



Sylhet Sunrisers pacer Kesrick Williams cut a frustrating figure after failing to grab a leading edge off Comilla Victorians batter Nahidul Islam, on five. Although Nahidul scored no more than 16, it proved to be a costly miss eventually for Williams and Co as the game unfolded as a low-scoring nail-biter. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Shakib, Fizz among elites for IPL auction

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan and pacer Mustafizur Rahman have registered themselves in the category of highest base price, worth 2 crore Indian rupees, for the upcoming auction of IPL 2022.

More than 1,200 cricketers from India and 18 countries, where as many as nine cricketers from Bangladesh have registered for the auction among 318 foreign players, across the world have registered to go under the hammer in Bangalore on February 12 and 13 for the 15th edition of the world's most lucrative cricket tournament. However, the final list will be announced two days ahead of the auction.

Shakib and Mustafizur have featured in the IPL on a regular basis. In the previous edition, Kolkata Night Riders romped in the premier all-rounder by 3 crores 20 lac rupees while Mustafizur signed for the Rajasthan Royals for 1 crore rupees.

England's Ben Stokes, Australia's Mitchell Starc and veteran West Indies big-hitter Chris Gayle are among the stars missing from the upcoming auction, media reports said Saturday. Other notable absentees from the long list of players in the bidding pool for the IPL – expected to begin in April depending on the Covid situation in India – are the English trio of Jofra Archer, Chris Woakes and Sam Curran, the reports said. Ten teams will bid and participate in this year's IPL after the addition of two new franchises, Ahmedabad and Lucknow.

## Confusion over batting approach

SPORTS REPORTER

The third match of the BPL produced another low-scoring game similar to the opening affair, with Comilla Victorians struggling to chase a modest total of 96 scored by Sylhet Sunrisers after being sent in to bat first.

Just how much the nature of the wicket confused the teams could be gauged from the different statements made by Sylhet opener Anamul Haque and Comilla skipper Imrul Kayes. "The way the wickets behaved, I think we hurried a bit to score runs. Had we taken our time and spent time at the crease and scored 20-odd more runs, we could have won the match," Anamul said.

"Chasing in a low-scoring contest always creates a problem. It becomes difficult to formulate a plan. I think it's better to finish a low-scoring game early by playing aggressively," Imrul observed.

# A curious difference of night and day

SPORTS REPORTER

Yesterday was only the second day of the eighth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), but in the four matches that have been played so far, an eerie difference could be observed between the night and day games.

While teams have struggled to even cross the hundred-run mark in the day games at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur – no stranger to unpredictable and mysterious occurrences – players have posted and chased down scores close to 200 in night matches.

Such a stark difference is surely not very common around the world, especially in matches which are played at the same venue just hours apart.

With the dew factor coming into play, it is true that conditions under lights become more conducive to batting. But the extent to which the batters are favoured remains uncanny.

Comilla Victorians almost let the game slip away while chasing a meagre 96-run total from Sylhet Sunrisers in yesterday's day game. Although Imrul Kayes' Comilla did finally get their first win this edition, it took them 18.4 overs to register a slender two-wicket victory.

When Sylhet's struggle to negotiate

sharp turn and bounce from spinners Tanvir Islam and Nahidul Islam became apparent, Comilla skipper Imrul did not hesitate in bringing on occasional spinner Mominul Haque, who ended up taking the important wicket of Ravi Bopara.

Players also did not hold their tongue after the end of that game. "Actually, we did not think that this was a wicket for a T20 match. It was very difficult for batters to score runs," Sylhet opener Anamul Haque

**If the wicket is behaving like this then you don't need to do anything. You just need to bowl in the good areas and the wicket can help you a lot.**

said at the post-match press conference.

Sylhet skipper Mosaddek Hossain's take was more interesting.

"If the wicket is behaving like this then you don't need to do anything. You just need to bowl in the good areas and the wicket can help you a lot," said Mosaddek, who returned impressive figures of two for 10 in four overs.

That same wicket appeared to have

changed drastically when Chattogram Challengers went out to bat against Minister Group Dhaka just an hour later.

