

Brothers go down in Manama

SPORTS REPORTER

Premier League and Federation Cup champions Brothers Union began their AFC Cup 2006 campaign on a bitter note on Tuesday when they conceded a 2-0 defeat to Bahraini champions Al Muharraq in Manama.

Brazilian Leandson Da Silva and Bashar Bani Yaseen scored in either half as Muharraq coasted to an easy win in the Group A encounter at the Bahrain National Stadium.

Muharraq lost no time in imposing themselves on their rivals but could not open their account till first half stoppage time. Mahmoud Abdulrahman's corner was met at the far post by Abdulla Al Dakeel who threaded it back to Brazilian striker Da Silva for a fierce shot into the roof of the net.

Five minutes into the restart, Abdulrahman's pinpoint cross picked out Bani Yaseen in the

SEE PAGE 13 COL 5



PHOTO: AFP
Bangladesh skipper Habibul Bashar looks on as he sweeps for a boundary during the first day of the second Test against Sri Lanka at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra on Wednesday.

All praises for Murali

BISHWAJIT ROY from Bogra



There was hardly any evidence in Bangladesh's batting on the first day of the second and final Test that they have learned the way to tackle Muttiah Murali-daran's spin.

After Habibul Bashar's lady luck with the coin, the home team looked well set for a better batting display but it was once again proved that morning does not always show the day, at least for the Tigers.

From 52 without loss, Bangladesh slumped to 234 all out in the first innings, thanks to Bashar's lone battle during a fine 69 and a face-saving 32 by Mohammad Rafique.

Muralidaran, the 33-year-old great from Sri Lanka for another occasion ripped through the Bangladesh batting to take a giant leap toward the 600-wicket milestone. At the start of the series, Murali-daran was 16 scalps behind 600 and a 9-wicket haul in the Chittagong Test raised hopes to reaching it during the tour. After bagging 5-79 in the first innings in Bogra, he stands just two wickets away.

Although Bangladesh captain Bashar in the past blamed his batsmen for throwing wickets against the leading Sri Lankan bowler, he was not ready this time around to find his boys at any fault.

"Murali bowled extremely well and I must say he was too good today. We don't think our batsmen played bad shots this time," said Bashar, who reiterated his claim that they are not scared of facing the off-spinner.

Javed Omar and Nafees Iqbal not only looked confident but runs also came thick and fast during the opening partnership as Bangladesh reached the fifty mark in 11.1 overs. But the Tigers lost their way once Muralidaran was brought into attack in the 13th over.

"I have told you that we are not scared of Murali and that doesn't mean he would not be successful against us. Even great players struggled against him," he explained when he was asked whether the openers got annoyed when Muralidaran took over.

"There is a more turn in the track

and the surface is dry. So it would not be easy to bat here. I think we would have been in a much better position if we could at least score 300 runs," he added.

Bashar, however, sounded happy the way they finished the day taking two early wickets.

"I don't want to say the match is even after the first day's play because still they have a long batting coming. But definitely, two dismissals gave us some solace," he said adding that their main target is now to wrap up the rival first innings as early as possible.

Identifying a new problem, Bashar said that he was worried the way the batsmen failed to convert good starts into big knocks.

"It is a new problem. This is why

we couldn't make big partnerships to put pressure on the opponents. Actually, we have yet to learn about how to bat session by session. If we want to do something in a Test match, we have to bat till lunch of second day.

"I think I was dismissed at a very bad time because it was just before the tea break. If I stayed into the third session, the story could have been different," said Bashar, who offered a catch at silly mid-off to Upul Tharanga off Muralidaran.

Many believed that the think-tank unnecessarily broke the team combination by including Mushfiqur Rahim, whose weakness

SEE PAGE 13 COL 5



PHOTO: AFP
A UNIQUE HALF-CENTURY: Sri Lanka's master off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran shows the cherry after taking his 50th five-wicket haul on the first day of the 2nd Test at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra on Wednesday.

One-day title beckons Rajshahi

SPORTS REPORTER

Rajshahi will keep the Ispahani Seventh National Cricket League one-day title in their showcase if they beat Sylhet today in the eighth round at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium.

The defending champions, unbeaten in seven matches, are leading the table with 14 points and can even afford a defeat in this round if Dhaka lose at home to Chittagong.

Second-placed Dhaka, who play Chittagong at the Sher-e-Bangla Mirpur Stadium, are trailing Rajshahi by six points.

In the day's other match, bottom-table sides Barisal and Khulna clash at the Barisal Stadium.

Court stays BCCI show cause to Dalmiya

PTI, Kolkata

Former Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Jagmohan Dalmiya today got a reprieve when a city court stayed the show cause notice issued to him by the BCCI for alleged irregularities with regard to the accounts of the 1996 World Cup cricket.

Prabir Kumar Sarkar, sixth judge of the city civil and sessions court, restrained the BCCI from giving effect to their show cause notice dated February 27 till disposal of the injunction application made by Dalmiya challenging the notice.

