

### Pegasus ride on Sharif

SPORTS REPORTER

An all-round performance by Sharif guided Young Pegasus maintain their all-win record in the First Division Cricket League with an 18-run defeat of Jatrabari Krira Chakra in the eleventh-round game at the Dhaka University ground yesterday.

Pegasus thrived on half centuries by Johnny (52) and Sharif (57) to score 208-9 in 50 overs after deciding to bat first.

Sharif then claimed four wickets for 27 as Jatrabari were bundled after 190 in 48 overs.

With the outcome, Pegasus extended their collection to 22 points while Jatrabari remained on eight points from same number of outings.

### JFA Cup Sylhet reach zonal semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Two-goal Sameer steered Sylhet into the zonal semifinal of the Second JFA Cup Under-16 football tournament with a 2-0 win over ten-man Habiganj at the Chandpur Stadium yesterday.

Sameer opened the account after 27 minutes and sealed the victory on the hour. Habiganj were reduced to ten men when Enam was sent off for his second yellow card five minutes before halftime.

Sylhet will take on Narayanjanj, who received walk-over against Brahmanbaria, in tomorrow's zonal semifinal.

### Peshawar may not host ODI

PTI, undated

The Indian itinerary for the tour of Pakistan looks like heading for another change with Peshawar unlikely to host the second one-day international. This leaves Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) to grapple with yet another problem barely a week before India's arrival.

The Northwest Frontier Province government has written to the PCB and said that it cannot host the second ODI in Peshawar on February 8 following the period of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic year.

The letter was received a couple of days ago and the PCB has been discussing the situation with the Pakistan interior ministry. The dates for the one-day series had already been altered with Rawalpindi and Peshawar swapping places because of the concerns over providing security.

A top PCB official said a final decision on Peshawar would be made in the next 24 hours in consultation with the interior secretary. "PCB chairman Shaharyar Khan is meeting the interior secretary in Islamabad on Monday and the final decision would be made in that meeting."

"The NWFP government has expressed its inability to host the match in the wake of Muharram. They feel they don't have enough manpower to provide top grade security to the two teams and also maintain complete law and order in the city and the adjoining areas."

### V-Day b'ball final today

SPORTS REPORTER

Josephites will take on Bangladesh Navy in the today's Victory-Day Basketball Tournament final at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium.

The final will begin at 4pm. Josephites knocked out Bangladesh Rifles in the first semifinal while Navy upset favourites Europa Youth.

### US win Hopman Cup opener

AFP, Perth

The United States rallied to defeat Serbia and Montenegro 2-1 at the Hopman Cup on Sunday, after Lisa Raymond had slumped 6-2, 6-4 to Ana Ivanovic.

Taylor Dent put the Americans level by outplaying Novak Djokovic 6-1, 6-4, and then teamed with Raymond to win the mixed doubles 7-6, 6-2.

Ivanovic dominated Raymond for much of the match, overpowering her from the baseline and striking several blistering returns.

The 18-year-old gave up just four points on her serve in the opening set, breaking for 2-0 and then again for the set with a winner off a second serve.

Ivanovic then leapt to a 4-0 lead in the second set and appeared ready to claim a swift victory. But she failed to maintain her aggression and allowed her experienced opponent back into the match.



Cristiano Ronaldo (R) of Manchester United is being congratulated by teammate Ryan Giggs after the former scored one of his two goals against Bolton Wanderers at Old Trafford on Saturday.

### PREMIERSHIP

# Liverpool, MU end year on a high

Football

AFP, undated

Peter Crouch's fifth goal in five Premiership games earned Liverpool a hard-fought 1-0 win over West Bromwich Albion at Anfield on Saturday.

Crouch's wonderful 52nd minute header ensured Liverpool ended a momentous year in which they were crowned European champions with a 10th successive league victory.

