

Schools b'ball

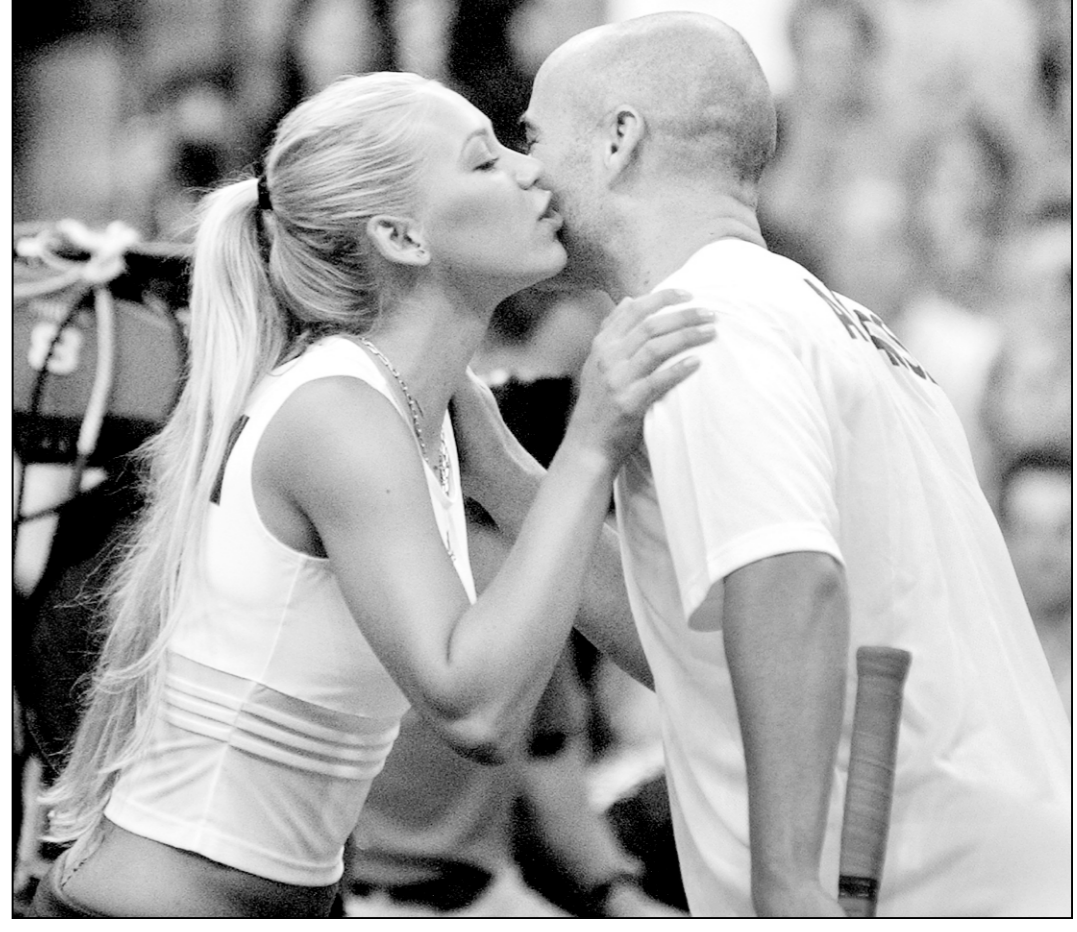
UNB, Dhaka
St Gregory's earned a massive 100-45 victory over Scholastica in the Inter-School basketball tournament at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.



Australian Sandy Gordon delivers a lecture on the third day of a six-day ACC Sports Medicine and Fitness Seminar at Sonargaon Hotel yesterday.

SAARC nations carrom begins

UNB, Dhaka
The Seventh SAARC Countries' Carrom Championship began at the National Sports Council gymnasium yesterday.



Russian Anna Kournikova kisses Andre Agassi after "The Battle of the Sexes Celebrity Doubles" tennis match on September 25 at the Fleet Centre in Boston.

'It's for friends, fans'



REUTERS, Karachi

Rashid Latif, Pakistan captain one day, back in the ranks the next, insists he did not resign or quit international cricket under pressure from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

The demonstrators chanted slogans and held placards, supporting the former captain's stance against match-fixing.

The chief organiser of the protest, Mohammad Saleem, said a match-fixing and betting "mafia" was again active and wanted to see Latif out of the team.



