

Maruf ton sets up thrilling victory

SPORTS REPORTER

Mehedi Maruf's century powered Gazi Group to a thrilling four-run win over Prime Bank Cricket Club in a Dhaka Premier League clash at the Sher-eBangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Jamal DC clinched a five-wicket win against Abahani in the other game to remain top of the table with 14 points.

Chasing a target of 257, Prime Bank were cruising towards a win and reached 167 for the loss of just one wicket but they lost their way and some poor cricket saw them eventually end up on 252 for nine after 50 overs.

Abhimanyu Easwaran broke Mahmudul Hasan and Anamul Haque's 117-run partnership by dismissing the former for 57 before using the next delivery to remove Anamul, who made a team-high 85 off 100 balls.

Skipper Mohammad Mithun scored eight and began the trend of Prime Bank losing wickets. Needing seven off the last over, Rubel Hossain was unable to connect with three deliveries.

Earlier, Maruf smashed his seventh List A ton off 121 balls before being dismissed after a 140-ball 118, laced with 13 fours and three sixes to help Gazi post 256 for nine after being asked to bat.

At BKSP-4, Abahani were caught in Parvez Rasool's spin web. He bagged a five-wicket haul as the defending champions folded for 177.

The Indian recruit has been in terrific form and, despite missing out with the bat, ended up picking five for 29 runs from 9.4 overs. Left-arm spinner Sunzamul Islam picked up two wickets while Shamim Hossain was the top scorer for the batting side with 50.

Sheikh Jamal reached the target in 48.4 overs, with Robiul Islam Robi remaining unbeaten on 57.



On a placid Port Elizabeth pitch, Taijul Islam, back into the side, persevered with his nagging line and length and reaped rewards with three wickets as South Africa reached 278 for five at the end of the first day of the second Test yesterday. Bangladesh toiled hard early after being sent into field, but two late wickets kept them in the hunt.

PHOTO: AFP

A mindset conditioned by batting woes

SPORTS REPORTER

Set back by injuries to frontline pacers Taskin Ahmed and Shoriful Islam, Bangladesh went back to their tried and tested strategy of playing two spinners after including Taijul Islam in the second Test against South Africa in Port Elizabeth yesterday.

While the merit of going in with just two pacers in South Africa may raise a few eyebrows, it was a bad toss to loss as South Africa would go on to show.

The surface had a friendly pace to it and the deliveries came onto the bat even as Ebadot Hossain went past the bat a few times. Generally, the pace duo did not hit the right length, with Ebadot guilty of giving too many boundary balls. And there was no third seaming option to fall back on to either attack or put pressure on the South Africa top-order.

A full-length delivery from Khaled Ahmed induced an edge from Sarel Erwee through to the wicket-keeper after South Africa had gotten off to a rapid start. Dean Elgar in particular was in attacking mood and took on Mehedi Hasan Miraz, forcing Bangladesh to take the spinner out of the attack. The first session saw Mehedi concede 30 in his first six overs before he bowled the final over before lunch.

It also illustrated the problem of going in with four bowlers. By going after a spinner, the Proteas had ensured the pacers would have to bowl longer spells. It remains to be seen why the Bangladesh

SCORES IN BRIEF (DAY 1)

SOUTH AFRICA VS BANGLADESH, 2ND TEST

SOUTH AFRICA

First innings- 278 for 5 in 90 overs (Elgar 70, Bavuma 67, Petersen 64, Rickelton. Erwee 24, Verreynne 10 not out, Mulder 0 not out ; Taijul 3-77, Khaled 2-59, Mehedi 0-58., Ebadot 0-75)

think-tank did not count on Abu Jayed Rahi, but Taijul's inclusion was one based on solidity. And he turned things around with three crucial wickets, accounting for Elgar, out for 70, and Keegan Peetersen for 64 as Bangladesh sort of came back into the match. Near the end of the day, he removed Ryan Rickelton for 42.

The Tigers' strategy was in part conditioned by their batting debacle on day five at Durban. They did not include an extra seamer by sitting a batter. Having looked at the surface, they perhaps found it to be advantageous to spinners. They also did not get the rub of green, losing

a toss that ensured their spinners would not get the chance to come in when the surface will be more conducive than it was on day one.

Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, a mentor to many of the Bangladesh national team's stars, felt that injuries had conditioned Bangladesh towards a more defensive mindset.

"We haven't seen that much help for pacers in this wicket. Since there wasn't much help, maybe the pacers were a little off with their line and length. Maybe picking two pacers and two spinners was the best option. Ideally, you want five bowlers. But since the team doesn't have enough confidence in their batting, that didn't happen. If we have to bowl for a long time, two spinners can bowl for longer. It's a defensive mindset but perhaps other options were not better," Fahim opined about the lack of a third seaming option.