Liverpool had to battle all the way to bank the three points against a workmanlike West Brom side and it looked like it was going to be a frustrating end to the year for the hosts before the Crouch leapt high above the visitors' defence to head Australia ace Harry Kewell's cross beyond Polish keeper Tomasz Kuszczak.

Kewell was by far Liverpool's best player before the break but the left winger was denied his first Premiership goal for a year by Kuszczak.

After a scrappy opening, the keeper leapt into action to parry Kewell's 14th minute effort from 25-yards behind his post for a

corner before the same player was denied moments later after the West Brom defence had failed to cut out Djibril Cisse's low cross.

Liverpool's luck did not get any better in the 21st minute, a post denying John Arne Riise on his return to the side.

The ball rebounded into Kewell's path but once again the former Leeds United player was left frustrated as Kuszczak made a vital block.

They emerged for the start of the second half a lot livelier and West Brom's defence was finally breached when Crouch leapt high to place man-of-the-match Kewell's cross beyond the outstretched hands of Kuszczak.

It brought a wave of relief around Anfield and Liverpool ought to have gone on to win by a more handsome margin with Gerrard twice going close to doubling the lead before the end.

Meanwhile, Manchester United marked Sir Alex Ferguson's 64th birthday with an emphatic 4-1 dismissal of Bolton Wanderers at Old Trafford. Two goals from Cristiano Ronaldo, one from Louis Saha and an own goal from Bolton's Bruno N'Gotty confirmed United's superiority but it was the

display of Wayne Rooney that more than anything fuelled the belief that United can yet pressurise runaway leaders Chelsea.

Sir Alex Ferguson told Sky Sports. "It was an excellent performance. On my 50th birthday here we lost 4-1 to Queens Park Rangers so that was a bit of a tonic today. They (Bolton) are a very difficult team to play against."

The Scot also hailed the performance of Cristiano Ronaldo, who scored twice. "He's had a difficult time but he's young and coming out of that. I thought in the forward play we were really excellent."

Earlier, league leaders Chelsea beat second-bottom Birmingham City by 2-0 at Stamford Bridge while Arsenal's bid to climb the table stalled in a goalless draw away to Aston Villa.

### TOP SIX

Team	M	W	D	L	G/FG/APts		
Chelsea	20	18	1	1	43	9	55
Man Utd	20	13	5	2	40	17	44
Liverpool	18	12	4	2	26	9	40
Tottenham	20	10	7	3	29	18	37
Wigan	20	11	1	8	25	24	34
Arsenal	19	10	3	6	27	15	33

### Sydney Test from today

FROM PAGE 12 obviously starting tomorrow and then the away ones against South Africa.

"We'll focus on the Ashes when it comes around but it certainly will be an exciting time."

Ponting said he expects senior opening batsman Justin Langer to return from a hamstring injury and take his place in the team.

Langer over-stretched the hamstring in the drawn first Test in Perth and had two work-outs in the SCG nets Sunday along with some sprint work.

Langer also said he was fine and expected to play.

Should Langer return to the side Phil Jacques, who made his Test debut in Melbourne, will make way.

Andre Nel is expected to open the fast bowling attack alongside Shaun Pollock. Newly-arrived off-spinner Johan Botha, who has yet to play a Test, could partner established spinner Nicky Boje.

"Sydney is going to be a challenge. Losing Makhaya is always going to be a challenge for us. He's led our attack for a

while and he's been very successful," skipper Graeme Smith said.

"We lose our real out-and-out strike bowler. That leaves opportunities for other players. We'll have a look at the conditions in Sydney and make some decisions from there."

Smith said he had been disappointed with his series form while opening the innings with AB de Villiers, with scores of 34, 30, 22 and 25.

"It's disappointing, but I think a big score is just around the corner," he said.

### TEAMS

**AUSTRALIA:** Ricky Ponting (captain), Adam Gilchrist, Matthew Hayden, Brad Hodge, Mike Hussey, Justin Langer, Brett Lee, Stuart MacGill, Glenn McGrath, Andrew Symonds, Shane Warne, Nathan Bracken, Phil Jacques (standby for Langer), 12th man to be named.

