



The West Indies players were happy to sweat it out at the BCB Academy ground yesterday after spending three days quarantined in hotel following their arrival in Dhaka. Having to make do without net bowlers, the likes of Shannon Gabriel bowled at young batsmen under the watchful eyes of head coach Phil Simmons.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Mahmud aces practice match as seamers shine

SPORTS REPORTER

Young pacer Hasan Mahmud starred with four wickets as seamers utilised the overcast conditions and early movement to bundle out Tamim Iqbal XI for just 161 runs as Mahmudullah XI won the first practice match by five wickets at BKSP yesterday.

Chasing 162 runs in the 40-overs-a-side game, skipper Mahmudullah Riyad guided his side over the finish line with an unbeaten fifty to reach the target with 19 balls to spare.

After Mahmudullah XI chose to bowl first, their pacers -- spearheaded by Mahmud with young left-arm seamer Shoriful Islam and Al-Amin Hossain providing valuable support -- shared eight wickets among themselves. Al-Amin picked up the first wicket of Liton Das for two, but skipper Tamim and Nazmul Hossain Shanto added 40 for the second wicket and seemed to be setting up a big total. It was then Mahmud who changed the game, dismissing both batsmen in their twenties with some brilliant bowling to leave Tamim XI struggling on 69 for three.

Shoriful then joined in and removed Mohammad Mithun (15) and Afif Hossain for 35 as Tamim XI were dismissed for a sub-par total. Mahmud ended up with figures of four for 21 from six overs, which included



Tamim Iqbal fishing outside the off-stump against young Hasan Mahmud, only managing to edge it to Yasir Ali at slips during a practice match among the national team members at BKSP yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

a maiden, while Shoriful and Al-Amin scalped two each.

"There was some movement early on from the bowlers and I think our bowlers bowled well with the new ball. We managed to pick some early wickets which put the pressure on the batters but overall bowlers from both teams did well and I think it was a bowlers' day today," Mahmudullah told the media after the game yesterday.

Defending a rather modest total, left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman gave the early breakthrough for Tamim XI as he trapped Yasir Ali leg before on three. Shakib Al Hasan also departed cheaply for nine in rather unfortunate manner when his shot deflected off the

non-striker and went straight to the fielder, causing him to be run-out.

Left-handed opener Naim Sheikh looked solid at the other end and scored 43 off 52 balls, which included seven fours, before he was caught behind off the bowling of seamer Mohammad Saifuddin.

Mushfiqur Rahim chipped in with 28 but skipper Mahmudullah held the ship together from the other end and remained unbeaten on 51 off 64 balls with four boundaries to register an easy win.

The Tigers will play the second practice match tomorrow before taking on West Indies in the first of the three-match ODI series on January 20.

Windies get on the field

SPORTS REPORTER

West Indies players completed their first training session yesterday at the BCB Academy Ground following their three-day quarantine period since arriving in Bangladesh on January 10.

"Three-day isolation was very tough. It feels good to come out and get some fresh air and finally get some cricket practice," West Indies' ODI skipper Jason Mohammed told reporters after the practice session.

It was also the first time in over 10 months that an international side stepped onto the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium premises.

All members of the West Indies contingent had already tested negative for Covid-19 after the first of many coronavirus tests last Tuesday. But the visitors will have to practise on their own for a while before being provided with net bowlers once they have cleared three tests in seven days.

The West Indies team is scheduled to play a one-day warm-up match at BKSP on January 18 before the first of three ODIs against the Tigers on January 20.

Depleted Abahani edge past Police

SPORTS REPORTER



A last-gasp goal from Belfort Kervens helped Abahani edge Bangladesh Police FC 1-0 in their opening match of Bangladesh Premier League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Six-time Premier League champions Abahani had dropped points in their first match of the league season five times in the past 11 editions and the trouble-hit side were rescued from one of their worst performances before Haitian striker Belfort struck a winner in the 85th minute.

