

SPORT



Thai rookie Sadom Kaewkanjana (L) may be eyeing his first Asian Tour title in the Bangabandhu Cup Golf Open, but India's seasoned campaigner Rashid Khan is breathing down his neck as the event moves into the final day at the Kurmitola Golf Club today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Sadom in lead as locals play catch-up

SPORTS REPORTER



At the end of the third day of the Bangabandhu Cup Golf Open, Bangladesh's hopes of an elusive home winner on the Asian Tour seemingly became ever-so difficult as young Thai talent Sadom Kaewkanjana took an assured step towards a breakthrough victory.

The rookie Thai golfer signed off for a three-under-par (68) at the Kurmitola Golf Club to take a two-shot lead, with Bangladesh's best hope Siddikur Rahman seven shots behind in joint-fourth position.

Rashid Khan of India stayed in contention for his third Asian Tour title after firing four-under-par (67) while Bangladesh's Akbar Hossain returned a card of 69 to end the day in joint-seventh position.

The 20-year-old Sadom, who is making his first start on Tour after coming through the Qualifying School last December, marked his card with four birdies against a bogey to stay atop the leaderboard with an 18-under-par (195) total.

Sadom is chasing to become the third Thai player following Thitiphun Chuayprakong (2016) and Jazz Janewattananond (2017) to win the National Open of Bangladesh.

Should he accomplish the feat on Sunday, he would also become the record fastest Qualifying School graduate to win on the Asian Tour. However, he is keeping his feet firmly grounded.

"I remembered finishing second in a

tournament here when I was an amateur four years ago. Good memories coming back here," the young Thai told Asiantour.com after the day's play.

"I won't be thinking much about tomorrow. My aim for this season is to keep my card but I will try my best tomorrow," added Sadom.

Sadom's overnight three-shot lead was reduced to two by his Rashid, who narrowed the gap after carding a bogey-free (67), highlighted by an eagle and two birdies.

"Rashid played well but I told myself to just focus on my game. My goal was just to hit fairways and greens and make putts. If I can hit the fairway, it will be easier," Sadom said.

Local hopes, though, remains firmly on the shoulders of two-time winner Siddikur, who enjoyed his second bogey-free round, but not still good enough to mount a serious challenge for the title.

LEADERBOARD (TOP 10)

1	Sadom Kaewkanjana (Thailand)	-18 (195)
2	Rashid Khan (India)	-16 (197)
3	Ajeetesh Sandhu (India)	-12 (201)
4	Siddikur Rahman (Bangladesh)	-11 (202)
	Maverick Antcliff (Australia)	-11 (202)
6	Jack Harrison (England)	-10 (203)
7	Jazz Janewattananond (Thailand)	-9 (204)
	Akbar Hossain (Bangladesh)	-9 (204)
	Berry Henson (USA)	-9 (204)
10	Viraj Madappa (India)	-8 (205)



SIDDIKUR RAHMAN

He was, however, happy with his effort, except for his putting, which he felt went cold in the third round.

"It's great to shoot another bogey-free round. Everything was good today except my putting. I didn't putt as well as I did in the last two rounds. But I hit the ball well again and my second shots were good too. I managed to hit it close to the pins but left some putts out there," Siddikur said.

"I hope to make more putts tomorrow and jump up a little bit higher on the leaderboard. This is the fifth year we're playing in my National Open on the Asian Tour. To be honest, the main difference for me so far is that I am not feeling the pressure that I felt in the past. This time, I feel more comfortable and I don't take pressure at all honestly," Siddikur added.

Akbar stayed two shots behind Siddikur after exchanging three birdies for a bogey while Sajib Ali was further four shots behind after settling for a one-over-par (72) in the third round.

Brothers seek end to record losing streak

SPORTS REPORTER



Falling giants Brothers Union will be hoping to catch a break when the Bangladesh Premier League resumes today following a one-month break due to international engagements of the national team and national U-23 team.

Bottom-placed Brothers Union take on Rahmatganj at 6:00pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium with hopes of putting an end to their seven-match losing streak, the longest in the history of the professional football league.

The Gopibagh-based outfit have not won since a 1-0 win over Mohammedan in their second match and will be looking to climb out of

bottom place in the 13-team table. However, they will face a stern test from their neighbours, who are in ninth position in the table with eight points.

Brothers may be seeking confidence from their past encounters with Rahmatganj. The All Orange outfit have won 11 times against Rahmatganj's four in 18 professional football league meetings, but the fact is that results have been going against Brothers despite them putting up good performances.

Brothers coach Syed Nayeem Uddin had a full month to repair his side's weaknesses and he will be expecting a fresh start today while his counterpart Syed Golam Jilani will be hoping to keep the momentum going after 1-1 draw against a spirited

Arambagh.

Away at Rafique Uddin Bhuiyan Stadium in Mymensingh, newcomers NoFel SC take on fourth-placed Saif SC at 3:30pm with hopes of giving their superior opponents a run for their money.

