

BFF plans beyond BNS

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is determined to start the domestic season in April with the Premier Division League despite the unavailability of the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS).

The BFF came unstuck with their plans to start the new domestic season after the National Sports Council wanted the BNS ground for renovation from April.

"We are determined to start the Premier League sometimes in April after the AFC Challenge Cup even if we don't get the BNS on time. We will hold the league in an alternative venue," said BFF general secretary Anwarul Haque Helal yesterday.

The federation high-ups had an unofficial meeting on Sunday and agreed in principle to start the league in other prospective venues. Besides, the BFF was also working on to launch a semi-professional league in line with the prescription of the AFC from this season. But everything will get a real shape after the EC meeting on February 1.

"We will finalise the domestic calendar in our next meeting on February 1. But before that we will meet the 20 Premier and First Division clubs on January 26 to settle some issues," said Helal. He said that the date of inter-club players' transfer would be announced after the meeting with the club officials.

"We are adamant to launch the professional football league in the country next September and it would be a major issue during the discussion with the clubs. The

present format of the National Football League will no longer exist.

"Besides, a player would be allowed to play only one league either the Premier or the pro-league. But the clubs can participate in the both competitions. We have already completed the ground work and think the clubs will appreciate the new concept," said a confident Helal.

He informed that the national camp will start on January 27 with Argentine coach Andres Cruciani and trainer Ariel Colman expected to return in the city tomorrow after a three-week vacation.

Bangladesh will feature in two Asian Cup qualifying matches in February and March and the newly introduced AFC Challenge Cup at home also in March.

One last hurdle for DOHS

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Old DOHS will desperately look for a victory to close in on their second successive title when they lock horns with start-studded Sonargaon Cricketers in a one of the three Super-Six matches of the Aktel Premier Division Cricket League at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium today.

DOHS will go into the match with a six-point lead from their nearest challengers Mohammedan and Victoria, who will face off at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium. A victory will take DOHS to an unassailable position with three more games in hand.

Akram Khan-led DOHS raised their tally to 22 points after their thrilling two-wicket victory over Brothers Union in their first Super-Six match.

On the other hand Mohammad Ashraf-ud-Din Sonargaon, who flew in Indian batsman Sridharan Sriram yesterday, scored a seven-run victory against Victoria in their first game.

Mohammedan wanted to play pacesman Mashrafe Bin Mortaza against Victoria, but the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM) turned down their plea.

"We have got a request from Mohammedan to include Mashrafe in place of Aftab (Ahmed) who did not play any matches due to jaundice. But the inclusion of a fourth pool player as it would have been the case with Mashrafe is a violation of the by-laws," said CCDM chairman Khondokar Jamiluddin.

The other match between no-hoppers Biman and Brothers will take place at BKSP.

Aftab withdrawn from A team

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) withdrew Aftab Ahmed from the Bangladesh A team on Sunday a day after the right-hand batsman was included for the two limited-over matches against the visiting UAE.

The board yesterday announced that Aftab, who has been out of action for nearly two months due to jaundice, would not be available for any competitive matches in January.

"The BCCB would like to announce that based on the medical report received yesterday from national team physiotherapist (Paul Close), Aftab Ahmed Chowdhury will not be able to participate any matches until 31st January," said a BCB press release.

Aftab, a cricketer on the board's payroll, underwent treatment in Thailand earlier this month.

UAE's first match at Bogra today

SPORTS REPORTER

The visiting UAE team will play their first limited-overs match against Bangladesh Under-19s at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra today.

Mushfiqur Rahim will lead the Bangladesh youths, which will play under the banner of Bangladesh Academy. The youth team, who are preparing for the ICC Under-19 World Cup in Sri Lanka next month, will play another limited-overs match against the tourists on January 24.

The UAE will play two more games against Bangladesh A on January 26 and 27 at Khulna Divisional Stadium.

Sohel scores hat-trick in JFA Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Sohel slammed hat-trick as Narayangang beat Kurigram 3-2 in the final round of the JFA Cup Under-16 Football Tournament at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Sohel put his team ahead in the 33rd minute and doubled the margin in the 56th minute before completing his hat-trick as well as scoring the match-winner in the 85th minute.

Shaishab netted in the 65th minute and Raha in the 77th minute for Kurigram.

