

Kings one win away from hattrick of titles

SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings closed in on a hattrick of Bangladesh Premier League titles as they handed a 1-0 defeat to Chittagong Abahani in a crucial encounter at the Shaheed Dhirendhranath Datta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday.

A 15th win from 19 games means Bashundhara raised their point tally to 48, 10 points ahead of second-placed Abahani. Oscar Bruzon's side now need only one more win from their three remaining games – against Saif SC, Abahani and Sheikh Jamal DC – to seal the title. Meanwhile, Chittagong Abahani remain seventh in the 12-team table after a fourth straight defeat. They have 26 points from 19 matches.

Maruful Haque's port-city side have always been a difficult prospect for Bashundhara. A majority of their defeats have come against Chittagong Abahani and they had dropped points to them in the previous three league campaign, including the one that was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, this time Bashundhara held their nerve and won both of the league meetings, hammering Chittagong Abahani 5-0 at home before yesterday's narrow win.

Bashundhara launched the first attack in the 15th minute as Brazilian footballers Robson Da Silva and Miguel Ferreira played a nice one-two before goalkeeper Saiful Islam denied Miguel.

Moments later, right-back Yeasin Arafat rattled the crossbar before the BPL's top scorer, Chittagong Abahani's Peter Thankgod, narrowly missed the target in the 23rd minute. Four minutes later, Mohammad Ibrahim failed to connect with a cross from Robson, who then drove narrowly wide in stoppage time of the first half.



After resumption, Bashundhara continued to press for the lead and Spanish forward Nuha Marong broke the deadlock by capitalising on a defense-splitting through ball from Miguel. Nuha raced past the defenders and into the box before placing the ball to the left of the onrushing goalkeeper.

Kings continued to apply pressure as they aimed to extend their lead but Chittagong Abahani showed some character by launching a few attacks although they could hardly break Bashundhara's defence.

Afghan forward Omid Popalzay was close to levelling the margin but goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico denied him from close range before substitute Mahdi Yusuf Khan saw his short miss the far post in the 86th minute.

Chittagong Abahani forward Candy Augustine then darted into the box from the right and played it square to substitute Arifur Rahman, but Iranin defender Rimon Hossain made a brilliant interception to rescue Bashundhara.

Covid-hit Sri Lanka seek to level series

AGENCIES

All-rounder Glenn Maxwell remains in Australia's plans for the second Test against Covid-hit Sri Lanka on an expected turner at Galle, skipper Pat Cummins said Thursday.

Maxwell, a batsman who bowls off-spin, will fight for a place in the team with fast bowler Mitchell Starc as the tourists look to clinch the series in the final match starting Friday.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka suffered a blow ahead of the second Test when three more players were ruled out on Thursday after contracting COVID-19.

Sri Lanka are trailing 1-0 in the two-Test series after their 10-wicket defeat in the first test in Galle.

All-rounder Dhananjaya de Silva, pace bowler Asitha Fernando and spinner Jeffrey Vandersay are the latest players to test positive for the virus, taking the total number of cases in the Sri Lankan camp during the series to five.

The hosts, however, will be strengthened by the return of former skipper Angelo Mathews, who will be available for selection, having been withdrawn during the first test after contracting the virus.



England's Beth Mead celebrates her decisive goal against Austria in the opening match of the UEFA Women's EURO 2022 in front of a tournament record crowd at Old Trafford on Wednesday. The record books have been rewritten after a crowd of 68,781 turned out to watch this match, elevating the mark of 41,301 set when Germany beat Norway in the 2013 final in Sweden.

PHOTO: TWITTER

Another Caribbean voyage for Mominul?

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and Cricket West Indies (CWI) confirmed on Wednesday that Bangladesh's A team would play two four-day matches and three 50-over matches in the West Indies against their counterparts in August.

The assignment will be Bangladesh A's first away tour in a while and will go a long way to getting next the generation of players ready for international assignments. But the tour could also serve the BCB's purpose of providing out-of-favour players such as Mominul Haque, Soumya Sarkar and Shadman Islam with the game time they need to help return to form.

Bangladesh do not have any Tests until November, when India are slated to visit for two Tests and three ODIs.

As Mominul was dropped following a run of poor scores in the Test format, BCB president Nazmul Hassan hoped the former Test captain could return to his best through domestic matches. However, the A team's tour provides a very good opportunity to provide some game time to Mominul, who does not feature in any of the other formats in the senior side.

