



Did U Know?

Katarina Witt of Germany achieved a rare feat in figure skating when she won the World, Olympic and European titles in both 1984 and 1988. The only other figure skaters to have matched this feat were Austria's Karl Schafer and Norway's Sonja Henie, in both 1932 and 1936.



What to WATCH

- ESPN**
 England vs Sri Lanka World Series, Tenth ODI Live at 9:13 am
 English Premier Football League Liverpool vs Aston Villa Repeat at 5:30 pm
 Sportscentre Hindi Sport News Live at 8:30 pm
 Cricket Programming Super Selector Repeat at 9:00 pm
- STAR Sports**
 Australian Open Men's/Women's Third Rd Live at 6:00 am
 Sportsline Tonight Sport News



TALK TURKEY



Romario
 (Brazilian striker)
 "I'm honoured that clubs like Flamengo and Fluminense still want me to play for them."

Star WHIZZ KID COMPETITION 18

Tick the correct answers, post **The Daily Star**

Competition closes at 8 pm Jan 24, 2003 and draw

- How many teams will play in next month's Cricket World Cup?
 16 12 14
- Who won the Hopman Cup title?
 Australia Russia America
- How many Test centuries has Steve Waugh scored?
 34 31 29
- Who became Tribal football champions?
 K'Chari M y e m e n s i n g h
 Rangamati
- Who won the man-of-the-match award in the fifth and final Ashes?
 Name
 Class Roll No.
 School Address
 Phone: (If any)

Derbyshire sign Afridi

INTERNET, London
 Derbyshire have signed Pakistan's Shahid Afridi for the first two months of the county season, and the explosive all-rounder could stay on for the rest of the year.
 Batsman Nathan Asle is due to become the club's second overseas player, but the New Zealander will be on international duty in April and May.
 And a recent knee injury has cast doubt on his participation for the rest of the English summer.
 "Derbyshire await a report from New Zealand Cricket before taking any further action on a potential



PHOTO: STAR

LEAVE IT, IT'S MINE: Four national players (L-R) Biplob, Aminul, Sujon and Joy are fighting for the ball during the team's practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Prediction put to rest



SPORTS REPORTER

Khulna caused the biggest surprise a day after the media had announced with great certainty that the final of the Ispahani Mirzapore Fourth National League would be played between Chittagong and holders Dhaka.
 It was a fitting reminder for those who tend to forget the game's glorious uncertainties when the spirited Khulna team defied the odds as they chased a massive target of 388 on the fourth and final day against Sylhet at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.
 They ended up scoring 391 for nine in exactly 90 overs offered on the final day.
 The incredible last-ball victory, which placed Khulna on equal points with Dhaka and Chittagong, now leaves the statisticians needing to calculate the run rates of the three teams.
 Besides, Khulna sent the tournament committee into total disarray with tournament committee secretary Khondoker Jamil Uddin saying that he was not in a position at the moment to disclose the names of

the two finalists.
 "It is not possible for us to calculate the run rates of the three teams tonight since most of the officials are engaged in the inter-club transfer," he said over telephone, adding that he would sit on Friday morning to settle the issue.
 The ignorance or indifference of Jamil only reflected how silly the tournament committee is regarding updating of statistics.
 While many tried to smell a rat in Khulna's victory, match referee Roquibul Hasan said that it was one of the finest run chases he had ever seen.
 Khulna, who faced only one ball after Sylhet scored 237 in their second innings on the third day, started the chase in a positive frame of mind.
 Opener Parvez set the pace with a brilliant 87 off 163 balls that included eight boundaries.
 "But it was the brilliant 94-run partnership between Khulna captain Hasanuzzaman and Manjarul Islam that set the tone for their victory," observed Roquibul, a former national captain.
 Hasanuzzaman hammered a breezy 51 off 54 balls with the help of four boundaries and six.
 But it was a brave-hearted Manjarul Islam who fashioned the victory with a superb all round show.