BCCI secretary Niranjan Shah had issued a three-page show cause to Dalmiya asking him to explain within 15 days why appropriate action should not be taken against him for 'irregularities' pertaining to PILCOM (Pakistan, India, Lanka Committee), which had organised the 1996 World Cup, transactions.

Monty at 'home'

REUTERS, Mohali

England spinner Monty Panesar will receive a warm welcome to his home from home when he plays in the second Test against India.

Panesar, 23, became the first Sikh player to play for England in the drawn first Test and Mohali is in the state of Punjab, birthplace of his parents.

"I don't know how many friends and family will be coming to watch the Test but certainly quite a few," the Northamptonshire bowler said.

"It's very nice to be playing a Test match in the state where my family comes from but my main focus will have to be the cricket and trying to help England.

"This is a place where a lot of Sikh people are from but I still miss home as well."

His grandparents live in the commercial city of Jalandhar, about 90 km from Mohali, and will be in the stands with his father Paramjit and mother Gursharan to watch Panesar play.

Jalandhar is also the hometown of Indian off-spinner Harbhajan Singh.

Panesar made an impressive debut in Nagpur, claiming three wickets and displaying excellent control.

He took the prized scalp of Sachin Tendulkar first up before

SEE PAGE 13 COL 8



AKRAM INSWINGER

wicket which looked odd with two colours and a bit of moisture. Both the Bangladeshi openers batted well and played positive shots to put on a 50-plus partnership until Muttiah Muralidaran came into action and started turning the ball from the wrod go. He also sent both the openers back to the pavilion.

In the end he took five wickets which he has done for the 50th time in Test matches. The bowler who comes close doing that is Sir Richard Hadlee, who did it for 36 times.

After a good start, Bangladeshi batsmen threw the initiative away. In my opinion Bangladesh batsmen were playing on the back foot most of the time and Muralidaran exploited that pretty well. The batsmen should have played more of the front foot and occasionally, they should use their feet if they want to play a world class spinner like him.

Bashar played a captain's knock

with a very positive attitude and played some good strokes. He was unlucky the way he got out. Mohammad Ashraful played some very positive shots and looked good until he was also fooled by a Malinga Bandara wrong-one.

Sri Lankan skipper Mahela Jayawardene rotated and handled his bowlers pretty well and made sure they were not over or under used.

In the end, the day belonged to Sri Lanka but not before Bangladesh opening pair doing the damage to their batting. The young Shahadat Hossain impressed me very much as he used the new ball well, finishing with remarkable figures of one wicket for two runs from five overs. The Bangladesh team really have to apply themselves in all departments to come back in the game.

Dravid seeks 20 wickets Second Test begins today



REUTERS, Mohali

India captain Rahul Dravid has urged his bowlers to adapt quickly if the hosts are to have any chance of beating England in the second Test starting in Mohali on Thursday.

The India attack struggled in the drawn first Test in Nagpur, allowing the injury-depleted tourists to dominate for most of the match.

"We should be able to learn and adapt and be able to take 20 wickets," he told reporters on Wednesday.

"We can't always rely on conditions. We've played on some wickets which have been pretty flat and slow and low, which was also a factor."

India have failed to dismiss the opposition twice in the last four

Tests, including the three-match series in Pakistan they lost 1-0.

Spin duo Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh are also a concern after taking just four wickets in Nagpur, despite the absence of injured England captain Michael Vaughan and opener Marcus Trescothick.

Dravid said India's young seam attack including rookies Rudra Pratap Singh, Shantakumaran Sreesanth and uncapped Munaf Patel should also adapt quickly.

"At the end of the day you got to play in whatever conditions you are given," he said. "No point making excuses."

The 22-year-old Patel could make his India debut on Thursday after capturing 10 wickets to help defeat England in a three-day tour game last month.

He could replace Sreesanth,

who took four first innings wickets on debut in Nagpur before going down with the flu.

Sreesanth bowled in the nets on Wednesday, but Dravid said a decision on his participation would be taken on the morning of the match.

Mohammad Kaif appears set to make way for in-form Yuvraj Singh, back after missing the opening Test due to a hamstring injury.

Kaif struck 91 in Nagpur on a rare Test appearance, but Dravid hinted the experienced Vangipurappu Laxman would still play despite struggling at the crease.

Dravid also believes India should fare better in Mohali because the grassless pitch could afford extra bounce.

"With our spinners and our kind of strokemakers, we enjoy wickets

SEE PAGE 13 COL 5

Warne bares his soul



AFP, Sydney

Test cricket's greatest wicket-taker Shane Warne has admitted his off-field antics with a series of women cost him not only his marriage but also a chance to captain Australia.

In a candid interview with The Bulletin magazine, the spin wizard describes himself variously as "an idiot" and "a dickhead" for his well-publicised extra-marital sexual escapades, but said there were fewer than most people imagined.

