

SPORT

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS 2

ICC Women's T20 World Cup

Ireland vs England

Live from 7:00 pm

South Africa vs New Zealand

Live from 11:00 pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT HD1

English Premier League

Liverpool vs Everton

Live from 2:00 am (Tuesday)

Star power takes Comilla to final

SPORTS REPORTER

Comilla Victorians have nours for big games with three BPL titles to their name and they made it through a crucial qualifier against title contenders Sylhet Strikers on Sunday with a four-wicket win to make it to their fourth BPL final. It was Comilla's 10th win on the trot as their big names thwarted Sylhet at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

Comilla had a plethora of talent from franchise cricket to bank on in this game while Sylhet, built on a budget, had depended on local players levelling up but, in the qualifier yesterday, things did not quite pan out as they were bowled out for just 125 after being sent to bat.

They lost three wickets early with Andre Russell sending back Afghan Shafiqullah Ghafari with his first delivery in the second over. Towhid Hridoy had been the go-to man in terms of building the innings but yesterday he fell to an unfortunate run-out, effected by Tanvir Islam, without scoring.

When Zakir Hasan, another of the youngsters Mashrafe Bin Mortaza counted upon throughout the tournament, departed for just two, Sylhet found themselves at three for 16 in the third over. It resulted in Mashrafe showing his nous for thinking of something out of the box and bringing himself on at number five.

Till the eighth over, Mashrafe and opener Najmul Hossain Shanto were able to put some of the pressure back on Comilla captain Imrul Kayes. However, Comilla had Sunil Narine to thank for putting in two economic overs to wrest back some control.

Mashrafe's pinch-hitting tactics paid dividends as the partnership contributed 56 runs but the former Bangladesh captain departed for a 17-ball 26 in the 10th over, going for another big shot against Russell. And after Tanvir struck twice in the next over, removing Shanto for 38 and Ryan Burl for a duck off back-to-back deliveries, Sylhet never really recovered.

The experienced Mushfiqur Rahim's 22-ball 29 saw them inch towards an average score but after he departed, the tail succumbed to Mustafizur Rahman as they were bowled out for 125 with 17 deliveries left.

In chase, Narine's carnage at the top during a 18-ball 39 almost ensured there will be no hiccups but when Comilla lost Liton Das, Narine and then Johnson Charles in successive overs, they found themselves in a spot of bother. The run-rate slowed down and skipper Imrul could not ensure they get over the ropes easily, falling for 13 with the score at 73 for four.

Moen Ali had things under control during a 13-ball 21 but when Rubel Hossain, who earlier picked up Liton, removed Mo'in and then Jaker Ali for a duck in the 15th over, pressure was felt but a few missed opportunities from Mushfiqur, who dropped Russell, saw the moment slip away.

Russell took things on his stride and finished things off with two big sixes off Rubel to ensure a four-wicket win with Mosaddek Hossain at the other end remaining unbeaten on a run-a-ball 27.



Comilla Victorians all-rounder Andre Russel smacks one for six as the defending champions sealed a final berth in the BPL with a four-wicket win over Sylhet Strikers in the First Qualifier at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. [Bottom] Rangpur Riders skipper Nurul Hasan Sohan shakes hands with Barishal captain Shakib Al Hasan following the Eliminator earlier in the day.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Rangpur get it right, Shakib does not

SPORTS REPORTER

At the business end of the Bangladesh Premier League, decisions did not pay off for Shakib Al Hasan while young Shamim Hossain made the most of the opportunity handed to him as Rangpur Riders ensured second qualifier in expense of Shakib's Barishal, who departed from the tournament in the eliminator on Sunday.

Shamim's door opened with Rahmanullah Gurbaz leaving the BPL and he did not disappoint after Barishal had put on 170 for three. His fast bat-speed came to the fore, with some lovely pickup shots over square-leg against Dwaine Pretorius.

A 51-ball 71, laced with four fours and four sixes, signalled an ability behind just being able to hit the ball hard. He took on the likes of Shakib and Mehedi Hasan Miraz early on and that acceleration was vital as he kept the scoreboard ticking to help his side's cause, taking the game deep. Rangpur, in the end, won by just four wickets but the innings was enough to seal victory. Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, Barishal coach and a mentor to many of the national team stars, praised the effort. Shamim had been out of the national team contention after a poor outing at the T20 World Cup in UAE and Fahim felt he needed this opportunity to show a different side.

"Unfortunately, he [Shamim] doesn't get to bat at the top order and usually where he bats, he has to bat in a one-dimensional manner and keep hitting,



When he gets the opportunity to play this kind of innings, he will be able to organise himself better and I am very hopeful about him," Fahim said at the post-match presser.

"I always rate him highly not because of his ability to play shots or his aggressive batting, but for his mentality. He has the mentality required in this format," the Barishal coach said.

"Actually, I am a number seven or eight batter and whenever I come on it's not easy to play. When I come on, I try to finish the game which isn't easy," Shamim said about whether there were regrets over not being able to bat through the innings.

Rangpur's gamble with Shamim

worked but Shakib's gamble in not bringing himself at the top-order was a surprise and ultimately Barishal's first innings total fell short of what it might have been.

Shakib has been the most fearsome batter in this tournament, scoring 375 runs at an average of over 41 and an immense strike-rate of 174.41. After the platform laid out by Mehedi's 48-ball 69, Shakib sent on Karim Janat in the 14th over and Bhanuka Rajapakse in the 16th over following Mehedi's dismissal. The last seven overs produced just 56 runs and so from 114 for 1, Barishal ended up with just 170 for three.

