

## Kottan dreams a new dawn

SAFF CHAMPIONSHIP Bangladesh 2003

SPORTS REPORTER

National coach George Kottan hopes that Bangladesh will use the excellent success in the third South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Championship as a platform to revitalise the popularity of the game in the country.

The emotion-choked Austro-Hungarian was speaking from his heart after his charges lifted the SAFF Championship after defeating Maldives yesterday evening.

"I am very, very happy. We are the champions. This is a great moment in Bangladesh's football history and my career as well," said Kottan after the nerve-racking final.

"I am not too pleased with the way my team played today but in the end we won. So I can't complain."

Kottan lauded the role of acting captain Hasan Al-Mamun who operated like a General in the absence of suspended skipper Rajani Kanta Barman. "I was a little worried as Rajani wasn't there. But the way Mamun covered up for him was awesome."

Kottan is scheduled to fly home on January 25 after his little more than two-year relationship with Bangladesh as the Asian Football Confederation (AFC)'s paid coach. Although his contract was over last month, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) held back the gray-haired 54-year-old for another month through their own initiative. Kottan refused to give talk on his immediate future after he was bombarded with questions on whether he wanted to carry on as the Bangladesh boss.

"I can not say about my future. I don't want to think about it now. Let me celebrate this victory first. I am also looking forward to a vacation with my family back in Vienna."

Kottan however, did not shy away when asked what Bangladesh should do after this achievement. "This is high time to re-organise football in Bangladesh. I have been saying this for the last two years but nobody has paid any attention. Football will never flourish in your country until you change the whole system and it has to start with the organisers. There should be professionals to look after the national squad and the domestic structure."

"It is only the media and the players who think for football and its

development here in Bangladesh. But they are helpless as the organisers don't understand their demands. Hopefully it will start to change now because you can not play football for three months a year and expect this kind of success at the international level.

"What is really surprising to me is you don't play domestic football during winter like now, which is the best time to play the game," added Kottan before heading for the dressing room to join the party that was brewing.

Captain Rajani, who missed the final for getting two yellow cards in the tournament, said he was cursing his misfortune before the game but forgot all about it after his mates won the final.

"There is nothing sweeter than victory and credit should go to all my teammates who gave more than their hundred percent tonight," said Rajani who was later declared the Most Valuable Player of the tournament.

No Maldives officials were present in the press briefing as they left the Stadium immediately after the prize giving ceremony.

The islanders are scheduled to leave Dhaka today.



TEARS OF JOY: Stand-in Bangladesh captain Hasan-Al Mamun (C) could not hide his emotions after winning the SAFF Championship at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

## Dhaka 295 all out

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka were all out for 295 runs on the first day of a play-off match against Chittagong in the Ispahani Tea 4th National Cricket League at Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

The tournament committee arranged the play-off to decide the opponents of Khulna in the final of the longer version games.

Khulna, Dhaka and Chittagong finished on equal 14 points but Khulna confirmed their berth in the final by virtue of better run rate.

Spinner Sabbir Khan was the most successful bowler for Chittagong with a haul of five wickets for 102 runs.

Opting to bat first, Dhaka lost the wicket of Rashedul Haq on 38 runs. But discarded national opener Javed Omar Belim and Jahangir Alam put on 60 runs for the second wicket to raise hopes for big total.

Javed top-scored with 60 off 124 balls that featured nine boundaries. Jahangir meanwhile made 51 off 68 balls.

### BRIEF SCORE

**DHAKA:** First innings -- 295 all out in 96.1 overs (Javed 60, Rashedul Haq 7, Jahangir 51, Mridul 32, Shipon 4, Durjoy 23, Sajjad 31, Sumit 24, Rahul 30, Sunny 29 n.o.; Tareq Aziz 1/49, Aftab Ahmed 1/23, Suja Erfan 1/49, Hasan 2/78, Sabbir Khan 5/102.)

## Warne may play tri-series finals

INTERNET, Melbourne

Aussie star Shane Warne could play against England in the first VB tri-nation series final in Sydney on Thursday, team medics have confirmed.

Physiotherapist Errol Alcott said Warne had recovered well from Sunday's bowling stint for Victoria in a one-day match against Tasmania.

Alcott will examine Warne's shoulder on Tuesday and if there are no problems, he will recommend the leg-spinner be made available for selection.

The 33-year-old Warne dislocated his bowling shoulder diving to field a ball during a match against England on December 15.

It was initially expected he would miss Australia's World Cup defence beginning in February.

But exploratory surgery a week before Christmas in Melbourne revealed the extent of the damage was less severe than originally feared.

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## Hail the champions

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SPORTS REPORTER

The nation salutes the Bangladesh football team for lifting the title of the third South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Championship yesterday.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia congratulated the victorious Bangladesh team immediately after they beat Maldives 5-3 in tiebreaker.

