

Star

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SPORT

First half was Mr Hyde; second half Dr Jekyll – and for a change, [the result] was different.

Manchester United manager Ralf Rangnick on win over Brighton



Mentor surprised at Shakib snub

SPORTS REPORTER

Shakib Al Hasan's childhood mentor and Fortune Barishal's batting consultant Nazmul Abeeden Fahim said that if the IPL franchises had been aware of Shakib's current form, especially with the bat, the cricketer would not have gone unsold during the mega auction.

"his availability could be a big reason for not being picked in the IPL but it's disappointing because had the franchises realised the type of form he is in then they would surely pick Shakib. Not just with the ball but he has developed himself as a match-winner with the bat as well," Nazmul told the media yesterday.

"I think he could be more effective on better pitches in IPL and could have scored runs quickly. Any team would have benefited from picking him," Nazmul added.



Comilla Victorians opener Sunil Narine smashed a 16-ball 57, reaching fifty off just 13 balls to be the fastest player to the landmark score in the BPL, and powered his side to the final with a seven-wicket victory over Chattogram Challengers in the Qualifier 2 in Mirpur yesterday. Before Narine's carnage, Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Akbar Ali stitched together a 61-run sixth-wicket stand, helping Chattogram reach a respectable total.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

An unusual inspiration

REUTERS

Australia all-rounder Ashton Agar has vowed to overcome self-doubt and focus on the joy of cricket after finding his inspiration in an unusual place - a concert by south London rapper Loyle Carner.

Agar is aiming to return to test cricket for the first time since September 2017 after the 28-year-old was named in Australia's squad for the three-test tour of Pakistan next month.

Agar, who played a key role in Tuesday's Twenty20 win over Sri Lanka, said rapper Carner's fearlessness on stage at a Perth concert motivated the Australian to do the same on the cricket field.

"He was owning the stage and it was beautiful. I thought, 'This is so cool, he just has such great presence,' and we're all there to watch him," Agar told reporters on Wednesday.

"I was thinking to myself 'Oh God, I'd love to do that'. But at that moment I kind of realised I actually have the chance to do this all the time - every time I get to play cricket."

Overseas players drive Comilla into final

SPORTS REPORTER

Comilla Victorians' overseas stars Sunil Narine, Moeen Ali and Faf du Plessis came up with decisive contributions to guide their side to the final of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) against Fortune Barishal with a thumping seven-wicket win over Chattogram Challengers at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Narine showed the meaning of haste during a 16-ball 57 and by the time he departed to Mritunjay Chowdhury, the game had already tilted heavily in his side's favour. In chase of Chattogram's 148 all out, the man from Trinidad was on full flow from the off, hitting Shoriful Islam over cow corner for six to open his innings. Sent in to open the innings with Liton Das, who fell in that very first over to Shoriful, Narine picked off Mehedi Miraz for two back-to-back sixes, followed by a four, which was then followed by a magnificent six over cover as 23 runs came in just the second over of the chase.

A six off Mritunjay in the final over of the Powerplay saw Narine pick up the fastest-ever fifty in the BPL, off just 13 deliveries to seize the record from Pakistan's Ahmed Shehzad, who previously held the record with a 16-ball 50 against Duroto Rajshahi while playing

for Barisal Burners in the inaugural edition of the tournament in 2012. Narine was shy off hitting the fastest-ever fifty by any batter in T20s by just one delivery with the record still belonging to Yuvraj Singh, who had achieved the feat in 12 deliveries

But the power-hitting capabilities were on full show and Faf (30 off 23) and Moeen (30 off 13) did not let up as Comilla



won in style. Narine was happy, knowing there was an opportunity even before the game started to get in his power-hitting mojo. "When I was told I'd open, I was delighted, especially with just 2 fielders outside the ring. It was a good wicket to bat on, not much spin, especially with the new ball,

came on nicely. It was one of the best performances as a team, looking forward to the final," Narine said.

Chattogram batting has largely been carried by their English stars Will Jacks and Benny Howell throughout the ongoing BPL while other overseas star Chadwick Walton came up with vital runs just when they needed in the first Eliminator game against Khulna Tigers on Monday.

When all three failed to fire, they could only reach a middling score and that too was achieved due to Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Akbar Ali.

Jacks and Walton departed very early in the Chattogram innings and Howell's unfortunate run-out added to their woes.

Responsibility fell to local stars such as captain Afif Hossain and Shamim Hossain but Comilla's Moeen, who finished on 3 for 20, accounted for both in a tremendous spell as Chattogram slumped to 50 for five in eight overs.

Akbar's 20-ball 33 and Miraz's 38-ball 44, the duo contributing in a 61-run sixth-wicket stand, saw Chattogram reach a challenging score. The performances of the overseas stars held sway, however, Comilla's trio performed better. Comilla skipper Imrul Kayes' relief was apparent.

"It's a great feeling for us as a team, we were down after the last match, everyone was sad and shocked, we didn't expect to lose that game," he said at the post-match ceremony.

Bashundhara Kings Arena set for historic debut

ATIQUE ANAM

The Bashundhara Kings Arena is set to become the first privately-owned football ground to host a match of the Bangladesh Premier League, the top-tier professional football of the country.

Situated in Block N of the Bashundhara Residential Area in the capital and owned by Bashundhara Group, the venue has so far been used to hold practice sessions and friendly matches of Bashundhara Kings, but today this modern facility will go into history books when it hosts the defending league champions against Bangladesh Police.

Although the venue is still a work in progress, at least six months away from becoming what it aspires to be -- a first-of-its-kind private football club with state-of-the-art facilities and certification to stage international matches -- the Kings Arena is already a thing to admire and be proud of.

And certainly proud was Bashundhara Kings president Imrul Hassan, who provided the invited journalists a glimpse of the Kings Arena -- a part of an establishment that promises to be a gigantic sports complex -- on the eve of its BPL debut yesterday.

"We don't have much to be proud of on the international stage. The sports complex would be something we can be really proud of," Hasan said in his speech.

"We will host international matches from next season. This venue will be of a standard to host even World Cup matches. We hope other clubs will be inspired by this and will follow our example," the Kings president added.

According to Hasan and the project officials, the stadium, once completed, will host 14,000 spectators with seating facilities and will have floodlights installed for staging night matches. For the moment, though, only limited spectators will be allowed through invitations for the BPL matches.

And Bashundhara Kings, the two-time defending champions, might as well need all of that support when they host Bangladesh Police today as they are currently fourth in the points table with six points, one behind Abahani and Sheikh Jamal and level with Saif Sporting Club, following three match-days.

Having missed out on the first two domestic titles of the season -- the Independence Cup and the Federation Cup -- the defending champions started with a defeat against newcomers Swadhinata KS before bouncing back with single goal victories against Uttar Baridhara and Muktiyoddha Sangsad KS.

Grappling with injuries to key players, the Leviathans of Bangladesh football can definitely allow themselves some breathing space, even if momentarily, with a victory today ahead of Sheikh Jamal's match against Rahmatganj later in the day at the Sylhet District Stadium.



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