



On the opening day of the Bangabandhu Cup Golf Open, little-known Australian Maverick Antcliff grabbed the clubhouse lead with an eight-under while Bangladesh's unheralded Muaj Mohammad (inset) followed suit with a six-under at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Promising start for locals

SPORTS REPORTER

Unheralded Muaj Mohammad stole the show on the opening day of the Bangabandhu Cup Golf Open with a six-under as the local golfers made a promising start in their home Asian Tour event at the Kurmitola Golf Club (KGC) yesterday.

Muaj, the 21-year-old from Savar, brushed aside an early bogey to fire seven birdies and take the joint-second position, trailing first-round leader Maverick Antcliff of Australia by two strokes.

The opening day of the event, being held for the fifth consecutive time, was a promising one for the locals as five golfers ended the day within the top-15 positions.

Bangladesh's best golfer Siddikur Rahman ended the day with a flawless five-under to take a share of the third position alongside promising golfer Sajib Ali.

However, the day belonged to Australia's Antcliff, who was making his debut at the KGC after having only secured his Asian tour card last year.

The 25-year-old Australian returned with a bogey-free card highlighted by eight birdies to stay ahead of Muaj, Chinese Taipei's Wang Weilun, as well

as Thailand's Jazz Janewattananond, Settee Prakongvech and Sadom Kaewkanjana.

"I am really happy with the way I played today. I have been working hard on my game after my first few events back home," said the Australian, who failed to keep his Asian Tour card for 2019 after finishing outside of top-60 in the order of merit last year.

Unlike Antcliff, Muaj started the day with a bogey on the third hole, but fired seven birdies thereafter to have the best day of his professional career.

"I just stayed in it and kept the

good momentum going. Everything was good for me today. I managed to hit it close. All my birdies were from within six feet. I putted very well today as well," Muaj said.

Bangladesh's two-time Asian Tour winner Siddikur made a cautious start to the event. He has never won an Asian Tour event on home soil, but after returning with a bogey-free card, he was confident about his game.

"I felt really comfortable out there today. It was nice to come back with a bogey-free round with five birdies. I left a few birdies putts out there but overall, it was good,"

Siddikur said.

While he missed a few close putts on the front nine, the experienced golfer wrapped up the day with an excellent 15-foot birdie.

"I had a really tricky line on the 18th but I made it and it reminded me of my birdie on that hole to finish second place two years ago. It was nice to finish off with that birdie again," the 34-year-old said.

A total of 10 out of 47 local golfers finished the first round with under-par scores, raising hopes of better performances from the locals compared to the previous four editions.

Six-under surprise from Muaj

SPORTS REPORTER

Muaj Mohammad had never made the cut in Bangladesh's Asian Tour events in his previous two attempts. In fact, the Savar-based golfer had never managed to shoot better than two-under in international events.

So, when he came to the clubhouse of the Kurmitola Golf Club with a card of six-under-par (65) on the opening day of the Bangabandhu Cup Golf Open, Muaj was as sur-

prised as everyone else.

"I didn't expect myself to shoot six-under. It feels really nice. I gave myself a lot of birdie chances actually but I made a few mistakes out there," the youngster told reporters.

Having missed the cut in his previous two attempts, Muaj was only thinking about making the cut here. While he is in second position at the moment, Muaj is still mindful of the past and hence he is not looking too far ahead of himself.

"Before the event I didn't have many expectations. I came here with the target of making the cut. I still want to ensure the cut first and then look forward," said Muaj.

His secret to the first-round success, Muaj believes, is not taking any pressure. "I made a bogey, missing the target by only a few yards, on the third hole. So I told myself that it wasn't a big mistake. I just tried to play normally without taking pressure which is what helped me get this score."



The third phase of Dhaka Premier League (DPL) starts with the defending champions Abahani taking on Prime Doleshwar Sporting Club at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today. Doleshwar skipper Forhad Reza (L) will be hoping to continue his explosive form and help his side secure their seventh win of the tournament while the likes of Soumya Sarkar and Sabbir Rahman will look to help Abahani continue their winning ways.



PHOTO: BCB

Pandya brothers dismantle Chennai

STAR SPORT DESK

Pandya brothers - Hardik and Krunal - combined to lead Mumbai Indians to a 37-run win against MS Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings in their Indian Premier League encounter at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai yesterday.

