

SHORT CORNER

DPL transfer window opens today

Premier League clubs are ramping up preparations for the players' transfer window, set to be held on Saturday and Sunday, with Mohammedan leading the way with a string of high-profile signings.

Australia confirm Bangladesh white-ball tour in June

Cricket Australia on Friday confirmed the itinerary for their white-ball tour of Bangladesh in June, making slight changes to the schedule provided earlier in the year by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB). Australia will play three ODIs and three T20s. The three-match ODI series, initially slated to start on June 5, will now be held on June 9, 11, and 14, with all games taking place in Mirpur. The three T20s are scheduled for June 17, 19, and 21 in Chattogram.

SL women arrive for Bangladesh white-ball series

The Sri Lanka national women's team, led by Chamari Athapaththu, arrived in Bangladesh on Friday to play a white-ball series against the hosts, scheduled to begin in Rajshahi on April 20. The three-match WODI series will be held at Rajshahi Divisional Stadium on April 20, 22, and 25. Following the WODI series, both teams will travel to Sylhet for a three-match WT20I series

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New Zealand players celebrate as Bangladesh captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz takes the long walk back to the pavilion after getting dismissed for a 14-ball six in the opening match of the three-match ODI series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. (Bottom) Bangladesh head coach Phil Simmons alongside chief selector Habibul Bashar and selector Naeem Islam wear concerned look at the dug-out following the home team's 26-run defeat against a second-string New Zealand side.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Kings slip amid foreigners' boycott

SPORTS REPORTER

League leaders Bashundhara Kings stumbled in the Bangladesh Football League (BFL), playing out a 1-1 draw against Rahmatganj MFS after being forced to field an all-local eleven as three of their foreign recruits skipped the crucial tie in Munshiganj over alleged unpaid wages.

Five-time champions Bashundhara Kings, who have already received 10 FIFA registration bans over unpaid wages to players and coaches, took to the field without any foreign players for the first time this season.

However, it was learned that Nigerian defender Emmanuel Tony, forward Emmanuel Sunday and Brazilian striker Dorielton Gomes had also skipped training sessions prior to the game, demanding their dues be cleared. They reportedly issued an ultimatum, refusing to play the match unless their wages were settled before Friday's fixture.

When The Daily Star tried to contact club president Imrul Hasan and manager Wasimuzzman, none of the officials responded.

There were also whispers that club officials persuaded the local players to take the field by pledging to clear part of the payments by next week. However, Kings dropped points after three straight wins, during which Dorielton and Sunday had combined for six of the seven goals scored by the team in their last three league matches.

Despite the stalemate, Kings remain top of the 10-team table with 28 points from 13 matches. Rahmatganj's Ernest Boateng cancelled out Shahrear Emon's 13th-minute opener in first-half stoppage time, before both sides were reduced to 10 men in the second half.

The result allowed contenders Abahani to close in on the title race to second place, reducing the gap to three points, following an emphatic 3-1 win over Bangladesh Police FC in Gazipur.

Meanwhile, at the Bashundhara Kings Arena, 10-man Fortis FC played out a goalless draw against lowly Arambagh KS, while Mohammedan SC registered a 3-0 win over Fakirpool Young Men's Club in Cumilla, with Joy Ahamed, Jewel Mia, and Rafayel Tudu scoring one goal each.

Experience fails to translate as middle order falters

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Experience-wise, Bangladesh were far ahead of the current New Zealand squad, but it ultimately counted for little as the visitors secured a 26-run win in the opening fixture of the three-match ODI series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladesh players had a combined 761 ODI appearances compared to New Zealand's 368 before the match. Only four members of Bangladesh's 15-man squad had played fewer than 10 ODIs, whereas eight in New Zealand's 14-member group fell into that category. Moreover, only Tom Latham, Henry Nicholls and Will Young had prior experience of international cricket in Bangladesh.

Those numbers, however, had little bearing once play began. New Zealand posted a competitive 247 for eight, built on half-centuries from Nicholls (68 off 83) and Dean Foxcroft (59 off 58) on a tricky Mirpur surface, executing their plans effectively against a side that have struggled in chases.

Over the past two years, the Tigers have failed to win a single match while chasing 250 or more, with their highest successful chase in this period being 115-2 against Pakistan in March -- the only success in eight



“The wicket was fine — we had an idea of how it might behave. But it was a bit more uneven than expected. Still, there's no point in giving excuses.”

Bangladesh opener Saif Hassan

SCORES IN BRIEF

New Zealand: 247 for 8 in 50 overs (Nicholls 68, Foxcroft 59, Young 30; Shoriful 2-27, Rishad 2-44, Taskin 2-50)

Bangladesh: 221 all out in 48.3 overs (Saif 57, Litton 46, Hridoy 55; Tickner 4-40, Smith 3-45)

Result: NZ won by 26 runs
Player of the match: Dean Foxcroft

44th over, the required rate had climbed to nearly nine, having been under five earlier.

Eventually, Hridoy's 55 off 60 came too late, with Bangladesh already eight down, as they were bowled out for 221 in 48.3 overs.

Although the pitch became more challenging due to uneven bounce, New Zealand's pacers -- Blair Tickner (4-40) and Nathan Smith (3-45) -- adapted well with disciplined, slower-paced deliveries.

Miraz and teammates will rue a missed opportunity. With a solid platform in place, the lower middle-order needed composure, but too many dot balls and a tendency to take the game deep proved costly.

Saif later admitted that a "prolonged period of dot balls" and wickets at key moments hurt the chase, noting they were "in the match until around the 22nd or 23rd over" before falling behind -- they went 90 balls without a boundary from 24th over -- while insisting the opposition's relative inexperience was "not a factor" given their skill level.

"Hridoy was there -- if we, the other batsmen, could have supported him a bit more, it might have been easier.

"The wicket was fine -- we had an idea of how it might behave. But it was a bit more uneven than expected. Still, there's no point in giving excuses," he said.

attempts.

Despite losing two early wickets, the hosts recovered through a 93-run third-wicket stand between Saif Hassan and Litton Das, which came off 116 balls and left them needing 134 in more than 27 overs.

The quick dismissals of Saif (57) and Litton (46), however, shifted the momentum, leaving the lower middle-order with the

task of finishing the chase. That phase proved decisive, as Tawhid Hridoy, Afif Hossain and captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz allowed the innings to stall despite having six wickets in hand.

Afif, returning to the ODI side after a 16-month hiatus, made 27 off 49 without a boundary, struggling to rotate strike, while Mehidy managed just six off 14. By the time he fell in the

Ollie Watkins brought up a century of goals for Aston Villa on Thursday, helping his side thrash Bologna 4-0 in their Europa League quarterfinal second leg at Villa Park, securing a commanding 7-1 aggregate victory. Following the win, Villa will now face Nottingham Forest, who beat 10-man FC Porto 1-0 in Nottingham to seal a 2-1 aggregate success, in an all-English semifinal.

PHOTO: ASTON VILLA

EUROPA LEAGUE SEMIFINALS

Nottingham Forest vs Aston Villa
Braga vs SC Freiburg

*** Teams listed first will play the first leg at home on May 1 (1:00am), with the second leg away on May 8 (1:00am)*



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