RASHID LATIF

warning them of the menace of match-fixing and asking them not to give up the fight against corruption in cricket.

The PCB reprimanded him for writing directly to the ICC and releasing a statement to the press. This eventually led to a fall-out with the establishment during the home series against Bangladesh.

But Latif insisted no-one had put pressure on him to resign on Wednesday as captain or quit the game.

"It was my own decision. I was under a lot of pressure and I was not happy with some of the things. So I decided it is best to step down. I knew Inzamam could manage things well against South Africa," he said.

Latif has had a controversial career since making his Test debut in 1992 against England. He quit in 1995 while touring South Africa and Zimbabwe, protesting against match-fixing.

He was reinstated for the 1996 World Cup and later appointed captain in 1998.

However, after being dropped in late 1998 he made a comeback to the team in April 2001 in England and was named captain after the World Cup this year in the rebuilding process of the Pakistan team.

He said on Thursday: "It was not a hasty decision to step down as captain. I thought it out. But I had to reconsider my position as a player."

Eng look for Anderson's substitute

BBC ONLINE, London

England will decide in the next couple of days who will replace James Anderson for the Bangladesh Tests.

The Lancashire fast bowler has been ruled out of the two Tests with a knee injury.

Sussex's James Kirtley is favourite for a call-up, although Somerset's Richard Johnson, Surrey's Martin Bicknell and Worcestershire's Kabir Ali are also in the frame.

The first Test is in Dhaka and is set to start on October 21.

Kirtley was a surprise omission when the original touring squad was named.

He took 13 wickets against South Africa before shin splints ruled him out of the final Test at The Oval.

Johnson also impressed in an England shirt but his summer was beset by injury problems.

Veteran bowler Bicknell took six wickets in the final Test on his county ground.

And Ali could also come into contention after a successful county season.

Wet start

FROM PAGE 13

Sehwaq not out 9
Extras: (nb-5) 5
Total: (For no wkt in 10.1 overs) 23

To bat: Shiv Das, Laxman, Yuvraj, Sriram, Ratra, Mishra, Powar, Bhandari, Trivedi

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Rows: Butler, Mason, Styris.

NEW ZEALAND: Fleming, Richardson, Astle, McMillan, Vincent, Styris, Hart, Vettori, Wiseman, Butler, Mason

Saurav rubbishes

FROM PAGE 13

followed by India (35), Sri Lanka (32), New Zealand (31) and Australia (29).

Boycott said too many one-day internationals could kill interest in the shorter version of the game.

"We're going to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs," said the former England opener, who was here for a new TV show along with Gavaskar and Ganguly.

"It's an easy and cheap way of running the game for the administration."



State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman inaugurates the Philips National Tennis Tournament at the National Tennis Complex in the city yesterday.

'No conspiracy behind his resignation'

AFP, Karachi

New Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq insisted Friday there was nothing sinister behind the sudden resignation of previous incumbent Rashid Latif ahead of the crucial series against South Africa.

"I assure everyone there was no controversy behind Latif's resignation," Inzamam said after some 150 supporters voiced anger Thursday that a 'match-fixing mafia' was responsible for the veteran wicketkeeper's departure.

Waiting on

FROM PAGE 13

some serious efforts to add a touch of flair to go with Brazilian midfielder Sandro.

An upbeat Ashraf-Uddin Chunnun expressed the same view as others on chasing foreign players.

"Although we have two players (Sandro and Nigerian defender Sylla), we need to buy more quality footballers but we won't recruit foreign players without weighing all the options," said the Abahani football secretary.

For Mohammedan their case is unique. Seriously affected from the transfer dealings, the popular Moltijheel club are trying their best to plug the gaps in their squad.

The black and whites after losing a host of key players were forced to sign up quite a few mediocre players.

They are desperate to get hold of some quality foreign players but haven't found one yet.

Mohammedan were the first team to launch their conditioning sessions at the Savar-based BKSP on September 24.

'Don't tour

FROM PAGE 13

move which would have had disastrous financial implications for the ECB.

As part of the bridge-building which ensured the Zimbabwe tour went ahead, England agreed to a reciprocal tour at the end of 2004.

Vodafone chairman Lord MacLaurin, who was previously chairman of the ECB, said the company was concerned about the possibility of bad publicity arising from a tour.

