

Hamilton hungry for F1 return

AFP, London

Lewis Hamilton said Friday he was ready to attack the new Formula One season after getting over a "difficult time" following the traumatic end to his 2021 world championship campaign.

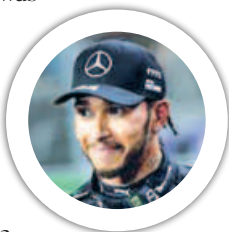
The British driver, 37, was speaking for the first time since he lost the championship in controversial circumstances to Max Verstappen in Abu Dhabi on December 12.

Hamilton was poised to capture a record-breaking eighth world title at the season finale before a controversial safety car restart allowed Dutch driver Verstappen to pass his British rival on the last lap.

The seven-time world champion was disillusioned following his defeat and, at one stage, it was unclear if he would return to the grid.

But Hamilton, speaking at the launch of the Mercedes car for the 2022 season said: "I never ever said I was going to stop."

"I love doing what I do, and it is such a privilege working with this large group of people and you feel like you are part of a family. There is nothing quite like it."



Abahani players celebrate their second goal against hosts Sheikh Russel KC with goal-scorer Iranian defender Milad Sheikh Soleimani during a high-voltage Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bashundhara Kings Arena yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Abahani soar to top

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani registered a third victory in the Bangladesh Premier League, securing an emphatic 3-1 win over big-budget Sheikh Russel at the Bashundhara Kings Arena.

In the days other game, Mohammedan notched a 2-0 win over Saif SC at the Birshreshtha Flight Lt Matiur Rahman Stadium in Munshiganj yesterday.

A second win from four matches means Abahani leapfrog holders Bashundhara Kings to grab pole position with 10 points, one point ahead of the holders.

Mohammedan, meanwhile, equal Sheikh Jamal in the fight for third with eight points from four outings. Saif SC and Sheikh Russel have six and five points from four matches respectively.

Abahani took the field after an inspiring 3-0 win over Rahmatganj and the visitors carried that momentum by penetrating twice in the first two minutes. However, the Sky Blues surrendered momentum in the face of Sheikh Russel's press, which

negated Abahani's build-up.

Abahani faced a scare in the 19th minute as Brazilian forward Thiago Eduardo watched his bicycle kick narrowly miss the far post. Abahani came close to breaking the deadlock when Nabib Newaj Jibon played through top scorer Dorielton Gomes, who surprisingly headed straight at goalkeeper Ashraf Islam Rana in the 24th minute.

In the 27th minute, Milad Sheikh and Dorielton squandered more good chances for Abahani but they gained ground and made inroads four minutes into the second half when winger Jewel Rana nodded home a Dorielton header off a Daniel Colindres corner.

Sheikh Russel could have levelled in the 55th minute when Abahani goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel's pass went into the feet of Esmail Ruti, who however could not get past defender Milad Sheikh.

With both teams playing a fast-paced game, Abahani came close to doubling their lead but Dorielton again frustrated

Abahani. However, Milad Sheikh made no mistake by making it 2-0 with a powerful left-footed shot from the edge of the box in the 61st minute.

Trailing by two goals, Sheikh Russel bolstered their attack by sending on Brazilian Aiton Machado and pulled one goal back with a nice exchange before Esmail Ruti curled the ball to the far post in the 65th minute. Sheikh Russel pressed hard for the equaliser with Machado and Manik Mollah missing two one-on-one chances before Abahani killed the game with their third.

Availing a mispass, right-back Sushanta released Jibon, who made space on left-foot inside the box and drove to the far post six minutes from time.

At Munshiganj, Malian striker Souleymane Diabate dragged Mohammedan once again, scoring in his fourth successive match before promising forward Shariar Emon sealed the match with the second in 49th minute against Saif SC.

'It's not a friendly'

AFP, PARIS

Rangers stunned Borussia Dortmund 4-2 in the Europa League on Thursday while Barcelona had to come from behind to draw 1-1 at home to Napoli in their play-off first leg tie.

"It is a great night but only a great night," said Rangers manager Giovanni van Bronckhorst. "We are not through to the next round, which is what we want. We know we have to have a good performance next week."

Napoli gained a 1-1 draw in Barcelona. The visitors, challenging for the Serie A title, opened the scoring in the Nou Camp against a home team that is scrambling just to finish in the top four in La Liga.

Polish midfielder Piotr Zielinski ran onto his own rebound to slam the ball home after 29 minutes.



Barcelona increasingly dominated possession but needed one of four penalties awarded for handball by VAR in the Europa League on Thursday to level. Adama Traore's cross hit Juan Jesus on the arm

after 59 minutes.

Ferran Torres converted the penalty with confidence for his first goal at Camp Nou for Barcelona but his cool deserted him as he hit two good chances over the bar as Barcelona dominated the closing stages.

"We played very good soccer," said Barca coach Xavi.

"But of course, it's not a friendly, it's the Europa League. The result is insufficient, but I am very happy with the performance."

Real Betis, who won 3-2 at Zenit Saint Petersburg, and Sevilla, who beat visiting Dinamo Zagreb 3-1, both stayed on course for the final in their home city.

Ivan Rakitic gave Sevilla the lead from the spot. The next three goals came in four minutes just before half time.

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