

National TT

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Biman clinched the women's doubles title in the 26th National Table Tennis Competition at the Jessore Zilla Gymnasium yesterday.

Saleha and Soma pair of Bangladesh Biman beat their compatriot Rumi and Ratna 11-4, 11-9, 8-11, 11-9 in the final.

Bangladesh Ansars became champions in the boys' doubles beating Narail DSA in straight 3-0 sets.

Parag and Mehedi of Ansar defeated Krishna and Rocky of Narail DSA 11-7, 11-8, 12-10 in the final of the boys' doubles.

Earlier, in the boys' doubles matches, Parag and Mehedi pair of Ansar outplayed their teammates Thirtha and Helal 3-1 in the first semis while Krishna and Rocky of Narail DSA defeated Rubel and Palash of Khulna DSA 3-0 in the other semis.

'Leave it behind'

AFP, Brisbane

One-time Test teammate Ian Healy on Tuesday urged Shane Warne to put his personal issues behind him so he can be remembered for his cricket skills rather than a catalogue of sex scandals.

The world record-holding wicketkeeper with 395 Test dismissals said the scandal-plagued cricketer should not entertain thoughts of retirement in the wake of the latest sexual affair allegations.

"I hope not because then he will be remembered solely for the last 12 months," Healy said on Tuesday.

"He needs to clear his head and the harder it gets for him the clearer his cricket focus will become and hopefully he will give us two good years of cricket, whether it's for Victoria or Australia.

"Hopefully, he can have a crack at being remembered for what cricketers will remember him for his great skills."

Healy, who commented on television with Warne during Australia's recent home series with Bangladesh, believed his former international teammate could triumph over adversity but warned he faced stiff competition.

"You couldn't say he would come back and slot back into the team with the good form of Stuart MacGill," Healy said.

"He might never get back in the Australian team that doesn't bother me as long as he plays some good cricket for Victoria ... that will be enough."

Warne left with his family on Saturday bound for London to get away from intense scrutiny over his private life.

In the latest episode in the Warne soap opera, a Melbourne stripper has claimed she had a sexual affair with him.

The claims follow allegations by South African Helen Cohen Alon earlier this month that he had harassed her with raunchy text messages.

Muktis' escape

FROM PAGE 13 strategy going into the game against their superior opponents, got only two chances, one in each half. Nigerian Winu headed an Emu cross which went wide in the 11th minute while country's number one custodian Aminul easily gripped a Saiful header 20 minutes into the second-half.

TEAMS MUKTIJODDHA SANGSAD KC: Aminul, Hasan Al Mamun, Rajani, Prodip Poddar (Lajuk) (Belal), Sujon, Papet, Ghansa, Nono (Matir Munna), Arman, Moni and Alfaz.

ARAMBAGH KS: Piru, Kamruzzaman, Mustafa Kaba, Rezaul Karim Biplob, Aziz Al Arman, Kamal, Saiful Islam (Kum Chu), Biddyt, Iqbal Hasan Emu, Winu and Tariq Awal (Apu).

Yellow cards: Tariq Awal (Arambagh). Referee: Ehsanul Haq.



Kim Collins of Saint Kitts and Nevis holds his national flag after winning the men's 100m gold at the 9th IAAF World Athletics Championships in Paris on Monday.

King Collins

Athletics

AFP, Paris

Kim Collins led home a Caribbean 1-2 in the men's 100 metres at the World Championships here on Monday while the dominant nation in the sport the United States had a day they would rather forget.

Three-time world champion Maurice Greene failed to make the 100m final while neither Tim Montgomery nor Bernard Williams managed to make the podium leaving the USA bereft of medals in the event for the first time since 1995.

Their pole vault world champion Stacy Dragila also failed to step up to the plate as the 32-year-old former world recordholder finished in fourth spot.

Off the track the Americans fared little better.

The sport's governing body, the IAAF, set them an ultimatum for administering a suitable punishment to Jon Drummond and an American official for bringing the sport into disrepute.