"We do not want to support a side that goes and plays in a country with the sort of regime that is reviled not just by this company but by many in the country," MacLaurin told The Guardian.

"To do so would be abhorrent and would be good for the brand image neither of Vodafone nor England cricket.

"We have told the ECB that we would rather the team did not go to Zimbabwe. We believe in the cold light of day, and having had the experience of the World Cup, that it would be inappropriate for the tour to take place and as major sponsors we would certainly urge them to withdraw."

Moya toppled



AFP, Bangkok

Spanish third seed Carlos Moya was dumped out of the 550,000-dollar Thailand Open by Finland's Jarko Nieminen here Friday, losing a three-set battle 6-7, 6-4, 6-4.

Nieminen drew rapturous applause from the local crowd as he bowed in a traditional "wai" to all four corners of the court after scoring the biggest upset of the event.

Nieminen, 37th in the world, pounced on his opportunities at the Impact arena against a Spanish opponent who has been suffering with a sore throat this week.

When the drama ended after two hours, 12 minutes, the man from the north further charmed fans with his bow to tradition.

Nieminen moved into a semifinal for the first time since Munich last May.

The 22-year-old from Masku, seeded fifth, also handed the inaugural edition of the tournament its first surprise after four days of predictable victories by seeds.

Desperately seeking

FROM PAGE 13

Not having a single batsman with similar qualities has often forced Bangladesh to send tail-enders like Mashrafe-bin Mortuza or Mohammad Rafique to accelerate the scoring. The play hasn't worked so far.

So what prevents perfectly strong and fit youngsters like Saleh, Kapali, Mushfiqur Rahman or Tushar Imran from adding that extra dimension to their game?

There's no point in blaming the players for their inability to play big shots as often as we would like or more importantly, the team would like. They are just products of a system that is inadvertently destroying the natural flair in individuals.

Big hitting is an art and it is very different from slogging. You can't teach or coach a player to hit sixes, the urge has to come from within. But that urge is being strangled.

The ever-growing popularity of cricket has seen a mushroom growth in the number of coaching clinics and coaches all over the country. Most of the coaches are forcing their pupils to bat straight and in an orthodox way while discouraging anything other than the ordinary. The result is a generation of 'decent' batsmen who play by the book but don't have the heart to be adventurous.

Our batsmen can't take the advantage of the first fifteen overs when only three fielders are allowed outside the 30-yard circle as they are afraid of going over the top. In the middle of the innings, they get stuck and the run rate begins to come down when it should be pushing up. They are found seriously wanting again in the slog overs when a few sixes can do a world of good.

The hard fact is that even if they have all their wickets standing, this Bangladesh team won't get past the 250 mark in 50 overs nine times out of ten. That is never an adequate total against any opponent considering our limited bowling resources. The same theory applies if we are chasing a target. Given this gloom scenario, it's difficult to see a win in the abridged version in near future unless we are extremely lucky.

Whatmore must be anxious to unearth a couple of youngsters who can really whack the ball before the start of the one-day series against England but he'll have his work cut out.

Looking around the domestic cricket scene, there are only three cricketers who come to mind who can still do the job for the Tigers—the estranged former Bangladesh captain Naimur Rahman, Abahani's all-rounder Rahul Neeyamur

Rashid and the out of favour opener Al-Shahriar.

Incidentally, all three are products of the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP) where their natural aggressive qualities were never ignored by coaches who understood the importance of power-play.

The trio can clear the fence with effortless ease but they are in their late twenties and are the last torch-bearers of the big-hitting breed. The rest of the cupboard is frighteningly bare. You could actually count the number of over-boundaries hit by local batsmen in all domestic competitions last season with your fingertips and that's no exaggeration.

Cricket in this country has gone through some radical changes over the last decade with the focus shifting to technique and perfection. That's fine as long as we don't compromise with God-given talent.

Not everyone can hit sixes at will. It requires a special kind of talent and guts to throw caution to the wind. Maybe Whatmore is already working on a plan to change the misconception that good basic and hit hitting don't go together. Maybe the search for the illusive braveheart will not take us that long.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues and solutions. Includes 'Cryptiquip' section with a grid and clues.

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Minister for Land M Shamsul Islam (L) and State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman enjoy a board of carrom during the opening ceremony of SAARC Countries Carrom Championship at the NSC gymnasium yesterday.