No rest on a rest day

Out-of-the-race teams start to leave Dhaka



SPORTS REPORTER

After six days of busy SAFF Championship fixture, none of the four semifinalists had any intention to relax on the first of their two rest days yesterday.
 Having been thrown out of the race, four others however have started to leave Dhaka. Afghanistan, who lost all of their three Group A matches conceding six goals, left the capital yesterday. Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan are due to depart today.
 Pakistan, the lowest FIFA ranked (178) country among the four semifinalists, had their practice at the Army hockey stadium yesterday

morning and their Saturday's opponents Maldives practised at the nearby Army Stadium, also at the same time.
 Pakistan topped Group A with maximum nine points and their first ever victory against their bitter rivals India. Maldives meanwhile came from behind to pull off an exciting victory over Nepal and a place in the last four.
 The first semifinal between the two teams will start at 3pm.
 But the whole country will be agog with expectation when Bangladesh take on defending champions India in the second semifinal, starting at 6pm on the same day.
 Ranked 127th in the world, India blanked Bangladesh (159) 3-0 in their previous meeting at the Asian Games in South Korea last September. But, this time around, the sub-continent giants have their misfortune in injuries and are yet to impress the crowd.
 Ace striker Baichung Bhutia, who made all the difference between Bangladesh and India previously, defenders Deepak Mandal and Maresh Gawly, and midfielder Tomba Singh could not accompany the team due to injury.
 The depleted Indian side had a lot of difficulties in the group stage, managing only a win against a lowly rated Afghanistan. They shocked their fans back home by going down to Pakistan 0-1 and then drew 1-1 with Sri Lanka.
 "We should win on Saturday because India had never been a strong team without Baichung," said a Bangladesh defender, opting anonymity because of the player's code of conduct.
 "If you take our three previous meetings into consideration, we lost twice (in the 2nd SAFF Championship final and the Asian Games) and won once. On both the occasions we lost, Baichung made the difference. We won in the SAFF Games final but Baichung was not there," he said.
 Bangladesh coach George Kottan however played down the Baichung factor, saying that India were still a better side than Pakistan. "What they were lacking is a little bit of cohesion," Kottan said.
 He however was optimistic about his team's chances.
 "It does not matter who we are going to play on Saturday. What I care about is the result."
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'Time to Dazzle'



REUTERS, Johannesburg

Keen to hook potential supporters for the World Cup, the contest's organisers kicked off a spectacular cricket awareness tour on Wednesday, featuring local stars and the biggest mobile stage in Africa.
 The "Time to Dazzle" tour started in the town of Nelspruit to the east of Johannesburg as the "Dazzlemobile", a huge motorised stage loaded with South African musicians, sportsmen and comedians, set off on a nine-city tour charged with rousing support for the four-yearly event.
 Ali Bacher, the competition's executive director, said the tour would try to garner grass roots support. "It is important to take our World Cup to the people," he said.
 The opening event featured South African musician PJ Powers, African pop star Kabelo, and comedian Shabba. Boxing hero Baby Jake Mattala, a World Cup cricket ambassador, also planned to take to the stage.
 "Sport is the only thing to unify our people, we all get together when we watch sport it doesn't matter if you are black white or coloured", Mattala told Reuters.
 The "Dazzlemobile", named after the official World Cup mascot "Dazzler" and resplendent in the competition's official colours, is part of an initiative by the ICC to unite South Africans around the competition, for which many have been unable to get tickets.



PHOTO: STAR

The India team stretching at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Murali no doubt for WC

SL's crucial game against Eng today



AFP, Adelaide

Injured Sri Lankan match-winner Muttiah Muralitharan will definitely be fit for next month's World Cup in southern Africa, team manager Ajit Jayasekera said here Thursday.
 The 30-year-old spinner strained the quadriceps muscle in his right leg in Wednesday's one-day clash with Australia in Brisbane.
 But Jayasekera emphasised the injury was not serious, and there was no doubt the team's trump card would compete in the sport's four-yearly showcase.
 Sri Lanka's first match is against New Zealand in Bloemfontein on February 10.
 Muralitharan was even optimistic he could be fit for the finals of the ongoing three-nation series, starting next Thursday in Sydney.
 "I'm hoping if everything goes well and if we win Friday against England, then I will be able to play if we make the finals," he said.
 "It's just a little bit sore at the

