

Leadership change for Challengers

SPORTS REPORTER

Ahead of yesterday's match against Sylhet Sunrisers, Chattogram Challengers announced that Mehedi Hasan Miraz had been replaced by Naem Islam as captain of the side.

The team's Facebook page posted that Naem was the new captain of the side. During the toss, Naem said, "Mehedi wants to focus on his game, that's why he stepped down."

There was more change in leadership role as the team's coach Paul Nixon left for England after being called up by his county club and he will conduct team meetings through Zoom for the rest of the tournament as part of the team management. Later, Chattogram's Chief Operating Officer (COO) Yasir Ali said that coach Nixon had guided the decisions in regards to change of captaincy.

"Naem will take over the captaincy of Chattogram. Shaun Tait [pace bowling coach] will take over as the head coach," Chattogram Challengers' chief operating officer Yasir Ali told The Daily Star.



Left-arm pacer Mritunjay Chowdhury became only the sixth player in the history of Bangladesh Premier League to bag a hat-trick, helping Chattogram Challengers beat Sylhet Sunrisers by 16 runs at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday. His hat-trick, which involved the wickets of Anamul Haque, Mosaddek Hossain and Ravi Bopara, swayed the momentum towards the home side after Anamul's blistering 78 threatened to take Sylhet over the line. (Bottom) Fortune Barishal pacer Mehedi Hasan Rana celebrates one of his four wickets that helped them beat Khulna Tigers in the day's first match by 17 runs.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Gayle opens as Shakib comes in at seven

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram

Fortune Barishal made big changes to their batting order in the crucial fixture against Khulna Tigers, catching everyone by surprise. The sweeping changes were dictated by the presence of right-arm off-spinners Mahedi Hasan and Mohammad Sharifullah in the Khulna ranks after the latter had won the toss and sent Barishal to bat. The other factor was more obvious, keeping a right-left handed batting combination going.

The big surprise was sending in Chris Gayle, who had come in at number five in previous games, to open the innings alongside Jake Lintott, who was batting at number nine. While the duo did provide a brisk start, Chattogram's off-spin duo kept them under control in the five Powerplay overs they bowled on the trot. With Lintott departing within the Powerplay, Barishal sent in right-handed Ziaur Rahman, who had batted at number eight previously, out to accompany Gayle with coach Khaled Mahmud's plan becoming clearer. The problem for Barishal, however, was that even as Gayle had given momentum with six fours and two sixes, the two spinners were able to contain his extraordinary shot-playing.

One by one, Barishal sent in batters to keep the right-handed-left-handed combination going. After Gayle departed



for a well-crafted 34-ball 45, left-handed Najmul Hossain came in. Shakib was sent in at number seven as part of that same strategy, having played at number three in the previous matches. Apart from Gayle, the other batters, however, did not have enough form going for them and Barishal were restricted to 141 for nine.

It was, however, the bowlers that gave Barishal their second win of the tournament, bowling out Mushfiquur Rahim's Khulna for 124 even as things looked tight at one point, with Mehedi Hasan Rana bagging four wickets which included a three-wicket penultimate over of the innings.

Different fifties for Jacks and Taskin The evening match of the BPL yesterday saw very different fifties from Will Jacks and Taskin Ahmed. After Dhaka's Tamim Iqbal had taken apart Sylhet the other day, it was Jacks' turn to take apart the Sylhet attack yesterday as he hit a scintillating 19-ball 52, consequently the second fastest fifty in the BPL.

Taskin's fifty, however, did not have the same positive impact as it came in the form of runs conceded. In his first over, Taskin was hit by Jacks for a four and a six, with the batter coming out with a fantastic bit of invention, moving across the stumps to scoop the ball over fine-leg. In Taskin's next over, Jacks hit two more fours before he departed trying to play a ramp shot.

Taskin went for 13 and 22 in his third and fourth over respectively when he came in to bowl at the death. Thus, having conceded 53 runs, Taskin bowled his most expensive over in the BPL.

Imrul the off-spinner

Comilla Victorians captain Imrul Kayes is known for his batting but in yesterday's practice session at the MA Aziz stadium, he rolled his arm around in the nets, bowling to various Comilla batters. While Imrul never bowled in ODIs or T20Is, he did bowl in four Test matches till date, each time bowling one over of off-spin. The last time it happened was in 2015 at Fatullah against India.

Lampard set to take over at Everton

AGENCIES

Frank Lampard is set to become the new manager of Everton, finally bringing to an end what has at times been an excruciating recruitment process, according to various media outlets in England.

The former England midfielder, 43, who has previously managed Derby County and Chelsea, will be tasked with saving Everton from relegation after replacing the fired Rafael Benitez.