**SOUTH AFRICA:** (from): Graeme Smith (captain), AB de Villiers, Jacques Kallis, Herschelle Gibbs, Jacques Rudolph, Ashwell Prince, Mark Boucher, Shaun Pollock, Nicky Boje, Johan Botha, Andre Nel, Garnett Kruger.

### Another ton for Ponting

FROM PAGE 12 Ponting was earmarked for greatness at a very young age. An aggressive right-hander who can play every shot in the book and has the perfect temperament, he made his Test debut just before his 21st birthday.

A dubious umpiring decision cost him a century on debut, but he has made up for that disappointment by scoring a mountain of runs ever since.

Heading into his 100th Test, Ponting has 7,990 runs at an average of 56.27 with 26 centuries.

"Looking back, it certainly would have been nice to score a hundred on debut but that wasn't to be," he said.

"I was really upset at the time, but there were lots of great memories from that game. I made a pretty good start and that's where it all began for me."

But not everything went according to plan for the talented wild-child of Australian cricket.

### CCDM imposes

FROM PAGE 12 Meanwhile, the league committee has decided to install video cameras at both ends for the crucial matches to avoid any controversy following this incident.

"We have decided to set cameras to help the on-field umpires taking decisions in controversial situations. I think it will help ease the tension in important matches," said Jamiluddin.

In the eighth round, which starts today, cameras will be provided in the DOHS-Abahani and Mohammedan-Biman matches.

### Merkel against banning Iran

REUTERS, Berlin

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Sunday she opposed banning Iran from the soccer World Cup because of controversial remarks by Iran's president, saying it would be wrong to punish the players for his words.

Responding to demands to ban Iran because its President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had said Israel should be moved to Europe and suggested the Holocaust might never have happened, Merkel told the Bild am Sonntag newspaper she doubted the value of a ban.

"I'm sceptical about demands for a ban. One would have to reconsider if the World Cup were held in Iran. But the Iranian team can't influence the comments of their president. That's why I think it's difficult to punish a team by banning them."

Iran is one of 32 countries to have qualified for the tournament in Germany from June 9 to July 9.

In widely condemned comments, the Iranian president suggested last month that the Holocaust might not have happened. That followed his call in October for Israel to be "wiped off the map". Six million Jews were killed in the Nazi Holocaust.

In Berlin, the Foreign Ministry had summoned Iran's ambassador to protest about the remarks. Several German soccer leaders, the opposition Greens party and some leaders in Merkel's conservative party had called for a ban of the Iranian team.

### Adriano eyes ultimate title

INTERNET, undated

Inter Milan's Brazilian ace Adriano is aiming to shine at this summer's World Cup and succeed compatriot Ronaldinho as Player of the Year.

Adriano initially rose to prominence during the 2004 Copa America and then again in the Confederations Cup last summer, but he believes the upcoming prestigious tournament in Germany offers him the opportunity to show the world what he is capable of and challenge fellow samba star Ronaldinho for the honour as the world's best performer.

The former Fiorentina and Parma player also recognises the Brazil squad is bursting with quality and he faces a battle to even start games with the likes of Barcelona's Ronaldinho, AC Milan's Kaka, Real Madrid starlet Robinho and Ronaldo.

He said: "I know that I am in a position to aspire to these trophies. I strain to improve with every game, as I know people expect a lot from me."

"It will be quite a battle, but I know my capabilities," he added in an interview with a Brazilian newspaper.

"Coach Carlos Alberto Parreira knows the squad at his disposal and what we can do. All I can do is make the most of my chances and say may the best man win."

### Kaneria looks forward to India series

PTI, Karachi

Billed as Pakistan's trump card against India, champion leg-spinner Danish Kaneria said it will be a new and tougher challenge for him but he is determined and motivated to play a leading role in the upcoming series at home.

