

Shadman's 10th ton powers South

SPORTS REPORTER

South Zone opener Shadman Islam starred as he struck his 10th first-class ton on the first day against Central Zone in one of the Bangladesh Cricket League's final round of fixtures at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogura, helping his side post 281 for seven after being asked to bat.

The left-hander put away 17 fours and a six, batting throughout the day for his 130 off 240 balls before being castled by Central Zone pacer Abu Hider Rony in the 85th over in a game that is a prelude to the tournament's final.

South Zone started proceedings on the back foot as opener Pinak Ghosh was bowled by Rony off the very first delivery of the innings on a surface in Bogura that is said to aid the fast bowlers.

Shadman steadied the ship, stitching a 49-run stand with Anamul Haque and then forging an 81-run partnership with Amite Hasan. Anamul was sent back courtesy of a run out while Amite fell to the leg-break of Roqibul Hasan, leaving South Zone at 130 for three.



PHOTO: BCB



England had their first training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on Saturday ahead of their white-ball series against Bangladesh. All-rounder Moeen Ali, who won the recently concluded Bangladesh Premier League with Comilla Victorians, will look to put his experience in the country to good use and would have had some insights to share with his skipper Jos Buttler.

No longer 'best friends'

SPORTS REPORTER

The bitter relationship between 'best friends' Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal has been festering for quite some time now and has remained something of an open secret in the nation's cricket fraternity, but the topic came squarely to the forefront after Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon admitted that the relationship between the two national stalwarts was strained during an interview with Cricbuzz on Saturday.

His quotes spread like wildfire, leaving many to question whether the frosty relationship between two of the biggest egos in Bangladesh's dressing room would seep into the environment. But Papon asserted that the players had assured him they would not let their issues affect the team, especially on the field.

"This is not a healthy dressing room, that I can guarantee you. This thing [rift between Shakib and Tamim], it's not that I have not tried to sort it out. I spoke with both of them but I felt that it would not be easy to settle the issue at the moment. Both of them have been given the same message: 'we don't know what is going on between you, but during a game or series, these differences cannot come out'. Both of them assured me that it would not be there during the game," Papon was quoted as saying.

The Daily Star contacted the BCB boss and he admitted that the tension between the two players had become prevalent but he could not get to the bottom of an issue which he believed would harm the next generation of players, many of whom idolise one or the other of Bangladesh's finest.

It appears that things have deteriorated much more than previously portrayed and become so intense that the two have even sought opportunities to skip playing under each other.

There have been numerous incidents in

recent times when Tamim and Shakib have skipped international series, citing injury concerns or various reasons. There were even occasions when the two had opted not to face each other despite being present in

"First of all, I am unaware of any such issues between Shakib and Tamim. But if I take it as a case study, I would say such a gap between two cricketers in the team needs to be sorted out. Regardless of



the same programme, raising questions about their relationship.

Both players, who once used to publicly fawn over their friendship, have moved away from their previous statements. In the past, Shakib has told the media that his best friend within the dressing room was Tamim Iqbal. Curiously, on many occasions in recent times, both parties denied it, saying that their friendship was created and hyped up by the media.

Although the two stalwarts have made immense contributions to Bangladesh cricket, the rift has undoubtedly affected the dressing-room environment, with insiders claiming there is a huge divide in a national camp.

personal relations, it is important to set everything aside for the greater interests of the team," Shakib and Tamim's mentor and prominent coach Nazmul Abedeen Fahim told The Daily Star yesterday.

However, according to another cricket official also requesting anonymity, the issue was too sensitive to be disclosed so publicly by the BCB boss.

But since the rabbit is already out of the hat, it will be important for both Shakib and Tamim to settle things for the sake of the nation. Even if they cannot be the best of friends as they seemed to be in the past, they can surely portray that they are far from the biggest enemies and, most importantly, good teammates.

Kings' title to lose

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Bashundhara Kings have opened up a nine-point lead at the top as the first phase of the Bangladesh Premier League came to an end yesterday.

The three-time champions have been in marauding form this season, winning all 10 of their first-phase matches, and barring some miracle, they look set to add a fourth consecutive league title to their growing trophy cabinet. Their closest rivals for the title, six-time professional league champions Abahani, are nine points behind in second position and were subjected to a 2-1 defeat by the champions last week.