The veteran sprinter refused to leave the track for 20 minutes on Sunday after being disqualified from his 100m quarterfinal over the false start rule introduced this year.

Dragila and Greene were joined

on the losing champion's list by triple jump world recordholder Jonathan Edwards who retired for good from the sport after just two attempts with his ankle problem still worrying him - but his anointed successor Christian Olsson didn't disappoint as he took the title.

South Africa won only their third world title since their return from the political wilderness as Jacques Freitag won the men's high jump.

Collins won in a pretty average time of 10.07sec - from Trinidadian Darel Brown - to add the world crown to the Commonwealth one he won last year and the tight finish reflected the decline in standards from previous years.

However, Collins was not surprised at the absence of the Americans from the podium.

"They've been bad all year," he said.

"I like the fact it was a close race because you had eight men lining up who had all beaten each other at some time."

The 27-year-old said he was delighted to have honoured his promise to put the tiny Caribbean island of St Kitts and Nevis on the map and thought there would be a huge party to celebrate his victory.

"This is the biggest thing that has happened to St Kitts since they gained independence in 1983," he said.

"It's going to be a little bit crazy there tonight, whoever is going to be drinking will be drinking, whoever will be smoking will be smoking and if they're not doing either of those things they will be partying."

There will be no such scenes in the hotel room of Greene as he shares his misery with fellow stablemate Ato Boldon, who also failed to make the final, and Drummond.

Whether Drummond will ever grace another major championships is questionable as he turns 35 next month and faces a likely suspension from the 4x100m relay following his antics on Sunday.

"If the IAAF is not satisfied with the American authorities' decision it has the right according to IAAF rules to impose its own sanctions."

Both the favourites for the women's 400m hurdles Russian world record holder Yuliya Pechonkina and Australian star Jana Pittman won their respective semi-finals to set up a mouthwatering duel on Thursday.

American hope Raasin McIntosh, though, failed to make it as she fell at the third last hurdle and lay prostrate on the ground mouthing 'no, no' as she saw her medal hopes disappear.

French fifth seed Amelie Mauresmo took only 62 minutes to beat Indonesia's Angelique Widjaja 6-0, 6-2. After missing four months with a sore right knee, Mauresmo pulled out of a WTA semi-final last week with food poisoning.

Edwards calls it a day

Athletics

AFP, Paris

Britain's triple jump Olympic champion Jonathan Edwards ended his stunning career in disappointment here on Monday as he retired from the World Championships final after just two attempts.

The 37-year-old world record holder had been suffering from an ankle injury prior to the championships and limped into the final after Sunday's qualifying round.

Edwards, a devout Christian, was unable to perform at his top form strolling into the pit on his first try while his second produced a below-par 16.31 metres.

He decided to not try a third attempt and ended his multi-medal career watching the other athletes go through the third round of jumps and left the arena sticking his tongue out playfully at some friends in the crowd.

"I've had the most amazing career even when I look back to my schooldays.

"I'm not sad," he said wiping away tears. "I'm overwhelmed by it all."

"I just had nothing there. I didn't have it in me and I was thinking this is the end."

"I chatted to my wife and I said are you happy for me to stop here

know whether to relish the moment and try to be competitive."

He added he would like to put something back into the sport he had lit up for so many years.

"It has been wonderful for me and I don't know how I can play a part in it but I am sure I will one day find a role."

Moroccan running great Hicham El Guerrouj paid warm tribute to the Briton after he reached the final of the 1500 metres to put himself in sight of a fourth world title.

"It's a pity to go out like that because he is a man I have a lot of respect for."

"I have always thought he is very courageous and I wish him all the best," said El Guerrouj, who will also try to win the 5,000m later in the week.

Edwards had announced on Friday that this would be his last event as he had received a sign from God when he injured the ankle at the Crystal Palace meeting earlier this month.

He is set to begin his new career with the BBC on Tuesday.

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Clijsters, Hewitt coast

AFP, New York

Kim Clijsters began justifying her status as the top player in women's tennis and boyfriend Lleyton Hewitt began climbing back to the top with impressive first-round victories here Monday at the US Open.