moment."
 Muralitharan did not play in the competition before Christmas while recovering from a hernia operation.
 He believes the surgery and rehabilitation may have contributed to the leg injury, received after he darted after a ball in the outfield. "I could not do strength training because of the hernia and maybe that's why I was injured last night," he said.
 Muralitharan has definitely been ruled out of Friday's England match -- a big blow to his side in a game they must win to have reasonable prospects of lining up against Australia in the best-of-three finals of the 190,000 dollar (110,000 US) tournament.
 He said Thursday he had fully recovered from a knee ailment which flared after back-to-back Tests.
 "I have had 12 days of rehab and strengthening around the knee," Vaughan said.
 "I have fond memories of the Adelaide Oval, so hopefully I can continue where I left off," he said, referring to his brilliant 177 in the Adelaide Test.
 "One-day cricket is different and I haven't played that many one-day

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Abahani rope in 8



SPORTS REPORTER

A day after Mohammedan completed their cricket team for the forthcoming Premier Division Cricket League on Wednesday, it was the turn of their traditional foes Abahani to enter the inter-club transfer market yesterday.
 Hit hard with the loss of all-rounder Naimur Rahman, opener Nafees Iqbal and pacer Anwar Hossain Monir on the first day, the popular Dhanmondi outfit roped in eight new faces.
 Middle-order batsman Sajjad Ahmed of Victoria SC, opener Sajjadul Alam of Dhanmondi Club, wicketkeeper/batsman Nuruzzaman Tuhin, middle-order batter Towhid Hossain and four pacers Ashfaq Ali of Uttara SC, Bikash Ranjan of Kalabagan KC and Syed Russell and Gazi Alamgir.

of the Bangladesh Under-19 team changed their allegiance.
 However, their long-serving skipper Akram Khan, out of form opener Mehrab Hossain, prolific all-rounder Neeyamur Rashid, off-spinner Ali Arman, wicketkeeper Mukter Siddique and middle-order Asadullah Khan decided to stay put.
 Victoria were also involved in trading. The defending champions got off-spinner Sabbir Khan. Elsewhere, former under-19 batsman Shafiqul Alam signed for Uttara Sporting Club while former Bangladesh opener Shahriar Hossain returned to his old club Brothers Union from City Club.
 A total of 131 players completed their transfer in the Premier League in last couple of days while the number is 163 for First Division cricketers.
 The bourse is scheduled to end today.

Indians to take a break



REUTERS, New Delhi

India's weary cricketers will earn a break at home from the game at the end of a disastrous New Zealand tour before they set off for next month's World Cup in southern Africa, a senior cricket official said on Tuesday.
 The team is expected to return home on Friday after their final World Cup build-up ended in utter disappointment.
 Their much-touted batting failed yet again as India ended their New Zealand tour with a six-wicket defeat in the final one-day game on Tuesday to concede the series 5-2, having lost both the preceding Tests inside three days.
 "They will be rested for about 10 days till they leave by month end. There will be no (training) camp," Indian board secretary Karunakaran Nair said.
 Repeated batting failures on seam-friendly pitches in New

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Hewitt, Clijsters speed up



AFP, Melbourne

World No.1 Lleyton Hewitt and girlfriend Kim Clijsters stayed on course for an Australian Open 'love double' after racing into the third round here Thursday.
 Australian favourite Hewitt and Belgian fourth seed Clijsters blasted their second round opponents aside with merciless performances, dropping just two games between them.
 Hewitt took just 74 minutes to blow away compatriot Todd Larkham, ranked 235 in the world, 6-1, 6-0, 6-1. Clijsters was even more ruthless as she dispatched Hungary's Petra Mandula with a dreaded 'double bagel' 6-0, 6-0.
 "It's always tough playing anyone from the same country and you just have to block it out of your mind," said Hewitt, who is aiming to become the first home-grown winner of the Australian Open for 27 years.
 "This is such a big tournament, you can't go thinking about taking it a little bit easy out there.
 "It's a Grand Slam and I've seen