While the title-race seems done and dusted already, there is fierce competition for the next couple of positions which might have some ramifications for Asian club competition participation. Abahani have a five-point lead over third-placed Bangladesh Police, who were held to a 1-1 draw by Chittagong Abahani in one of the two matches on Saturday.

Police took the lead in the fifth minute at the Rafiq Uddin Bhuiyan Stadium in Mymensingh,



with Almazbek Malikov scoring from the spot. Chittagong Abahani, who started the day in 10th position with seven points, found the equalising goal in the 43rd minute, with David Ojukwu heading home Candy Augustine's freekick.

Sheikh Russel had the chance to reclaim the third position, but they were subjected to a 1-0 defeat by Muktiyoddha Sangsad at the Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium in Gopalganj. Aminur Rahman Sajib's 62nd minute header off a freekick from Najem Junior earned Muktiyoddha their third win of the season. The win lifted the All Reds to eighth position with 10 points while Sheikh Russel remained in fourth position with 14 points. Sheikh Jamal, with 14 points, were occupying the fifth position.

At the opposite end of the table, newcomers Azampur FC of Uttara look destined for the drop as they have only two points from 10 matches, six behind Chittagong Abahani.

BPL POINTS TABLE

Team	M	W	D	L	G/D	Pts
Bashundhara	10	10	0	0	+20	30
Abahani	10	6	3	1	+15	21
Police	10	4	4	2	+6	16
Sk Russel	10	4	2	4	+1	14
Sk Jamal	10	3	5	2	-1	14
Mohammedan	10	3	3	4	+3	12
Fortis	10	2	6	2	-1	12
Muktiyoddha	10	3	1	6	-5	10
Rahmatgonj	10	2	3	5	-6	9
Ctg Abahani	10	1	5	4	-8	8
Azampur	10	0	2	8	-24	2



Paris Saint-Germain forward Lionel Messi will be chasing a milestone of his own when his side take on arch-rivals Marseille in a pivotal game in the fight for the Ligue 1 title on Sunday. A goal from Messi in the tie could make him only the second footballer after Cristiano Ronaldo to join the 700-goal club in European club football.

PHOTO: PSG

Can Proteas emerge victorious in uncharted territory?

AFP, Cape Town

South Africa's women cricketers will go where none of their male counterparts have gone when they contest their very first World Cup final at Newlands in Cape Town on Sunday.

No South African team, men or women, had previously gone beyond the semifinals of either a 50-overs or T20 World Cup. So far, the South African teams had played a combined eleven semifinals at ICC World Cups, failing to win all of those.

The hosts reached the final of the women's T20 World Cup with a thrilling six-run win over England but now they will be up against Australia, a team of proven World Cup winners, who have won five of the previous six T20 finals.

The Aussies also had a tight semifinal when they edged past India by just five runs but they are loaded with experience which their captain Meg Lanning believes will help them in the pressure moments.

"Having been in pressure situations before helps a lot," said Lanning on Saturday.

"We're not going to be the team that everyone's cheering for. We're expecting South Africa to

come out to play to their full strength and they're riding a wave of emotion as well.

"I expect an incredible atmosphere and an incredible game at an amazing venue. It's a World Cup final and there's nowhere to hide."



Lanning said there would be pressure on both teams.

"It comes down to holding your nerve under pressure," she said.

"We've always known we had the ability to get to a final, I think it was just to get through that semifinal," said South African captain Sune Luus.

While Australia stormed through the group stages before being pushed all the way by India in the semifinals,

South Africa lost two of their first three games.

They looked anything but championship contenders when they lost the tournament opening match against Sri Lanka and they went down by six wickets in a group match against Australia in Gqeberha.

Luus said South Africa had a strong pace bowling attack and she expected an "even contest" between her bowlers and the Australia batters.

"It's going to be the best in the world against the best in the world."

Luus, 27, said the discussion before the semifinal had been on how to handle the big occasion.

"Everybody was hyped up and excited but we said before the game that the team that is the calmest is going to get over the finish line. I think tomorrow is going to be no different."

Tazmin Brits, 32, who until the retirement of big hitting Lizelle Lee last year was not an automatic choice for the team, made herself a national heroine by hitting top score of 68 and holding four catches in a remarkable display of big-match temperament.

"She's got a lot of self-belief. It's been years of hard work that finally came together," said coach Hilton Moreng.