



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

WANDERERS back in the big league with nostalgia and new hope

ANISUR RAHMAN

Dhaka Wanderers Club, a forgotten name in the country's football despite a glorious past, returned to top-flight football after 19 years following their runners-up finish in the Bangladesh Championship League, thanks to a goalless draw against BFF Elite Football Academy in their last match at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

due to the organising failure. "Club officials from the old part of Dhaka operated Mohammedan and Wanderers before the liberation war. Those two teams had big rivalry with huge support base and the matches between these two teams used to draw huge crowd the way Abahani versus Mohammedan matches used to draw after liberation," veteran organiser Manzur Hossain Malu told The Daily Star.

"Wanderers started going down in

reflected. "After liberation, Wanderers were dealt another blow when Abahani was formed as most supporters of the club flocked to the new club."

In its heydays, the club boasted stars like Nabi Chowdhury, Amir Jong Gaznabi, Fazlur Rahman Arzu, Kabir Ahmed, Ashraf Chowdhury, Chingla Mong Chowdhury Mari, Manzur Hasan Mintu, Jakaria Pintu, Major Hafizuddin and Wazed Gazi played. But once it fell into hard times, it kept going down -

of the club, the club tent assumed a deserted look, with all the doors and window scrapped off by thieves.

However, the new management of the club is slowly bringing changes and the club is now all set to compete again against the heavyweights of domestic football.

"President Kazi Shahidullah Liton, younger brother of KM Nazibullah Hiru, has been playing a key role in rebuilding the club by providing financial support and managing sponsors for the last four years," informed the club's general secretary Mohammad Kamal Hossain.

"After the casino scandal, we faced a lot of problems in collecting fund but we were also able to make some people realise that it was an accident which happened due to misunderstanding among the club officials," said Kamal, who played in the country's top-flight football from 1987 to 1996.

Asked about the difference between Wanderers of now and that of yesteryears, Kamal said, "The difference is money. When we played football, we played it as an art and gained fame, but not for money. There were, however, opportunities to get jobs from the government-backed office teams. Footballers were not professionals then but now footballers are 100 percent professional and teams like Mohammedan and Abahani are also struggling due to financial issues."

When asked how the club would manage a big budget for BPL next season, Kamal said, "We will have to double our effort to manage sponsors. We needed one crore taka for the BCL squad but now we may need five crore taka for the BPL. Fortunately, as the club is doing well, the old buddies, well-wishers and supporters of the club are coming forward to help the club."



DHAKA WANDERERS CLUB

- Established: 1937
- Dhaka League title: 1950, 1951, 1953, 1954, 1956, 1960
- Independence Day Cup: 1956 and 1966
- Aga Khan Gold Cup: Runners-up in 1963
- Federation Cup: Runners-up in 1987
- Demotion to lower league: 1995
- Casino scandal: 2019
- Promotion to BPL: 2024

It will be the first appearance for Wanderers in the Bangladesh Premier League - the top-tier professional league of the country - and they will join promoted Fakirerpool Young Men's Club, who emerged as BCL champions.

Wanderers used to have a key rivalry with Mohammedan in the 1950s and 1960s before gradually losing the lustre

1968-69 once East Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (EPIDC) started forming strong teams and the supporters of Wanderers also started supporting EPIDC, which later turned into BJMC after liberation. There were also financial problems under the leadership of president Aga Yousuf and general secretary Wazed Ali," Malu

getting demoted to the lower division from the top division for the first time in 1995. Since then Wanderers had moved up and down between the top two tiers quite a few times before their latest demotion in 2005. And then the big blow came in 2019 in the form of the casino scandal.

Following the scandal and closure

BCB steps up to combat heatwave

SPORTS REPORTER

As the country undergoes a moderate to severe heatwave, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) conducted a workshop on Heat Illness Prevention and Management in conjunction with AIUB Public Health Department to facilitate better understanding of heat-related issues during the ongoing Dhaka Premier League and the Women's Premier League, set to begin on May 17.

Representatives of clubs, players, BCB staff and ground staff attended the workshop, conducted by BCB chief physician Debashish Chowdhury, alongside Pro Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Md. Abdur Rahman and Dr. Wasif Alam, director of Public Health department of AIUB.

"There is a lot of heat, and if it was just heat, it would not be a problem but the presence of water vapour has made for humid conditions, which is harmful when

you are playing. But the matches will go on and the heat will increase. We have to adjust to it," Debashish told reporters yesterday.

"We have to know about the scientific ways to adjust to it and then we can resist it. We have brought together the support staff at various clubs to pass those scientific information, so that we can manage things [during extreme heat]," he added.

Debashish maintained that clubs cannot avail the same level of services afforded by the national team. Thus, there is the matter of some education regarding nutrition.

"Clubs can't avail all kinds of facilities. There is travelling, too, and clubs often have to think of below-par accommodation. There is the matter of nutrition as well and this is why we called the physios and trainers of all the clubs to educate them so that they can help their clubs," he said.



Bangladesh's new spin-bowling coach Mushtaq Ahmed appears eager to share his wealth of experience as the Pakistan legend, appointed till the completion of the T20 World Cup in June, was seen putting his expertise to use while working with a net bowler at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka yesterday. [Inset] Head coach Chandika Hathurusingha was spotted in an atypically jovial mood, which could be down to what former Bangladesh Test captain Mominul Haque had said. Although the forthcoming World Cup tune-up series against Zimbabwe at home is the primary focus at present, the Tigers have 10 red-ball fixtures lined up for the remainder of the year.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

SHORT CORNER

Zinnat wins gold in Nelson Mandela Cup Boxing

Bangladeshi-origin US-based boxer Zinnat Ferdous won the gold medal in the Nelson Mandela Cup International Boxing Competition held in the South African city of Durban on Tuesday. She clinched the gold medal in the women's 50-kg weight category competition, beating her Ethiopian opponent in the event's final.

Tevez hospitalised with chest pain

Former Argentina international Carlos Tevez has been hospitalised due to chest pain, Club Atletico Independiente, the Argentine club he now coaches, said on Tuesday. Tevez, who made 76 appearances for Argentina and played as a striker for Boca Juniors, Manchester United, Manchester City and Juventus, took charge of Independiente in August 2023.

Zimbabwe legend's son included in squad for Bangladesh tour

Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) has announced a 15-man squad for Zimbabwe's tour to Bangladesh for a five-match Twenty20 international (T20I)



series in May. Captained by Sikandar Raza, the side includes one uncapped player, Johnathan Campbell, son of former Zimbabwe captain Alistair Campbell, while Tadiwanashe Marumani and Faraz Akram have been recalled.

Liverpool in talks with Feyenoord over Slot

Liverpool have lined up Feyenoord coach Arne Slot as successor to departing manager Juergen Klopp and have opened negotiations with the Eredivisie club, Dutch media reported on Wednesday. The Algemeen Dagblad newspaper said Liverpool made contact with Feyenoord on Wednesday morning. Slot was heavily linked with a possible move to Tottenham Hotspur last year, but opted to stay at Feyenoord and signed a contract extension with the Dutch side until 2026.

Nadal uncertain over Roland Garros appearance

Spain's Rafael Nadal said on Wednesday that he is not sure if he will be able to play at next month's French Open after pushing through the pain barrier in his comeback from injury. The 37-year-old, a 22-time Grand Slam champion, said that he is far from being in top form and that he is only playing against American Darwin Blanch in the first round of the Madrid Open on Thursday as a personal sacrifice.

*Read full stories on The Daily Star website