

Anamul continues scoring spree

SPORTS REPORTER

Anamul Haque Bijoy continued his fine form in the ongoing Dhaka Premier League as the Abahani Limited batter smashed his second century of the tournament to help his side to a 54-run victory over Dhaka Leopards at the BKSP-4 Ground yesterday.



Anamul, who leads the run-getters charts with 419 runs in six matches, put away seven fours and four sixes for his unbeaten 126-ball 107, his 17th List A hundred, as he helped Abahani post 266 for six after they opted to bat first.

Leopards in reply were bundled out for 212 in 48.5 overs where Pinak Ghosh top-scored with 68 runs.

Abahani pacer Ripon Mondol and left-arm spinner Rakibul Hasan picked up three wickets each, while the top two wicket-takers so far in the tournament, Mohammad Saifuddin and Tanvir Islam, each scalped two to help Abahani clinch their sixth straight win which took them to the top of the table.

Meanwhile, Shinepukur Cricket Club registered a comprehensive eight-wicket win over Agrani Bank Cricket Club in Fatullah, and City Club snatched a nervy one-wicket win over Brothers Union at the BKSP-3 Ground on the same day.



Bangladesh batting stalwart Mominul Haque appears in jovial mood while playing football as Mominul Haque looks on during the training session yesterday ahead of the one-off Test against Ireland, starting tomorrow at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Verstappen wins maiden Australian GP amid drama

AFP, MELBOURNE

Max Verstappen held off a revived Lewis Hamilton to steer his Red Bull to a chaotic win at the Australian Grand Prix on Sunday and tighten his grip on the world championship.

The world champion began from pole and despite being passed by Mercedes pair George Russell and Hamilton at the start, he kept his cool to win a race red flagged three times, with multiple crashes.

Hamilton came home second ahead of Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso, who made it three podiums from three this year.

"We had a very poor start, lap one I was careful as I had a lot to lose," said Dutchman Verstappen.

"After that, the pace of the car was quick. With these red flags, I don't know, I don't really understand. It was a bit of a mess but we had good pace and we won, so that's important." Victory was Verstappen's maiden win in Melbourne and Red Bull's first in Australia since Sebastian Vettel's 2011 triumph.



Cash flows after BFF's late signal

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has come under severe scrutiny from all fronts after their financial shortcomings – amounting to around 80-90 lac, according to BFF general secretary – resulted in the national women's team to sit out of the Paris Olympics qualifiers this week.

Recently, the reigning SAFF champions reportedly staged a protest after being denied their salary.

In the midst of backlash, BFF vice-president Ataur Rahman Manik deposited Tk 50 lakh at BFF account yesterday, and fulfilled the promise he made following SAFF triumph in September last year.

"I wanted to pay out soon after their arrival from Nepal but the federation requested me to wait for some days, so that they can disburse it with other promised money among the players. Today [Sunday] I deposited it to the BFF account because the criticism over the promised money has surfaced again," Manik told The Daily Star from Canada yesterday.

He added, "The BFF will decide whether they will distribute the money among the players or spend it behind other areas concerning the women's team."

Moreover, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and BFF senior vice-president Abdus Salam Mursheedy had promised to award Tk 50 lakh each to the women's footballers and they are also reportedly ready to disburse it once they get BFF's signal.

Earlier the BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag said: "There was no shortage of effort from us to send the women's team to Myanmar but we could not manage the required money of approximately Tk 80-90 lakh in three to four weeks."

Tigers not taking Ireland Test 'lightly'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's long stretch of assignments since the Asia Cup last year will pause briefly after the lone Test against Ireland, starting from Tuesday, and resume with an away ODI series against the same opponents in May. The Tigers geared up for the longer version yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur but were without skipper Shakib Al Hasan, who himself had a far busier schedule off the field than rest of his teammates.

The quiet period will not be so quiet given the ongoing Dhaka Premier League (DPL) games but for Shakib and Liton Das, the Indian Premier League (IPL) will be on the agenda as they join Mustafizur Rahman following the Test.

Shakib had arrived in Dhaka on Friday, the very day of the third T20I against Ireland in Chattogram, before he played the DPL game for Mohammedan Sporting Club on Saturday, after which he returned from BKSP by a helicopter to fulfil commercial obligations.

Shakib's unavailability in a practice session is not surprising given he has been maintaining an aggressive schedule, in terms of commercial involvement, during the Ireland series. There was a question mark over Shakib's availability for the Test before his inclusion in the side on Saturday as the BCB remained unmoved from their position of not allowing players to leave for IPL during national team's assignment.

Recently, however, Shakib did have leeway in terms of attending to personal obligations during a series and apparently talked to Chandika Hathurusingha regarding yesterday's break.

"The coach is aware of his unavailability as far as I know. There is a lot of cricket to be played in the

modern game and workload management is an issue, which is why he is taking rest to not be exhausted," a member of the team management informed.

The rest of the 14-member squad went about their business in preparation for the longest format. The players attended a team meeting with Hathurusingha in the dressing room before the session. Afterwards, Liton was going through wicket-keeping drills with Jamie Siddons while others performed fielding drills.

Tamim Iqbal was seen having a look at the wicket. It appeared quite greenish, indicating a challenging prospect for Ireland but also the Tigers top-order if it stays the same through to the start of the match.

