

Goals galore as BPL kicks off

SPORTS REPORTER

Sixteen goals were scored across three matches as the 17th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League – the country’s top-tier professional league – kicked off yesterday, with defending champions Bashundhara Kings and runners-up Mohammedan notching massive wins.

Kings handed a 7-0 defeat to Chittagong Abahani at the Bashundhara Kings arena while Mohammedan inflicted a 6-0 defeat on newcomers Dhaka Wanderers Club at the Shaheed Barkat Stadium in Gazipur.

At Flight Lt Matiur Rahman Stadium in Mymensingh, Brothers Union defeated Bangladesh Police 2-1, thanks to Gambian duo Mady Ceesay and Zakaria Darboe scoring either side of Manik Hossain Mollah’s equaliser.

The foreign forwards dominated the scoresheets as expected but six local forwards also got on the scoresheets on the opening day.

Fresh from a 3-1 win over Mohammedan in the Challenge Cup, five-time champions Kings made light work of troubled Chittagong Abahani despite the absence of last season’s Brazilian duo of Dorielton Gomes and Robson Robinho.

SCORES	Bashundhara 7 – 0 Ctg Abahani
	Brothers 2 – 1 Police
	Wanderers 0 – 6 Mohammedan

Romanian coach Valeriu Tita is perhaps happy to see local players like Faisal Ahmed Fahim, Rakib Hossain and Mojibur Rahman Jonny sharing the spotlight alongside French signing Jared Khasa and Brazilian midfielder Miguel Ferreira in the 7-0 victory.

Kings dominated the port-city outfit at their home venue and took a third-minute lead with Khasa scoring with a placing shot before Fahim doubled the lead with a diagonal shot that kissed the net after hitting the far post in the 23rd minute.

Fahim then set up Ferreira for the third goal six minutes later before Khasa made it to 4-0 with a simple tap-in on a square pass from Rakib in the 39th minute.

After resumption, Kings held their dominance and added three more goals with substitute Jonny netting one and Rakib scoring two goals within 10 minutes.

In Gazipur, Mohammedan also toyed with Dhaka Wanderers Club, who returned to the top-flight football after 19 years.

The Black and Whites took only five minutes to make the first inroad with a placing shot from Nigerian forward Emmanuel Sunday before Minhajur Abedin capitalised on a fumble from Wanderers’ goalkeeper Saiful Islam Khan to double the lead in the 19th minute.

Long-serving captain Souleymane Diabate made it 3-0 with an effortless header before the break as Mohammedan went into the break with a comfortable lead before adding three more after in the last 15 minutes to wrap an easy win.

Ghanaian forward Ernest Boateng widened the margin with a placing shot in the 80th minute and nine minutes later Diabate scored his second with a chip while Sourav Dewan sealed off the victory with a tap-in in stoppage time.



Faisal Ahmed Fahim celebrates with teammates after scoring a goal during Bashundhara Kings’ 7-0 drubbing of Chittagong Abahani on the opening day of the Bangladesh Premier League at the Bashundhara Kings Arena yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh openers’ musical chairs to continue? Jamaica Test begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

The second and final Test between Bangladesh and the West Indies will begin today in Jamaica with the visitors likely to shake up their playing eleven after suffering a crushing 201-run defeat in the opening fixture last week.

The match will take place at the Sabina Park Stadium, a venue known to be pacer-friendly, which could prompt the management to add speedster Nahid Rana on the side.

But the bigger headache for the think tank would be the batting line-up, which has been short of runs since the Pakistan tour in August.

In the first Test in Antigua, Jaker Ali and Mominul Haque hit fifties while Liton Das and Mehedi Hasan Miraz hit one 40-plus knock each but openers Mahmudul Hasan Joy and Zakir Hasan hardly contributed, which could result in either one of them losing their spot to Shadman Islam.

These three batters – Joy, Zakir, and Shadman – have taken turns in the opening slots for the last 12 Tests for Bangladesh, but none of them have been able to lock down a permanent position or provide the team with stability at the top.

The pair of Joy and Zakir opened the innings in the first five of the 12 Tests and then again got together for the first Test against the West Indies.

None of their 14 opening partnerships

crossed the 50-run mark, with their highest stand being 47, which came in the Chattogram Test against Sri Lanka this March.

- Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Zakir Hasan, and Shadman Islam have opened in the last 12 Tests for Bangladesh. During this period, Joy averaged 22.625 in 16 innings; Zakir averaged 16.75 in 22 innings; and Shadman averaged 23.09 in 12 innings.
- The Joy-Shadman opening combo averaged 9.33 – the lowest among the pairs between the trio.

The Joy-Zakir opening partnership averaged a mere 19.50 – which is not even the worst among the three opening combos between the trio.

After Joy got injured playing for the ‘A’ team in the buildup to the Pakistan series, Shadman replaced him and joined Zakir at the top and this duo lasted for the next four Tests.

