

Abahani thrash Rahmatganj

SPORTS REPORTER

Holders Abahani notched an emphatic 3-0 win over Arambagh KS in their Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Sunday Chizoba, Jewel Rana and Faisal Ahmed Shital scored one goal apiece in the second half to help the Sky Blues raise their points tally to 45 from 18 matches, four behind leaders Bashundhara Kings, who have played one match less than the defending champions.

Coming back from a hard-fought 2-1 away win over Team BJMC, Abahani dominated the Old Dhaka outfit from the outset and play was mostly confined in the Arambagh half as the hosts launched intermittent attacks from both flanks but could not breach the goal.

Abahani, however, came close to breaking the deadlock on the half-hour mark when a poor clearance from Arambagh's Zahid Hossain came to Sohel

Rana, who drove a powerful shot from the edge of the box, only to be tipped over by goalkeeper Mazharul Islam Himel.

Arambagh threatened Abahani with a nice move from winger Ariful Islam, who darted into the box from the left to cut it back for Chinedu Mathew, who was however late to connect with goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel in the 38th minute.

Abahani took the lead in the 48th minute, with Sunday converting a penalty after Jewel was fouled by goalkeeper Himel, who however denied a close-range header from the Nigerian in the 56th minute.

Arambagh came close to levelling the margin in the 62nd minute but captain Rocky frustrated with a miscued attempt from the six-yard box while Sunday and Nabib Newaj Jibon squandered two chances.

However, Jewel made amends to double the lead with a placing shot to the far post in the 86th minute while substitute Shital headed home a cross from substitute Imtiaz Sultan Jitu in the stoppage time to wrap up Abahani's 15th victory.



Abahani striker Sunday Chizoba celebrates his opening goal during their 3-0 Bangladesh Premier League win against Rahmatganj MFS at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Dutch 'love' underdog tag against USA

REUTERS, Undated

Netherlands are relishing their underdog status ahead of the women's World Cup final against the United States on Sunday, midfielder Danielle van de Donk has said.

The Dutch side will take on the thrice champions in Sunday's title clash at Lyon and Van de Donk said her team will not be overawed by their more celebrated opponents.

"I love being underdogs," Van de Donk told reporters. "It's the best role you can be in. I like it. I don't know the English word but I don't think they (the U.S.) think we're that good. Underestimate? Yes, that's it. That is going to be an advantage for us."

'Nadal could be a fantastic footballer'

AFP, London

Jose Mourinho believes Rafael Nadal would have made "a fantastic footballer" had he not chosen to become one of the greatest tennis players of all time.

The former Manchester United, Real Madrid and Chelsea manager said that the world number two, currently chasing a third Wimbledon title, had all the attributes needed to succeed in football.

"He's incredible. He could have been a fantastic footballer with his physique, mentality and skill," said the Portuguese, who worked with Nadal's uncle, Miguel Angel when he was on the coaching staff at Barcelona.

"I am happy that he isn't a footballer. In tennis he is what he is."

Trophy-king Alves eyeing one more

AFP, Belo Horizonte

At 36 years young, Brazil captain Dani Alves could be forgiven if he was thinking of hanging up his boots and admiring his bursting trophy cabinet.

Instead, Alves is preparing to play a key role when Brazil take on Peru in Sunday's Copa America final at Rio de Janeiro's Maracana stadium, and the full-back is showing no signs of letting up.

"I know how old I am, and I know what that means in football, but I've learnt that people want results," said Alves, currently without a club having announced last month he was leaving Paris Saint-Germain.

"I'm focussed on that, I'm not focussing on my age nor what people think of me."

"I'm not here to shut anyone up, I'm simply here to do my job."

As it is, his trophy cabinet already contains one Copa America title and according to some lists, more trophies than years he's been alive.

He's won the Champions League three times, the old UEFA Cup twice, the Club World Cup three times, European Super Cup four times -- and that's just at European continental club level.

Six La Liga crowns with Barcelona, two French Ligue 1 titles with Paris Saint-Germain and one Serie A with Juventus, not to mention eight domestic cups across Spain, France and Italy.



