

Rare opening stand undone by late collapse

SPORTS REPORTER

Courtesy of Shadman Islam's second Test century, Bangladesh yesterday found themselves in a promising position on day two of the second and final Test against Zimbabwe. However, a flurry of wickets in the final session has cast doubt on their chances of securing a significant first-innings lead in Chattogram.

The Tigers closed the day on 291 for seven, leading by only 64 runs, having lost their grip on a match they once looked to be dominating.

Resuming the day's proceedings, after Taijul Islam wrapped up Zimbabwe's first innings by taking his sixth wicket off the very first ball of the day, the home side looked to mean business.

The new opening pair of Shadman and Anamul Haque Bijoy composed a much-needed 118-run opening stand – Bangladesh's first century opening stand in 16 Tests following Najmul Shanto and Zakir Hasan's 124-run partnership against India in Chattogram over two years ago.

Anamul eventually departed for 39, but Shadman found another able partner



PHOTO: BCB

in Mominul Haque. The duo added 76 runs for the second wicket without much trouble, further strengthening the hosts' position.

Shadman went on to reach his century, off 142 balls as he dispatched Richard Ngarva delivery with a classy cover drive for a boundary. His innings served as both a comeback from his poor outing in Sylhet and a notable team milestone

as well, giving Bangladesh their first Test hundred from an opener in 28 months.

However, a lapse in concentration at the stroke of Tea saw both batters depart in quick succession – first Mominul for 33, then Shadman on the very next ball after reaching career-high 120 runs.

The sudden double blow brought captain Shanto and a vastly experienced Mushfiqur Rahim to the crease, and while

they managed to regroup, the momentum shift was also a sign of things to come.

Mushfiqur and Shanto stitched together a 65-run stand for the fourth wicket, frustrating the visitors and reviving hopes of a commanding lead. But the final session proved costly. What seemed a solid foundation quickly crumbled as Bangladesh lost four wickets for just 20 runs.

Shanto's dismissal triggered the slide, gifting a simple catch to mid-wicket off debutant leg-spinner Vincent Masekesa, who soon grabbed his maiden Test wicket. Masekesa struck again to remove Jaker Ali, while Mushfiqur, looking steady on 40, was run out trying to sneak a needless single. Masekesa capped off the session by removing Nayeem Hasan, leaving the visitors firmly back in the game.

Reflecting on the day, Shadman admitted the collapse hurt their momentum, saying, "we were in a good position but suddenly we witnessed a collapse," while remaining hopeful with Mehedi Hasan Miraz at the crease and that "a good partnership" is still possible to regain control.

Ancelotti set to take over Brazil

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti has agreed to take over the Brazilian national team, several Spanish media outlets reported Monday.

The veteran Italian has one more year on his contract with the Spanish giants, but after quarterfinal Champions League elimination by Arsenal and Copa del Rey defeat by rivals Barcelona, he is poised to depart the Santiago Bernabeu.

Ancelotti has not hidden that a potential exit was on the cards and said his future was "a topic for the next weeks" after defeat by Barca on Saturday.

Spanish media reports Ancelotti would take over ahead of the 2026 World Cup qualifiers in June, leaving Madrid before the Club World Cup starts in the United States this summer.

Brazil sacked Dorival Junior after a 4-1 thrashing by Argentina in March and are fourth in the South American qualifying table for the tournament in the US, Mexico, and Canada.

Ancelotti led Real Madrid to a Champions League and LaLiga double last season, with Brazil stars Vinicius Junior and Rodrygo Goes vital parts of the team, and is one of the most successful coaches in the club's history.



Inter brace for daunting Barca trip

AFP, Milan

Inter Milan head into the Champions League semifinals at risk of finishing the season empty-handed after a late-season slump killed their treble hopes and has left them wondering where the next win will come from.

Wednesday's daunting clash at Barcelona could hardly have come at a worst time for Inter who, since reaching the last four, have lost three games on the bounce without scoring a goal.

Those three defeats handed Napoli a three-point lead at the top of Serie A with four matches remaining and left Inter out of the Italian Cup after a dismal 3-0 derby defeat at the hands of AC Milan last week.

Simone Inzaghi's team look tired and bereft of ideas up front in Sunday's 1-0 home loss to Roma. Barca are on a high after beating Real Madrid to win the Copa del Rey on Saturday as their old enemies had a petulant meltdown in a face of a third straight Clasico defeat. Unlike Inter, the Catalans are still in contention for a treble as they also lead LaLiga by four points.

"We're not scared, the best thing is to be in April and still have something to play for," said wing-back Carlos Augusto on Sunday.

"We have a chance to achieve something extraordinary and we're not afraid. This team has already won a lot and is always focused."

Inzaghi will be hoping striker Marcus Thuram will be available as his replacements have done nothing alongside Lautaro Martinez who has looked exhausted, and frustrated.

- Barcelona are unbeaten in their six home games against Inter in the Champions League.
- Since the turn of the year, Barca have only lost once in 28 games (22 wins, five draws excluding extra-time), with that defeat coming in the second leg of their quarter-final against Dortmund.

- Inzaghi will oversee his 50th Champions League match, becoming the seventh Italian coach to reach this milestone; the most for any nation (currently level with Spain). He already has 26 wins - the most by an Italian manager through his 50 matches in the competition.
- Raphinha's total of 51 goal involvements in all competitions

this season (30 goals, 21 assists) is only bettered by Mohamed Salah of Liverpool (33 goals, 23 assists) across Europe's big five leagues, while Yamal has 34 goal involvements (14 goals, 20 assists).

