



BKSP players celebrate gleefully after narrowly securing a two-run victory over Brothers Union in a Dhaka Premier League encounter at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Fahad, Shirin become IM, WIM

Win Asian Zonal Chess to earn tickets to world events

SPORTS REPORTER

FIDE Master Fahad Rahman earned the title of International Master after clinching the trophy of the Asian Zonal Championship during an intriguing final round at the Engineers' Institute in Dhaka yesterday.

The 16-year-old, who had earned his FIDE Master status back in 2013, also earned the ticket to the Men's World Cup in Russia in September this year due to his triumph in the zonal championship, where he was taking part for the first time.

The young chess player was ecstatic with his achievement. "Winning the title on my first appearance, that too from amidst five GMs and two IMs, is a big achievement. I'm excited that I will play in the World Cup," Fahad told The Daily Star after his triumph.

Fahad was trailing overnight leader GM Enamul Hossain Razib by 0.5 points ahead of the final round, but while he beat FM Mehedi Hasan Parag to earn seven points from nine rounds, Razib lost against fellow GM Reefat Bin Sattar to finish in third position. That left Fahad and Reefat tied on seven points, but due to Fahad's wins over more higher-ranked players throughout the championship, he edged the more experienced Reefat to the title.

"Yesterday when I was trailing Razib bhai, I hoped I would win the IM status by winning today's match, but I didn't think I would win the title. I didn't think Razib bhai would lose. So it was a pleasant surprise for me," Fahad said.

Meanwhile, in the women's section, WFM Sharmin Sultana Shirin clinched the title, beating WIM Rani Hamid in the final round to collect 7.5 points from the championship. The triumph earned Shirin WIM status while also earning herself the ticket to next year's Women's World Championship. WCM Noshin Anjum and WFM Tanima Parvin finished second and third respectively.



Fahad Rahman (L) became an International Master by clinching the Asian Zonal Championship title at the Engineers' Institute in Dhaka yesterday. Similarly, Sharmin Sultana Shirin became a Women's International Master by winning her respective title. PHOTO: COLLECTED

PHOTO: STAR

Shamim stars in thrilling win

Saif's second successive ton lifts Prime Doleshwar

SPORTS REPORTER

A thrilling Dhaka Premier League (DPL) encounter at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur saw Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP) win by two runs, defending 12 runs off the final over against Brothers Union yesterday.

An all-round performance from Shamim Hossain, who scored a 96-ball 71 and took two wickets, helped BKSP to their second win in this edition of the DPL.

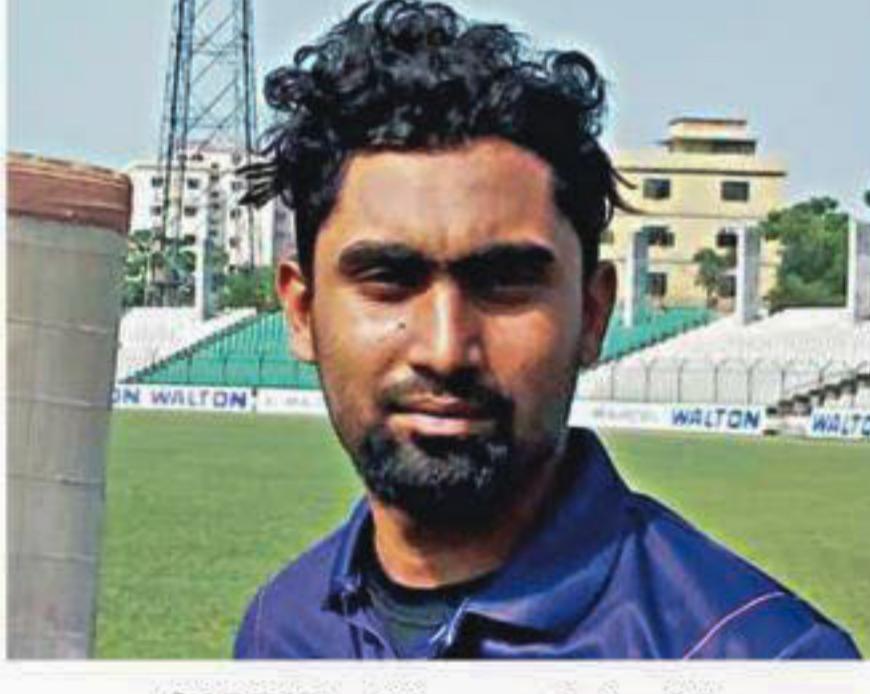
Meanwhile in Fatullah, Saif Hassan smashed his second successive ton, smashing an unbeaten 132 off 134 balls, to help Prime Doleshwar romp to a seven-wicket victory over Khelaghbar SKS at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium.