In the day's other match at the same venue, Satkhira defeated Tangail 2-1.

Shahabuddin struck both the goals for the winners in the 22nd and 46th minutes.

Mohammad Rafique scored the lone goal for Tangail.



Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq raises his bat after scoring a century on the second day of the second Test against India at the Iqbal Cricket Stadium in Faisalabad on Sunday.

India off to bold start after Pakistan run riot

Cricket

AFP, Faisalabad

India were waging another battle to save the second Test after Pakistan put on an impressive batting display for the second consecutive time here on Sunday.

India, needing 389 runs to save the follow-on, were 110-1 when stumps were drawn four overs early on the second day after a run feast by batsmen from both sides.

Shahid Afridi smashed a career-best 156 off 128 balls and skipper Inzamamul Haq hammered 119 despite a back injury to propel Pakistan to an impressive 588 in their first innings.

Indian captain Rahul Dravid (46) and Venkatesh Laxman (28) were unbeaten at the close, having put on 71 runs for the second wicket after losing in-form opener Virender Sehwag for 31.

Sehwag, who hit a majestic 254 in the high-scoring first Test in Lahore, failed to capitalise after being dropped on 12 by substitute Imran Farhat off pacesman Shoaib Akhtar.

Sehwag fell off the third ball after tea as Farhat compensated for

the earlier miss with a high catch at first slip off Abdul Razzaq. The match appeared to be a replay of the drawn Lahore Test where Pakistan piled up 679-7 declared and India replied with 410 for one.

"We have to bowl extraordinarily well to force a result because there is nothing in the wicket for bowlers," Afridi told reporters later.

"Moreover the Kookaburra (Australian brand) balls get soft very early and that does not help the bowlers at all."

Pakistan, starting the day at 379-4, added 209 runs by midway through the afternoon session as

Afridi entertained the 15,000-strong holiday crowd with powerful hitting.

The popular all-rounder, who scored 103 in Lahore, plundered six sixes and 20 fours before miscuing a sweep off leg-spinner Anil Kumble to be caught at square-leg by Yuvraj Singh.

Afridi, 85 overnight, hit seamer Irfan Pathan for two boundaries to move within three runs of his second successive hundred and then pulled the same bowler for a powerful six over mid-wicket to reach his fifth Test century.

Afridi took 20 runs in one over

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Did U Know?

The expression Grand Slam, initially used to describe the winning of the tennis major events, was later incorporated by other sports, notably golf, to describe a similar accomplishment.



Carlos Alberto Parreira
(Brazil football coach)
"I like (Zinedine) Zidane a lot. He is a player without equal, he can organise play, impress his style, his force, his style to any team. He would fit perfectly into my side."



TEN Sports
India vs Pakistan
Second Test, Day Three
Live at 10:45 am
ESPN
Sportscentre
Live at 9:30 pm
English Premier Football League
West Ham vs Fulham
Live at 1:55 am (Tuesday)
STAR Sports
Australian Open
Men's/Women's Fourth Rd
Live at 6:00 am



Aktel Premier Division Cricket League SUPER SIX
Old DOHS vs Sonargaon
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium
Victoria vs Mohammedan
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium
Biman vs Brothers
Venue: BKSP-2

Zia secures 3rd spot

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman finished third in the Fourth Parsvnath International Open chess tournament when he defeated FIDE Master Zhumabaev in the tenth and final round in New Delhi on Sunday.

Zia bagged eight points from ten matches along with GM Pavel Kotsur, Saptarshi Roy and IM Venkatesh but they were split by the Bucholz system which placed Zia in the third position.

Grand Master Alexei Fedorov of Belarus became unbeaten champion securing nine points.

Kotsur finished runner-up while Saptarshi got the fourth and Venkatesh the fifth places.

Another Bangladeshi Grand Master Niaz Murshed got 20th place, IM Abdullah Al-Rakib of Biman 21st, IM Enamul Hossain of Muktijuddah Sangsad 25th, all of them earned seven points each.

In the last round, Niaz beat Nasir, Rakib drew with IM Balasubramaniam, Rajib beat Somak, Emon beat Arun, Ali beat Negi, Debaraj beat Debasish, Javed beat Gagan, Parag drew with Prabhakar, Taib lost against IM Deepen and Shakil lost against GM Ibraev.