In a message, the prime minister thanked the players, coach and officials for bringing glory for the country. She hoped that this success would inspire other sports to bring laurels for the success starved country.

Leader of the Opposition and Awami League president Sheikh

Hasina also felicitated the charges of George Kottan for beating Maldives in the final.

Hasina, who was attending a function of diplomats at Sonargaon Hotel, offered sweets among the attending guests as soon as Bangladesh clinched the SAFF Champions trophy for the first time.

She said that it was a continuation of Bangladesh's success in the regional football that began with the gold in the SAF Games in Nepal four years back.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman, his predecessor and Awami League joint-secretary Obaidul Quader also congratulated Bangladesh team.

Land Minister M Shamsul Islam, Textiles Minister Abdul Matin, Women and Children Affairs

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## Nat'l junior chess Parag loses a chance

SPORTS REPORTER

Mehdi Hasan Porag of Titas yesterday squandered his chances to become champions straight away when he lost his last round match to Mohammad Ali of Bangladesh.

On completion of the ninth round of the 24th National Junior Chess Championship, Parag and Ali have 8 points each. They will play a play-off match on Wednesday for the title.

Tie-breaking system came in to play when six players finished with equal 7 points. Mohammad Javed of Kamapur secured third place, Obaidul Islam Shahin of Deaf Sports 4th, Bliash Biswas 5th, sub

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## India settle for third

SAFF CHAMPIONSHIP Bangladesh 2003

SPORTS REPORTER

A 99th minute 'golden goal' from striker Abhishek Jadav helped India avenge a sweet revenge against Pakistan and finish third in the SAFF (South Asian Football Federation) yesterday.

The match before the grand finale between Bangladesh and Maldives was levelled at 1-1 on completion of 90 minutes regulation time. Pakistan shocked the tournament favourites India 1-0 to mark their first ever victory against their bitter rivals in the group phase.

Striker Abhishek, who was out of sorts throughout the match missing out on three clean chances, became an Indian hero when he headed

home a Selwyn Fernandes cross from the right nine minutes into the extra time.

India, who lost to the eventual champions Bangladesh (1-2) in a semifinal on Saturday, got off to an impressive start right from the word go despite they missed the services of their young forward Ashim Biswas for two yellow cards.

India could have scored at least half a dozen goals in the first session had not their forwards missed sitters. Their attackers appeared to have been running out of steam in front of the goal post, and they ended up shooting straight to the Pakistan custodian Jaffar Khan.

Abhishek alone missed three one-to-one chances while Jo Paul Ancheri and Abhay Kumar muffed up the others.

"It's very unfortunate that the boys could not capitalise those easy

opportunities," said India coach Stephen Constantine after the match.

India came back firing on all cylinders after the lemon break and finally could break the evening's duck in the 56th minute when veteran striker IM Vijayan headed home a left side floater from substitute midfielder Avlito D'Chunha.

Pakistan, on the receiving end most of the time, however took only six minutes to level the score with striker Sarfaraz Rasool heading home a brilliant cross from Nawaz.

Buoyed by the equaliser, Pakistan went all out and came close to scoring in the 81st and 82nd minutes. But it was Indian custodian Naseem Akhter who stayed cool under the bar to make two great saves.

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## Did U Know?

The longest ski jump ever officially recorded in the finals of a World Cup event is 704 feet. Martin Schmitt of Germany had that huge hop in Slovenia in 1999. His first jump had been measured at 718 feet, but he fell in the end and missed that feat.



## ESPN

Australia vs Sri Lanka World Series, 12th ODI Live at 9:13 Football Focus Live at 6:30 pm Sportscentre Hindi Sport News Live at 8:30 pm

## STAR Sports

Australian Open Men's/Women's Singles Qtrs Live at 6:00 am Football Asia Repeat at 1:00 pm Harsha Online Cricket Talk Show Repeat at 1:30 pm Sportsline Tonight Sport News



**Shaun Pollock** (South Africa cricket captain) "Cricket needs a good and exciting tournament to win the fans all over again."

## Crowe sorry

AFP, Wellington

Former New Zealand cricket captain Martin Crowe has apologised for saying that Maori did not make good cricketers because they lacked patience for the duration of a match, it was reported Monday.

Crowe said on television he wanted to "sincerely apologise" to anyone he may have offended by the comments, made in his column for the widely read Wisden website

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh's Arif Khan Joy (L) and Assad Abdul Ghani of the Maldives are in pursuit of the ball during the final of the SAFF Championship yesterday.

## No progress in Lanka row

ICC Cricket World Cup SOUTH AFRICA 2003

REUTERS/AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's cricket board Monday opened last-ditch talks with the national team to resolve a pay crisis that threatened to scuttle the country's participation in next month's World Cup.

The Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka (BCCSL) said it began another round of talks with skipper Sanath Jayasuriya, who is currently leading the team in Australia.

"The talks are still on and we are hoping the matter can be resolved, but there is no breakthrough yet," an official of the BCCSL said.

"We haven't been able to come to a resolution. Hopefully this will be resolved. If not, then we will inform the ICC and get advice and then

proceed accordingly," cricket board chief executive Anura Tennekoon told Reuters.

The BCCSL is battling against time after breaching a January 17 deadline set by the International Cricket Council (ICC) for Sri Lankan players to sign contracts to play in the World Cup.

The tournament will be hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya from February 8 to March 23.

"In the event the squad members fail to sign the contracts, the BCCSL will be reluctantly compelled to avail itself of all remedies available to it," the board said in a two-page statement.

A top cricket board source on Sunday indicated the options included fielding a second-string squad or completely pulling out since Jayasuriya's men were making totally unacceptable demands.

The players were insisting on a

20 per cent share of the BCCSL's guaranteed fee of 6.4 million dollars from the World Cup, but the authorities were only willing to offer 10 per cent plus an incentive payment.

The incentive was a 100,000 dollar-bonus to the entire team if they won the World Cup and the doubling of match fees from 700 dollars to 1,400 dollars.

An additional 20,000 dollars was also being offered if the team entered the final.

But the board says it cannot afford the 20 per cent without jeopardising the development of younger players.

The BCCSL has defended its stance by arguing that it was particularly generous to its players in 2002.

During the course of that year it paid 70 per cent of its total revenue to its players.

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## Tour of N Zealand India women vow to perform better

AFP, New Delhi

India's women cricket team left for a tour of New Zealand Monday determined to make amends for the dismal performance by their male counterparts.

Saurav Ganguly's men were blanked 2-0 in the recent Test series and went down 5-2 in the one-day internationals as the highly-fancied batsmen were unable to cope with the seaming conditions.

The women's team, who take on England, Australia and the hosts in a limited-overs tournament from January 26-February 8, was confident it will fare better.

"There was some fear in our minds regarding the weather and the pitches after seeing our men's team play in New Zealand, but we are expecting better conditions," said captain Anjum Chopra.

"One did not get a good feeling watching the men being tormented in unfamiliar conditions and on under-prepared pitches.

"But we are playing only in Christchurch, where the wickets are expected to be better prepared. Hopefully, the weather too would be warmer now."

On a recent tour of England, the Indian women were shot out for 26 by world champions New Zealand and for 59 by England in a one-day tournament.

The only consolation was a world record individual score of 214 by Mithali Raj in a Test match, and Chopra hoped her team will fare better this round.

"Mithali is a very good player, but the others too will have to chip in," she said.

The Indian women beat both Australia and the Kiwis to win the one-day series when they last played in New Zealand in 1995.

"We have fond memories of New Zealand and hope to make up for our men's losses there," said Chopra, even as the humbled men prepared for next month's World Cup.

## Hewitt slips up

Australian Open

AFP, Melbourne

Younes El Aynaoui guaranteed a new face in next Sunday's Australian Open men's tennis final when he dumped tournament favourite Lleyton Hewitt out of the race on Monday.

The 31-year-old late-blooming Moroccan, armed with an impenetrable service and ferocious forehand, caused the biggest upset in the men's tournament with a gripping 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 win over the world number one.

With Hewitt's passing went Australia's remaining chance of ending a 27-year home title drought.

El Aynaoui now tackles 20-year-old American Andy Roddick in Wednesday's quarterfinals, with in-form German Rainer Schuettler taking on either Wimbledon finalist David Nalbandian or Swiss sixth seed Roger Federer in another quarterfinal.

None of these players have played in an Australian Open final with three-time champion Andre Agassi the hot favourite to come through to the tournament decider from the bottom half of the draw.

El Aynaoui, the tournament 18th seed, broke Hewitt's service just once, in the seventh game of the fourth set, but eventually won two of the three set tiebreakers in the gripping 3hr 30min match.

Only last September, Hewitt knocked out El Aynaoui in the

quarterfinals of the US Open in New York in four sets, but he gained sweet revenge on the Australian's home patch on Monday.

"I served well the whole way. That's the most difficult thing for me to keep a very high level of play during four or maybe five sets," said El Aynaoui, whose serve was not broken in 23 games.

"And today I did it. Lleyton helped me a little bit. I don't think he played his best today. I saw I had a chance and I took the opportunity."

El Aynaoui said although his win might be considered an upset by most people, he believed he had a chance to beat Hewitt on Monday.

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AN AERIAL BALLET! Maldives goalkeeper Imran Mohamed punches a cross away during the SAFF Championship final.

PHOTO: STAR