

Russel topple Abahani in marathon shootout

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Centre-back Nasir Chowdhury sealed the 30-shot marathon shootout as Sheikh Russel KC emerged Group B champions of the Bashundhara Group Federation Cup with an entertaining 13-12 win over Abahani Dhaka in a tiebreaker after they came from behind twice to play out a

2-2 draw in group final match yesterday.

With Uttar Baridhara Club having declined to participate in the tournament, both teams had equal three points before the match in the three-team group. And after a stalemate in yesterday's regulation time, the match entered into the penalty shootout to separate both sides at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium.

Sheikh Russel goalkeeper Ashraf Islam Rana was the eventual hero of the match, having denied two shots from Sohel Rana and Emon Mahmud in the tiebreaker.

Sheikh Russel will play the quarterfinal against Group D runners-up -- either Sheikh Jamal DC or Rahmatganj, who are scheduled to play today to decide the group standings, while Group B runners-up Abahani will battle against Group D champions in the last-eight battle.

Independence Cup champions Abahani took the lead in the eighth minute with Brazilian forward Dorielton



Gomes putting Abahani ahead with a nice placing-shot by capitalising on a defensive fumble from Sheikh Russel.

Five minutes later, local forward Mannaf Rabbi brought Sheikh Russel back into the match by sending a rebound home from inside the box after a close-range header from Portugues Esmal Ruti was parried by Pritom.

Sheikh Russel then almost took the lead when Ruti danced past two defenders to release a defense-split pass through for Brazilian Thiago Eduardo, whose shot ended up missing the far post narrowly.

After resumption, both sides fought on level terms to seize midfield control but Abahani dominated the first 15 minutes of the second half proceedings, generating two-three good chances but Iranian defender Iran Sheikh and Costa Rican forward Daniel Colindres failed to convert.

The sustained pressure finally paid off for Abahani in restoring the lead on the 75th minute when Augusto presented a well-judged cross for Dorielton and the Brazilian forward guided the ball home with a glancing header from inside the box.

Abahani looked on course to register their first win in the Federation Cup. However, Sheikh Russel were not meant to go down without a fight. The equaliser arrived in the 84th minute from a goal-mouth melee when Ailton brilliantly threaded the ball in the near post with substitute Hemanta Vincent Biswas providing the assist with a header.

In the stoppage time, Abahani could have sealed the game in their favour had goalkeeper Rana not thwarted a close-range shot from Colindres. The match then proceeded to roll into the marathon tiebreaker, the likes of which has been a rarity in the domestic circuit.



Bangladesh fielders at slip keep their eyes on the ball as a New Zealand XI batter tries to negotiate a delivery during their two-day warm-up game at Mount Maunganui yesterday.

PHOTO: NZC TWITTER

U-19s take on India in semis today

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Bangladesh U-19 will be taking on their Indian counterparts in the semifinal of the ongoing ACC Under-19 Asia Cup at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium today.

According to skipper Rakibul Hasan, Bangladesh will have the upperhand in the semifinal. "We are hopeful that we can do well if we give our best against India tomorrow [Thursday]. Having won our two previous games [against Nepal and Kuwait] by big margins, we will be confident against India. We also won a series against India and that will also help us mentally. That's why we think we will have the upper hand," said Rakibul in a video message to the media yesterday.

The young Tigers have been rampant in the tournament so far, beating Nepal and Kuwait by 154 and 222 runs respectively before their final group stage match against Sri Lanka was abandoned after an official tested positive for Covid-19.

Tigers warm up for first Test

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Following a prolonged quarantine and isolation period since landing in New Zealand on December 10, the Bangladesh cricket team finally had the opportunity for a proper game scenario in the two-day warm-up match against New Zealand XI which ended in a draw yesterday.

The first day of the warm-up game was mostly washed out due to rain, with seamers such as Taskin Ahmed and Abu Jayed shining bright with the ball. After New Zealand XI declared the innings on 146 for seven, the Bangladesh batters got an opportunity to spend time in the middle on the second day.

Experienced Mushfiqur Rahim led from the front with 66 runs while young Mahmudul Hasan Joy, who opened the innings, also had a good outing as the right-hander also scored a fifty.

More importantly, the youngster who had a disappointing Test debut against Pakistan being dismissed for a duck and six in two innings, will gain some confidence ahead of the first Test, starting from January 1 at Mount Maunganui.

"It's been a long time since we came here and we have done 10 days of quarantine (actually 11 days) and tried to utilise once we had the opportunity to train. We batted well on the second day of the warm-up game and our preparation has been really good. We only had one practice match and we are hopeful that we can do something good."

BANGLADESH BATTER
MAHMUDUL HASAN JOY

However, it wasn't a great outing for the majority of the batters with Liton Das looking good until he was dismissed for 41. Another opener, Shadman Islam, was dismissed for a duck while the likes of Mominul Haque, Najmul Hossain Shanto and Yasir Ali were also unable to stay long in the middle as the visitors posted 269 for eight.