A total of 314 players including 14 GM, 31 IM and five WGM participated in the tournament.

Jayasuriya jolts Aussies

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Sri Lankan veteran Sanath Jayasuriya shrugged off jet-lag and a shoulder injury to play Australia's attack and set up a comfortable 51-run victory in a one-day triangular series match at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday.

Jayasuriya's inspirational 114 off 96 balls helped carry Sri Lanka to a formidable 309-7 before dismissing a relatively inexperienced Australian line-up for just 258.

It was Sri Lanka's second win from three matches in the series, while the Australians were left with two wins from four matches.

South Africa have just one win from three matches and are due to play Sri Lanka in Adelaide on Tuesday.

Sri Lankan coach Tom Moody had predicted Jayasuriya would influence the match and his words couldn't have been more prophetic.

The 36-year-old, who only arrived in Australia on Friday after recuperating from a shoulder injury which he suffered on tour in New Zealand, smacked four sixes and 10 boundaries during his 19th century in one-day internationals.

He and Kumar Sangakkara piled on 163 for the second wicket, with the first 100 coming off 80 balls.

The run fest finally ended when a tired Jayasuriya was stumped by wicketkeeper Brad Haddin while trying to belt wrist-spinner Brad Hogg.

"If he scores more than 40 runs Sri Lanka wins 75 per cent of the games," Sri Lankan captain Marvan Atapattu said.

"It is nice to win against the number one team in the world and it gives you so much confidence going forward."

Australian skipper Ricky Ponting was also complimentary.

"I thought they certainly batted extremely well, I mean Jayasuriya's knock was something pretty special and he had Sangakkara out there with him to play very well around him," Ponting said.

"They had all the momentum going their way early on, and it just

seemed that every ball they hit went through or over the field.

"We have seen Sanath do that to us before, he just gets on a bit of a roll and he just keeps on going and he has no fear, and today it came off very, very well."

Sangakkara also played a key role, making 78 off 95 balls. The pair had Ponting grasping for solutions.

Ponting substituted newcomer Brett Dorey who had been battered for 35 runs off four overs and brought on Hogg.

Hogg managed to stem the flood of boundaries but the Sri Lankans

continued to pound the bowling of all-rounder James Hopes, who ended with 0-65 off six overs.

Sangakkara was eventually caught and bowled by Andrew Symonds and Mahela Jayawardene then joined the fray, making a rapid-fire 56 off 46 balls.

The Australians had gone into the match without veteran pace bowler Glenn McGrath who was being rested. They also dropped Phil Jaques, who made a brilliant 94 in his international one-day debut against South Africa on Friday.

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BACK WITH A BANG: Sri Lanka opener Sanath Jayasuriya hits one for the maximum on way to a scintillating century against Australia in the VB Series match at the SCG on Sunday.

Dravid defends decision

Door not shut on Ganguly: India selector

Cricket

PTI, Faisalabad

India skipper Rahul Dravid Saturday defended Sourav Ganguly's omission from the second Test against Pakistan, saying the team needed five frontline bowlers to win the match on a flat track at the Iqbal Stadium here.

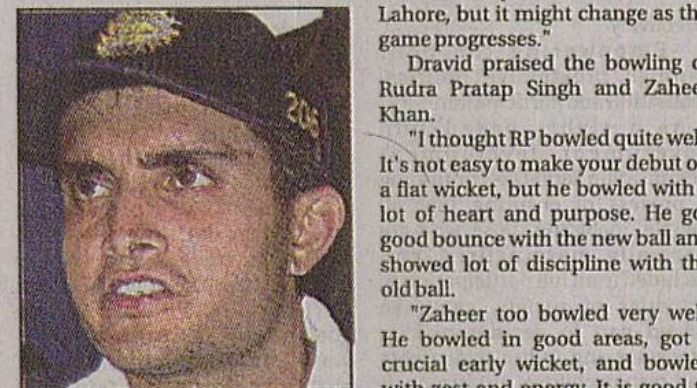
"It is very difficult to drop someone like Sourav, with his experience and his ability. But we had to pick the right combination that we thought would win us the game," Dravid said after the first day's play.

"We are looking to win games irrespective of the conditions, and we felt we required five bowlers to take 20 wickets on this track. It was a tough decision, and Sourav was unlucky to miss out," the Bangalore stalwart explained.