Riding on Hardik's late cameo, Mumbai Indians creased 29 runs in the final over to reach 170 for five. Sent into bat, Suryakumar Yadav compiled a half century to lay the foundation for Mumbai Indians.

Before Hardik's eight-ball 25 and Kieron Pollard's seven-ball 17, Yadav stroked his way to 59 in 43 balls against the CSK attack that kept the MI batsmen on a tight leash till the last few overs.

Yadav, who hit eight fours and a six, also put on a half century stand with Krunal (42 in 32 balls) to revive MI's floundering innings.

Towards the end, Hardik and Pollard struck big to remain unbeaten and boosted the total with the former striking three sixes and one four and the latter hitting twice over the ropes.

Later, Hardik bowled a terrific spell, taking three wickets for 20 runs as Chennai Super Kings failed to get any momentum in their chase. Veteran pacer Lasith Malinga broke the through Chennai's batting lineup with three wickets while Australian Jason Behrendorf scalped two wickets. Apart from Kedar Jadhav's 58, there was no substantial contribution from the Chennai batters.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Mumbai Indians: 170 for 5 in 20 overs (Yadav 59, Krunal 43, Hardik 25 not out; Tahir 1-25)

Chennai Super Kings: 133 for 8 in 20 overs (Jadhav 58, Dhoni 12; Hardik 3-20, Malinga 3-34)

Result: Mumbai Indians won by 37 runs.

Bangladesh to start against UAE

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday disclosed the fixtures of the Bangamata U-19 Women's International Gold Cup.

All the matches of the tournament will kick off at 6:00pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka. The tournament, named after Bangamata Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib, will start on April 22.

Hosts Bangladesh will play their opening match against United Arab Emirates on April 22 before facing Kyrgyzstan in the second Group B match on April 26.

Group A features Mongolia, Tajikistan and Laos. The two semifinals will be held on April 29 and April 30 while the final will take place on May 3.

During the tournament, Bangladesh Premier League will remain suspended while the mid-term players' registration window will take place between April 21 and 30.

NZ pick 15 for World Cup

AFP, Wellington



New Zealand opted for experience in a 15-man squad named Wednesday for this year's cricket World Cup, with rookie Tom Blundell's inclusion as back-up wicketkeeper the only real surprise.

The Black Caps hope to shed their tag as valiant losers and claim the title after exiting in the semifinals six times and suffering a heavy defeat to Australia in their only appearance in the final four years ago.

New Zealand are currently third in the one-day rankings, behind England and India.

Coach Gary Stead said the Kane Williamson-led side had repeatedly excelled at the top level and he was

SQUAD

Kane Williamson (capt), Tom Blundell, Trent Boult, Colin de Grandhomme, Lockie Ferguson, Martin Guptill, Matt Henry, Tom Latham, Colin Munro, Jimmy Neesham, Henry Nicholls, Mitchell Santner, Ish Sodhi, Tim Southee, Ross Taylor.

'My career so far is six out of ten'

Among the fabulous five of Bangladesh cricket, Mahmudullah Riyad is arguably the one who tries to keep the lowest profile when it comes to facing the media. A soft-spoken batsman has grown as a cricketer over the years and is now rated as a big-match player in the Tigers' ranks, being the only Bangladeshi to smash back-to-back hundreds in the last ICC World Cup in 2015. The 33-year-old will once again shoulder a lot of hopes in the upcoming World Cup campaign in England and Wales this summer. The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin caught up with Mahmudullah for an exclusive interview, speaking about Bangladesh's chances at the World Cup, his personal preparations and injury updates along with a few other topics. The excerpts of the interview are below:

The Daily Star (TDS): What is the condition of your injured shoulder?

Mahmudullah Riyad (MR): At the moment it's not bad. I started rehabilitation two days ago and at the moment it's getting better.

