers and smashed an unbeaten 141 off just 61 deliveries in Comilla's 199 for three. But more than the 11 sixes and 10 fours, or the success in his maiden BPL final, Tamim later said that

his biggest achievement was carrying the flag for local players on the big stage. "The best thing in today's [Friday's] innings was... if you have noticed, it was always overseas cricketers performing well in big matches like the semifinals, finals and winning the game for the franchise. Today it was a Bangladeshi and this is the biggest achievement for me, that a Bangladeshi changed the whole game.

"There is nothing bigger than this for me and it doesn't matter how many runs I have scored, but I hope all the others and the

juniors who play with me will take this as a challenge and a sign that we don't need to wait for them [foreigners] and that we can do it too," said a satisfied Tamim, who rated the knock as his best T20 innings.

When asked about his knock after the match, Tamim said that it all still seemed like a dream.

"To be honest I am still in a dream state and I still don't know how I did it. I will go back to the room and watch the highlights and then I can assess it. There was a time when I got very pissed off when Anamul [Haque] was out, so I had to calm myself down and start again," he said.

"BPL was very personal and I always wanted to win a cup so the monkey has gotten off my back. A hundred... obviously if you have seen, I was dismissed on 70s and 80s but I couldn't score a hundred, so it does not get better than getting a hundred in the final. Nice to score a hundred and it taught me about how I can take

this into international cricket," Tamim said.

'CREDIT TO MR. MORTAZA'
Bangladesh ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was not involved yesterday, but Tamim still gave him credit for shaping his positive attitude before the final.

"I have to give credit to Mr. Mortaza. He always says in such situations that 'we will win'. Even though I was very nervous before the match, I kept saying that we would win and tried to be a positive force in the team -- they didn't have to know what I was feeling inside."

SCORES IN BRIEF

COMILLA VICTORIANS v DHAKA DYNAMITES

COMILLA: 199 for 3 in 20 overs (Tamim 141, Anamul 24, Imrul 17 not out; Shakib 1-45, Rubel 1-48)

DHAKA: 182 for 9 in 20 overs (Talukdar 66, Tharanga 48, Nurul 18; Wahab 3-28, Perera 2-25)

Result: Comilla won by 17 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Tamim Iqbal

Player-of-the-series: Shakib Al Hasan



Tamim Iqbal, appearing in his first BPL final ever, hogged all the spotlight in yesterday's final against Dhaka Dynamites at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur as the southpaw's majestic, unbeaten 141 off just 61 deliveries proved to be good enough for Comilla Victorians to lift the trophy of the sixth edition of the tournament.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

The positives and negatives of BPL 6

NABID YEASIN

The sixth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) ended yesterday with Comilla winning the final against Dhaka by 17 runs at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. Like any other tournament, the month long domestic cricket festival saw some positives and negatives throughout.

THE POSITIVES

MIRAZ'S CAPTAINCY
All-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz got an unexpected surprise when the 21-year-old was made the youngest captain in the tournament's history by the Rajshahi Kings.

Although Miraz could only notch 123 runs in 12 matches, the young skipper took the initiative of promoting himself up the order -- opening the batting on a few occasions and also batting at number three at times. His only fifty (51 off 45 balls) came while batting at the number three position against the Khulna Titans. He also led Rajshahi to a fifth-place finish in the tournament.

CHATTOGRAM LEG

The Chattogram leg of the tournament was the most entertaining one as it saw the highest (Rangpur Riders' 239 for four against Chittagong Vikings) and the second highest (Comilla's 237 for five against Khulna) totals in history of BPL being registered. It was not just a batsman's paradise though, as two of

the three hattricks in this edition-- Comilla pacer Wahab Riaz's against Khulna and Dhaka all-rounder Andre Russell's against Chittagong -- were registered in Chattogram.

STAR POWER

With players like AB de Villiers, Steve Smith and David Warner featuring for the first time, this year's BPL was hyped up as it had more star power than the last five editions. The two Australians -- Smith and Warner -- were made captains for their respective franchises but unfortunately both had to leave the tournament early due to injury. Nevertheless, their inclusion alongside the likes of the returning Chris Gayle, Andre Russell and Kieron Pollard increased the lustre of the tournament.

THE NEGATIVES

MIRPUR PITCH

The tournament had a very slow start and some of the blame could be attributed to the unpredictable Mirpur pitch, which saw a number of low scoring dull contests. In the opening match of the tournament, Chittagong struggled to chase the 98-run total posted by Rangpur. Mushfiquur Rahim's team only managed a three-wicket victory in a little preview of the Mirpur pitch. However, even more reasoning behind the claim of the pitch being unpredictable could be given by the next game which saw Rajshahi bundled out for just 106 in response to Dhaka's 189 for five in the

first innings. Throughout the tournament there were plenty more such instances in Mirpur.

PRODUCTION

One of the most eye-catching and horrendous aspect of this edition's BPL was its abysmal quality of broadcast. There were instances of commentators pronouncing the names of players wrong and the most noticeable mistakes were the graphical errors. Comilla's Shohagh Gazi was once identified as Abu Hider Rony and there were numerous occasions where the required runs and balls remaining did not match the actual stats. Moreover, the tournament initially started without the technological facilities of Ultra Edge, Snickometer or Hot Spot -- which were brought in almost a week after the tournament commenced.

