

## SPORT



Mushfiqur Rahim was in imperious form as he hit a 51-ball 96 to guide Khulna Tigers past a stiff target of 190 set by Rajshahi Royals in the BBPL match at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

# '360' Mushy powers Khulna

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram

Less than a month ago when almost all the Bangladesh batsman struggled to cope with the quality bowling during the two-match Test series in India, Mushfiqur Rahim was the only batsman to show the class, technique and temperament to set himself apart and strike two fifties in the two games.

In the span of three weeks, Mushfiqur retained his form while shifting focus from the longer version to the shortest format in the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League for Khulna Tigers.

After scoring an unbeaten 28 to win the first game, the 32-year-old smashed a blistering 51-ball 96 to chase down the joint-fifth highest total in BPL history of 189 by Rajshahi Royals yesterday.

The stellar contribution from the captain sealed a five-wicket win at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram, Khulna's second win as many games.

Mushfiqur needed four runs to reach his first T20 century, with Khulna needing two off the last four balls of the innings. He went for glory, only to be caught by Shoaib Malik at long-on off Ravi Bopara, ending a match-winning 51-ball 96, during which he hammered four sixes and nine fours.

Following the early dismissals of openers Najmul Hossain Shanto (0) and Rahmanullah Gurbaz (7), Mushfiqur took charge to stabilize the chase with Rilee Rossouw.

The wicket at the ZACS lived to its reputation once again, offering a lot of runs, as Mushfiqur and Rilee took on the Rajshahi bowlers and added 72 for the third wicket.

Mushfiqur played the role of the aggressor

## SCORES IN BRIEF

**RAJSHAHI ROYALS:** 189 for 4 in 20 overs (Malik 87, Bopara 40 not out; Amir 2-36)

**KHULNA TIGERS:** 192 for 5 in 19.4 overs (Rahim 96, Rossouw 42; Russell 2-41)

**Result:** Tigers won by 5 wickets.

**Player-of-the-match:** Mushfiqur Rahim.

as he added 44 off 27 while the in-form Rilee contributed 26 off as many deliveries before being dismissed by pacer Kamrul Islam for 42 off 35.

The Khulna skipper however remained strong as he built two more partnerships, a 61-run fourth-wicket stand with Shamsur Rahman and another 30 with Robbie Frylinck for the fifth wicket.

The experienced cricketer displayed an array

of improvised and conventional cricketing shots, ranging from his scoops to sweeps and drives, with great elegance as an elated James Foster –Khulna's head coach – termed Mushfiqur a '360 degree player', the name given to South Africa batsmen AB de Villiers for his wide shot-making range.

"Mushy is a 360-degree player. In the last few years, having played against him when I was with Khulna Titans [as assistant coach], he is very difficult to bowl at. Very powerful as well but he has got a touch game, he is the complete package.

"I am saying he is a 360 player because he is hitting all around the ground. He is a wonderful player, one of the cricketers very difficult to bowl at. You know, there are cricketers who are strong hitting to deep midwicket, to mid-off. But Mushy is a player who can hit behind and straight but that doesn't come with luck, it comes with a lot of hard work and practice," Foster said yesterday.

Earlier in the game, Rajshahi Royals were sent to bat first and Shoaib's 50-ball 87, with eight boundaries and four sixes, helped the side post 189 for four. Left-arm pacer Mohammad Amir picked two while Frylinck and Shahidul Islam bagged a wicket each.

It was the highest score of the edition, eclipsing Dhaka Platoon's 182 in the Dhaka leg, but Mushfiqur made sure that it would not stay at the top for long.

## Langeveldt to step down

SPORTS REPORTER

Charl Langeveldt informed the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) that he will not continue as the national team's pace bowling coach yesterday, less than four months after taking up the job.

BCB cricket operations committee chairman Akram Khan confirmed Langeveldt's communication, telling The Daily Star last night: "He has communicated that he does not want to continue because he has a good opportunity at home [in South Africa] and wants to work there. He has an offer from the South Africa national team."

The former South African pacer was appointed on a two-year deal as the pace bowling coach on July 27 this year after the end of the World Cup. He replaced Courtney Walsh, whose contract ended with the World Cup in England this summer.