With the Toffees a lowly 16th in the Premier League table, just four points above the bottom three, Lampard will need to hit the ground running.

The recruitment process - in which Vitor Pereira, Duncan Ferguson and Wayne Rooney were other candidates - has last a fortnight since Benitez was sacked on January 16.

'This is a dream come true for me'

AGENCIES

World number one Ash Barty said her dream came true after she ended Australia's 44-year wait for a home winner at the Australian Open by beating American Danielle Collins 6-3, 7-6(2) in the final on Saturday.

Barty staved off a fightback from Collins to pick up her third Grand Slam title, thus becoming the first Australian to win the event since Chris O'Neil captured the women's title in 1978.

Multi-talented Barty has been a professional cricketer, won a golf tournament and now taken her place among the giants of Australian tennis.

It was fitting that Chris O'Neil, the last home-grown player to win the Australian Open, was in the stadium to witness Barty ending a 44-year hoodoo and thrilling a nation glued to their televisions.

"This is a dream come true for me, and I am so proud to be an Aussie," said Barty, who also won the 2019 French Open and 2021 Wimbledon titles.

"As an Aussie, the most important part of this tournament is to be able to share it with so many people and you guys in the crowd have been nothing short of exceptional.

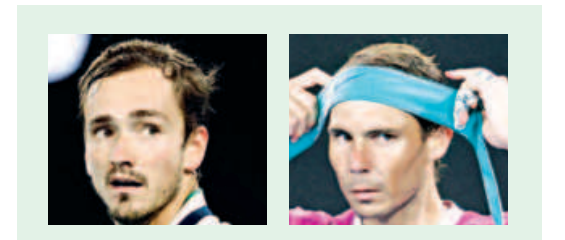
"I have said numerous times, I am so lucky to have so many people here that love and support me... I am an incredibly fortunate and lucky girl to have so much love in my corner."

The 25-year-old Barty becomes the second active female player to claim major titles on all three surfaces, alongside 23-time Grand Slam champion Serena Williams.

"This crowd is one of the most fun I have played in front of... You relax me, force me to play my best tennis," Barty said of the crowd on the floodlit Rod Laver Arena.

"A Grand Slam champion on three different surfaces, you are the complete player @AshBarty and I am so happy for you tonight."

AUSTRALIAN TENNIS GREAT
ROD LAVER



FACTS

HEAD-TO-HEAD: Nadal leads 3-1

Rafael Nadal: Age-35, World Ranking-5, Career titles- 89, Grand Slam titles-20, Australian Open best- Winner (2009).

Daniil Medvedev: Age-25, World Ranking-2, Career titles- 13, Grand Slam titles- 1 (US Open 2021), Australian Open best-Final (2021, 2022)

Nadal's date with tennis immortality

AFP, MELBOURNE

Rafael Nadal is chasing a record 21st Grand Slam crown in today's Australian Open final but Daniil Medvedev is once again ready to act as the spoiler.

The Russian world number two upset Novak Djokovic in last year's US Open final to prevent the Serbian's calendar Grand Slam bid and scuppered his attempt to move ahead of Nadal and Roger Federer on the all-time list of men's major winners.

Apart from the 21st major title, Nadal is on Sunday also bidding to become only the fourth man to win each of the four Grand Slams twice.

At 35 will be the third oldest man in the Open Era to win a Grand Slam title, behind Ken Rosewall and Federer.

Premier League to start in three venues

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Premier League, the top-tier football league of the country, will start in three venues instead of previously-decided seven across the country, but on February 3 as per the original schedule, according to a decision of the professional football league committee (PFLC) yesterday.

As per the decision of the meeting, the four venues far from Dhaka - Rajshahi, Cumilla, Gopalganj and Sylhet, have been chalked off from the list of original seven as the league will start in three venues- Bashundhara Kings Complex in Dhaka, Shaheed Ahsanullah Master Stadium in Tongi and Shaheed Lt. Matiur Rahman Stadium in Munshiganj.

There are talks ongoing to add Army Stadium in Dhaka as a fourth venue. However, there will be no spectators allowed in galleries for the matches.

Abdus Salam Mursheedy, the chairman of PFLC, said that the decision was made in view of rising coronavirus cases across the country.

"We had all our venues prepared. But we have decided this considering govt restrictions and the clubs have agreed. The three venues are a temporary resort. If the situation improves, we will go back to our original decision," Mursheedy told reporters after the meeting.

The senior vice-president of Bangladesh Football Federation also informed that unlike the original decision, there will not be any home venue for any team. All the teams will play in the three venues, which will be under the supervision of BFF.