



Did U Know?

Tennis was played at the Olympics until 1924, then reinstated in 1988.



Sourav Ganguly

(Former India cricket captain)

"It was the worst year as far as my cricketing career is concerned. I'm really happy that 2005 has passed."

What to WATCH

ESPN

Sportscenter
Live at 8:30 pm
English Premier Football League
Man City vs Tottenham
Live at 1:55 am (Thursday)
STAR Sports
Australia vs South Africa
Third Test, Day Four
Live at 5:00 am (Thursday)

Nirala century guides Partex

SPORTS REPORTER

Nirala hit a hundred as Partex Sporting Club thrashed Dhanmondi Club by 87 runs in the First Division Cricket League at the Dhaka University ground yesterday.

With the outcome Partex pushed their collection to 20 points from eleven matches, two points adrift of league leaders Pegasus.

Partex rode on Nirala's 135-ball 114 to make 240-9 in 50 overs and then dismissed Dhanmondi for 153 in 45.5 overs.

At the Jagannath Hall ground, Dhaka Mariner Club (206-10) defeated Bangladesh Boys (169-10) to register their fourth win. Boys suffered their sixth defeat in eleven outings.

Sabu scored unbeaten 71 and Sony added 53 as Dhaka Wanderers (156-3) secured their third victory beating Young Pegasus-B (152-10) at the City Club ground.

Watch out for new Zaheer!

PTI, New Delhi

Having forced his way back into the national squad, Zaheer Khan is banking on his "new bowling style" to deliver the goods during the gruelling tour of Pakistan which he admits could be the turning point of his career.

The left-arm pacer said the tour of Pakistan would provide him the opportunity to try out his remodelled bowling action for the first time in the international arena but believed his fine run in recent domestic matches would stand him in good stead.

"I have reduced my run up... This tour will be the first international stage when I will be bowling with the new style. I am a bit anxious and nervous but I hope it should be okay," Zaheer told PTI overphone.

Zaheer said the time out of the national team provided him the opportunity to work on his bowling which he had wanted to do for long but did not have the time because of hectic international schedule.

"My aim was to utilise time to work on my skills. I needed to bowl lot of overs because I was trying a few new things," said Zaheer, who was dropped from the team for the home series against Sri Lanka and South Africa.

"Even when I was working with the MRF Pace Foundation when I was going through the injuries, I wanted to cut down my run up and try a few things, but there was no time."

The 4th that shook Reds Muktijodha last in semis

SPORTS REPORTER



Muktijodha Sangsad completed an expected semifinal lineup of the Nitol-Tata Fifth National Football League with a 4-0 drubbing of Bangladesh Army yesterday.

The Reds, who finished fourth in the Super-Six due to an inferior goal difference with Mohammedan after both earned eight points, will take on top-of-the-table Abahani in tomorrow's first semifinal. Defending champions Brothers are pitted against Mohammedan in the second semi on Thursday.

But it seemed George Kottan's charges, who needed just a draw for a passage into the last four, went into the match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium with a misconception. They were

hungry for goals but at the same time desperately wanted to finish fourth to avoid a clash with Brothers, the most successful team of the season with two trophies out of three tournaments.

Apparently ignorant of that fact that unlike bonus points, goal advantage from the first phase would not be included to the teams' Super Six collection, Muktijodha players let loose a comedy of errors after scoring their fourth goal two minutes away from the final whistle. The first reaction from the players and coach alike was frustration after the long-range shot from their Moroccan midfielder Rachid beat the Army custodian.

Muktijodha's backline then tried in vain to allow the opponent attackers to get past them unchallenged so that Army could score at least one goal.

Had the previous-phase goals were counted, the last year's runners-up would have finished third and face Brothers instead in the

semis.

Back to the match and Muktijodha, who lost to Brothers 1-0 and thrashed Samabesh Club 5-2 in their previous encounters, dominated the first half but hardly showed the effort to score.

Rajani's early corner troubled Army goalkeeper Monriul in the flight but he recovered to save a powerful shot by Titu on the rebound while Kanchan miskicked a chance from close-range as the first half ended scoreless.

Army, who lost 1-0 to Abahani before being humiliated by Mohammedan 6-0, came to the last Super-Six game in a must win situation to book a berth in the last four.

But instead of trying to fire on all cylinders, Army had their backs to the wall as Mukti took absolute control in the second half, scoring

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PHOTO: STAR

Muktijodha forward Kanchan (2nd from L) misses an opportunity to score against Bangladesh Army in their Nitol-Tata Fifth National Football League Super Six match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Tuesday.

Weather may play foul with Pak pitch plans

Cricket

AFP, Lahore

Wet and foggy weather may wreck Pakistan's plan to prepare hard pitches during this month's home cricket series against rival India, Pakistan's chief curator said Tuesday.

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq had asked the authorities to prepare bouncy tracks during the January 5-February 6 series, to make use of Pakistan's strong pace attack against a formidable Indian battingline-up.