"The series will be tough for me in several ways, like different balls to be used in the series and tough weather conditions in which the Tests would be played," Kaneria said.

"But the bottomline is that it will be a new series and we as a team will not try to live in the past glories and would try to extend our success run," Kaneria, who sparkled in Pakistan's recent victory against England, told PTI in an interview.

The 25-year-old, who took 19 wickets against India last year, said the Tests would be played in the chilli Punjab weather that would make it difficult for spinners to bowl.

"The fingers take time to warmup and sometimes you struggle to properly use the wrist. I think my experience with Essex would help me in the series against India in more than one way," he said.

Kaneria said he was getting adjusted to playing with different kind of balls in international cricket as he bowled with SG balls in India and Australian kookaburras against England at home.

"The SG balls have lifted seam but after 15 overs or so, the seam softens whereas the Kookaburra balls don't have lifted seam at all," said the second most successful Pakistani bowler after paceman Shoaib Akhtar, with 143 Test wickets including 26 from five Tests against India.

### Abahani top dog

FROM PAGE 12 midfield after Joy and Ujjal's return from national duties, created ample scoring chances afterwards.

But Ndem was kept at bay by the defensive wall and Ali before Brothers skipper Sujon's superb tackle stopped substitute Anwar from shooting into an open net in the dying moments.

**Yellow cards:** Obaidur, Marshall (Abahani)

**Referee:** Azad Rahman.

# Mourinho warns Cole

Football

AFP, London

Fuming Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho rounded off 2005 by savaging England midfielder Joe Cole, telling him one more bout of showboating for the crowd will bring the axe crashing down.

The Blues cruised into 2006 with a 2-0 win at Stamford Bridge over strugglers Birmingham City on New Year's Eve to leave the champions 11 points clear at the top of the English Premiership.

But before admitting it had been an "unbelievable" year in which the west London side won their first league title in 50 years, Mourinho laid into his talented attacking midfielder, whose dazzling array of tricks has not always been combined with team-minded play.

"I just told him. One more match like this, he's off," Mourinho raged after the Birmingham win.

"That was not a joke. I am seri-

ous. "One more match for himself and the public and not for the team and he is off."

Cole has featured in 22 of the Blues' 27 matches this season and wants to make himself an England regular in time for the 2006 World Cup, which starts in June.

The controversial Portuguese boss said he had left Cole to stew on his harsh words for a while as he cannot play in Chelsea's London derby on Monday.

"He is on holiday now. I gave him four days because he cannot play against West Ham."

Mourinho is banking that his outburst will not backfire.

"He came a long way to arrive at this position and I don't think he is ready to go back," he added.

Chelsea beat Birmingham thanks to two first-half goals from Netherlands winger Arjen Robben and Argentina striker Hernan Crespo, extending the Blues' 100 percent league home record this season to 11 matches.

However, Cole and Crespo conspired to muck up a chance to make it 3-0 before the interval and put the result beyond doubt, leaving Mourinho furious.

"I said to the players at half-time 'you cannot make these kinds of mistakes'," he seethed.

"Imagine in the second-half, they score one goal and you stay until the end of the game under pressure."

"You cannot forgive in relation to the opponent. You have the chances, you have to kill."

Once he calmed down, Mourinho said even he, the self-titled "Special One", was impressed with Chelsea's performance over the last 12 months.

"101 points from the Premiership in 2005, that's an unbelievable record. This half of the season, better than the last season, an unbelievable year for Chelsea."

He said that with Manchester United trailing in second place and European champions Liverpool able to cut the gap to nine points, Chelsea had to be confident but also wary.

"You don't believe you are going to lose a lot or draw a lot. I believe the team is very strong and in a very good moment," he said.

"It's very difficult for them to catch us but in football you have to believe in everything so we must play safe, safe safe."

Mourinho said he would not be prepared to let any of his squad leave Stamford Bridge on loan in the January transfer window.