Batting will remain the centre

attention for the Tigers and despite having few individual performances from Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur, Shakib Al Hasan, Mahmudullah Riyad and Soumya Sarkar in the previous tours, Bangladesh went on to lose all nine Test matches in New Zealand without putting up a fight.

Regardless of the condition, Bangladesh's batting approach has remained questionable in the longest format of the game with their inability to tackle quality bowlers and lack of patience often exposed brutally.

In the last four Tests in New Zealand, 74 of the 76 Bangladesh wickets fell against pace bowling. The likes of Kyle Jamieson, Trent Boult, Tim Southee and Neil Wagner are once again expected to test the Bangladesh batters in the upcoming series.

Apart from the one-off Test win in Zimbabwe, the Tigers had a miserable 2021 in the longest format, suffering 2-0 series defeat against West Indies at home, a 1-0 loss in Sri Lanka and a 2-0 defeat at home against Pakistan.

In the absence of Shakib, Tamim and Mahmudullah, there is no easy beginning for Bangladesh in the new year as an inexperienced Tigers' unit will be desperate to change their fate down under.

South, Central in final after expected draw

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Despite a draw in their third-round fixture at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday, both BCB South Zone and Walton Central Zone made it into the final of the ongoing Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL).

Having resumed the day on 381 for five in their first innings, a century from Zakir Hasan saw South Zone pile up 494 all out in 158.3 overs and take a 13-run lead on the final day of their encounter. In reply, Central Zone reached 99 for the loss of four wickets in their second innings before stumps as the game grinded to an expected draw.

With one win and two draws, South Zone topped the table having accumulated a total of 12 points. Meanwhile, Central Zone remained second in the four-team table with 11 points. The two teams are to square off in the final on January 2 next year at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. However, unlike the group stage matches, the final in Mirpur will be a five-day affair.

Going back to the game yesterday, South Zone had lost their skipper Forhad Reza to pacer Mukidul Islam Mugdho in the third delivery of the day. Mukidul went on to scalp two more wickets in quick succession, removing Ziaur Rahman and Nasum Ahmed for single digit scores.

Jolted early in the day, overnight batter Zakir brought some stability as he stitched a 52-run stand with tailender Rishad Hossain. Leg Spinner Rishad, after bagging a fiver with the ball in hand, also showed grit and patience with the willow as the right-hander played a 61-ball 21-run knock.

Zakir, who resumed the day unbeaten on 36, brought up his 10th first-class ton, smashing nine boundaries and two maximums during a 109-run knock before he was the final South Zone wicket to fall.

In reply, Central Zone lost four wickets in their second innings but that did not affect the game's outcome.

Final round of National Youth Kabaddi begins

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The final round of the IGP Cup National Youth Kabaddi Championship got underway yesterday at the Paltan Outer Stadium in Dhaka through a glamorous ceremony.

A total of 16 teams each will compete in boys' and girls' sections (u-19) in the final round of the event which will conclude on January 2.

A total of 58 teams in boys' section and 51 teams in girls' section participated in the preliminary round of the championship at the district level, with total number of 50,052 boys and 46,764 girls taking part, according to a press release from the media committee of the championship.

The press release also added that the selected players from these championships will be trained for the upcoming Youth Kabaddi World Cup, with two coaches from India already roped in for the purpose.



A Brahmanbaria raider tries to win a point against Dhaka during a girls' section match of the IGP Cup National Youth Kabaddi Championship at the Paltan Outer Stadium yesterday. Brahmanbaria won the match by 36-25 points.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Warner eyes one more crack at England

AFP, Melbourne

David Warner has hinted he is keen for one last Ashes tour in 2023 to make amends for his failed campaign in England two years ago, drawing inspiration from veteran seamer Jimmy Anderson.

The explosive Australian opener would be approaching 37 should he retain his place that long and in all likelihood would have joined the 100-Test club. He currently has 89 caps. Winning in India is also on his bucket list before pulling up stumps on a Test career that has so far yielded 7,551 runs at 48.40.

"Winning the Ashes here was obviously a big one," Warner said after Australia crushed England in the third Test in Melbourne to retain the Ashes.

"We still haven't beaten India in India, that would be nice to do. And England away -- we had a drawn series (in 2019) but hopefully if I manage to get that opportunity, I might think about going back."

England hasn't been a happy hunting ground for Warner, who had a horror tour in 2019, when he managed just 95 runs at 9.50 from five Tests with Stuart Broad dismissing him seven times.

"In terms of 2019 it was obviously in England so he (Broad) was able to get the ball to come back into us and away from us," said Warner, who has been a mainstay at the top of the Australian order for a decade.

"For me it was one of those tours where I didn't back my game plan and I went too defensive and I didn't attack. That was my fault, and he bowled really well."

Whether Warner can still be competitive into 2023 remains to be seen, although he has been written off previously and come roaring back, most recently at the Twenty20 World Cup.