It was a walk in the park for Shinepukur CC at the BKSP-3 ground as they chased down a paltry 145-run total from Uttara Sporting Club courtesy of Sabbir Hossain's all-round brilliance. They won by eight wickets with 149 balls to spare.

At Mirpur, BKSP got off to a shaky start as they lost three wickets for 25 runs inside just 6.5 overs. However, a 66-run fourth-wicket



SAIF... 132 not out



SABBIR... 99 runs & 3 wkts

stand between Aminul Islam and Shamim steadied the ship before the former was dismissed for a 51-ball 23. Shamim was next to fall but skipper Akbar Ali and Parvez Hossain built on his knock. The duo scripted a 90-run partnership for the sixth-wicket to help BKSP post 267 for nine.

After the exchange, Brothers -- who seemed on course for an easy victory courtesy of contributions from Junaid Siddique (52 off 79) and Chirag Jani (96 off 120) -- were hit by a sudden storm when Jani was dismissed off a Shamim delivery in the 48th over. After that, Brothers lost four wickets for just 13 runs, falling ago-

nishingly short of the target. Sumon Khan picked up two wickets in the last over, restricting Brothers to 265 for nine.

At BKSP-3, it was yet another Saif show that helped Prime Doleshwar to their fourth victory of the tournament. After Khelaghbar rode on Mahidul Islam's 86 and a further 58 runs from Sadikur Rahman to post 257 for nine, it was opener Saif's magnificent unbeaten 134-ball 132 that helped Doleshwar reach the target with seven wickets and 20 balls to spare. Saif's onslaught was nothing new as the right-hander has been in imperious touch in DPL, scoring 102, 9, 85 and an unbeaten 83 in his

last four games for Doleshwar.

In the other game, Shinepukur opener Sabbir fell just a run short of the three-figure mark (99 off 72) but his fiery innings, which featured seven fours and as many sixes, was enough to ensure a humiliating defeat for Uttara Sporting. Sabbir also had economical figures of three for 27.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BKSP v BROTHERS UNION

BKSP: 267 for nine in 50 overs (Shamim 71, Parvez 69, Akbar 56; Sharif 3-65)

Brothers Union: 265 for nine in 50 overs (Junaid 52, Jani 96, Sharifullah 42 not out; Mukidul 4-62, Shamim 2-43)

Result: BKSP won by 2 runs.

KHELAGHAR v DOLESHWAR

Khelaghbar: 257 for nine in 50 overs (Mahidul 86, Sadikur 58; Forhad 3-52)

Doleshwar: 258 for three in 46.4 overs (Saif 132 not out, Ayub 40; Robi 1-27)

Result: Doleshwar won by seven wickets.

UTTARA v SHINEPUKUR

Uttara: 145 all out in 44.4 overs (Minhajul 51 not out, Tanzid 25; Sabbir 3-27)

Shinepukur: 149 for two in 25.1 overs (Sabbir 99, Shadman 38; Jahangir 1-24)

Result: Shinepukur won by eight wickets.



Siddikur swings to ninth

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman moved up to tied ninth position in the Maybank Championship in Malaysia yesterday after a scintillating four-under-par (68) in the third round.

The two-time Asian Tour winner exchanged five birdies for a single bogey at the Saujana Golf and Country Club on Saturday to move 13 places up, taking his three-round tally to seven-under-par (209).

Going into the final round, Siddikur trails the leader, Nacho Alvira of Spain, by six shots. The Spaniard fired seven birdies against a bogey to grab the clubhouse lead from Thomas Pieters of Belgium.

This is the second event of the Asian Tour season for Siddikur, who missed the cut in the first event, the SMBC Singapore Open, in January. A good finish in Malaysia will definitely be a confidence boost for Siddikur ahead of next week's Heron Indian Open and Bangabandhu Cup Golf Bangladesh Open in the first week of April.



Pacer Taskin Ahmed was seen doing sprints as part of his rehabilitation for a lateral ligament injury, which ended his chances of a national call-up for the New Zealand tour, in Mirpur yesterday.

'We can win WC if we will play our best'

ICC

Carlos Brathwaite, the West Indies all-rounder, believes that if his team continue to perform as they did in the one-day international series at home against England, they can challenge for the ICC World Cup 2019 title.

