



Abahani were well on their way to victory right from the get go with opener Jahurul Islam striking 96 runs, laced with 12 fours, to set up a six-wicket win against perennial rivals Mohammedan in a DPL encounter in Mirpur yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Abahani prevail in dull chapter

SPORTS REPORTER

There were tear gas shells fired by the police at the Bangabandhu National Stadium during the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) game between archrivals Mohammedan Sporting Club and Abahani Limited after the supporters of the two clubs engaged in a battle in the stands back in 1998.

Being witness to that incident more than two decades ago as a keen follower of the Mohammedan-Abahani clash, the contrast could not have been more stark yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. It seemed like any other day at the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) headquarters, where hardly anyone would have realised that the latest chapter of Bangladesh domestic sport's most storied rivalry was playing out yesterday.

The weather itself was not conducive as it was a hot day in Dhaka and much like the last few years, it was Abahani once again who registered a comprehensive six-wicket win over Mohammedan in a dull match that marked the giants' first clash of this season of the DPL.

Chasing a modest target of 249, Jahurul Islam missed out on his hun-

ded by just four runs, but his 131-ball 96 led Abahani past the target with 15 balls to spare. Soumya Sarkar scored 43 off 54 balls as he along with Jahurul added 105 runs for the opening stand, which laid the platform of an easy win.

Abahani remained on top of the points table with five wins from six games, while Mohammedan faced their third defeat in six games.

SCORES IN BRIEF

MSC V ABAHANI
Mohammedan: 248 for 7 in 50 overs (Irfan 57, Raqibul 51, De Silva 32; Nazmul 3-29, Saifuddin 3-31)
Abahani: 254 for 4 in 47.3 over (Jahurul 96, Soumya 43, Jaffer 38; Shahadat 2-59)
Result: Abahani won by 6 wickets.

The home of cricket resembled a deserted arena with hardly 70 people in the stadium to watch the game. Of those 70 supporters a majority were Abahani faithfuls, and they briefly tried to create some noise but the volume paled in comparison to the glory days.

BCB's media committee chairman Jalal Younus looked outside his office window overlooking the playing area and said in a low voice: "There are no more than fifty spectators in the sta-

dium. I feel really bad as during our time the stands used to jam-packed for an Abahani-Mohammedan."

There were times when the intensity surrounding an Abahani-Mohammedan game gathered even as early as the eve of the game with club officials and supporters creating a lot of excitement and buzz among the players in the club tents.

Over the years that culture has faded and even the cricketers do not feel the hype of a battle between the most famous archrivals in Dhaka cricket.

Going back to the game, after being asked to bat first Mohammedan posted 248 for seven in fifty overs despite at one stage being 155 for two in 37 overs. Openers Liton Das (27) and Abdul Mazid (26) provided a steady start before Irfan Shukkur and skipper Raqibul Hasan added 68 runs for the third wicket.

But both Irfan and Raqibul departed after scoring fifties as Mohammedan lost their way, losing a few quick wickets. Mohammedan's Sri Lankan recruit Chaturanga De Silva scored a quick 32 off 24 balls and Sohag Gazi added 27 at the end to take them to a fighting total.

Medium-pace Mohamad Saifuddin and left-arm spinner Nazmul Islam were the pick of the bowlers for Abahani, picking up three wickets each.

Mehedi fires Rupganj's charge

SPORTS REPORTER

Khelaghar Samaj Kallyan Samity could not register their second victory in this edition of the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) as Legends of Rupganj rode on Mehedi Maruf's brilliant century -- the only one of the day -- to chase down a challenging 264 for three and win by five wickets at the BKSP-3 ground yesterday.

In the other game, Asela Gunaratne's all-round performance ensured Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club's comfortable 43-run victory over Gazi Group Cricketers at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah.