The year's final Grand Slam tournament began with early exits for Britain's Greg Rusedski, eighth seed Chanda Rubin and ninth seed Sebastian Grosjean plus solid triumphs by French Open winner Juan Carlos Ferrero and Lindsay Davenport.

An emotional retirement ceremony for 14-time Grand Slam winner Pete Sampras stole some of the limelight, but intense matches and upsets served notice that a fortnight of suspense could be in store.

Top seed Clijsters beat American Amber Liu 6-2, 6-3. The Belgian star took the top ranking because 2002 US Open champion Serena Williams is out with a knee injury, becoming the first women's number one without a Grand Slam title.

Clijsters shrugs off such snubs while downplaying her favorite's role.

Sixth seed Hewitt, the speedy Australian who won the 2001 title here and last year's Wimbledon crown, needed just 91 minutes to open with a 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 victory over Romania's 84th-ranked Victor Hanesau.

Spanish third seed Ferrero bounced Czech Jan Vacek 6-2, 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 while the man he beat in the Roland Garros final, Dutch 16th seed Martin Verkerk, won 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 3-6, 7-6 (11/9), 1-0 when American Alex Bogomolov cramped and collapsed on the court.

Rusedski, the 1997 runner-up here, lost to 100th-rated Gregory Carraz 6-4, 4-6, 6-2, 5-7, 6-4. The Frenchman fired 22 aces, the last on match point, to hand Rusedski's his fastest exit here since 1996.

Paraguay's Ramon Delgado ousted France's Grosjean 6-4, 6-7 (3/7), 4-6, 7-6 (9/7), 6-4 after four hours and 13 minutes while Venezuela's Maria Vento-Kabchi beat Rubin 6-4, 6-4.

Grosjean, with a sore left elbow, hit only 46 per cent.

Refusing to join the early exodus was third seed Davenport, who showed no sign of the severe nerve pain in her left foot in beating Belgium's Els Callens 6-1, 6-0 in just 47 minutes.

French fifth seed Amelie Mauresmo took only 62 minutes to beat Indonesia's Angelique Widjaja 6-0, 6-2. After missing four months with a sore right knee, Mauresmo pulled out of a WTA semi-final last week with food poisoning.

Indians may get graded-payment

CRICINFO, undated

The issue of performance-linked graded payment for India's cricketers is expected to gather momentum again when the board officials meet senior players from the Indian team in Bangalore next week to discuss the matter.

A report in the Hindustan Times quoted a board official as saying that a draft of the contract had been sent to Saurav Ganguly, who would attend the September 2 meeting with Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid.

The issue of graded payment first came up in June last year immediately after the Indian team returned from their tour to the West Indies when the board announced that 20 players would be offered contracts which would put them into one of four levels.

Since then, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has failed to name the players or firm up the contract.

However, the report says that coach John Wright, Brijesh Patel, the chief selector, and Jagmohan Dalmiya, the president of the BCCI, would meet soon to decide on the 20 players.

World chess in trouble

AFP, Moscow

World chess champion Ruslan Ponomarev on Monday ignored an ultimatum from FIDE, the World Chess Federation, to agree to a world championship eliminator match against the world's top player, Garry Kasparov.

In a move that threatens to disrupt the world chess championship, Ukraine's Ponomarev let pass the 4.00 pm (1200 GMT) deadline for the signing of the contract for a series of 12 games against Russia's Kasparov starting September 19, Russian media reported.

Match organisers spent several hours mediating by telephone between Ponomarev and FIDE officials in Lausanne, Switzerland, the RIA Novosti news agency reported from the Ukraine capital Kiev.

On Saturday Ponomarev sent FIDE president Kirsan Ilyumzhinov a series of demands concerning the conditions for the match, to be held at Yalta on the Crimean peninsula as part of a FIDE plan to reunite the official world championship with a rebel title that has existed for the past decade.

"I'm retiring because I have

Biggest test of his life

Cricket

REUTERS, Melbourne

Shane Warne has overcome many obstacles in his high-profile career, but one of the toughest may be returning to Test cricket next year after serving a drugs ban.