"We are trying our level best but the foggy weather and wet conditions are not ideal for bouncy tracks, because a pitch takes time to dry," curator Agha Zahid told AFP.

The Pakistani cities of Lahore and Faisalabad, where the first two Tests are being held, have been in the grip of extremely damp

weather but the meteorological department said conditions would improve later this week.

"We need three days of sunshine to dry the pitch. It would be a problem in Lahore and Faisalabad, but the clear weather in Karachi will help us prepare a suitable pitch," Zahid said.

The Indian team arrive here on Thursday and will start the first of three Tests on January 13 at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore, on their second tour across the border in two years.

India lifted a four-year ban on bilateral cricket which paved way for their team's tour to Pakistan in 2004, the first since 1989-90.

Pakistan employed English curator Andy Atkinson to prepare pitches during the last Indian tour, but the home team lost the three-Test series 2-1 and the preceding one-day series 3-2.

The pitches for the series against England, which were laid by Zahid after he replaced

Atkinson, helped Pakistan to beat the tourists 2-0 in the Tests and 3-2 in the one-day series last month.

Fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar took 17 wickets while leg-spinner Danish Kaneria grabbed 11 wickets as both extracted bounce out of the three tracks.

Zahid said Pakistan's pace attack can trouble India on bouncy pitches while preparing spinning wickets could give India the advantage.

"Pakistan has a strong pace attack so they can come good on hard pitches. It is of no use to give spin tracks as India has a slight edge in that department," he said.

Former Pakistan pacer Wasim Akram last week advised Inzamam -- who met curator Zahid on Monday -- and the Pakistan Cricket Board to prepare bouncy tracks to beat India.

India open their tour with a three-day side match against Pakistan A at Bagh-e-Jinnah Stadium in Lahore from January 7.

Advantage South Africa

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

South Africa amassed a huge first innings total and rocked Australia with three late wickets to seize the momentum in the final cricket Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Tuesday.

The Proteas, trailing 1-0 and needing a win to square the three-match series, called a halt to their stoic 11-hour occupation of the crease at 451 for nine, giving themselves 15 overs to bowl at the Australians late on the second day.

And they were richly rewarded, with Australia tottering on 54 for three at stumps. Ricky Ponting, playing in his 100th Test match, was on 11 and Brad Hodge out in the last over of the day for six.

In the course of his innings, Ponting passed 8,000 Test runs.

Australia lost openers Matthew

Hayden (4) and Justin Langer (25), both bowled by seamer Charl Langeveld. Then Hodge popped a catch to close-in fielder Jacques Rudolph off Andre Nel.

The South Africans, grafting at under three runs an over with Kallis (111) and Ashwell Prince (119) accumulating centuries, dawdled to their declaration off 154.4 overs.

Home fans were frustrated by Australia's inability to dominate despite their all-star bowling attack.

Kallis was rock-solid in reaching his 23rd Test hundred, his second against Australia, before he was caught by Glenn McGrath at fine leg off Andrew Symonds nearing lunch.

He chiselled his runs off 275 balls in just over six hours with 17 boundaries.

Prince, who put on a record 219 for the fourth wicket with Kallis, was struck well outside off-stump when not offering a stroke to a prodigious Shane Warne leg-break

in the hour after lunch.

'Hawkeye' technology suggested the ball was missing off-stump.

Prince batted for 395 minutes and faced 271 balls with 13 fours.

Kallis and Prince broke the previous record South African fourth wicket partnership against Australia, 206 between Charles Frank and Arthur Nourse in Johannesburg in 1921-22.

Prince, who has steadily improved in confidence and form during the series, scored centuries against Zimbabwe and the West Indies last March and April.

It was tedious going up to tea with just 160 runs coming off 65 overs, before Australia's bowlers finally got among the wickets on an unresponsive slow pitch.

Prince and wicketkeeper Mark Boucher (5) were both the victim of contentious umpiring decisions in

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PHOTO: AFP

South Africa's Ashwell Prince salutes the crowd on reaching his century while teammate Jacques Kallis, who also hit a hundred, looks on during the second day's play of the third and final Test against Australia at the SCG on Tuesday.

Aftab expected quick recovery

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh international Aftab Ahmed is expected to make a quick recovery from jaundice than expected.

The Chittagonian batsman is now in Bangkok where the specialists diagnosed his Hepatitis B as a mild attack.

"The doctors at Bumrungrad Hospital have told him that his jaundice is not serious and he will need ten more days to recover from the illness," said his elder brother Arif Ahmed Chowdhury, who is captain of Dhaka first division side Gazi Tank.

Aftab was diagnosed with jaundice during the third round of the National Cricket League and failed to play even a single match for Mohammedan Sporting Club in the ongoing Premier Cricket League.

He is now expected to be available for the struggling Motiheel outfit after the first phase.