In his short time as the pace bowling coach, the 45-year-old oversaw the pacers in the home Test against Afghanistan, the home T20I tri-series against Zimbabwe and Afghanistan and the tour of India, which consisted of three T20Is and a two-Test series.

## Can Sabbir still come good?

RAMIN TALUKDER and ABDULLAH AL MEHEDI



Sabbir Rahman was once considered one of Bangladesh's most formidable promising prospects. His ability to find more time when facing faster bowlers was counted on by the team management and his progress in away conditions saw his star rise in Bangladesh cricket after coming onto the scene in 2014.

Sabbir's place in the squad was once thought to be a formality and the 28-year-old's haul of 66 ODIs and 44 T20Is goes some way to showing the faith that was placed on him. However, how much of that potential has actually been repaid with performances so far is a factor that can go on to define the present state of Bangladesh cricket as well.

Bangladesh cricket has often seen promising prospects fall away after early skirmishes. Many have failed to live up to standards and their national futures are now considered bleak. Names such as Shamsur Rahman Shuvo, Shahriar Nafees or a more comparable character in Nasir Hossain come to mind when delving into Sabbir's career. Their national team career faded due to inconsistency after early promise. Is Sabbir also following that trend?

His innings of 85 against Rangpur Riders in last edition's Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) saw him get back in contention

for the World Cup, with skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza himself backing his inclusion. Serving a ban for disciplinary issues at the time, the management reduced Sabbir's sentence in order for him to make the World Cup squad. He then struck a hundred in the New Zealand ODIs.

He played only twice in England



and following the World Cup did not make an impact and is quickly fading from discussions when it comes to someone who can play an important part for the Tigers.

"In the World Cup I played two matches and obviously I can't score 200 runs in two matches even if I try. Maybe I would have carried out my responsibility if I played four or five matches but unfortunately whoever played in my place did well," Sabbir told

a distance from the cricketers' movement in October this year but the strides he has apparently made in terms of fitness have not been reflected in his bowling.

Mashrafe has picked three wickets in three matches in the ongoing tournament at an economy of 7.40 and, more importantly, the cricketer was seen limping around -- as was the case during the World Cup -- creating doubts about his match fitness.

Even the pacer's inclusion in the Dhaka team was not without drama. The most successful captain in the history of the BPL was not drafted until last moment despite being an A+ category player. Dhaka eventually picked Mashrafe in the seventh round of the draft and it was learned that an integral member of the team had pushed the management to pick Mashrafe. That required permission from the BPL Draft Commission, given Dhaka Platoon had already picked Tamim as their A+ category player but it was granted through a discussion during the break in the draft.

So far, Mashrafe's return to competitive cricket after the World Cup in July this year has barely provided any indication that he is going to prove people wrong with another exemplary comeback.

Team officials informed that Mashrafe had joined Dhaka Platoon on Monday and was at the hotel during practice yesterday.

With curiosity growing over Mashrafe's absence, Dhaka head coach Mohammad Salauddin was queried and the former Bangladesh assistant coach replied: "He is fine. I think it is okay and I think we don't need to think about him.

"He [Mashrafe] is always fit. He is doing the thing that he needs to do now. He is in the gym. I think it is more important for him to get his fitness back. There is no reason for anyone to think that he is not involved because he is not on the field [for practice sessions]. He is very much involved. He is busy doing gym and swimming which is needed for him now," he added.

PHOTO: STAR FILE



Chattogram Challengers pacer Mehedi Hasan Rana appeals for one of his four wickets in the BBPL match against Sylhet Thunder in Chattogram yesterday. Sylhet managed just 129 for eight, which Chattogram eclipsed by four wickets in 18 overs.

PHOTO: STAR

## BBPL TIDBITS

### Drone no more!

The first day of the Chattogram leg of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League saw a few technical difficulties for the broadcasters at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium.

First, the broadcasters lost the drone that captures images of the stadium after the controller lost its communication while operating the device.

It was later revealed that a battery failure had caused the drone which was eventually grounded as it remained untracked. According

to sources, the broadcasters even announced a Tk 10,000 reward to whoever can find and return the drone.

### Power too

Later in the day, during the second game between Sylhet Thunder and Chattogram Challengers was halted for over 10 minutes due to a technical error in the floodlights. Malfunctions of the Chattogram floodlights has now become a regular occurrence as a similar incident took place during the tri-nation T20I series in September this year.



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