"I can't tell you about the victory but I can assure you of a competitive match," said NoFel coach Kamal Babu, who opined that there may be two consequences of the long break.

"Big teams that have been showing consistent performances from the beginning may lose their momentum after the resumption of the league following a long break while small teams struggling from the outset may get back into rhythm by rectification their mistakes over the past month," said Babu.



"Test cricket gives ultimate satisfaction that I don't think any other type of cricket does due to the nature and longevity of it."

ALASTAIR COOK



Players of the new BFF-funded youth academy at their new lodgings in a four-storied building in Beraid adjacent to the Fortis Sports Club ground yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

BFF's youth academy a go

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF's) dream of a youth academy turned into reality as 60 budding footballers yesterday were provided lodging at a four-storied building in Beraid, adjacent to the Fortis Sports Club ground which is supposed to be used by academy footballers.

The game's local governing body's promise to form a football academy finally saw the light after a three-and-a-half-year gap since a FIFA-funded academy in Sylhet was closed after just nine months of activity.

The players -- 32 from the U-15 group and 28 from the U-18 group -- were picked through a month-long talent hunt programme and are expected to start training from today under a local seven-member coaching staff. However, BFF technical and strategic director Paul Smalley feels having foreign coaches at the academy would be best for the players' development.

"It's important to have foreign expertise to complement local expertise. There are some good coaches who have been involved with the BFF for the past two or three years and have been successful in competitions. What we want to do is to make sure we recruit the best youth developers from

overseas," said Smalley in a video message.

"Things have got to be of the highest standard. It's a work in progress. There are things that need to be done in the accommodation box and on the surface. But I'm convinced that in future things will be nearly perfect," Smalley said about the Fortis Sports Club's facilities.

Last January, without mentioning any names of those who came forward to provide funding, BFF president Kazi Salahuddin said: "Seven, including me, will give away Tk 25 lakh each and deposit Tk 2.5 crore to initially run the academy and we will sponsor the academy until I manage sponsors."

Lara wants consistency from Windies

ICC



West Indies great Brian Lara said the main challenge for Jason Holder's men at the 2019 World Cup was to get to the knockout stage -- after which they had the match-winners "to beat any team".

Lara, who retired with 10,405 runs from 299 ODIs, said the team's main concern was lack of consistency.

"The West Indies have match-winners, but that's not enough to play in English conditions and win the World Cup. We need a team that is consistent," he said on Thursday during a function in Mumbai.

"[But] once they are in the knockout, they can beat any team -- we have seen that in the past."

The West Indies, two-time winners of the World Cup, had to go through a qualifying tournament to seal their place in the 10-team event in England and Wales, starting

30 May. They are placed ninth on the ICC ODI Rankings, but in the recent series at home, ran England, the top-ranked side, close to draw the five-match ODI series 2-2.

They prompted England collapses, while also breaking records with their batting, led by the indomitable Chris Gayle. It marked a welcome turnaround for the team after losses to Bangladesh at home and away and India away.

On their tour of India in October-November, the hosts had taken the five-match ODI series 3-1, with one tied. They also won the Tests 2-0 and swept the three T20Is. Lara, though, felt things might be a lot closer when India tour the Caribbean and the United States later this year for two Tests, three ODIs and three T20Is.

"The team has shown enough improvement from what they played in India last October. What we are trying to be is a strong team at home," he said. "India may have to worry when they come to the West Indies because we have a team that understands the conditions."



KKR cut down RCB

AGENCIES, Bengaluru

Andre Russell came up with another sensational display of power hitting to fire Kolkata Knight Riders to a five-wicket win over Royal Challengers Bangalore in an Indian Premier League match in Bengaluru yesterday.

Needing 66 runs off 24 balls, Kolkata were up against it before Russell came in and smashed an unbeaten 48 off 13 balls to complete the job with five balls to spare.

Russell's brutal hitting came after Virat Kohli (84 off 49) and AB de Villiers (63 off 32) recreated their "magic" with a delightful 108-run stand to take Bangalore to 205 for three.

Kolkata were kept alive in the chase through opener Chris Lynn (43 off 31), Robbie Uthappa (33 off 25) and Nitish Rana (37 off 23) before Russell singlehandedly got the job done in the death overs.

Earlier, Kohli and de Villiers hammered the bowlers at will during their entertaining stand. At one stage, it seemed Bangalore would get close to 250 but Kolkata did well to pull things back a bit.

Kohli also overtook Suresh Raina to become the leading run-getter in IPL history besides completing 8000 runs in T20 cricket.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangalore: 205 for 3 in 20 overs (Kohli 84, De Villiers 63; Rana 1-22, Yadav 1-31)
Kolkata: 206 for 5 in 19.1 overs (Russell 48 not out, Lynn 43; Negi 2-21, Saini 2-34)
Result: Kolkata won by 5 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Andre Russell.