

SPORT



After Liton Das provided a solid start, it was Avishek Mitra's (inset) 65 runs that proved pivotal in helping Mohammedan Sporting Club secure a Super League place in the Dhaka Premier League with a one-wicket victory over BKSP in Fatullah yesterday.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

MSC edge into Super League

SPORTS REPORTER

A boundary off the penultimate delivery of the match saw Mohammedan win an enthralling Dhaka Premier League (DPL) contest by one wicket against Bangladesh Krira Shikha Protisthan (BKSP) at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah yesterday. With this dramatic win, Mohammedan secured their Super League place as the round robin stage of the coveted 50-over tournament came to an end with two other fixtures being played out at two different venues.

In the other games, Prime Bank Cricket Club registered a 34-run victory over Gazi Group at BKSP-4 while Shinepukur Cricket Club rode on Shadman Islam's half-century to seal a 15-run victory via DLS method in a rain-interrupted game at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. The top six teams will now fight it out in the Super League while the bottom three will be embroiled in a relegation battle.

POINTS TABLE

Team	Mat	W	L	T	Pts	NRR
Rupganj	11	10	1	0	20	0.648
Abahani	11	8	3	0	16	0.612
Prime Bank	11	8	3	0	16	0.502
Doleshwar	11	7	4	0	14	0.163
Mohammedan	11	6	5	0	12	0.299
Sk Jamal	11	6	5	0	12	-0.057
Shinepukur	11	5	5	1	11	0.248
Gazi Group	11	5	6	0	10	-0.074
Brothers Union	11	3	8	0	6	-0.098
Khelaghar	11	3	8	0	6	-0.391
BKSP	11	2	8	1	5	-0.666
Uttara	11	2	9	0	4	-1.058

saved the day for his side. Avishek top scored, notching 65 off 69 balls, before falling prey to Hasan Murad in the 44th over with the score on 214 for seven. Although Mohammedan lost two more wickets after that, Saqlain Sajib's boundary off Sumon Khan off the penultimate ball of the match ensured Mohammedan would prevail.

Earlier, Aminul Islam's 60 off 92 balls and a 73-ball 49 from Shamim Hossain helped BKSP post a challenging total.

In Mirpur, Khelaghar were bundled out for a below par 190-run total after they were asked to bat first. A team-high 40 off 55 balls came from the bat of Masum Khan at the death while Shinepukur pacer Delwar Hossain's economical figures of three for 27 runs helped restrict Khelaghar to a low total.

After the exchange, it was opener Shadman's patient 112-ball 64 that proved pivotal for the side's triumph on the day. The game was eventually decided via DLS method after Shinepukur had scored 165 for six in 41 overs before rain halted the game.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KHELAGHAR v SHINEPUKUR

Khelaghar: 190 all out in 48.1 overs (Amit 37, Masum 40; Delwar 3-27)

Shinepukur: 165 for 6 in 41 overs (Shadman 64, Chand 34; Robiul 2-26, Moinul 2-31)

Result: Shinepukur won by 15 runs (D/L method)

PRIME BANK v GAZI GROUP

Prime Bank: 201 for 9 in 50 overs (Nayeem 34, Ariful 34, Monir 25 not out; Sanjib 3-30, Nasum 2-32)

Gazi Group: 167 all out in 45.2 overs (Mysukur 74, Shamsur 27; Nayeem 2-39, Kapali 2-13)

Result: Prime Bank won by 34 runs.

BKSP v MSC

BKSP: 249 for 7 in 50 overs (Fahad 32, Aminul 60, Shamim 49, Akbar 38, Parvez 38; Rahatul 3-37, Bhatia 2-48)

MSC: 252 for 9 in 49.5 overs (Liton 53, Irfan 41, Avishek 65, Raquib 35; Murad 4-30)

Result: Mohammedan won by 1 wicket.

Elsewhere, right-arm young spinner Nayeem Hasan's all-round performance ensured a comfortable victory for Prime Bank. Nayeem scored a valuable 34 runs with the bat to help Prime Bank post 201 for nine before returning figures of two for 39 to help bundle Gazi Group to 167 in 45.2 overs.

Fizz's prep in doubt

SPORTS REPORTER



With just over a month left before the World Cup, the Bangladesh cricket team's injury list just grew longer as the nation's ace left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman suffered an injury to his left ankle during practice on Wednesday with his Dhaka Premier League (DPL) side Shinepukur Cricket Club. The injury is set to sideline him for two weeks.

Mustafizur becomes the latest name on the injured players' list with the likes of Mahmudullah Riyad, Rubel Hossain, Mushfiqur Rahim, Taskin Ahmed and Mohammad Saifuddin already undergoing recovery periods for their respective injuries.