One of Wisden's five cricketers of the 20th century, the Australian leg-spinner was suspended for 12 months after testing positive for diuretics in February and he missed his team's entire World Cup campaign.

It was the biggest doping scandal in cricket history and the earliest Warne can hope to return to the Test arena is February, when his ban ends.

Although public sympathy for the 33-year-old appears to be strong in Australia, it is by no means a formality that he will walk back into the national team.

His replacement in the Test side, leg-spinner Stuart MacGill, has played well and Warne had to concede defeat last week in a long-running debate over his eligibility to train with the Australia squad.

The Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA) and Warne agreed he should be free to do so because of a loophole in Cricket Australia (CA) rules, as did an independent arbitrator.

However, World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) chairman Dick Pound said the ACA's stance was "against the spirit of the game", and Australia's Federal Government threatened last week to withdraw more than 650,000 US dollars of funding to CA.

Prime Minister John Howard and Sports Minister Rod Kemp both said Warne, the second highest wicket-taker in Test history with 491 victims, should be banned from training with his state Victoria and Australia during his suspension.

On top of that, Test cricket's most

successful spinner has become the subject of a "phone sex" allegation for the second time in three years.

Warne refused to comment on the August 10 story of a telephone "text sex" scandal involving South African woman Helen Cohen Alon but, despite the unequivocal support of his wife Simone, he has unquestionably been feeling the pressure.

Nicknamed "Hollywood" because of his dyed blond hair, fashion sense, love of fast cars and theatrical on-field celebrations, Warne decided on Friday he would train privately for the remainder of

"The media are killing him. If he's good enough, why not put him back in the team next year? If he's not, p--him off, it's as simple as that," said Pat, who lives in working-class Sunshine in west Melbourne.

Prue McTaggart, who spent her Saturday serving fish and chips meals from a fast-food diner at the market, told Reuters: "It's his private life. If it was anybody else, it wouldn't be such a big deal."

"I don't really see a problem with that (Warne training with the national team). He's got to get back into form somehow."

Leading sports writer Patrick Smith, however, said it was a pity CA had not taken a firm stand in February and banned the 107-Test veteran from training with Australia's Test squad while he was suspended.

"The Australian cricket community mostly thinks Warne has been harshly treated because he is Australian," Smith wrote in The Australian newspaper.

"Too few people in Australian sport take the issue of drugs in Australian sport seriously."

CA chief executive James Sutherland added fuel to the fire when he told The Age newspaper: "Any association he has with the Australian team at present is something I'm not comfortable with."

But ACA chief executive Tim May said: "Shane's announcement (about training privately) is incredibly unselfish." May added that CA and the ACA needed to work together to "tighten" CA's anti-doping policy.

Australia vice-captain Adam Gilchrist has said Warne's expected return to Test cricket is by no means a certainty.

"It is not as simple as whether we take Warne back on," Gilchrist told Australia television. "There are other factors involved. Stuart MacGill is in there doing a terrific job."

"I have come to the decision that I'm going to remove myself from all official training," said the controversial leg-spinner, who sparked a media frenzy by training with Victoria in mid-August.

Warne, who described the uncertainty over the terms of his ban as ridiculous, appeared angry during his news conference, a mood reflected by supporters on the streets of his home town.

Pat, a fruiterer at Queen Victoria Market in Elizabeth Street, was enjoying a cold beer on a wet Melbourne Saturday last week when approached by Reuters.

"Pete is the best I have ever played. Of course I will miss him," Agassi said.

"After all he has done for this game, he deserves to leave on his own terms."

Sampras won his 13th Slam title in 2000 at Wimbledon, then went more than two years without a title of any kind before beating Agassi in last year's Flushing Meadows final.

"What an unbelievable ending, after everyone had written him off for two years. He's just so tough and showed everyone wrong," said women's star Lindsay Davenport.

"He has been the greatest men's player in the last I-don't-know-how-many years. His record has been amazing. All his Grand Slam titles speak volumes about what a consistent, great player he was."