With Brazil he won the 2007 Copa America and two Confederations Cups.

Any suggestions he might be satisfied with what he's won so far were dispelled within 20 minutes of Tuesday's 2-0 semi-final victory over Argentina when he took three Argentina players out of the game in creating the opening for Roberto Firmino to cross for Gabriel Jesus to open the scoring in Belo Horizonte.

Alves's skill was a thing of beauty as he latched onto a dropping ball, chipped it over the head of Marcus Acuna, sent a sliding Leandro Paredes the wrong way and then left Nicolas Tagliafico chasing shadows with a no-look pass to Firmino.

From then on, Brazil were in the

box seat and they secured victory, and a place in the final, with Firmino's tap-in from a Jesus pass after the Manchester City forward's determined charge on the counter-attack.

What led up to that goal was another example of Alves's single-minded commitment to the cause.

Whether Brazil win or not on Sunday, Alves is already regarded by many as the most successful player in history.

UEFA places him at the top of its list of major trophies won by a player in Europe with 29, with Messi only joint fourth on 26.

In another list, that takes into account trophies won with national teams as well as domestic Super Cups omitted from UEFA's list, Alves is top with 39 trophies.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine arriving where I have," Alves told Fox Sports in an interview a few months ago.

"I come from poverty, from a reality that many people around the world experience."

"When I left home at 15 my aim wasn't to win many things, but to return home and that my parents be proud of me."

After a career that has taken him from Sevilla to Barcelona, Juventus and PSG, and 114 appearances for the national team, Alves now hopes to be an inspiration to others from a similar background.

"My aim is for this to inspire youngsters, the little dreamers to have a go, to never give up," he told Fox.

Robben retires

AFP, The Hague

Dutch winger Arjen Robben announced on Thursday he is ending his playing career at the age of 35 after a 10-year spell with German giants Bayern Munich.

"It is without a doubt the most difficult decision I have had to make in my career, my heart says yes, my body says no," Robben told the Telegraaf.

His contract at Bayern had expired on June 30.

Robben played 96 international matches for the Netherlands, scoring 37 goals, and starred in the team which reached the 2010 World Cup final and finished third four years later.

He won two Premier League titles under Jose Mourinho at Chelsea in 2005 and 2006, before claiming a La Liga winner's medal with Real Madrid.

But Robben, a Groningen youth product, will be best remembered for his time at Bayern. He helped the Bavarians to eight Bundesliga crowns, five German Cups and the 2013 Champions League title, scoring 144 goals in 309

appearances for the club.

There had been speculation Robben would continue playing, with a possible return to England mooted, but instead he has decided to hang up his boots after a career which was often blighted by injuries.

"At the moment I'm fit and healthy and as a fan of many other sports, I want to keep it that way in the future," Robben added.

At Bayern, he combined with fellow winger Franck Ribery to great effect as the pair earned the nickname 'Robbery'.

"Thank you, danke, merci, dankjewel @arjenrobben," wrote the 36-year-old Ribery, whose Bayern contract also expired last month, on Twitter.

"Best @FCBayern counterpart I could imagine, #Robbery will never be forgotten! What a career my friend, now enjoy your time off the pitch."

Robben had already retired from international football after the Netherlands failed to qualify for the 2018 World Cup.

He missed the majority of Bayern's tight title contest against Borussia Dortmund, but returned late in the season.



Dutch legend Arjen Robben, in this file photo celebrating one of many triumphs with Bayern Munich, announced the end of his professional career on Thursday. PHOTO: AFP FILE

WHAT TO WATCH

BTV, GTV & MAASRANGA
ICC World Cup
SRI LANKA V INDIA
LIVE FROM 3:30PM
AUSTRALIA V SOUTH AFRICA
LIVE FROM 6:30PM

DAY'S EVENTS

BAHAGHAT PREMIER LEAGUE
TIME: 4:00PM
MUKTIJODHA V RAHAMATGANJ
VENUE: GOPALGANJ
TIME: 7:00PM
MOHAMMEDAN V CTS ABAHANI
VENUE: BNS, DHAKA
SK RUSSEL V SK JAMAL
VENUE: SYLHET

Nadal overcomes Kyrgios; Kerber knocked out

AFP, London

Rafael Nadal may not end up winning a third Wimbledon singles title but he will take joy from having beaten his 'bete noire' Nick Kyrgios in an engrossing but bad-tempered grudge match on Thursday.