Abahani dominated from the start despite struggling with players missing through Covid-19, injuries and suspension, but lacked bite in the attacking third but Police goalkeeper Mohammad Nehal's fumble handed Abahani a goal.

Mario Lemos was forced to make the positional changes as four of his regular starting eleven were missing but those changes led to Abahani struggling to break down the defence.

Forward Nabib Newaj Jibon and Brazil's Francisco Wagsley Rodrigues mustered a few shot on target but largely failed to threaten while Police goalkeeper Nehal made a couple of good saves.

Abahani started penetrating in the second half after winger Rubel Mia, having recovered from Covid-19, came on in place of Mamunul Islam in the latter part of second half. Rubel kept beating opposing defenders with his pace and delivered good crosses from the right flank.

Afghanistan's Masih Saighani was denied in the 80th minute by Nehal, but he made a big mistake as he fumbled his attempt to grip another cross from Rubel. The ball fell to an unmarked Belfort, who tapped home at the second time of asking in the 85th minute after

the first shot was parried by a defender.

Bangladesh Police came close to pulling a goal back two minutes later but luck was not on their side and a powerful left-footer from Kyrgyz midfielder Murolimzhon Akhmedov came off the crossbar before a Lincine Toure header went narrowly wide of the post in stoppage time.

"I don't believe in bad luck, but we had lot of injured players through Covid and suspension and it was a really tough match against an organised team. We had more possession but we were missing the last pass in the attacking third and a little of speed and aggressiveness," said Abahani coach Lemos. "If you don't score early against the teams like Police, Mukitjodha and Rahmatgani, then it is very difficult to handle them. Today we luckily got the goal and secured full three points."

"Police are a new team, who today lost to a strong team but I am satisfied with the performances of the boys, who I believe will play better football in coming days," said Police FC's Sri Lankan coach Packer Ali.



National athletics starts today at BNS

SPORTS REPORTER



The 44th National Athletics Championships will get underway today at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, with the participants asked to submit reports of Covid-19 tests before taking to the track.

Even though Bangladesh Athletics Federation (BAF) could not ensure Covid-19 tests of athletes and officials during the Junior Athletics Championships in November last year, this time the sport's local governing body is determined to ensure of a Covid-free competition for all participants, who

must submit negative reports of tests taken 72 hours prior to their events.

Marking the birth centenary of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the championships will award cash prizes to first, second and third-placed finishers worth Tk 3,000, Tk 2,000 and Tk 1,000 in each of the 33 events. The federation has an estimated budget of Tk 19 lakh, which will be spent from its own coffers as it failed to get any sponsor on board.

The meet will get underway without electronic timer and will be held on the worn out track of the BNS. Close to 450 athletes are expected to take part in the three-day meet.

Bess fierer puts England in command

REUTERS, Galle

England captain Joe Root struck his 50th Test fifty to put them in a strong position on the first day of the opening Test after Dom Bess took five wickets as the tourists bowled out Sri Lanka for a paltry 135.

An unbeaten 110-run partnership between Jonny Bairstow and Root saw England to 127-2



at stumps on Thursday, trailing by eight runs, with the opportunity to go on and build a significant lead after Sri Lanka posted the lowest first-innings score in a Test at Galle.

The pair steadied matters after spinner Lasith Embuldeniya, who opened the bowling, had removed England openers Dom Sibley and Zak Crawley cheaply. Root, in his 98th Test, will resume on Friday on 66.



(Clockwise from top) Paris Saint-Germain's Argentine coach Mauricio Pochettino has had an auspicious start to his stint at the French Capital, winning the Champions Trophy, the French equivalent of the Super Cup, with a 2-1 win over Marseille on Wednesday. The giants in other parts of Europe, though, did not have such a wonderful time. German champions Bayern Munich crashed out of the German Cup following a shock 6-5 defeat on penalties against second-tier side Holstein while Barcelona scraped through to the final of the Spanish Super Cup following a win on penalties over Real Sociedad.

PHOTO: TWITTER

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