West Indies had to go through the qualifying tournament, in which they lost in the final to Afghanistan, to seal their place in CWC 2019 in England and Wales. They lost one-day international series to Bangladesh (home and away) and India, but enthralled against England in a drawn series where several records were broken.

Brathwaite, whose last-over heroics won his side the ICC T20 World 2016 title, said their recent performance was a good sign as they chase their third World Cup trophy after wins way back in 1975 and 1979.

"I don't want ourselves to be called favourites or underdogs. But we have recently played some great brand of cricket and if we can replicate that [in England] we will go somewhere close to challenging for the title," Brathwaite told Press Trust of India on Friday.

"We have been traditionally a good tournament team, so hopefully, we can win the third World Cup. From players' point of view, we have the belief that we can win and we will play our best cricket."

One of the Windies' concerns is consistency. After the ODIs, for instance, they collapsed in the T20Is against England. Given the format of the World Cup, where each team plays the other, their challenge will be to maintain a high level throughout.

"We have to play our best game over nine or something preliminary games and then in the semifinals and finals," added Brathwaite. "We know what we can do but we need to execute our plans. We have full faith that we can lift the trophy."

For his own part, he'll be happy to play a small part -- even if it isn't something as iconic as hitting four sixes in a final over. "I would not be hitting four sixes again maybe, but I am happy to be contributing," he said. "It's not about scoring a fifty or taking a hattrick. I've matured over the years."



CARLOS BRATHWAITE

Malinga puts country first

REUTERS, Mumbai

Sri Lanka's limited-overs skipper Lasith Malinga says he is ready to sacrifice his earnings from the lucrative Indian Premier League (IPL) in order to win a place in the country's World Cup squad.

Selectors have made it mandatory for Sri Lanka players to participate in a 50-overs tournament at home if they want to be considered for selection in the 15-member squad for the May 30-July 14 Cricket World Cup in England and Wales.

"I had asked the board for the No-Objection Certificate for me to play in the IPL, and they had said that was fine, but that all players who want to go to the World Cup would need to stay back for the provincial tournament," Malinga told ESPNcricinfo.

"So I told them I'd play in the provincial tournament, and I asked the board to inform Mumbai Indians and IPL, since it was their decision. I'm ok with losing those earnings from IPL. I'm doing it for the country."

The 35-year-old fast bowler, who has taken the most wickets (154 in 110 matches) since the first edition of the IPL in 2008, was bought by the Mumbai franchise for 20 million Indian rupees (\$289,184.50) in the January auction for the upcoming season.

He had worked as a bowling mentor for the same team after going unsold in 2018.

Malinga is currently leading the Sri Lanka limited-overs team in South Africa with one Twenty20 match remaining in the series which will be played in Johannesburg on Sunday.

Pakistan want to bounce back

Second ODI against Australia today

AGENCIES, Sharjah



After succumbing to an eight-wicket loss in the first of five one-day internationals against Australia, Pakistan will be keen to make a swift comeback in Sharjah on Sunday.

Pakistan looked comfortable for most of their innings after opting to bat in the opening ODI, but a flurry of wickets in the last 15 overs saw them post a below-par 280/5. The run-rate too remained below 6 through the 50 overs.

Haris Sohail's century was the bright spot for the hosts in an otherwise timid batting display. They will want the rest of the line-up to make a

strong claim for their spots, especially with the ICC World Cup 2019 just a couple of months away. Shan Masood and Umar Akmal, both of whom notched up 40-plus scores but could not kick on, will want to convert their starts in the second ODI.

The bowling unit, spearheaded by the experienced Mohammad Amir, was also rendered ineffective by Australia's counterpunch. Mohammad Abbas, in particular, will want to grab the opportunity with both hands. Pakistan might consider bringing in Junaid Khan for the second ODI.

It will be interesting to see what combination Australia go for in the second ODI, considering the likes of Ashton Turner and Pat Cummins were on the bench for the series opener.

Australia, on the other side, are

brimming with confidence. After coming back from 2-0 down to win the ODI series 3-2 against India, they have

made an instant statement against Pakistan as well. The team took time to find their right combination after Steve Smith and David Warner were suspended, but now seem to have turned into a well-oiled machine.

Players like Shaun Marsh and Peter Handscomb have stepped up significantly over recent weeks and have been fairly consistent in the middle order.

The bowling line-up looks settled as well, with the likes of Nathan Coulter-Nile and Adam Zampa bringing their A game.

One of the Windies' concerns is consistency. After the ODIs, for instance, they collapsed in the T20Is against England. Given the format of the World Cup, where each team plays the other, their challenge will be to maintain a high level throughout.

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