"Seeing the kind of wickets, we had to try something different. We hadn't done well with the ball in Lahore and we wanted to strengthen that department, so we played with five bowlers," he said. "Also, in conditions like this, it

can get very tough on the bowlers. We felt we needed five bowlers to keep them fresh and motivated, considering the long season ahead. We wanted to spread the workload ahead and guard against burn-out," Dravid added.

The skipper also defended the



SOURAV GANGULY bowlers' performance after they were carted around by the Pakistanis who reached 379 for four

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Roddick run ends Sharapova, Davenport & Henin in qtrs

Australian Open

AP, Melbourne

Andy Roddick tumbled out of the Australian Open on Sunday, losing 6-4, 1-6, 6-3, 6-4 to unseeded Marcos Baghdatis in the fourth round.

Roddick, the No. 2 seed, was unsettled by the high-energy Baghdatis, a 20-year-old former junior world champion from Cyprus.

After dropping just one service game in his three previous matches, Roddick was broken once in each of the first, third and fourth sets. Baghdatis had 16 aces, one more than Roddick, and only 26 unforced errors.

"I'm just in my own world and playing great tennis," Baghdatis said. "I think it's one of the best matches of my life."

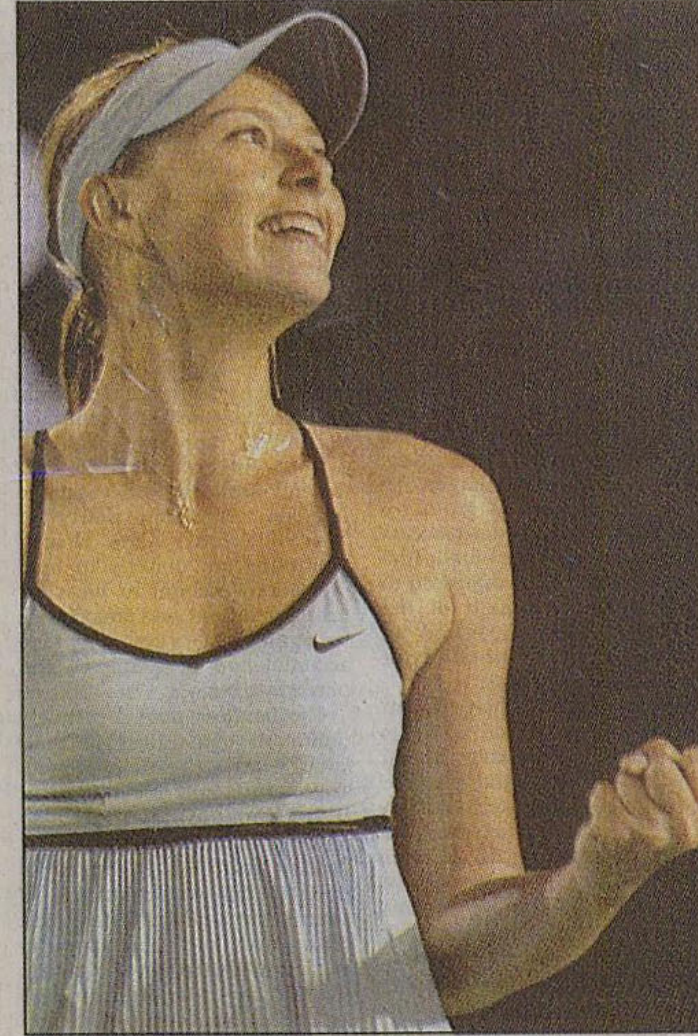
Baghdatis, ranked 54th, advanced to a quarterfinal against the winner of Sunday's later match between No. 7 Ivan Ljubicic and No. 10 Thomas Johansson, the 2002 Australian Open champion.

It was a disappointing exit for Roddick, the American who had a shocking first-round loss in the US Open -- the last Grand Slam event.

Roddick had 39 winners and 31 unforced errors.

"I didn't play that badly -- plus eight in winners to errors -- I looked and I won more total points," said Roddick. "I think I would have beaten most people today but credit where it's due, he played a very good match."

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Russia's Maria Sharapova pumps her fist after beating Daniela Hantuchova of Slovakia in the fourth round of the Australian Open in Melbourne on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP