

Hattrick, tons, and a 'tired Liton' steal focus

SPORTS REPORTER

A last-over dramatic hattrick, a couple of tons, and the struggles of a few batters saw the Dhaka Premier League (DPL), the country's premier domestic one-day competition, get back some focus on Sunday.

All-rounder Mahedi Hasan was the hero for Prime Bank in a high scoring match at BKSP ground 4. Defending 15 runs in the last over with City Bank on 291 for four in chase of 306-run target, Mahedi was hit for a four and a six inside the first three deliveries before he removed Sazzadul Hoque for 76, Irfan Hossain (0 off 1) and Moinul Haque (0 off 1) in the next three deliveries to pick up a hattrick and help Prime Bank win the game by three runs.

Earlier, Parvez Hossain hit his second successive ton, scoring a 114-ball 100, laced with five fours and as many sixes. He was ably supported by Zakir Hasan, who got 79 while Mohammad Mithun's 29-ball 42 came as saw Prime Bank post 305 for eight. Skipper Tamim Iqbal, who opened the innings with Parvez, failed to get going, getting an inside edge through to the wicketkeeper to depart for an 11-ball 6.

Mahedi, despite his last-over heroics, ended on the expensive side, conceding 86 runs and picking up four wickets as City Bank were restricted to 302 for seven.

Liton Das, dropped from the squad for the third and final ODI against Sri Lanka just a day before, batted at number three and managed



Bangladesh batter Mahmudullah Riyad would want to forget the manner of his dismissal in their three-wicket defeat against Sri Lanka in the second of the three-match ODI series in Chattogram on Friday and deliver a much more resolute effort with the bat in today's series decider. Meanwhile, leg-spinner Rishad Hossain had a batting session at the venue but the Tigers would hope to benefit more from his bowling as he is tipped to get a shot as the second spinner in the eleven. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



One thing I'm sure is that the dew factor will be taken out. So, it will be very even conditions for both teams. So, we have to study the wicket and see what's the advantage in batting first or bowling first, which team will get an advantage over there.

Naveed Nawaz
Sri Lanka batting coach

A win today will give Bangladesh only their second ODI series win over Sri Lanka. The Tigers won at home against the Lankans in 2021 and drew an away series 1-1 in 2016.

The Tigers have won only 11 out of their 56 ODIs against Sri Lanka. The Lankans won 43, while two matches produced no results.



just five runs during a 19-ball stay before he succumbed to a delivery from Arafat Sunny.

Fifties from opener Mohammad Naim (66 off 87) and batter Mahmudul Hasan (51 not out off 59) saw Abahani Limited coast to a seven-wicket win, their third victory on the trot. Earlier Khaled Ahmed bagged three for 17 while Afif Hossain scalped three for 34 in his 10 overs.

Liton, who was in DPL for just this one match as he would soon be joining the Tigers' Test side, appeared to be batting gingerly against spin. His footwork appeared to be similar to what was seen on the national side just recently. According to Abahani head coach Khaled Mahmud, Liton might have been a bit tired.

"No there is no question about nervousness, I think he is a bit too tired. He was just informed yesterday [Saturday] that he will be playing the match and mentally he wasn't that ready. It's normal that when you don't perform you are a bit down and there is pressure although I don't feel there was any pressure this game but sometimes your head does not work," Mahmud told reporters yesterday at BKSP.

"He is a class player. He needs to go back to his basics and keep himself calm considering the pressure in the national team. But I feel he is a player who can get back from here [DPL]. I feel one good innings will see him back in form," he added.

Nurul Hasan Sohan, meanwhile, returned back amongst the runs with a dazzling 97-ball 101, his fourth List A ton, to help Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi thrash Brothers Union by 121 runs. Fazole Mahmud's 74 and Sohan's ton saw Sheikh Jamal reach 256 all out in fifty overs before Ripon Monol and Shafiqul Islam's four-wicket hauls saw Brothers bowled out for 135 in 40.2 overs.

Changes imminent but Tigers optimistic

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Bangladesh play Sri Lanka in the third and final series-deciding ODI in Chattogram today, with questions remaining over what the Tigers' line-up could be for the pivotal contest. The Tigers started the series with a convincing six-wicket win before the visitors bounced back with a three-wicket victory in the second game.

Star opener Liton Das was dropped from the squad for the final ODI, owing to underperforming in the first two matches during which he could not even open his account. He has been replaced by Jaker Ali Anik, who shone in the prior T20I series.

Liton's expulsion means the final ODI is likely to see a new opening pair in action for Bangladesh, with any one of Anamul Haque or Tanzid Hasan Tamim getting a nod to partner up with Soumya Sarkar.

Anamul yesterday was out for a net session with Soumya and the right hander is likely to come into the lineup.

Bangladesh will also be missing the services of in-form pacer Tanzim Hasan Sakib, forced out of the squad due to a hamstring injury. His injury, however, opens up a chance for Mustafizur Rahman to return to the lineup after sitting out the first two ODIs.

