

What to WATCH

T SPORTS

ICC Men's T20 World Cup
Oman vs Papua New Guinea
Live from 04:00 pm

Bangladesh vs Scotland
Live from 08:00 pm
La Liga
Barcelona VS Valencia

Live from 01:00 pm (Monday)
STAR SPORTS HD 1 EPL
Everton vs West Ham
Live from 07:00 pm

New Castle vs Tottenham
Live from 09:30 pm
TEN 2
Bundesliga

Leverkusen vs Bayern Munich
Live from 07:30 pm
Augsburg vs Arminia
Live from 09:30 pm

DAY'S SEVENT

NCL

DHAKA v SYLHET, SICS Academy (Sylhet)
KHULNA v RANGPUR, SICS

CHATTOGRAM v RAJSHAHI, ZACS

DHAKA METRO v BARISHAL, SICS Academy
(Cox's Bazar)



SOHAN'S BRACE POWERS MARINERS TO MAIDEN TITLE

SPORTS REPORTER

Young forward Sohanur Rahman Sabuj became the hero of Club Cup Hockey Tournament once more as his brace powered Mariner Youngs Club to their maiden title in the history of the competition yesterday.

The former youth team forward scored goals either side of Avishek Kumar's strike as the Arambagh-based outfit won 3-0 at the Maulana Bhashani Hockey Stadium, ending Abahani's dreams of a third consecutive title and a record fifth title overall.

It was sweet Revenge for Mariner Youngs, who had lost the final of the last edition, held in April 2018, by a solitary goal against the Sky Blues from Dhanmondi.

Interestingly, Sohan had scored the all-important goal in favour of Abahani in that fixture three years ago.

The youngster broke the deadlock in the 22nd minute, turning on his heels in front of goal and releasing a powerful shot following a through-ball from Milon Hossain as Mariners dominated the game right from the word go.



Both teams had chances to score from penalty corners but failed to make those count. While there were four Indian players in each side – the maximum number allowed to field in a single match, it was

the ones playing for Mariners who had more impact on the game. Mariners took the one-goal lead into the fourth quarter when a decision over an Abahani attack caused some controversy. Abahani thought

they had scored but the umpire ruled it out for infringement before the ball hit the net. The Sky Blues players appealed for a video referral, which took almost 20 minutes to come to a conclusion, with

the umpire's original decision standing.

Soon after the restart, Mariners doubled their lead with Avishek's reverse hit making it 2-0 in the 55th minute.

Sohan then wrapped up the victory from a counter attack three minutes later, tapping in Fazle Rabbi's pass from in front of goal.

Mariners coach Mamunur Rashid credited their foreign recruits and better fitness for making the difference. "We had full fitness which was lacking for Abahani players. Our foreign collection was good too and that made the difference. The decision regarding cancellation of the Abahani goal was the right one. The umpires shouldn't have taken so long over the video referral," the former national team coach said.

Avishek was adjudged the best player of the tournament while Milon was named the top-scorer with six goals.

NCL begins anew

SPORTS REPORTER

Ever since the National Cricket League's inception two decades ago, the improvement of the standard of cricket, preparation of sporting wickets and overall competitiveness have been a far cry from what was promised over the years.

With the intent of achieving these same goals as usual, after more than six months, the country's traditional first-class tournament is set to begin from today across five venues in three cities -- Chattogram, Cox's Bazar and Sylhet.

NCL was postponed right after the completion of two rounds back in April this year after Bangladesh saw a surge in Covid-19 cases nationwide. And even

Metro and Barishal, will be held in the two venues of Cox's Bazar and in Chattogram.

Bangladesh ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal was supposed to feature for Chattogram in the NCL. However, he is still not available as the left-hander is nursing a thumb injury, which he picked up while playing for Bhairahawa Gladiators in Nepal's franchise T20 league earlier this month. The 32-year-old opener, however, is expected to feature in the league from the fourth round onwards.

Other than Tamim and the national players who are currently in the Middle East to feature for Bangladesh in the T20 World Cup which began today, all the players of the national team Test side are expected to return to action with the NCL.

With the hopes of enhanced performances for the national side in the upcoming Test matches, the likes of Test



inside the bio-secure bubble, the likes of Sylhet Division skipper Alok Kapali and pacer Khaled Ahmed had tested positive and there were also reports of cases in the Rangpur Division team.

However, instead of resuming the postponed league, the new league is being started afresh as Dhaka Division face Sylhet Division at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium Academy Ground, Khulna Division take on Rangpur Division at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, Chattogram Division host Rajshahi Division at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium and Dhaka Metropolitan lock horns with Barishal Division at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium Academy Ground in Cox's Bazar.

All the participating players have already been in hotel quarantine at their respective venues since October 13. The matches of Tier 1, which includes Dhaka, Khulna, Rangpur and Sylhet, will be held in the two venues in Sylhet while the matches of Tier 2, including Chattogram, Rajshahi, Dhaka

skipper Mominul Haque and spinner Nayeem Hasan are expected to feature for Chattogram while the likes of pacers Abu Jayed, Khaled and Ebadot Hossain are set to play for Sylhet. Test team opener Shadman Islam has been named skipper of Dhaka Metropolitan and Taijul Islam will play for Rajshahi under the leadership of Najmul Hossain Shanto while all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz will field for Khulna.

For the national team's Test players, the NCL will be of paramount importance and it would provide them with much-needed longer version game time as Bangladesh are set to host Pakistan in November-December for three T20Is and two Tests, both part of the ICC World Test Championship. Eventually, it will be interesting to observe how much of an efficient output can the likes of Mominul, Jayed or Ebadot yield from these matches as the standard of cricket and competitiveness of the NCL have always been the burning question before the start of any editions of the tournament.