When the reports came and I first heard that it was a grade 3 tear, I was honestly scared. But after talking to the physios, including the BCB doctor, they said that many of the players are playing despite having this injury. The plus point for me is that I am not facing any problems in my batting because of this injury. If I am able to start throwing and bowling then everything is good. I was feeling some stiffness in my shoulder for the past four months but as we had continuous games I couldn't realise that. During the third ODI in New Zealand I dove full length while fielding and I think the injury became worse after that. The pain gradually increased during the first Test and I bowled only one over. After doing the scan I got to know that it was serious.

TDS: There is talk of surgery...

MR: The reason for the talk of surgery came because Mehedi (Hasan Miraz), Rubel (Hossain) and Mustafizur (Rahman) faced the same problem. However, Rubel and Mustafizur are fast bowlers and the shoulder is a big factor for them so they decided to undergo surgery at the initial stage. Because I am mainly a batsman and an off spinner, I think it won't be a big problem for me which I realised after talking to the physios.

TDS: How was the tour of New Zealand as a team?

MR: It was a mixed bag as a team but as a captain my message was: we are here to win. We couldn't do that may be due to a lack of application but everyone had that belief. It was a good learning experience.

TDS: You struck a century in Hamilton again, the same venue where you registered your maiden Test ton.

MR: Obviously I felt good and I remember Tamim (Iqbal) said to me jokingly after the game in Hamilton to take some of the soil from there with me as I have had quite a few good scores on that ground.

TDS: Did the New Zealand tour and everything you went through change your perspective on life?

MR: I thank the Almighty for being alive after the situation we went through. I don't think anyone can forget the incident. It was a matter of a few minutes; anything could have happened, I might not even have been alive now. It was due to blessings from everyone. When I first spoke to my family after the incident everyone was crying and they were shocked because nobody imagined such thing could happen in New Zealand. I feel bad whenever I watch the videos and for those who lost their lives. I want to also thank the BCB for its support in such a difficult time.

TDS: In your twelve-year international career, how much would you rate yourself out of ten?

MR: Five, maybe six. I think I should have done much more as far as my ability is concerned. There were a few instances when I was unable to deliver and couldn't finish the game when batting at five or six. Hopefully I can give myself more points when my career is over.

TDS: You have risen to big occasions in the past, especially in the ICC events including the last World Cup and the Champions Trophy where you scored hundreds. How are you preparing yourself for the upcoming World Cup?

MR: Preparation is very important. If you talk about the previous World Cup and the Champions Trophy, we had good preparations. In 2015 we had a camp in Australia which helped us a lot to get used to the wickets. We did something similar in England ahead of the Champions Trophy. Once again, we are going to Ireland and we will also have a camp in England before the World Cup. I think each individual has their own way of preparing and one should know what type of preparation suits them. I am working on my fitness at the moment as well as batting and bowling gradually.

TDS: Realistically what are Bangladesh's chances in the upcoming World Cup?

MR: No one can guarantee who will win the World Cup or who is going to reach the semifinal. But I personally believe that we are capable of getting into the top four and not only me, the whole team also believes that. We have been discussing this along with Mashrafe (Bin Mortaza) and it is a



positive sign that everyone has that belief. It depends on the execution on the field so preparation is very important and I think how we start the tournament will be crucial.

TDS: Your favourite World Cup memory as a player?

MR: It was the game against England in the last World Cup. You can't imagine what we did after winning the game in Adelaide. All the players and the coaching staff went totally mad. We were all screaming and at some point everyone felt like a mad person. It was the best moment of my life. Whenever I see the video of that game and Rubel takes the last wicket and Nasser Hussain says 'Bangladeshi Tigers have knocked the England lions out of the World Cup', it feels good.

TDS: Your favourites World Cup moment as a fan?

MR: Wasim Akram's spell against England in the 1992 World Cup final, when he dismissed Allan Lamb and Chris Lewis in consecutive deliveries. It was the first moment that attracted me towards cricket.



The biggest surprise in New Zealand's World Cup squad is the inclusion of wicketkeeper Tom Blundell, who is yet to play a one-day international.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

confident the consistency would shine through at the tournament in England and Wales.

"We've got a squad here of 15 players that we think can give us a really, really good chance of going far into the tournament," he said.

"If we play close to our potential, then hopefully we can do New Zealand proud."

Wellington keeper Blundell was selected after Tim Siefert, the regular back-up to first-choice gloveman Tom Latham, broke his finger in a domestic match last month.