Slip catching was on the agenda as four stood at slip cordon beside Liton and the wicket-keeper had a discussion with Hathurusingha following the fielding session.

The Tigers were not keen on letting their dominance slip from the two white-ball series against Ireland and Shakib and Liton had to keep their end of the bargain as captain and vice-captain of the side, which is why they were not granted NOC to skip the Test.

Asked if having the duo available was a relief, selector Abdur Razaq said: "Having them in the side changes the environment and that's what's happening. The board had a decision regarding IPL and what the players want since it's a Test. I don't think any Test matches should be taken lightly; winning is better. I also don't think we are in a position that four or five players being unavailable will not be an issue."

Liton was seen undergoing a range-hitting session after returning from his nets session. The Tigers have adopted a more aggressive policy in white-ball formats and it remains to be seen whether that will translate into the Test arena.



Rybakina supports Wimbledon's Russia ban reversal

REUTERS

Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina said the grasscourt Grand Slam had taken the correct decision to reverse its ban on Russian and Belarusian players and allow them to compete at this year's tournament as "neutral" athletes.

Wimbledon was the only Grand Slam to ban competitors from Russia and Belarus last year after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and players competed as individual athletes without national affiliation at the other majors and the tours.

Russian-born Rybakina, who switched allegiance to Kazakhstan in 2018, said that she had no problem with Russian and Belarusian players competing without their national flags.

"They have been playing like this for all the tournaments, so it (Wimbledon) was only Grand Slam they were not allowed," Rybakina told reporters. "So I think that's the way that they are playing, without any flags. I think it's the right decision, I guess."

Twice Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitová, who stunned world number seven Rybakina 7-6(14) 6-2 in the Miami Open final on Saturday, had opposed the Grand Slam's decision.

Kvitová added that athletes from Russia and Belarus should also not be allowed to compete at next year's Paris Olympics.



IPL pays tribute to PRINCE SALIM

AGENCIES

Indian Premier League teams observed a moment's silence to mourn the death of Salim Durani after the former India all-rounder, fondly called "Prince Salim" and known for his match-winning ability, died at the age of 88 yesterday.

As a left-hand batter and left-arm spinner, Durani played 29 tests for India between 1960 and 1973, scoring 1,202 runs and bagging 75 wickets. The Afghanistan-born cricketer was popular for his six-hitting talent.

Tributes towards Durani had poured in from all over India. Former India head coach Ravi Shastri described Durani as "easily one of the most colourful cricketers of India", while another Indian legend Sachin Tendulkar said: "Deeply saddened to hear about the passing of Salim Durani ji. A really warm and loving person."



Durani was the first cricketer to receive the Arjuna award, the second-highest sporting honour in India. He starred in India's historic first series victory over England in 1961-62 when he took eight wickets in Calcutta (now Kolkata) and then 10 in Madras (now Chennai) and went on to play a key role in another famous win against the West Indies in 1971.

He was dropped for the Kanpur Test in 1973 against England, but brought back for the next match after protests from fans who held placards and raised slogans of "No Durani, no Test".

Alvarez, Jesus lauded by their coaches

AGENCIES

Manchester City thumped Liverpool 4-1 even without goal machine Erling Haaland in their ranks but Arsenal took another step towards a first Premier League title in nearly 20 years as they matched the champions with a 4-1 win over Leeds United on Saturday.

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta and his City counterparts Pep Guardiola had some special accolades for their two South American stars – Gabriel Jesus and Julian Alvarez – after the wins in their respective matches.

For Arteta the return of Jesus to his forward line must feel like the signing of a new player.

The Brazilian was back in the starting lineup for the first time in the Premier League since November on Saturday and struck twice in a 4-1 defeat of Leeds United.

The former Manchester City frontman, who suffered a knee injury at the World Cup, was substituted in the second half and left the pitch to a standing ovation.

His first goals in six months helped Arsenal restore their eight-point lead over Manchester City in the title race and with nine games remaining the Londoners are close to winning the Premier League for the first time since 2004.

There are several tough hurdles still to overcome and Arteta's squad is being stretched by injuries and illness, but Jesus being back is a



massive tonic.

"Delighted for him. They all were. We were all clapping for him," Arteta told reporters. "He's been working so hard for the last four or five months with a lot of support from the team and the staff. Today he deserved the chance to start."

"He grabbed the opportunity with a lot of conviction and with two goals."

On the other hand, in the wake of another superb display from the Argentine striker Alvarez, Guardiola described the 23-year-old as "something special".

The World Cup winner led the City line with aplomb, scoring to level in the first half after Mo Salah had given Liverpool an early lead.

Alvarez then showed his vision too with a brilliant ball to set up Riyad Mahrez which

paved the way for Kevin De Bruyne's 46th minute strike to give City the lead and he also played a key role in Ilkay Gundogan's strike which made it 3-1.

"He's playing for World Champions, Argentina, next to Messi for a reason! Not just the goal, the assist in the second, the third... He was involved in everything. With the ball, so clever. He's exceptional player," said Guardiola.

"Tactics is players. Erling is something special. Julian is something special too," he added.

"The club made an exceptional signing with



him – he's a world champion alongside Lionel Messi because he has something."

Manchester City paid 18.5 million euros with taxes for Alvarez and also rewarded him with new deal and salary improved until 2028.