This duo produced two half-century partnerships – a 58-run stand in the

second Test against Pakistan and a 62-run stand in the first Test against India. The pair averaged 30.125 – the highest of the three.

In the home series against South Africa, Joy returned in place of Zakir, creating an opening combo with Shadman which lasted two Tests. Their partnership averaged a mere 9.33 and the highest of their four stands was 15, which came in the second Test against South Africa.

Individually, all three enjoyed sporadic successes in this period, but lacked consistency. Joy and Shadman have a couple of half-centuries to their names while Zakir has hit three.

Consistency-wise, however, Zakir has been the worst of the three, averaging only 16.75, followed by Joy (22.625) and Shadman (23.09).

The recent stats indicate that dropping Joy and adding Shadman should statistically improve Bangladesh’s returns from the first wicket stand and the management could very well follow this logic while naming the eleven in the Jamaica Test.

But at the same time, the individual averages show that there is nothing much between them, indicating that playing any two of them would not have any dramatic effect on Bangladesh’s batting, not something a team would like to think of right before a Test where they want to avoid a clean-sweep.

SHORT CORNER

Halep rounds on tennis doping body for Swiatek leniency

Romania’s Simona Halep on Friday rounded on the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) for discrepancies in the treatment of world number two Iga Swiatek after testing positive for a banned substance. The ITIA announced a one-month ban on Thursday for Swiatek after the 23-year-old had tested positive for the heart medication trimetazidine (TMZ) in August 2024.

Guardiola will not ‘run’ from Man City rebuild



Pep Guardiola says he is braced for the challenge of turning around Manchester City’s fortunes after the worst run of his managerial career ahead of a daunting trip to runaway Premier League leaders Liverpool on Sunday. City are without a win in six games.

ICC talks continue on fate of Pakistan Champions Trophy

ICC said talks were continuing to settle uncertainty around next year’s Champions Trophy after India refused to travel to host nation Pakistan. The event’s fate has been hanging in the balance since earlier this month, when the ICC said India declined to visit Pakistan.

Messi, Ronaldo still in spotlight

Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo continue to be prominent figures as FIFA on Friday announced the nominees for The Best FIFA Football Awards for 2024. Messi is shortlisted for The Best FIFA Men’s Player award. Ronaldo, meanwhile, missed the shortlist for the third year running but the five-time Balon d’Or-winner is one of the 77 players nominated for The Best FIFA Men’s 11 of 2024, joining Messi among 22 forwards competing for a spot.

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A fearless Harry Brook slammed an unbeaten century to give England the upper hand in the first Test against an error-strewn New Zealand on day two in Christchurch on Friday. At stumps, Brook was 132 not out with the visitors recovering from 71-4 to be 319-5, trailing the hosts’ 348 all out by 29 runs and with five wickets in hand. PHOTO: AFP

ACC MEN’S U-19 ASIA CUP

Tamim ton propels young Tigers to winning start

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh launched their ACC Men’s U-19 Asia Cup title defence with a 45-run win over Afghanistan in the tournament opener, thanks to a brilliant century from skipper Azizul Hakim Tamim at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium in the UAE yesterday.

Tamim smashed four sixes and eight fours for his 133-ball 103 and put together a 142-run stand with Kalam Siddiqi (66 off 110 balls) to propel Bangladesh to 228-9 after they were sent to bat first in the Group B encounter.

With the ball, the pacers came through for Bangladesh. The pace trio of Al Fahad, Iqbal Hossain Emon, and Maruf Mridha scalped eight wickets between them to bundle out the Afghans for 183 in 47.5 overs.

Fahad and Emon scalped three wickets each while Mridha took two.

“We won and I scored a hundred which helped our cause,” skipper Tamim said after the game.

Tamim, coming in to bat at number three, held the innings together with opener Kalam after Zawad Abrar, the other opener,



got dismissed in the very first over of the innings, leaving the young Tigers at three for one.

It was then Tamim and Kalam who provided the foundation for a decent total but the Bangladesh

innings was all about the duo’s contributions as no other batter after them could produce a substantial knock, with three other batters managing double-figure scores.

“First and foremost, the team won. We are taking things match by match. Alen and I put together a partnership and the batting went very well; the bowling and the fielding as well,” Tamim, however, sounded happy with the overall performance.

Afghanistan were very much alive in the chase but the loss of two set batters – Faisal Khan Ahmadzai (58 off 58) and Naseer Khan Maroofkhil (34 off 60 balls) – deflated the Afghans as Tigers’ pacers continued to chip away at their batting lineup.

Bangladesh will face Nepal in their second Group B match at the same venue on Sunday.

Meanwhile, in the other match of the day, Sri Lanka beat Nepal by 55 runs at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium.

The Group A fixtures will get underway tomorrow as India will take on archrivals Pakistan in Dubai, while last edition’s runners-up UAE will face Japan in the other match in Sharjah.

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