too many players lose after they have been cruising two sets up."
 Hewitt, renowned as the fittest player on the men's tour, spent the Christmas period hard in training with girlfriend Clijsters.
 The work appears to be paying off for Clijsters, who looked tack-sharp against Mandula, ranked 98 in the world.
 Clijsters also has the useful advantage of overwhelming support from the Melbourne fans, one reason why many see her as the biggest threat to the domination of Venus and Serena Williams.
 Clijsters acknowledged the positive effect of her adopted home crowd after battering Mandula.
 "I feel very much at home here," she said. "Australia is one of my favourite countries in the world and the fans just make me feel so welcome. I think that's one of the reasons I'm playing so well."
 Afterwards the Belgian had some sympathy for her 24-year-old opponent.
 "You always feel a little bit bad. It's never nice but I think she took it okay, at least she was smiling at the end," she said.
 Top seed and world number one Serena Williams recovered from her opening round hiccup when she was taken to three sets by Frenchwoman Emilie Loit to easily beat Belgium's Els Callens.
 Williams secured a third round meeting with Thailand's Tamarine Tanasugarn with a 6-4, 6-0 win in 56 minutes.
 The 21-year-old American top seed, who is looking to complete her set of Grand Slam titles here after victories at Roland Garros, Wimbledon and the US Open last season, said she was yet to reach her peak.
 "I'm still not quite comfortable with where I want to be right now," Williams said. "But it's getting better and better - and I don't want to peak too soon."
 "I think I'm a little tense. Maybe I put a little bit too much pressure on myself. As the match wore on, after the third game, I think I just calmed down in general."
 Williams would not be drawn on who she sees as the biggest threat to her chances of a "Serena Slam", pointing to her first round troubles as evidence that no opponent would be taken lightly.
 "Everyone in the draw that is still in the tournament is a threat," she

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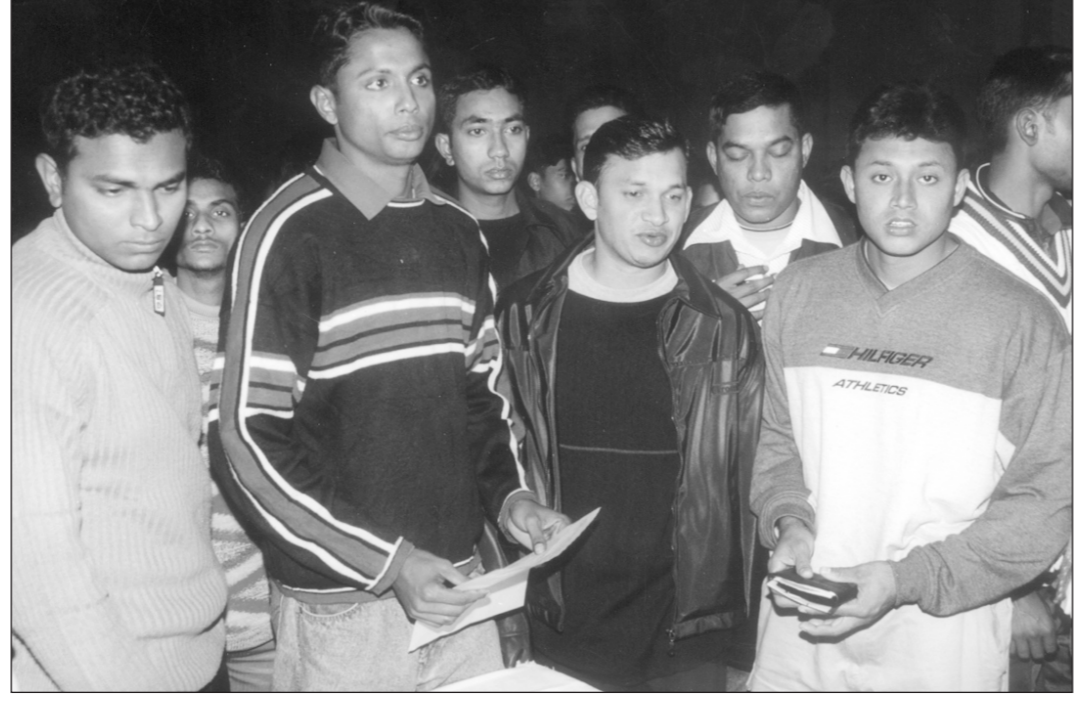


PHOTO: STAR

A RECOVERY ACT: Young paceman Bikash Ranjan Das (R) and Sajjad Ahmed Monsur (C) pose for photographs after signed for Abahani on the second day of the inter-club cricketers' transfer yesterday.