Chhetri leads India to eighth SAFF title

SPORTS REPORTER from Male

India once again proved too strong for their neighbours, securing an eighth SAFF Championship crown by beating Nepal 3-0 in the final of the 13th edition of the regional football extravaganza at the National Football Stadium in Male yesterday.

It seemed the perfect platform for David to slay Goliath but Nepal, playing in their maiden final, could not make that happen as India's illustrious striker Sunil Chhetri -- who was named man of the final and the tournament's most valuable player -- continued to lead from the front. He scored his fifth of the tournament -- which also earned him the tournament's golden boot -- to open the scoring with a spectacular running header before Suresh Singh and substitute Sahal Abdul Samad joined the party to continue the 12-time finalists' stranglehold on the trophy.

Although both head coaches were sidelined through suspension, India and Nepal played exciting, fast-paced football in the pouring rain, which did little to dampen the enthusiasm among the spectators.

Nepal, playing the final for the first time in the SAFF Championship's 28-year history, made three changes to the team that played out a 1-1 draw against Bangladesh in their final group game while India made one change, drafting in Anirudha Thapa and Chinglensana Konsham.

While India enjoyed the lion's share of possession, Nepal got better chances to take the lead in the first half after Nepalese goalkeeper Kiran Kumar Limbu bravely denied Anirudha

Thapa in the fourth minute.

On a wet surface, Nepal broke at pace and Sujal Shrestha and Rohit Chand squandered two good chances in the sixth and 16th minutes before India mounted pressure late in the first half with Chhetri volleying over from inside the box in the 44th minute.

After the break, India proved why they are ahead of 61 places ahead of Nepal in the FIFA Rankings by scoring two goals in two minutes.

Manvir Singh first ran down the left and

India's illustrious striker Sunil Chhetri was named man of the final and the tournament's most valuable player. He scored his fifth goal in the final-- which earned him the tournament's golden boot.



lifted in a cross, which was met perfectly by the head of Chhetri and took one bounce on its way to the back of the net in the 49th minute. Suresh Singh then drove home from inside the box after capitalising on a cut-back from Yasir Mohammad in the 50th minute.

With both teams attacking and counter-attacking, substitute Sahal Abdul Samad wrapped up the triumph by netting a third goal from a goal-mouth melee in stoppage time to send the Indian spectators into raptures.

ANISUR RAHMAN FROM MALE

As the 13th edition of the South Asian football extravaganza concluded last night in Male, Bangladesh's football fraternity should buckle up to thoroughly reflect on what transpired in the latest SAFF Championship for the country who last featured in the final of the prestigious tournament 16 long years ago.

Despite initiating an impressive start, Bangladesh once again failed to escape out of the group stage but overall, their performance throughout the tournament drew a bag of mixed responses.

Bangladesh had failed to make it beyond the group stage for the fifth successive editions, and their latest campaign ended on a bitter note, with almost all discussion kept revolving around the penalty decision in their last match against Nepal which threw them out of the final berth.

Now, what can Bangladesh possibly take away from this SAFF Championship?

When the Bangladesh Football Federation shockingly decided to replace English coach Jamie Day to appoint Bashundhara Kings club's coach Oscar Bruzon for the SAFF Championship, hopes had declined to an all-time low. Following the booters' standard display in the Three Nations Cup in Kyrgyzstan last month and considering such a short preparation time to prepare under the new coach, Bangladesh fans could not afford to allocate much room

for optimism. Nevertheless, Bruzon did his best to boost the confidence and morale of his charges. And those who played under him at Bashundhara, knew well that the Spaniard was determined and capable enough to get the maximum from the players on the pitch.

Having diverged from Day's defensive approach, the revamped attacking mindset saw Bangladesh dominate over Sri Lanka in the curtain raiser but it could hardly help them against India, and especially against Maldives and Nepal, as the latter three sides also happen to be well ahead of Bangladesh in FIFA Ranking.



Against India, Maldives and Nepal, the lack of technique and its finesse, especially in the central areas, were all there to see as Bangladesh struggled to carry the consistency to the second half of the group

stage matches. And the fitness standard coupled with a cramped fixture during the first three games led the booters to commit more unwarranted fouls all throughout the competition.

Looking back at the last three years under Day, Bangladesh backline had remained more or less solid against the superior sides. However, they could only keep a clean sheet against Sri Lanka but overall Bangladesh defended well throughout the tournament, ignoring some costly silly mistakes, which especially led them down against hosts Maldives.

On the attacking front, this edition of SAFF tournament saw Bangladesh score thrice from set pieces -- an evidence of their improvement in this department.

And promising talents, the likes of goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico, forward Sunan

Reza, right-back Arafat Yeasin and midfielder Biplu Ahmed -- were among the positive findings and the onus is on the team management to nurture them to prevent the cases of derailed prospects.

And as far as the stamina and effort on the field was concerned, except for the match against Maldives, Bangladesh supporters can find optimum satisfaction, if not pleasure.

Even though Bangladesh threatened their opponent somewhat in the set-pieces, the penetrative ability from the open-play left a lot to be desired. Composure in the attacking third around the opponent box was found wanting, which has been a recurring theme of the national team's playing style over the years, as indicated by their abysmal ranking.

Furthermore, unforced missed passes had cost Bangladesh dearly during defensive transitions, as was evident during the pivotal incident that saw goalkeeper Zico sent off against Nepal. Also against Maldives, the lack of precision in passing had brought the downfall for the men in red and green.

Moving forward, now it is high time that Bangladesh team management sincerely addresses aspects of their game and avoid finding stop-gap solutions for the betterment of the national team in the long run before things go beyond repair.