The 33-year-old Spaniard came through in four sets 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/3) which saw fiery but talented Australian Kyrgios receive a warning for unsportsmanlike behaviour after a running argument with the umpire while twice serving under-arm.

Nadal's pleasure was evident when he sealed the match against a man he had accused of lacking respect for the sport as he fist-pumped and jumped in the air yelling to his camp seated on Centre Court.

"I was aware of everything," said Nadal, who was winning his 50th match at Wimbledon.

"I was just next to him so I don't want to comment on this but potentially he is a Grand Slam winner."

Earlier, his great rival, eight-time champion Roger Federer had no such problems as he eased into the third round, beating British wild card Jay Clarke 6-1, 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 to equal American legend Jimmy Connors's record of 17 appearances in the last 32.

On the women's side, there will be a new name adorning the trophy as defending champion Angelique Kerber went out in three

sets to lucky loser Lauren Davis 2-6, 6-2, 6-1.

Kerber looked in control after the first set but once she went 3-2 down in the second Davis -- ranked outside the top 250 earlier this year -- gained in confidence.

"Its been a tough journey and a process of learning and growing as a player and person," said Davis.

"The drop in ranking has made this win even more fulfilling."



Australia's mercurial talent Nick Kyrgios drops his racquet in anger during his five-set defeat against Spain's Rafael Nadal in the second round of Wimbledon at The All England Lawn Tennis Club on Thursday. PHOTO: AFP FILE

BD A 119/4 against Afg A

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh A team posted 119 for four in 35 overs against visiting Afghanistan A team before rain forced end of first day's play of the first four-day game at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna yesterday.

Wicket-keeper batsman Anamul Haque was the top-scorer with an unbeaten on 53 off 86 balls, his innings featuring eight fours and a six, while Afif Hossain was not out on seven.

After being sent in to bat, Imrul Kayes and Zakir Hossain were dismissed for naught while Rokibul Hasan departed for four as Bangladesh were struggling on six for three inside five overs.

The other opener Naim Sheikh, along with Anamul, steadied the ship and added 102 run the fourth wicket. Naim was dismissed for 49 off 94 balls.

Yamin Ahmadzali bagged three wickets while Qais Ahmed took a wicket for the visitors.

Buffon returns to Juventus

AFP, Rome

Ex-Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon has returned to Juventus on a one-year contract after a season spent at Paris Saint-Germain.

The 41-year-old, who will be number two to Polish 'keeper Wojciech Szczesny, previously spent 17 seasons with the Turin club, winning nine Serie A titles and playing three Champions League finals.

"Welcome home, Gigi!" Juve said in a statement.

"It was 19 May 2018. That was the day when there were tears in everyone's eyes: when Gigi said goodbye to Juventus, its fans and vice-versa. It was the bidding of a farewell to someone who was more than just a captain, but a legend and a symbol of the club."

"Probably each of us hoped, and in the end, knew that the yam that united us for so many years was not destined to break. And that was the case."

The veteran goalkeeper joined PSG last summer and played 25 times in all competitions, winning the Ligue 1 title and the curtain raiser Champions Trophy.

Last season's league title was the 10th of Buffon's career, adding to a bulging trophy cabinet that contains just about every honour in football.

However the Champions League has eluded him despite him spending the bulk of his career at Juve, one of Europe's biggest clubs, and it was hoped that he might break his duck with the Qatari-funded Parisians.

However despite winning the league at a canter, the past season was a poor one for both Buffon and a team with lofty ambitions on the European stage.

They missed out on both domestic cup competitions and most importantly were dumped out of the Champions League by Manchester United in embarrassing style.