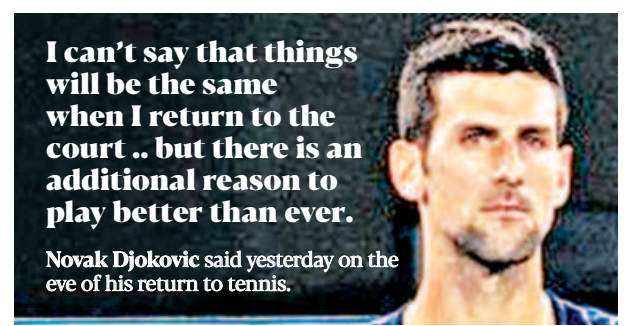


Star DHAKA SATURDAY FEBRUARY 19, 2022, FALGUN 6, 1428 BS

SPORT



Comilla Victorians players burst with joy following their thrilling one-run victory against Fortune Barishal in the final of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'In this type of final, you must be brave and cool'

SPORTS REPORTER

The balance of the match swung from side to side in the BPL final at Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday and, in the end, Comilla Victorians clinched victory by just one run. Shakib Al Hasan's Fortune Barishal had done well to hold Comilla to 151 for nine after Sunil Narine had given them a terrific start in the Powerplay. However, youngster Shykat Ali's smashing innings for Barishal means both teams found similar progression in terms of building the innings, only Comilla's bowlers did just enough to seize victory in the end. Barishal answered Narine's knock through Shykat, who got on top of Comilla's attack during a 34-ball 58 that featured magnificent strokeplay. Together with Chris Gayle, the duo notched a 75-run second wicket stand.

The equation seemed easy but Tanvir Islam and Narine then made things happen, with the latter sending back Gayle after a patient 31-ball 33. Shakib had been the saviour in a Barishal batting order that lacked depth, but once Tanvir sent him back, the game got interesting.

Narine with his experience, Mustafizur Rahman with his guile and skill in the death overs and young-but-effective Shohidul Islam bowled the final three overs, defending just 18 runs. Barishal's lower middle-order did not have the answers.

"Very good game of cricket. Both teams made mistakes, but in the end Comilla held their nerve. Credit to them," Barishal skipper Shakib said.

"Shykat Ali played a great innings. It was a good game for him but in the end, we couldn't get over the line. We came back really well after Sunil's innings. Credit goes to our bowlers for coming back from that situation," Shakib said, before crediting Narine for the 18th over of the innings when he scalped Dwayne Bravo and gave away just two runs.

Comilla had bet on Narine at the top again and he did not disappoint, hitting a 23-ball 57. But Comilla's innings fell away thanks to Barishal bowlers being able to redeem themselves. Moeen Ali, another of Comilla's overseas star, played a crucial 32-ball 38 knock to see his side reach a middling total.

"It was an incredible match. I never expected to win," Comilla skipper Imrul Kayes said at the post-match presentation yesterday after the franchise clinched their third BPL trophy. "In this type of final, you need to be brave and cool. If you are, you will be successful. Sunil and Fak helped a lot in the field, it was total teamwork. Bowlers did really well, especially Sunil and Tanvir Islam," Imrul reminded.

Shakib was left a bit disappointed. "It was a good tournament for me personally but I would have loved to have lifted the trophy more than being the Man of the Series."

Shakib, not one to shy after controversy, also drummed some up after not showing up at the photo session ahead of the final, which was supposed to feature the captains of the finalists. As it turned out, Shakib was involved at a different photoshoot, related to an advertisement, raising many eyebrows as it was also a possible breach of the bio-secure bubble protocols.

However, BCB physician Monjur Chowdhury informed that Shakib came back to the hotel and maintained protocols properly, also returning a negative test and then participating in the final.

ROLL OF HONOUR	
YEAR	CHAMPIONS
2012	Dhaka Gladiators
2013	Dhaka Gladiators
2015	Comilla Victorians
2016	Dhaka Dynamites
2017	Rangpur Riders
2019	Comilla Victorians
2020	Rajshahi Royals
2022	Comilla Victorians

Another journey of DRAMA AND CONTROVERSY

SPORTS REPORTER

Like its past seven editions, the eighth iteration of the Bangladesh Premier League was full of drama, controversy and action.

Eventually, the 2022 BPL ended on a good note as an action-packed, high-intensity encounter was witnessed at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday as Comilla Victorians, led by Imrul Kayes, triumphed over Shakib Al Hasan's Fortune Barishal in the final, winning by a solitary run against the odds.

The nail-biting finish was fitting for the tournament and the format of the game, designed to deliver sheer entertainment. At climax, needing to defend ten runs off the last over, and three off the last ball, Comilla's pacer Shohidul Islam pulled off a successful one as Barishal were restricted at 150 for eight after 20 overs while trying to surpass Comilla's total of 151 for nine in 20 overs.

It all started with low and slow surfaces at Mirpur, which maintained its reputation for producing low-scoring affairs. Interestingly, the night games in the first leg of the tournament in Mirpur produced fighting totals but day games produced low-scoring encounters. Among them, the lowest total came when Sylhet Sunrisers folded for just 96 runs against Comilla Victorians, who eventually chased down the target for the loss of eight wickets.

However, excitement began to soar in the Chattogram leg, which saw the first 200-plus total posted by hosts

Chattogram Challengers against Sylhet. In the same game, fans were treated to the eighth edition's first hat-trick from young left-arm seamer Mrityunjay Chowdhury.

The first hundred of the tournament was also registered in Chattogram by Sylhet opener Lendl Simmons. However, Minister Dhaka opener and Bangladesh's ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal outperformed Sylhet with his own century to lead his side to a nine-wicket win.

Mustafizur Rahman also remained instrumental for Comilla and was on top of the wicket-takers list, but it was star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan who stole the show with all-round performances for Barishal.

Shakib created history by picking up five consecutive man of the match awards following impressive performances with bat and ball

manner, unable to make it to the playoffs.

As for controversy, the Mehedi Hasan Miraz saga was prominent. After captaining Chattogram for the first four games, he was replaced by Naeem Islam just hours before the start of the fifth game.

Miraz then decided to leave the franchise and even left the team hotel and was set to return to Dhaka, creating a huge uproar. However, following negotiations between the franchise, BCB and Miraz, the drama came to a conclusion.

Meanwhile, Sylhet were also surrounded by controversy regarding their change in captains and strange decisions from the team management. Sylhet's team selection and performances kept raising questions throughout the tournament and they ended up winning just one game in the end.

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Comilla Victorians cricketer Sunil Narine became player-of-the-final for his brilliant allrounder performance... **57 off 23 balls and 4-0-15-2.**

Player-of-the-tournament: Shakib Al Hasan (**284 runs and 16 wickets in 11 matches**)

Most runs: William George Jacks (**414 runs in 11 matches**).

Most wickets: Mustafizur Rahman (**19 wickets in 11 matches**)

while also leading Barishal from the front as they cruised to the final.

Barishal ended the group stage on top of the points table while Comilla finished at second to confirm qualifier spots. Chattogram and Khulna secured playoff berths in their final group stage games.

Despite a star-studded side that had the likes of Mahmudullah Riyad, Tamim and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Dhaka ended the tournament in disappointing

This edition of the BPL was also significant in terms of performances from local cricketers.

Mrityunjay remained among the top wicket-takers, picking up 15 wickets from eight games while Fortune Barishal opener Munim Shahriar showed great promise with his big-hitting ability and his fearless attitude caught the eyes of the selectors.



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