- Inter have only spent 10 minutes and 54 seconds in a losing position in the Champions League in 2024-25, the shortest total time of any team.



AGENCIES

Vaibhav Suryavanshi etched his name in history, becoming Indian cricket's newest sensation after a breathtaking century in just 35 balls during Rajasthan Royals' emphatic win over Gujarat Titans in Jaipur on Monday. At 14, the left-handed opener shattered records, becoming the youngest to score a T20 hundred.

Nicknamed "Boss Baby," Suryavanshi's fearless hitting drew instant comparisons with West Indies legend Chris Gayle. His debut had already hinted at greatness, smashing his first ball for six against seasoned pacer Shardul Thakur. But Monday night in Jaipur, he truly arrived, dismantling India's best bowlers – Siraj, Sharma, and Sundar – with 11 towering sixes and seven sizzling boundaries.

The cricketing world erupted. Sachin Tendulkar praised his "fearless approach" and "bat speed," while Suryakumar Yadav called it "absolute carnage." Coach Rahul Dravid, despite a broken leg, rose from his wheelchair to celebrate the landmark six that sealed Suryavanshi's century off Rashid Khan. India's 1983 World Cup-winning batsman Kris Srikkanth said: "Indian cricket's next superstar is here."

Bashundhara remain Kings of Fed Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings broke their final curse against Abahani with a 5-3 win in penalty shootout in the eventual final of the Federation Cup at the Mymensingh District Stadium yesterday.

Even though Kings have a positive win record against Abahani, they had lost both finals against the Sky Blues – in the 2018 Federation Cup and the 2022 Independence Cup. Yesterday's win against the 12-time champions means Kings now have their second silverware of the season following the triumph in the season-opening Challenge Cup.

Goalkeeper Mehedi Hasan Srabon played a key role in the shootout following a 1-1 draw in regulation and extra time, thwarting Abahani's second shot from Nigerian forward Emeka Ogbugh.

A total of 17 players were booked and one saw red card in the high-voltage final, which was halted after 105 minutes due to heavy rain followed by bad light last Tuesday.

Kings' Romanian coach Valeriu Tita was happy to lead the side to the season's second trophy as he believes it wasn't the same Bashundhara side that played last season.

"I had no sleep in the last seven days. I had slept only for one hour before this final because it was not an easy task for us. All the people talked about Bashundhara but everyone must understand that this Bashundhara side is not the Bashundhara side of last season. This is another Bashundhara with no good condition of players and no money," Tita told reporters after the final.



PHOTO: BFF

No lack of fire in Abahani's 24th DPL triumph

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani completed a three-peat of the Dhaka Premier League with a commanding six-wicket victory over rivals Mohammedan at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

However, for the team that have now won the title six times since the tournament gained List A status from the 2013-14 edition and 24 times overall, this triumph came against a number of challenges.

A majority of the country's top cricketers had been featuring for Abahani, contributing to their firm grasp on the title in recent years. Even in the previous season, Abahani had national stars Liton Das, Taskin Ahmed, Afif Hossain,

- **Champions:** Abahani Limited (24 times)
- **Highest run-getter:** Anamul Bijoy of Gazi Group – 874 runs
- **Highest wicket-taker:** Mosaddek Hossain & Rakibul Hasan of Abahani – 30 wickets
- **Player of the tournament:** Mosaddek Hossain (487 runs and 30 wickets)

Mohammad Naim, Tanzim Sakib, and Shoriful Islam in their ranks.

With the DPL being played under a reduced budget, Abahani, which also went through a number of changes following a change in the country's political landscape, lost a number of the high-profile players, with a few even joining Mohammedan this season.

A few players stayed, such as Mosaddek Hossain and national team skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto. Mosaddek ended up as the joint top-wicket taker, alongside teammate Rakibul Hasan, with 30 wickets. In a match-winning performance, the all rounder bagged



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

two wickets in the final to help restrict Mohammedan to 240 for seven before smashing an unbeaten 65-ball 78 to see Abahani cruise over the line.

"This is special, as many things have changed. There were many challenges in front of us, and becoming champions is a huge thing. Our first target was to avoid relegation, and when we started winning, our expectation increased," Mosaddek, who amassed 487 runs this tournament, said after lifting the trophy.

While teams like Mohammedan were struggling with injuries and players leaving for national duty, a young Abahani side managed things better.

It was not just players who had to adjust. Abahani head coach Hannan Sarkar, who took over a side in DPL for the first time, said his players had a fire within themselves that led to the outcome.

"Cricketers came here with some discontent. I won't name them, but some players were contracted with other clubs. But at the last moment, those teams rejected them. So there was some fire within them. As circumstances forced them to play for Abahani under reduced payments, they wanted to prove themselves,"

Hannan said.

Abahani's 22-year-old opener, Parvez Hossain Emon, became the second-highest run-getter with 798 runs, while the 20-year-old Jishan Alam, who smashed a fifty yesterday, managed 400 runs with an attacking flair. Also, experienced campaigner Mohammad Mithun was an assured presence in the middle order, finishing with an unbeaten 79-ball 66 in the final.

"There were some young players who wanted to prove themselves and play for the HP squad or the Bangladesh A team. Ultimately, apart from winning the title with Abahani, they were also trying to establish themselves. So there were players with more hunger," Hannan added.

More than the performances on the field, the tournament, however, came under the spotlight more for the wrong reasons – with Mohammedan skipper Towhid Hridoy's suspension saga that dragged on for days the main highlight.

It was perhaps inevitable that such a tournament also ended with chaos – this time due to Mohammedan veteran Mahmudullah Riyad, who hopped onto the stands to confront a fan who had reportedly criticised the team.