Before playing for Shinepukur this season, Mustafizur last played the DPL in December 27, 2014. His injury is set to hamper his World Cup preparations with the Tigers heading to Ireland on April 27 to play a tri-nation series with the hosts and New Zealand.



There is no fracture-related injury here. There is some pain in the ligament -- a lateral ankle sprain.

He had suffered this kind of sprain before but predictions regarding these injuries are difficult," he added.

Bangladesh will be involved in a training camp -- tentatively to start from April 22 -- to kick off their preparations for the World Cup and the tri-nation series. The left-arm quick may not be fully fit when the camp starts.

"When the camp will begin, he will be in the rehabilitation process. When we review his condition after two weeks, we will be able to say if he can participate in the skills training," Debashish concluded.

Messi's Argentina to play in Bangladesh again?

SPORTS REPORTER



Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam has expressed his interest in bringing the Argentina national football team to Bangladesh in 2021, marking the centennial birth anniversary of father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The State Minister expressed his interest to the new non-resident Argentine ambassador Daniel Chuburu (based in New Delhi) when the latter paid a visit yesterday, said a press release from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The discussion took place as part of talk regarding cooperation in culture, sports as well as business opportunities between the two countries.

The Argentina football team earlier played a FIFA friendly match against the Nigeria national team at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka on September 6, 2013. Playing before a sell-out crowd, the two-time World Cup winners Argentina won the game 3-1, with Higuain and di Maria scoring the two goals. Argentina's other goal came from an own goal while Chinedu Obasi scored the consolation goal for Nigeria. Barcelona superstar set up two of the goals for the Argentines.

BHF polls on April 29

SPORTS REPORTER

The election commission yesterday rescheduled the polls of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BFF) after excluding the name of Shishu Kishor Sangho councilor -- Tareq A Adel -- from the voters' list on the court instructions.

Now, 83 councilors will cast their votes to elect five vice presidents, one general secretary, two joint-secretaries, one treasurer and 19 executive members on the April 29 polls, which were initially scheduled for April 8.

The last date to withdraw nominations has now been fixed on April 16 and the final candidate list will be published on April 18.

The election commission postponed all activities related to the BHF polls on April 3 after a High Court bench passed a stay order over the final voters' list.

MCC drunk on Spirit, but it ain't cricket

SAKEB SUBHAN

On March 25, Ravichandran Ashwin's unconventional run-out of Jos Buttler in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) reignited possibly cricket's most unnecessary debate. Rajasthan Royals batsman Buttler made the mistake (a charitable characterisation) of wandering out of the non-striker's crease before Kings XI Punjab skipper Ravichandran Ashwin delivered the ball. Now, as per cricket's laws the ball is live once the bowler begins his run-up, and Ashwin, seeing his prey out of his crease whipped off the bails in his delivery stride and ran the batsman out.

This mode of dismissal is colloquially referred to as the 'Mankad', after one of India's greatest cricketers Vinoo Mankad, who was the first to effect the mode of dismissal on Bill Brown at the SCG in 1947.

Cricket's rules are extensive and they are revered by the game's stakeholders as not rules, but Law. However, as old as the laws are the Marylebone Cricket Club's (MCC's) Spirit



Not only has the mythical spirit of cricket consigned one of India's greatest cricketers, Vinoo Mankad (L), to infamy, the muddled thinking has continued to the present day, confusing the debate surrounding Ravichandran Ashwin's perfectly legal run-out of Jos Buttler (R) during an IPL match on March 25.



PHOTO: COLLECTED/APP

of the issue is when the non-striker can safely leave his/her ground, and what the bowler can do to effect this form of dismissal without courting controversy. To clarify, it has never been in the laws that a warning should be given to the non-striker and nor is it against the spirit of cricket to run out a non-striker who is seeking to gain an advantage by leaving his/her ground early.

A day later, however, the MCC flip-flopped. "Having extensively reviewed the incident again, and after further reflection, we don't think it was within the spirit of the game," MCC laws manager Fraser Stewart said.

Today, we see cricket as a game dominated by teams from the Asian subcontinent, and in particular India. That is the result of a very recent shift in power caused by the exploding cricketing markets of India, and to a lesser extent, Bangladesh. But cricket's arrival to Asia was completely a result of British Imperialism. And while the spirit of the 'gentleman's game' is often romanticised, perhaps it is time to think about what the game's original function was in the minds of the colonisers.