Questions could be asked about Mustafizur who has not had the



kind of performances in white-ball cricket lately that are usually expected of him. Hasan Mahmud has been drafted in the side as Sakib's replacement but Mustafizur, who had a good session in the nets yesterday, could be the one trusted for this game.

To the bowlers' relief, condition-wise, things could be far more balanced in the third ODI with it being a day game. The dew factor had led to challenges for bowlers for both sides in the first two matches which were day-night affairs.

"In the last match, our pacers took three wickets in the first 10 overs, which was an advantage. We couldn't get a breakthrough later. You know the dew is very important

here. We, the spinners, did not get any help," Mehedi Hasan Miraz said in the pre-match press conference yesterday.

Another change in the bowling department could see left-arm spinner Taijul Islam make way for leg spinner Rishad Hossain. Taijul has had a difficult time in the first two ODIs, scalping just a solitary wicket while giving away runs at a hefty economy of 7.40 runs. He was only given five overs in the second ODI.

Moreover, Rishad brings in a bit more batting expertise down the order, something the team management has as well. He has been given the opportunity to bat in the nets so that he can mentally prepare himself," Miraz said about Rishad.

Despite a number of changes imminent before a crucial tie, Miraz was confident that the Tigers were a "hundred percent hopeful" of clinching a win and the series.

However, the Sri Lanka side will also see a major change as their lead pacer Dilshan Madushanka was ruled out of the rest of the tour, also including two Tests later this month, due to a hamstring injury.

SHORT CORNER



Australia women arrive for first-ever series
World champions Australia women's cricket team arrived in Dhaka in the wee hours of Sunday for a first-ever series against Bangladesh. The tour will kick off with three ODIs, the first of which is scheduled for Thursday. The three ODIs will be played on March 21, 24 and 27, respectively. The 50-overs series will be followed by a three-match T20I series.

Siddikur bags \$14,000 in Macau
Having overcome the disappointment of not being able to take part in the International Series event in Oman over visa issues, Siddikur Rahman stroked to 34th position in the International Series Macau. The effort saw Siddikur grab 14,000 dollars as prize money and moves him to 59th position in the Asian Tour Order of Merit.

MSC win easy, Usha edge Police
Title-contenders Mohammedan SC notched up an easy 11-1 win over Dilkusha SC, while Usha KC toiled hard to clinch a 3-2 victory over Bangladesh Police in their respective matches in the Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Wolfsburg sack coach Kovac
Bundesliga strugglers Wolfsburg fired manager Niko Kovac on Sunday with the German side yet to win in the league since the start of the year. Wolfsburg have not won any of their last 11 Bundesliga games under Kovac, a run which has left the side lingering in 14th spot.

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Bayern Munich forward Harry Kane celebrates one of his two goals in a 5-2 win over SV Darmstadt in Darmstadt on Saturday during their Bundesliga fixture. The two goals helped the English forward break a 60-year record for most goals in a debut season. With 31 goals in 26 league games since arriving from Tottenham Hotspur in the summer, Kane overtook German legend Uwe Seeler, who scored 30 goals for Hamburg in 1963-64. PHOTO: REUTERS

Cabrera's charges ready for Palestine challenge in Kuwait

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh football team landed in Kuwait yesterday for their World Cup Qualifying round match against Palestine on March 21 after a two-week training camp in Saudi Arabia which included a couple of warm-up matches against higher ranked Sudan.

Bangladesh head coach Javier Cabrera picked Saudi Arabia as the place for the training camp after Palestine chose to play their home match in Kuwait, a cross-border state with Saudi Arabia with similar conditions.

After training for two weeks, the Spanish coach feels his squad is ready to face Palestine, who are 86 places ahead of the 183rd Bangladesh in the FIFA rankings.

"It was a great experience and glad to have the opportunity to come here. It's been the perfect time and facility to develop the ideas we have prepared before coming here," said Cabrera before flying out for Kuwait yesterday.

"The ideas should become the base of the structure for the performance of this year. Everything

has been great - hotel, hospitality in the hotel, the food, facilities especially the gym was also quite good for us," he added.

Cabrera was especially pleased with the opportunity to play two warm-up matches against 127th-



ranked Sudan. "Having the chance to play with Sudan was huge for us," believed Cabrera, whose side played out a goalless draw in the first practice match before suffering a 3-0 defeat to the African nation in the second game.

The Bangladesh team flew to Kuwait with the entire squad fit

and raring to go. Right-back Saad Uddin, who had some niggles, was also ready for the match, said Cabrera.

"It's very positive to have the whole squad ready. Saad came with small issues but he has gone through a very detailed and careful rehab programs. He is feeling confident."

The match against Palestine will be played at the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium this Thursday. Both teams will then fly to Dhaka for the return leg on March 26.

Palestine, on the other hand, come into the match after tremendous performances in the AFC Asian Cup where the drew against the UAE defeated Hong Kong 3-0.

But they will be without five players who were part of their last Asian Cup encounter against Hong Kong owing to injuries.

Palestine had announced their squad for the Bangladesh matches on March 15, where a few new faces like goalkeeper Mahdi Assi got called up while experienced Anas Bani Owda, Ameer Sawafta and Mahmoud Eid returned to the fold.