"I've had a few one-night or two-night stands or whatever you want to call it...I've never fallen in love with anyone," he said.

"I think everyone out there thinks that there's been hundreds and thousands of women. That is not actually the case.

"Don't get me wrong, I'm not

trying to make excuses -- but it's very hard being on the road. It's very lonely.

"And when you're lonely and you're away for six months, things sometimes just happen and then you regret it afterwards and you think, 'You idiot.'"

Warne said he had paid heavily for his behaviour off the field. "At the end of the day, it's cost me probably a chance to captain Australia... my marriage is breaking down, we're getting a divorce.

"It's cost me all that and it's cost me sponsorship. It's cost me lots of stuff."

But, he said, he tried not to worry too much about it, adding: "A lot of people don't understand. I don't understand. Maybe I need to see people about it. Maybe, I don't know."

Warne continues to live in the same house as his wife Simone -- who is reportedly seeking a multi-million dollar divorce settlement -- and their three children.

He said he and Simone were "still best friends... like brother and sister."

Warne, who will take to the field again in the Test series against South Africa starting in Cape Town

SEE PAGE 13 COL 1



Did U Know?

Six teams Angola, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine will make their debut in the 2006 FIFA World Cup finals in Germany.

What to WATCH

STAR Sports

Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka
2nd Test, Day Two
Live at 9:15 am

DD National

India vs England
Second Test, Day One
Live at 10:30 am

ESPN

Sportscentre
Live at 8:30 pm
New Zealand vs West Indies
1st Test, Day Two
Live at 3:30 am (Friday)



Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka
2nd Test, Day Two
Venue: Shaheed Chandu Stadium, Bogra
7th National Cricket League
One-Day Matches
Chittagong vs Dhaka
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla Nat'l Stadium, Mirpur
Rajshahi vs Sylhet
Venue: Rajshahi Divisional Stadium
Barisal vs Khulna
Venue: Barisal Divisional Stadium



PHOTO: AFP

ONE FOR THE ROAD: Barcelona's talismanic striker Ronaldinho celebrates his brilliant goal against Chelsea during their Champions League clash at the Nou Camp on Tuesday.

Ronaldinho sinks Chelsea



REUTERS, Barcelona

Barcelona can claim two victories over Chelsea after knocking the Londoners out of the Champions League on Tuesday.

Not only did the Catalans give the runaway Premier League leaders a footballing masterclass on the pitch, but Barca coach Frank Rijkaard gave opposite number Jose Mourinho a lesson in sportsmanship off it.

Barca provided an exhibition of skill, discipline and maturity to outclass the Londoners.

"It was a great game and a great victory," said Ronaldinho, scorer of a magnificent solo goal that helped Barca to the 1-1 draw that put them into the quarterfinals 3-2 on aggregate.

"Nothing beats winning a game like this and I'm delighted to have helped the team with my goals."

Barca deprived Chelsea of possession in the first half at the Nou Camp stroking the ball around the midfield and probing for gaps in their iron-clad back four.

Although they enjoyed a handy 2-1 advantage after the first leg, they still showed more ambition

than Chelsea.

Chelsea sat back and waited to pounce, hoping to trap Barcelona in midfield and then hit them on the break or manufacture a goal from a set-piece, but unlike last season Barca refused to take the bait.

Barca proved that they had learnt more from last year's defeat by Chelsea than the Londoners had from their victory.

The Catalans still possess devastating power in attack, but they now have a more steely midfield and defence which showed that it was more than a match for Chelsea's much-vaunted back four.

The game may not have produced the fireworks of the previous encounters, but this tactical slow-burner exploded into life with Ronaldinho's brilliant goal 12 minutes from time.

The World and European player of the year lived up to his billing when he bamboozled his way past two defenders on the edge of the area, shrugged off a heavy challenge from Ricardo Carvalho and fired past Petr Cech.

Frank Lampard's stoppage-time penalty was scant consolation for Chelsea.

Barca won their only European Cup 14 years ago and they still have a long way to go if they are to win it again. Unlike any of their precedes-

sors in the last decade, however, this side has the combination of skill and strength needed to reclaim the crown.

"If we carry on like this we can achieve some big things," said defender Rafael Marquez. "We've got a great chance of winning the Champions League, but we have to take it step by step, game by game. We know it won't be easy to get to the final."

Far from crowing over his side's triumph, Rijkaard showed the sort of grace in victory that has eluded Mourinho.

"I'm not a guy who believes in revenge," said the Dutchman. "It was very important to go through in a wonderful tournament. For me it doesn't matter who we beat, we have to go on. Revenge doesn't come into it."

"I have nothing specifically against Chelsea or their coach. I have great respect for what he is doing and I think he does a great job."

Even when he congratulated Barca on their victory, Mourinho could not resist a dig and made much of the fact that his side played most of the first leg a man down.

"Barca have a great team, but they still haven't been able to beat us in a match of 11 players against 11," he said.