LOCALS MISSING

The only hundred by a local batsman in this edition of BPL was registered yesterday when Comilla opener Tamim Iqbal struck a magnificent unbeaten 61-ball 141-run to help his side post a mammoth 199 for three against Dhaka. But one local batsman proved to be the exception. Chittagong's Yasir Ali, who has not yet been capped by the national side, performed brilliantly with the bat. The 22-year old scored 307 runs across 11 games with three fifties and a high score of 78. However, the locals shone with the ball, with eight of the top ten wicket-takers being locals.

One innings cost us: Shakib

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Comilla Victorians opener Tamim Iqbal saved his best of this edition's Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) for the final game with a magnificent, unbeaten 61-ball 141 to help defeat Dhaka Dynamites by 17 runs and clinch the title at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Dhaka skipper Shakib Al Hasan also thought that the incredible innings of his national teammate had cost them the match, just like Rangpur Riders opener Chris Gayle's 146 undid Dhaka in last year's BPL final, and that they need to ensure that no one plays such innings in future finals.

"Obviously it feels bad to lose a final. I played in the last three finals, won the first one but lost the next two. It is sad but if I think from a different angle, then in T20 if someone plays such an innings -- Gayle's 146 last time and this time Tamim's 141 -- these two innings actually cost us the game. So from next time we need to try and ensure that no one plays such innings," Shakib said.

Throughout the tournament Dhaka have been relying on their all-rounder quartet -- Shakib, Andre Russell, Kieron Pollard and Sunil Narine and Shakib said them not performing was costly.

"If you see in today's game maybe myself, Pollard, Narine and Russell could not score 20 runs altogether and we lost, I guess, by 15 [17] runs."

With the BPL done with, Shakib will be leaving for New Zealand tomorrow and said that the ODI series starting on February 13 could be challenging.

"I think playing without any preparation in New Zealand conditions will be challenging, but as we have been playing cricket I don't think we need to be too worried."

Man of the hour Tamim also talked about the New Zealand tour. "It is always good to have four or five practice sessions because we rarely tour New Zealand. But I will try to use my past tour experiences and make sure that I work hard in the one practice session we have and get ready mentally."



The Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur saw a full-house crowd yesterday, with Tamim Iqbal's hurricane knock getting the Comilla Victorians fans on their feet during the first innings.

PHOTO: STAR

Crowd storms the gate ahead of final

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The Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) final between Comilla Victorians and Dhaka Dynamites saw the 25,000-plus capacity Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur packed to the rafters as enthusiastic fans from all over flocked to watch the highly anticipated encounter yesterday.

So much so was the crowd's enthusiasm that, ahead of the scheduled 7:00pm start time, supporters who were unable to get tickets caused enough of a commotion for law enforcers to have to intervene.

There were no tickets available at the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) designated booths, leaving the crowd to vent their frustrations by storming the stadium's gate no.2 just four to five hours before the game.

After a portion of the crowd broke into the stadium, a combined effort from Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and the Police brought the situation under control.

On a lighter note, there did not seem to be any 'sides' among the fans who were lucky enough to get tickets. When Comilla Victorians opener Tamim Iqbal -- featuring in his first BPL final for any team -- completed his century, the capacity crowd leapt to their feet, cheering with all their might.

The rest of the game was more or less similar regardless of allegiance as fans cheered on their cricketing heroes and proved that they were only there to witness what was an excellent match between two fierce sides.



(Anticlockwise from top) South African ace batsman AB de Villiers was on song right from the word go during his six-match stint for Rangpur Riders, scoring 247 runs while Sylhet Sixers' skipper David Warner saw his much-hyped maiden appearance cut short due to an elbow injury. Chittagong Vikings' youngster Yasir Ali was a revelation, finishing as the fourth top run-getter among the locals while Sylhet Sixers' pacer Taskin Ahmed found his old mojo with 22 wickets in 12 matches.



PHOTO: STAR FILE

U-19s looking to take charge

SPORTS REPORTER



Bolstered by some solid batting, the Bangladesh Under-19s looked set to post a big total after reaching 266 for five at the close of the second day in their first Youth Test against their English counterparts in Chattogram.

The visitors could add only 19 runs to their overnight score of 261 before losing their final two wickets.

Bangladesh's reply began in unfortunate fashion as opener Tanzid Hossain departed for just four runs. However, the hosts recovered from that hiccup in fine fashion with Amit Hasan and Parvez Hossain stitching together a 93-run stand in 31.1 overs. The loss of Amit and Parvez left the home side on 173 for four.

However, Towhid and Akbar Ali reacted strongly, both reaching their half-centuries during the course of a much-needed 89-run partnership before the former was disappointingly caught off left-armers Lewis Goldsworthy with the penultimate ball of the day. Akbar, unbeaten on 56, will resume with Shahadat Hossain today.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND U-19S: 280 all out

BANGLADESH U-19S: 266 for 5 (Amit 49, Parvez 62, Hridoy 61, Akbar 56 not out; Goldsworthy 1-3, Finch 1-22)