

SPORT

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS
SELECT HD2
 English Premier League
 Brentford vs Chelsea
 Live from 9:00 pm
STAR SPORTS

SELECT HD1
 Nottingham Forest vs Liverpool
 Live from 9:00 pm
 Luton Town vs Aston Villa
 Live from 11:30 pm

'Old, but still not out'

SPORTS REPORTER

Fortune Barishal's Mushfiqur Rahim on Wednesday quipped about his side being labelled as the 'team of elderlies' after the Tamim Iqbal-led side, also including veteran Mahmudullah Riyad, cemented their spot in the final of the 10th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League.

After their six-wicket win over defending champions Comilla Victorians in the final in Mirpur yesterday, Tamim underlined the importance of the old guard in the 20-over format as he pointed out how the experience of the trio that has an average age of 36 came into play in crunch situations.

"(We are) Old, but still not out," Tamim interrupted Mushfiqur when the wicket-keeper batter was asked during the post-match presentation ceremony how it felt to still have the fighting spirit despite all three of them now being considered veterans of the game.

Although unusual, Tamim called up Mushfiqur and Mahmudullah to join him in the captain's post-match interview and heaped praise on them.

"I would love to dedicate this trophy to them [Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad]," Tamim said upon arriving at the interview booth. "They haven't won it (before). Mushy did a massive job in the field and looked after the team really well. I mainly concentrated on who will come and who will play. He made the field changes and it is Mushy's trophy. Because I was named the captain, I get the credit but it's really important to say the right thing."



Tamim Iqbal led a Fortune Barishal side, also including experienced Mahmudullah Riyad and Mushfiqur Rahim, to their first-ever Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) title when his side beat defending champions Comilla Victorians by six wickets in the final in Mirpur yesterday. The win marked a very successful campaign for Tamim, adjudged player of the tournament, and also for first-time BPL winners Mahmudullah and Muhsfiqur.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Champion: Fortune Barishal (BDT 2 crore)
Runner-up: Comilla Victorians (BDT 1 crore)
Player of the tournament: Tamim Iqbal (BDT 10 lac)
Player of the final: Kyle Mayers (BDT 5 lac)
Highest wicket-taker: Shoriful Islam, 22 wickets (BDT 5 lac)
Highest run-getter: Tamim Iqbal, 492 runs (BDT 5 lac)
Best fielder: Mohammad Naim (BDT 3 lac)

Unfortunately, we didn't play well in the final game, it happens in cricket. We didn't bat well enough, we were 20 runs short and we didn't take the half chances in the field. I felt it was a good batting wicket in the first half, the ball turned more in the second half. I thought our players played well till the 15th over, but still, I thought 150 was a good score in the final. If we bowled and fielded well, it would have been a different ball game.

LITON DAS
 Comilla Victorians captain after losing the final.



"In this kind of tournament, there is a lot of pressure. This is where I have to thank Mushy who took away a lot of pressure from me, and I could just concentrate on my batting. It was important for me and the team that I score runs at the top. I've done it but it wouldn't have been possible without the support of Mushy, Riyad, and the others," he added.

Tamim finished the edition as the tournament's highest run-getter with 492 runs, evenly spread out throughout the competition, at a strike rate of 127 while averaging 35.14.

After winning their first match, Barishal lost the next three and suffered two more losses that saw their qualification hang in the balance and it was only after Khulna Tigers' defeat in their final league fixture that Barishal ensured a spot in the playoffs.

Third time the charm

Third time was the charm for Mushfiqur and Mahmudullah, who lost the past two BPL finals they played in. The duo featured in all 10 seasons of the tournament but up until now couldn't boast a winner's medal. Mushfiqur missed out on the title in 2019 and 2023 with Khulna Tigers and Sylhet Strikers respectively, while Mahmudullah had to walk past the trophy more than a decade ago with Chittagong Vikings in 2013 and then suffered the same fate the following season with Barishal Bulls.

"It was my third final and I won for the first time. Thanks to Tamim for leading us so well and a lot of credit to the team management and support staff, they worked really hard," Mushfiqur said in the post-match interview.

'Team environment' key in Barishal's triumph

SPORTS REPORTER

Tamim Iqbal put the exclamation point on what was a statement season for him in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) by leading Fortune Barishal to their maiden title yesterday, but instead of basking in the glory, chose to redirect all praise to the team environment and his teammates.

This year's BPL in many ways was a test for the veteran batter after not taking part in last year's ODI World Cup and the 34-year-old stepped up to the challenge, scoring 492 runs to finish as the tournament's highest run-getter and also being named the player-of-the-tournament.

Under his leadership, Barishal recovered from winning just one of their first four matches to finish third in the league stage and then defeated all three title contenders in the playoff stage to win the coveted trophy.

After the win, Tamim said it was Barishal's excellent team environment that helped them recover from the early stutter, an environment which he himself helped create.

"What I wanted was to create a very good team environment. Our team

environment was unbelievable and everyone's contribution, including the overseas stars, was important. They are great players but they are also good human beings. There was doubt, even amongst us, about whether we would qualify but just because of the team environment, we were able to do it," Tamim said.

The opener also said that at no

brought in and dedicated the trophy to Mushfiqur and Mahmudullah Riyad.

"The two seniors Riyad bhai and Mushfiqur, who have served the country for so, so long but hadn't won this trophy. I felt that if we get this trophy, I will dedicate it to them," said the Barishal captain at the press conference.