At BKSP-3, opener Robiul Islam Robi scored a sensible 87-ball 53 to give Khelaghar a steady start after they were asked to bat first. However, the highlight of Khelaghar's innings was the 131-run third-wicket partnership between Mahidul Islam Ankon and Ashok Menaria. Although Mahidul fell prey to a Subhasish Roy delivery in the 47th over after scoring 77 runs off 99 balls, Menaria remained unbeaten on a 79-ball 87 to ensure a challenging total.

After the exchange, Rupganj got off to a splendid start as their openers Mehedi and Mohammad Naim strung together a 118-run partnership, setting the tone for the successful chase of the challenging total before Naim was

dismissed for 72 off 73 balls. However, Mehedi went on to notch a brilliant 134-ball 108 before being trapped in front by Masum Khan in the 46th over. By then, on 239 for four in the 46th over, the fate of the match was all but sealed and Rupganj went on to register their fifth victory of the season.

In Fatullah, it was a 121-run fifth-wicket stand between skipper Nurul Hasan and Gunaratne that helped Sheikh Jamal post a challenging 277 for six. Although Gunaratne was dismissed in the penultimate over after a fluent 65-ball 79-run knock, Nurul remained unbeaten for his run-a-ball 81 to ensure Sheikh Jamal finish on a high.



MEHEDI MARUF ... 108

SCORES IN BRIEF

SHEIKH JAMAL V GAZI GROUP
Sheikh Jamal: 277 for 6 in 50 overs (Nurul 81 not out, Gunaratne 79, Fardeen 46; Rasool 3-37, Mshukur 1-14)
Gazi Group: 234 all out in 47 overs (Shamsur 81, Mahedi 60, Touhid 27; Khaleel 3-31, Sakil 3-47)
Result: Sheikh Jamal won by 43 runs.
KHELAGHAR V RUPGANJ
Khelaghar: 264 for 3 in 50 overs (Menaria 87 not out, Mahidul 77, Robiul 53; Muktar 1-42, Subashis 1-59)
Rupganj: 268 for 5 in 49.2 overs (Mehedi 108, Naim 72, Naeem 28 not out; Moinul 3-42, Masum 1-42)
Result: Rupganj won by 5 wickets.

In chase, Gazi Group never looked on course for the stiff total as they suffered a top-order collapse and were reeling on 104 for six in 24 overs. However, Shamsur Rahman and Mahedi Hasan's 89-run seventh-wicket partnership raised some hope for Gazi Group. But it was once again Gunaratne who came to the rescue -- this time with the ball -- as the Sri Lankan first picked up Shamsur for 81 to break the threatening partnership and later went on to scalp the wicket of the dangerous-looking Mahedi on 60 to wrap it up for Sheikh Jamal.



Mahmudullah Riyad could not resist yesterday's Dhaka derby between archrivals Mohammedan and Abahani. The all-rounder watched from a dressing room at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur as Abahani romped to a six-wicket win. PHOTO: STAR

Richardson sent home

AFP, Sydney

Australian fast bowler Jhye Richardson has dislocated his shoulder and will head home from the Pakistan tour, officials said, as he faces a battle to be fit for the World Cup.

Richardson took 2-16 in the second one-dayer in Sharjah on Sunday but fell awkwardly on his bowling arm and left the field in the 11th over.

"Unfortunately it's a dislocated shoulder for Jhye Richardson," Cricket Australia tweeted.

The governing body added on its website that the 22-year-old -- who has gone from strength to strength in recent months -- would fly back to Perth on Monday and undergo scans to assess the damage.

"He's obviously pretty shattered but he's trying to stay upbeat," teammate Nathan Lyon told reporters. "It's very disappointing, especially off the back of the summer that Jhye's had."

"The way he's been performing has been pretty impressive. Fingers crossed he can be fit for the World Cup and be in the selection (mix) there."

U-23s primed to end winless streak

SPORTS REPORTER



Buoyed by two spirited performances against Bahrain and Palestine, the Bangladesh under-23 football team are looking to break their drought in the AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers when they play their last group fixture against Sri Lanka in Manama today.