"The matter is certainly up for discussion but we have to hold talks on Mominul's inclusion. As you know, he has just returned from the West Indies after travelling a long distance. So sending him back with the A side does put a burden on

him. We will take a decision following discussions," chief selector Minhajul Abedin Nannu told The Daily Star yesterday.

The A team recently played a four-day fixture against the High Performance (HP) team in Rajshahi. Cricket operations committee chairman Jalal Yunus yesterday told media that 70 per cent of the HP team's players were in the A team. "We will try to keep most of the High-Performance team's players [in the A team]," he said, informing that the focus would be on improving in Tests with a new batch.

Although performances in T20 cricket have suffered since the T20 World Cup debacle, the BCB feels improving in Tests holds the key to improving in other formats.

"We're not doing well in Tests and we're very worried about that. The board president has formed a working group and chairmen from the cricket operations, game development, HP and age-group committees will hold a meeting after Eid. We have to make long term plans and we want to focus on what facilities and advantages can be given to cricketers so they are interested in playing Tests. Those who play Tests usually focus fully on the format. We want to sit with those who are more eager and have determination to play in the format," Jalal told the media yesterday, adding that the longer-version cricket would be prioritised because doing well in that format would bolster confidence for other formats.



Tunisia's Ons Jabeur lifted the spirits of an entire continent as she became the first Arab and first African woman to reach the Wimbledon final with a rousing 6-2, 3-6, 6-1 victory over her barbecue buddy Tatjana Maria on Thursday. "I'm a proud Tunisian woman standing here. I know in Tunisia they are going crazy right now. I want to see more Arab and African players on the tour. I love the game and I want to share the experience with them," said Jabeur.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Shakib to miss Zimbabwe tour

SPORTS REPORTER

Star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan will be unavailable for Bangladesh's upcoming tour of Zimbabwe, likely to start on July 30 with a T20I, BCB cricket operations committee chairman Jalal Yunus informed yesterday.

"I met with the selectors unofficially to discuss the upcoming Zimbabwe tour, during which we will play three ODIs and as many T20I. As the ODI series won't be part of ICC Cricket World Cup Super League, we advised the senior players that they could choose to take a break," Yunus said. "However, only Shakib informed us that he would not be available for the [Zimbabwe] trip."

Yunus also confirmed that Shakib would be unavailable for the three-match ODI series against the West Indies, starting from July 10 in Guyana.

"The selectors will form the squad within a very short time. We want to send a full-strength side [to Zimbabwe]," Yunus added.

Nadal in race to be fit as Djokovic targets 8th final

AGENCIES

Rafael Nadal is facing a race against time to be fit for Friday's mouthwatering Wimbledon semi-final against Nick Kyrgios but can either man stop Novak Djokovic in his relentless push for a fourth straight crown?

A meeting between 22-time Grand Slam champion Nadal and the mercurial Australian has been on the cards since Kyrgios defeated Stefanos Tsitsipas in an ill-tempered third-round meeting.

Nadal has suffered a "seven millimetre" tear to his abdomen but still intends to play his Wimbledon semi-final, sports daily Marca reported. He however turned up for practice at Wimbledon on Thursday a day after the 22-times Grand Slam winner played through an abdominal injury to beat American Taylor Fritz in an absorbing quarter-final.

Nadal, the 2008 and 2010 champion, underwent scans on the injury on Thursday following his gruelling 3-6, 7-5, 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (10/4) victory over Taylor Fritz in Wednesday's quarter-finals.

He played under similar circumstances at the 2009 US Open when he had a two-centimetre tear. He went on to make the semi-finals, losing to eventual champion Juan Martin del Potro.

Meanwhile, Djokovic had to come back from two sets down against Italian 10th seed Jannik Sinner in his quarter-finals on Tuesday. But the 35-year-old finished the match looking fresh, even pulling off an outrageous winner while doing the splits.

The Serbian top seed is on a 26-match winning streak at Wimbledon as he seeks to draw level with Pete Sampras on seven titles at the All England Club – just one behind Roger Federer's men's record.

Djokovic, who beat the 26-year-old Cameron Norrie in their only previous meeting, is braced for a partisan crowd.



ইউনিয়ন ব্যাংক লিমিটেড
এর পক্ষ থেকে সন্মানিত গ্রাহক, পৃষ্ঠপোষক,
প্রভাবশালী, শেফারহোভার, নিয়ন্ত্রনকারী
সংস্থা এবং সর্বোপরি দেশ-বিদেশের সকলকে
পবিত্র ইদ-উল-আযহার শুভেচ্ছা।

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