Birmingham boss Steve Bruce also insisted he would not let anyone leave, calling it "crazy" to do so given the club's injury crisis and precarious Premiership position.

Bruce stressed that Uruguay strike Walter Pandiani, wanted in Spain, was staying put, while he eyed up a few bargains in the January sales.

"The players have got to be better than we've got -- and if funds are available. We are certainly not going to bring players in who are no benefit to us."

"I would like to bring in two or three defenders if I could but we'll see what happens. As for Pandiani, it would be crazy to let somebody out now."

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# Edson never liked 'Pele'

Football

REUTERS, Berlin

Pele was so angry with a school classmate who dreamed up his nickname that he punched him, the soccer great recalled on Sunday.

"Pele isn't my real name," the Brazilian told the German newspaper Bild am Sonntag in an interview. "My name is Edson. I didn't come up with Pele myself. I didn't want the name. Pele sounds like baby-talk in Portuguese. Edson sounds like Thomas Edison, the man who invented the light bulb."

"But a classmate wanted to anger me with the name Pele. I flipped out when he called me that. I punched him...I was actually a good student and wouldn't hurt a fly. But for the punch I got suspended from school for two days."

Pele, now 65, began life as Edson Arantes do Nascimento and remains unsurpassed as the world's greatest player. He won the World Cup with Brazil in 1958, 1962 and 1970.

He told the newspaper Brazil were

top contenders to win the World Cup in Germany starting on June 9 but said favourites never had an easy task.

"We're the clear favourites but favourites have often failed," he said.

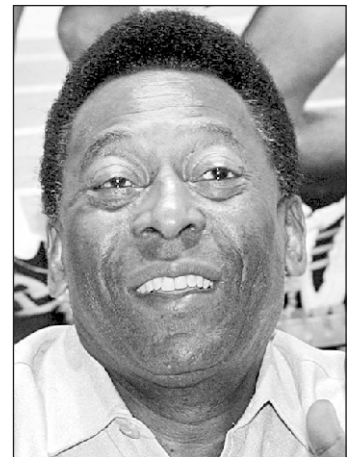
"Whether it's Brazil, Spain or England -- there seems to be a special curse on them. That's why we have to be ready, especially when it comes to hosts Germany."

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PELE

# Owen dismisses WC concern

Football

BBC ONLINE, undated

Newcastle striker Michael Owen insists he will be fit for England's World Cup campaign this summer, despite breaking a bone in his foot on Saturday.

The 26-year-old fractured the fifth metatarsal in his right foot during the Magpies' 2-0 defeat at Tottenham.

Owen is poised to be sidelined for two to three months and he said: "It's very disappointing."

"But I have no doubts I will be fit for the World Cup - from what the experts are telling me."

England boss Sven-Goran Eriksson has said that he will be monitoring Owen's fitness battle.

The Swede told the Football Association website: "It's very bad luck for him and for Newcastle United."

"Michael is a fantastic striker and a very important player for his club and for England."

"I hope that he returns to fitness as soon as possible and I will follow

his progress very closely."

However, Owen conceded that it would be unlikely he would be able to rush back into action after such an injury.

He added: "There is no quick return - I think it is about three months - but loads of people have had it, like David Beckham, Wayne Rooney and Stevie Gerrard, and I have spoken to some of them."

"It is disappointing but everyone gets their fair share. If there is any consolation it is that I have got plenty of time before the World Cup."

"You can never know for sure how long you're going to play for. Age and fitness come into it as well as form. There are a lot of variables but it's hard to see him slowing down for a while yet," Waugh said to the Melbourne Age.

"There's still a long way to go for him, but the way he's going at the moment, if you were going to pick someone to take that record, I'd say it would have to be Ricky."

Ponting, with 7,990 Test runs under his belt, is still far behind Lara's record of 11,204. However, Lara is expected to retire after the 2007 World Cup in the Caribbean, and Ponting has time on his side.



MICHAEL OWEN

### CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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