"It's not an aggressive team perhaps, but because two of the experienced batters have not found runs, they needed extra batters. Pacers will not be able to bowl for long and spinners will have to be brought on again. That also means we aren't taking full advantage of the conditions. If we had been able to win the toss and bat, this bowling combination would have worked a bit better," he said.

As the Test progresses, that solidity from Taijul so far may be Bangladesh's best bet, but having to bat last puts pressure back on them if the surface does become more conducive to spin.

Rashid longs for Tests

REUTERS, New Delhi

Star Afghan spinner Rashid Khan longs for opportunities to play Test matches against top teams but is content playing his trade in franchise cricket until that happens, the 23-year-old told Reuters on Friday.

Rashid has played all five of Afghanistan's Tests since the country was granted full membership of the governing International Cricket Council (ICC) in 2017.

They were scheduled to play a one-off test in Hobart in November but Cricket Australia postponed the match citing uncertainty over the future of women's cricket under Afghanistan's Taliban rule.

Rashid lamented missing out on an opportunity to test his craft against the likes of Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne.

"As a player, it disappoints you because you always wait for opportunities to play big teams," the leg-spinner, currently playing for Gujarat Titans in the Indian Premier League, told Reuters by telephone.

"It's about improving your cricket and learning new things.

"We all were looking forward to it but sometimes things do not go your way. I hope we get the opportunity to play them soon."



Serena hints at Wimbledon return

AFP, Paris

Serena Williams hinted Thursday she could return to action at Wimbledon after her long-time coach Patrick Mouratoglou announced he would work with Simona Halep on a "full-time" basis.

Williams, 40, has not played since retiring from her first-round match at Wimbledon last June with a torn right hamstring.

She appeared to suggest she would compete at Wimbledon in an Instagram video featuring Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers, posted backstage at a Bitcoin conference in Miami.

"We've been talking about my comeback and he's been hyping me up and getting me ready for Wimbledon. Can't wait!" said Williams.

Rodgers replied: "Wimbledon? What about the US Open?"

"Wimbledon is before the US Open! I have to play Wimbledon first!" responded Williams.

Ctg Abahani, MSC move up the table

SPORTS REPORTER

Big spenders Saif Sporting Club faltered again while Chittagong Abahani and Mohammedan Sporting Club had the last laugh in their respective Bangladesh Premier League matches yesterday.

Saif went down to seventh position as they drew 3-3 against Muktiyoddha Sangsad at the Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium in unlike Chittagong Abahani, who came from a one-goal down to beat Bangladesh Police at the Muktiyoddha Smriti Stadium in Rajshahi.

At the Sylhet District Stadium, Mohammedan registered a thumping 5-1 win over hosts Rahmatganj MFS to reach the fifth spot in the 12-team table.

From the onset in Gopalganj, Muktiyoddha kept surprising favourites Saif with one goal after another as the first half ended at 3-2 in Muktiyoddha's favour.

After Japanese forward Tetsuaki Misawa gave Muktiyoddha the lead, four goals occurred in the span of 14 minutes from the 21st, starting from Sazzad Hossain's equaliser. Aminur Rahman Sajib restored the lead minutes later before Riyadul Hasan brought relief into Saif's camp, but only for four minutes as Sajib went on to strike his brace in the 35th minute.

The second half saw Saif level scores in the 63rd minute through Mfon Udoh but the title aspirants could not grab the winner later despite two red cards to Muktiyoddha in the dying minutes.

In Rajshahi, Chittagong Abahani came out victorious, even though they were trailing 1-0 against a spirited Police side for 82 minutes, as an on-song Peter Thankgod equalised, to score his 12th goal of the league, before Keninder Yisa struck the winner four minutes from time. Al Amin's strike in the second minute, thus, went in vain and Abahani achieved their sixth victory to leapfrog to fourth position in table while Police stayed in sixth.



Eintracht Frankfurt winger Ansgar Knauff celebrates scoring the first goal of the game against Barcelona in their Europa League quarterfinal first leg at the Deutsche Bank Park in Frankfurt on Thursday. Ferran Torres later equalised for the Spanish giants as the first leg ended 1-1.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Bayern's win at Freiburg stands

AFP, Berlin

The result of Bayern Munich's 4-1 win at Freiburg last weekend will stand as the German FA (DFB) on Friday dismissed the hosts' appeal after the Bundesliga leaders had briefly played with 12 men following a substitution mix-up.

Bayern had an extra man on the pitch for 18 seconds last Saturday after two players came on, but only one came off, leading to Freiburg lodging an appeal on Monday.

The sports court of the German Football Association (DFB) has ruled Bayern were not at fault for the mix-up, but said the error was down to the "misconduct" of the match officials.

The decision means Bayern retain their nine-point lead and look set for a tenth straight Bundesliga title.