The match at the Khalifa City Sports Stadium is scheduled to kick off at 7:00pm Bangladesh time.

Bangladesh came into this qualifying campaign with a very sorry record -- nine defeats and a draw in the previous 10 appearances across three editions, and they were not quite expected to set things on fire in Manama either. But after two spirited performances against the two much-higher ranked sides from West Asia where they lost both matches by the slimmest of margins while giving Palestine a run for their money, Jamie Day's charges can certainly hope to end their draught in the competition.

The Bangladesh coach, during his pre-match talk with reporters, hoped that his charges would finally end their barren run and end the campaign on a high.

"We'd like to try and finish with a win. That is what they deserve. We'll set up and plan to try and win the game. We haven't won a game before. So it will be nice to get that and win the first game," Day said

regarding the match against Sri Lanka yesterday.

The English coach felt that they deserved more out of the first two games, but even in defeat he was quite content with the effort from his charges.

"We played well because the boys took on board what we wanted them to do. If we were a bit better in finishing, maybe we would have got some-

thing from both games. The work rate has been fantastic," Day said.

When it comes to FIFA ranking of senior teams, Bangladesh (192) are not far ahead of the Sri Lankans (201) and there is little to choose between the two sides from the recent meetings. But if this under-23 campaign is taken into consideration with Sri Lanka having suffered 9-0 defeats against Palestine and

Bahrain, Bangladesh should start the game as odds-on favourites.

Bangladesh team captain Mashuk Mia Johnny is determined that his colleagues will give their best and return home with a victory.

"In the two matches we played, we tried our best for a victory but we couldn't win. We'll try our best again to win against Sri Lanka," Johnny said.



Bangladesh coach Jamie Day watches his charges train at the Khalifa City Sports Stadium in Manama yesterday ahead of today's AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers fixture against Sri Lanka. PHOTO: BFF

Smith tastes defeat on IPL return

AFP, Jaipur



Australia's Steve Smith made a modest return to the Indian Premier League yesterday, scoring 20 for his side Rajasthan Royals as they lost to Kings XI Punjab by 14 runs.

Big-hitting Chris Gayle smashed 79 off 47 deliveries to steer Kings XI to 184 for four, a total they defended by restricting Royals to 170 for 9 in the Twenty20 tournament at Jaipur.

However, the match was marred by Jos Buttler's run out when spinner Ravichandran Ashwin took the bats off at the non-striker's end while the batsman was backing up.

The dismissal widely known as 'mankading' is considered to be against cricket's spirit of fair play and England's Buttler, who scored 69 off 43 deliveries, walked dejectedly back to the pavilion after an argument with Ashwin.

The term -- used when a bowler runs out a non-striker before delivery -- was coined 70 years ago, when Indian all-rounder Vinoo Mankad twice ran out Bill Brown at the bowler's end during India's tour of Australia in 1947.

However Royals skipper Ajinkya Rahane played down the controversy and said his team will take it "sportingly".

Smith, who along with compatriot David Warner made his return to the IPL after missing the previous edition due to a ball-tampering controversy, walked out into a charged field of play.

The former Australia captain took time to settle down before hitting England paceman Sam Curran for a four and six in one over.

Curran, who took two wickets, got his revenge in his very next over as he sent Smith trudging back to the pavilion with KL Rahul taking a sharp catch while running to his left from long-on. Bowlers soon struck back as the Royals batting collapsed from 148-2 to 164-9 as a disappointed Smith looked on from the dugout.

SCORES IN BRIEF
Punjab: 184 for 4 in 20 overs (Gayle 79, Khan 46 not out, Agarwal 22; Stokes 2-48, Kulkarni 1-30)
Rajasthan: 170 for 9 in 20 overs (Buttler 69, Samson 30; Mujeeb 2-31, Rajput 2-33, Curran 2-52)
Result: Punjab won by 14 runs.
Player-of-the-match: Chris Gayle.