Hanif hammers double century in LOM

SPORTS REPORTER

Hanif Hossain made a stunning double century in a limited-overs match (LOM) of the Under-15



HANIF...200

Dhaka Metro age-group cricket tournament as his side Nabin Sangha pulled off a massive 224-run victory against Gulshan Youth Club yesterday.

The 14-year old right-hander used the long-handle as a magic wand to smash 21 fours and 10 sixes in his magnificent 147-ball 200 that gave his team a record total of 503-7 in the stipulated 50 overs at the Nabin Sangha ground.

Asaduzzaman hammered 119 off 83 balls and Ashrafuzzaman played a whirlwind knock of 31-ball 77 in their team's towering total.

In reply, Gulshan were bundled out for 259 in 44.1 overs.

Wife puts Warne in multi-million dollar spin!

AFP, Sydney

Australian cricket's "spin king" Shane Warne is facing a 10 million dollar (7.3 million US) divorce claim from his wife, reports said Tuesday.

Shane and Simone Warne publicly split during last year's Ashes series in England after British papers alleged the champion leg-spinner had been involved in a series of sex scandals.

In an interview with a women's magazine, Simone said she would not be taking her husband of almost a decade back despite his pleas for a reconciliation.

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Kenya may tour Bangladesh in early February

SPORTS REPORTER

Kenya cricket team are likely to visit Bangladesh in the first week of February to play three one-day internationals against the Tigers.

"The board is planning to host the African nation for three ODIs before Bangladesh's home series against Sri Lanka, but things have not yet been finalised," said a board official yesterday.

It was learnt that the Bangladesh Cricket Board was due to take a decision about the series very soon but the sudden illness of its general secretary Mahbul Anam had left the issue pending.

"We had a meeting to discuss preparation of the venues ahead of the Sri Lanka series and some other important issues, but we have to wait until the general secretary returns from Singapore after treatment," said joint-secretary Rafiqul Islam Babu.

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Astle gives NZ series win

Cricket

AFP, Christchurch

Nathan Astle shrugged off the blues that have dogged him in recent innings to score an unbeaten 90 Tuesday, giving New Zealand a five-wicket win over Sri Lanka and an unbeatable 3-0 lead in the five-match one-day series.

It was a welcome return to form for Astle, whose poor performances of late saw him dropped and then recalled as the supersub when regular captain Stephen Fleming took paternity leave.

Set 256 to win on an easy wicket, New Zealand started at a rollicking seven runs an over but the pace slowed following the dismissal of swashbuckling opener Lou Vincent.

In a dramatic closing stanza, New Zealand started the 46th over requiring a run-a-ball and with rain falling.

The umpires allowed play to continue. Astle scored the winning

runs off the last ball of an action-packed 48th over in which Chaminda Vaas gave away three extras -- including a no-ball which bowled Astle, who hit the next ball for six.

Astle's 90 off 125 balls included seven fours and one six. Apart from the slog at the end he looked totally in command, particularly driving through the off.

The rain had earlier disrupted play for 20 minutes but New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori said he always felt in control.

It was Sri Lanka's second consecutive series defeat after losing 1-6 in India last month, and captain Marvan Atapattu said they desperately need a win to change their fortunes.

The omens looked bad for Sri Lanka from the start when Sanath Jayasuriya pulled out after falling and dislocating a shoulder in the shower, and Atapattu lost the toss.

After being sent into bat, Sri Lanka scored 255 for seven with the innings anchored by a well-crafted century

from Upul Tharanga. He was at the crease for 37 overs and figured in a 109-run second wicket partnership with Kumar Sangakkara.

Atapattu contributed a rapid 52 off 46 balls, and although the rest of the batsmen failed to deliver he still had reasons to believe his bowlers had a sound target to defend.

But Vincent had other ideas, cracking 46 off 44 balls before being dismissed in the 12th over with the score on 71.

His powerful hitting saw first-change bowler Dilhara Fernando concede 28 runs in two overs before being taken out of the attack.

Vincent relished the Sri Lankans' inability to get movement through the air and cracked seven fours and a six before flashing at Farveez Maharoof once too often. Sangakkara took a fine one-handed catch diving to his right.

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Jayasuriya slips in bathroom, tour looks over

AFP, Christchurch

Veteran Sri Lankan all-rounder Sanath Jayasuriya is unlikely to play any further part on the cricket tour of New Zealand after dislocating his shoulder in a bathroom mishap.

Jayasuriya was a late withdrawal from Tuesday's one-day international here after he fell awkwardly, Sri Lankan manager Michael Tissera said.

"Sanath was reaching for his shampoo when he slipped and fell in his bath," Tissera said.

Jayasuriya, the fourth player to score 10,000 one-day runs, will remain with the squad but is unlikely to play in the remaining matches in Wellington on Friday and Napier on Sunday.

Tissera confirmed Jayasuriya would stay with the squad when they travel to Australia for a tri-series which starts in about a fortnight.