John McEnroe paid homage to Sampras by saying how much every player in the game respects him, then cracked about his own fiery demeanor compared to the stoic style of Sampras.

"Pete, I tried to serve like you. I couldn't do that. I tried to hit the big forehand like you. I couldn't do that," McEnroe said.

"I tried to act like you. Needless to say, I failed at that."

Retired German legend Boris Becker lamented that Sampras cut short his own domination of Wimbledon.

"It was my house until you came along," Becker said.

nothing to prove to myself," Sampras said. "I have always had challenges ahead of me, staying number one or winning majors."

"If there was something out there I wanted to achieve, I would go and do it. I'm content, 100 per cent content with everything I've done."

Sampras captured seven Wimbledon titles, part of a 53-1 run at the grass court event from 1993-2000, plus the 1994 and 1997 Australian Opens and US Open crowns in 1990, 1993, 1995, 1996 and last year.

"Two months after winning here, I wasn't sure what was next," Sampras said.

"I kept pulling out of events, always thinking I might play Wimbledon again."

"Once I started doing some training for Wimbledon and my heart wasn't in it, I knew it was time to say goodbye."

Sampras said he did not quit after the US Open final because he had to come to the conclusion that he was ready to quit, a journey of self-discovery.

"It's a process, retirement. You need to go through all the emotions," Sampras said.

"I went everything I had to go through to be 100 per cent convinced I should. And I am."

"To say I should have retired after the final, I wasn't there yet. I am now. I'll miss playing. I'll miss competing. I'll miss finals in front of 20,000 people that rush. That excitement. Just the joy of playing the game."

"But I know what it takes to be there and I know I'm not there now. So it's time to stop."

Tributes for Pistol Pete

US OPEN

AFP, New York

Pete Sampras refused to be drawn into the debate over whether or not he was the greatest player in tennis history, leaving his rivals and admirers to make the case for him on the day he retired.

The 32-year-old legend said goodbye to the game he mastered at a ceremony here Monday at the US Open, 50 weeks after defeating Andre Agassi in the final here for his 14th Grand Slam crown in what was to be his last match.

"He was the best ever," Spain's Carlos Moya said.

"I don't see anyone dominating the game again as Pete did."

"There was nobody better. Ever," said American Mardy Fish, who idolised Sampras.

"It was amazing to see someone with so much confidence."

Sampras won a record 14 Slam titles, including seven at Wimbledon and five US Opens. He never captured the French Open to capture a career Grand Slam but he was year-end world number one six seasons in a row, an unprecedented feat.

"To say I'm the greatest ever, I won't say that," Sampras said.

"At times, I felt like I was playing perfect tennis. But it's hard to com-

'It's a closed chapter'

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"My time is done. I've done everything I can. I'm at peace with stopping. It's time to move on," Sampras said.

"I'm not coming back, coming out of retirement. I'm at peace with it."

Sampras broke Roy Emerson's career Slam singles mark with his 13th title at Wimbledon in 2000, then went without any other title until beating Agassi 6-3, 6-4, 5-7, 6-4 in last year's final here, what proved to be his last match.

"My biggest challenge was last year when I didn't win an event for two years," Sampras said.

"Once I did that, I felt I really climbed a tall mountain."

The drought was blamed in part on his marriage to actress Bridgette Wilson, a notion that rankles Sampras still.

"She has been my rock," he said.

"At a time when I was struggling, she got blamed for it, which is absolute bullshit. It wasn't easy to deal with. But she stuck with me and we got through it together."

Sampras was 20-14 against Agassi in their career rivalry, including a 4-1 mark when the two met for Grand Slam titles.

"Pete's accomplishments speak for themselves," Agassi said.

"Pete is the best I have ever played."

Sampras won 64 ATP titles, reached 88 finals, won 762 of 984 matches and took 43.3 million dollars in prize money. He spent a record 286 weeks atop the ATP rankings, including a record six seasons as the year-end world number one.

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nothing to prove to myself," Sampras said. "I have always had challenges ahead of me, staying number one or winning majors."

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