According to J.A. Mangan writing in 'Brit-

ain's chief spiritual export: Imperial Sport as Moral Metaphor, Political Symbol and Cultural Bond' it was cricket that emerged as 'the symbol Sport in Society par excellence of imperial solidarity and superiority epitomizing a set of consolidatory moral imperatives that both exemplified and explained imperial ambition and achievement.'

There has always been a disconnect between the need to adhere to a 'spirit' when cricket's laws are nearly as comprehensive as the constitutions of many nations. Could it be that it is a hangover of cricket's colonising intentions?

To take the point further, if we examine the effect that the mythical spirit of cricket has had over the years, it has mostly favoured the batsmen over bowlers. Batsmen are already the preferred citizens of the game, because as every cricket follower knows 'the benefit of doubt always goes to the batsman'. It is very much within the spirit of cricket for a batsman to walk when he has edged the ball and been caught behind, but no one bats an eyelid when he instead waits for the umpire's decision -- his right according to the laws of the game.

Yet when a fielder claims a catch that television replays show to have bounced just in front, the agency to be forthright -- and failing that the consequent blame -- falls on the fielder; the umpire's responsibility is conveniently overlooked. It cannot be denied that both -- perhaps the batsman more than the fielder -- know that their claim is not an honest one.

In the 21st century when cricket experts exalt the spirit of the game over its enshrined laws, it has to be asked whether they are aware that when the British dreamed up this great game, they were the preeminent superpower and much of the world was theirs to subjugate. It was a sport that both 'exemplified' and 'explained' imperial ambition and achievement. It may now be the sport of the masses in former colonies that have happily claimed the sport as their own. But would it be an argument too far to say that the batsman's superiority over the fielding team was a conditioning tool that paved the way for the acceptance of the imperialists' superiority, however unfair?

Because, how can this be fair? A bowler cannot overstep the popping crease by a millimetre lest the ball be ruled a no-ball and

he perhaps be denied a wicket, but the batsman can steal a yard before the ball is bowled, effectively having to run a yard short to complete a run. All within the spirit of the game, it seems, and if not adhered to Vaughan and Warne -- verbal abuser of batsmen par extraordinaire -- will be at the ready to question your integrity.

This preferential treatment of batsmen is not just limited to Mankading. In July 2011 on the third day of the second Test in Trent Bridge between India and England, Ian Bell -- already well past a century -- played the last ball before lunch down to third man and completed a second run. However, the England right-hander left his crease before the umpire had called 'over' or signalled for lunch and the incoming throw hit the stumps at the striker's end. The Indians appealed for a run out, which was upheld. There was much hand-wringing from the English contingent and, over the course of the break, India skipper MS Dhoni did the 'gentlemanly' thing and called Bell back to the crease.

Dhoni was feted as a sportsman, but Bell's irresponsibility in failing to protect his precious wicket while the ball was still in play was forgotten. Or perhaps it was the batsman's entitlement, which perhaps drew from his forebears -- both spiritual and, in this case, national.

It should be said that no less a figure than Sir Donald Bradman -- Bill Brown's captain during the original Mankad, by Vinoo Mankad -- defended Mankad in his book Farewell to Cricket. "For the life of me I cannot understand why the laws of cricket make it quite clear that the non-striker must keep within his ground until the ball has been delivered. If not, why is the provision there which enables the bowler to run him out?"

It is also worth noting that some of the most notable instances of Mankading -- Kapil Dev against Peter Kirsten in 1992, Ravichandran Ashwin against Lahiru Thirimanne in 2012 (later withdrawn), Sachithra Senanayake against Buttler in 2014 -- have all been by subcontinental teams. Take from that what you will.

Sport does imitate life, so perhaps it is high time that this hangover of colonialism named the 'spirit of cricket' -- which time and again has weakened rather than strengthened the sport's integrity -- be consigned to history's dustbin.

Cricket. In 2000, when the current code of laws was introduced, it contained a preamble on the Spirit of Cricket: "Cricket is a game that owes much of its unique appeal to the fact that it should be played not only within its Laws but also within the Spirit of the Game. Any action which is seen to abuse this Spirit causes injury to the game itself".

It is using this spirit as a crutch that detractors have taken the cane to Ashwin. The likes of Shane Warne and Michael Vaughan -- not quite saints during their playing days -- tweeted outrage in the aftermath of the incident. Some said that since he had stopped in his delivery stride, the umpire should have called it a 'dead ball', which is a ludicrous suggestion given that the ball is live when the bowler begins his run-up and that Buttler left his crease to make the potential run a shorter one.

Initially, the MCC -- the custodians of the game's laws -- seemed to rule the court of public opinion in Ashwin's favour. "The crux