"Maybe with such a good platform, he felt that if Rajapakse and Janat can go ahead of him and play freely, no matter how much they score, if they score at a good rate, then it will be handy for the side. But I don't think the plan worked," Fahim said on his side coming up short, adding that they should have gotten at least 190.

When asked whether Shakib should have come out and used that platform himself, Fahim agreed. "I think so. Given the way that Shakib had been batting on this wicket and in such scenarios, I don't think there was a better option than Shakib."

"Maybe that's what Shakib will realise now but whatever happened has happened. It's a lesson and even in bowling, we tried to depend on others but later we saw that our local bowlers got us back in the game," Fahim concluded.

Elusive gold leaves Imranur 'shocked'

SPORTS REPORTER

It took a while for Imranur Rahman to come to terms with reality after the England-born Bangladeshi sprinter reached the touchline during the men's 60 metre event in Asian Indoor Athletics Championship in Kazakhstan on Saturday night.

Imranur, after having clocked 6.59 seconds to leave behind seven superior counterparts from Hong Kong, Japan, Qatar, Oman, China and Pakistan, had first burst into celebration, leaping up into the air, before placing his hands on his forehead in utter disbelief.

"Yes, it was a bit shocking. I didn't expect it. I wasn't the favourite coming into the event," Imranur told The Daily Star over the phone from Kazakhstan yesterday.

Imranur initially stood first in the Heat round before becoming joint-second in the semifinals, based on a photo-finish. Afterwards, the lad from Sheffield became the first Bangladeshi sprinter to win the elusive gold medal at the Asian level.

"It's an amazing feeling [to deliver the first gold medal for Bangladesh]. I didn't expect the gold though. Thanking almighty Allah for such an achievement," said Imranur, who has been managing two jobs in England to run his family alongside bearing his training's expenditure.

"I manage the best way I can. But at times it is tough, but I am trying my best," said the fastest man



of Bangladesh, adding that he can only hope for the financial support to help him continue his training.

"I don't want to talk much about the financial support but there is a possibility. A full-time training is required though, if I want to perform better. The BOA and federation are trying to support me in the near future."

After bursting into the scene by cracking a national record in the National Athletics Championships in early 2022, the 29-year-old sprinter had been representing Bangladesh regularly at prestigious international competitions – such as the Commonwealth Games, Islamic Solidarity Games, World Indoor Championships and Asian Indoor Championships.

However, other than producing his career best timing in 100m event, he could not shine as per expectation.

Imranur initially tried to pursue his career as a footballer but he switched to athletics at around the age of 16. Since then, he has been trying to improve him by taking part in both indoor and outdoor events.

Replying to a query, Imranur said, "There is less room for error at indoor [events]. Mistakes can be costly. There is more emphasis on acceleration."

With Bangladesh sprinters having long struggled to win a gold medal in the regional multi-sports extravaganza since the last gold came in Madras South Asian Games in 1995 through the hurdle event, Imranur is looking forward to repeating his indoor feat in the upcoming South Asian Games.

"I want to replicate the Asian Indoor Championship feat in the South Asian Games," said Imranur, adding that he needs some advanced training to be sharper on the track.

'Is it Man City's fault Gerrard slipped?'

AGENCIES

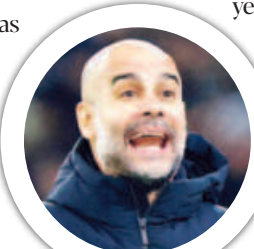
Pep Guardiola reaffirmed that Manchester City's glorious moments will always belong to them, asking if it was the club's fault Steven Gerrard slipped in the 2013-14 season.

City have been accused of over 100 breaches of the Premier League's financial rules between the seasons of 2009-10 and 2017-18.

Speculation has been rife as to the level of punishment the champions might receive should they be found guilty, including points deductions, relegation or the stripping of the titles they won during that time period, including two under Guardiola.

Yet Guardiola has insisted the moments cannot be taken away from City or their fans regardless of the punishment, if indeed there is one, with the manager sarcastically asking the press if it was his club's fault that Liverpool great Gerrard slipped at a vital moment in the 2013-14 title race.

Gerrard fell to the Anfield turf during a clash with Chelsea in April of that season, with Demba Ba going on to score as the Blues triumphed and handed City the chance to go and win their second Premier League title.



"Those moments belong to us. They absolutely belong to us, regardless of the sentence, they belong to us," Guardiola said.

"The goal from Sergio Agüero [in 2012]. I don't know if we are responsible for Steven Gerrard slipping at Anfield. Was that our fault?"

"I have respect for Steven Gerrard – but that moment belongs to us."

"The moments that we lived these years together, the Premier League will decide, but I know what we won and the way we won it."

"I know the effort we put in. If something happened in 2009 or 2010 it is not going to change one second."

Guardiola has full faith in the club's hierarchy.

"What I can say is I am proud of my owners, of my chairman, and the relationship we have had, this time together," he said.

"I have relied on them [and what they told me] a lot in the past, now you can't imagine."

Former Barcelona and Bayern Munich boss Guardiola also remains fully committed to City's cause.

"If they want me here I will be here," he continued. "The results are not good, they will put me out because it is a business where you have to win. But if they want me I will not let them down and my players, too."



Real Madrid put on a show at the Prince Moulay Abdallah stadium in Morocco on Saturday, securing a 5-3 win over Al Hilal 5-3 to lift the Club World Cup for a record-extending fifth time. This is Los Blancos' second piece of silverware of the season, after winning the European Super Cup in August.

PHOTO: REUTERS