He praised Saifuddin, who was a late inclusion in the Barishal squad, for holding his nerve in that final over of the Comilla Victorians innings, where he conceded just seven runs bowling to Andre Russell, four of which came from extras.

Player-of-the-final Kyle Mayers, another mid-season inclusion, was another key figure in Barishal's triumph and so was left-arm spinner Taijul Islam, whose economy rate was 5.65 throughout the tournament.

But for Tamim, the main ingredient behind Barishal's triumph was creating a team environment where everyone was united and played their role.

"I didn't want to come into an environment where everyone is not together. Creating the right environment was the biggest challenge. If you ask me why we won that trophy, it's because we created that environment where everyone played a part and they were happy for each other."

ROLL OF HONOUR		
Year	Champions	Runner-up
2012	Dhaka Gladiators	Barisal Burners
2013	Dhaka Gladiators	Chittagong Kings
2015	Comilla Victorians	Barisal Bulls
2016	Dhaka Dynamites	Rajshahi Kings
2017	Rangpur Riders	Dhaka Dynamites
2018	Comilla Victorians	Dhaka Dynamites
2019	Rajshahi Royals	Khulna Tigers
2022	Comilla Victorians	Fortune Barishal
2023	Comilla Victorians	Sylhet Strikers
2024	Fortune Barishal	Comilla Victorians

point did he feel he was answering his critics, saying, "I didn't think I had to make a statement. If I did, then maybe I wouldn't have been able to do it [win BPL]," he said.

Tamim said that he had left many of the on-field decisions up to Mushfiqur Rahim while he was more focused on off-field issues like which foreign players could be



Bangladesh's fastest man Imranur Rahman storms towards the finish line ahead of a Jamaican and a Pakistani competitor during the heats of the men's 60m sprint at the Indoor World Athletics Championships in Glasgow yesterday. The England-based sprinter clocked 6.64 seconds, 0.05 seconds slower than his personal best, to finish third in the heat and moved into the semifinals as the 17th fastest.

PHOTO: AFP



Bangladesh players train at the ANFA Complex in Kathmandu yesterday ahead of their first match of the SAFF Under-16 women's Championship against hosts Nepal, which kicks off at the same venue at 3:15pm Bangladesh time today.

PHOTO: BFF

Can Abahani stop spirited Mariners?

SPORTS REPORTER

Star-studded Abahani will look for improved performance to regain the title of Club Cup hockey tournament when they square off against reigning champions Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club in the final at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium today.

The game kicks off at 5:00pm. Despite being the top team on paper, national player-studded Abahani could not prove their mettle in the last three matches even though they won all of those matches, including a hard-fought 3-2 win over Mohammedan in the semifinals.

The Sky Blues will definitely look to up their game against a spirited Mariners, who stormed into the final with a massive 8-4 win over Usha KC. Mariners showed fantastic performance in all three previous matches and are considered as favourites to win back-to-back titles.

It is also going to be a repeat of the last edition final held three years ago when Mariners won 3-0 to claim their first-ever club cup title.

"The key to our strength is the fitness of the players as well as a good understanding among the local and the foreign players. We are playing with good combination, good passing, attacking and defending throughout the matches," Mariners coach Mamunur Rashid told The Daily Star after the team's final preparation.

"If we can carry our natural performance in the final, we will have a good chance of winning the match. We will definitely focus on team game instead of individual performances and that is what

I've told the players today (Friday)," said the former hockey player, who also praised his opposition for their defensive and attacking prowess.

Abahani coach Hedayetullah Islam Razib admitted that his charges could not perform well in the previous matches but he is optimistic for an improved performance in the final.

"Mariners have been performing well which we are not being able to do. We are lacking cohesion among the foreign and the local players. Besides, we

The foreign players of both teams have been decisive in their victories so far and the final could be a battle between them.

are also not getting proper service in midfield as the players have just come back from injuries," Razib told The Daily Star.

"We made some mistakes in the match against Mohammedan as there is always nerves during Abahani-Mohammedan matches. Having rectified those mistakes, the boys are expected to perform well against Mariners," said Razib, who however believes if the local players perform well, they will have a good chance to win the final.

The foreign players have been playing key roles in deciding the fate of the matches for both teams. Mariners' Indian recruits have outperformed Abahani's Indians and the final might also turn out to be a battle between the foreigners.

MATCHES TAKEN FOR FIRST TEST WIN

Australia: 1	Zimbabwe: 11
England: 2	South Africa: 12
Pakistan: 2	Sri Lanka: 14
Afghanistan: 2	India: 25
West Indies: 6	Bangladesh: 35
Ireland: 8	New Zealand: 45

Andy Balbirnie has represented Ireland in all eight Tests played by them.

Pacer Mark Adair, who was adjudged the player of the match for his career-best Test figures of eight for 95, has now become the top wicket-taker for Ireland in Tests with 18 wickets in four matches. He went past Andy McBride (14 wickets in six Tests).

Afghanistan also recorded their first Test win against Ireland back in 2019.

Ireland played their first Test in 2018 against Pakistan.



Ending a streak of seven successive losses, Ireland made history on Friday when they defeated Afghanistan by six wickets in Abu Dhabi to claim their maiden Test victory. Captain Andy Balbirnie led from the front with an undefeated 58 as Ireland reached their modest target of 111 in the final session of the third day.

PHOTO: X