The likes of Will Jacks, Sabbir Rahman and Benny Howell were able to play their shots with ease. Some quick fire knocks by the aforementioned players saw Chattogram post a commendable 161 for eight in an innings that featured a total of 14 boundaries and eight maximums.

Khulna Tigers' Sohravordi Shuvo, who was on the right side of a high-scoring thriller in the night game on the opening day of the BPL, tried to explain the contrasting scenarios.

"What happens is that the pitch gets wet in the night game. That's why the ball comes on to the bat easily, making it a bit easier for batters to score. Also, the outfield stays wet. Because of that, the seam of the ball dampens over time and makes it difficult for bowlers to grip and have control over the ball," Shuvo explained to The Daily Star yesterday.

The way the tournament is panning out, all the captains and team management will probably be making notes of the timing of their fixtures more intently than ever. And it goes without saying that teams will need to devise totally different plans depending on the timing of the game if they want to take the trophy home.

## 'Siddons to work with national players mostly'

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh head coach Jamie Siddons is all set to arrive in Bangladesh as the Australian announced yesterday on social media that he received his visa for Bangladesh and is looking forward to working with the country's cricketers in what is set to be his second stint with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

Although the board had announced him as batting consultant for the BCB, with which group of cricketers the former Australian cricketer will be working has not yet been clarified.

The BCB cricket operations committee chairman Jalal Yunus, however, shed some light regarding Siddons' role, at least what will be in the initial phase of his two-year contract.

"He has been appointed as batting consultant for BCB. As we have a number of challenging series on the horizon, he will initially be working with the mainstream players, mainly the national players," said Jalal to The Daily Star yesterday.

Siddons was in charge of the Tigers as their head coach from 2007 to 2011.

However, this time, aside from just working on the Bangladesh batters' technique and consistency, the former Australian cricketer also has a different goal in mind. "I hope I will improve my golf over there. There is a great golf course in the middle of Dhaka. Hope to get some time there, after work," Siddons said of his secondary target after reaching Bangladesh, hopefully on February 1.

## Peace breaks out between Medvedev and crowd

AFP, Melbourne

Peace broke out between title favourite Daniil Medvedev and the Australian Open crowd on Saturday as the forthright Russian cruised into the last 16.

In sweltering conditions, the world number two defeated unseeded Dutchman Botik van de Zandschulp 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 in 1hr 55min at Margaret Court Arena.

The atmosphere was considerably more friendly than it was during Medvedev's high-octane win over home favourite Nick Kyrgios two days ago at Rod Laver Arena, when he was critical of sections of the raucous crowd booing him in between serves. Medvedev, who has a history of riling up partisan crowds, made headlines when he said afterwards: "It's not everybody doing it but people who are doing it probably have a low IQ."

But there was no hint of animosity from the spectators on Saturday, who applauded him during his on-court interview after his win over Van de Zandschulp. "It's great. The other night I don't feel like there was anything wrong," he said. "I just talked about exactly one thing, which is between first and second serve, because the rest is, of course, they are going to support Nick, I'm not stupid, you know."

"I like coming to Australia, I feel like people support me in general here. I want to even say feeling in a way is like home. "So I do think it's much more ups than downs with Australian crowd."

Medvedev, the runner-up a year ago, is the favourite in the absence of deported defending champion Novak Djokovic and is looking for back-to-back Grand Slam crowns after beating the 20-time Grand Slam champion in the US Open final.



**Chattogram Challengers spinner Nasim Ahmed claimed three wickets for only nine runs as his side registered a 30-run victory over Minister Group Dhaka in yesterday's second match of the Bangladesh Premier League in Mirpur.**

PHOTO: STAR

## 'I cannot betray Man City'

REUTERS

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said he may make a decision on his future at the end of the season but made it clear he would never "betray" the club.

Guardiola, who took over in 2016, has a contract until the end of the 2022-23 season.

"I'm not good enough to think far away," Guardiola told reporters ahead of Saturday's Premier League game at Southampton.

"My future always depends on results. At the end of the season we'll see what happens. They gave me everything, so I cannot betray them or do anything wrong to them."

Guardiola is aiming to lead City to their fourth league title in five years, having also won four League Cups and the FA Cup in his time in charge.

"Together we took decisions to come here and to extend the contract two times and it will be the same now," he added.