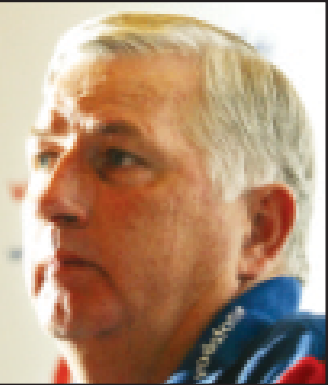




## Did U Know?

Roger Federer's match record of 81-4 in 2005 was the second best winning percentage in the Open Era for a season.



## Duncan Fletcher

(England cricket coach)  
"It's a huge, huge achievement. It's close to that Ashes win."  
After beating India in the third and final Test.



### ESPN

South Africa vs Australia  
2nd Test, Day One  
Live at 2:00 pm  
Sportscentre  
Live at 9:00 pm



7th National Cricket League  
Four-Day Matches (Day One)  
Rajshahi vs Dhaka  
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium  
Sylhet vs Khulna  
Venue: Rajshahi Divisional Stadium  
Barisal vs Chittagong  
Venue: Barisal Divisional Stadium

## Federer, Clijsters light up awards

INTERNET, undated

Kim Clijsters and Roger Federer received player of the year awards at the annual tennis awards banquet on Tuesday.

Clijsters won the 2005 WTA Tour player of the year and comeback player of the year awards. She took home nine championship trophies in 2005, including winning her first career Grand Slam event at the U.S. Open, after battling a wrist injury.

Federer was simply the most dominant player men's tennis has seen in some time. The reigning top-ranked player in the world won 11 tournaments in 2005. He steamrolled through the field on the hardcourts at Flushing Meadows to win the U.S. Open and dominated on the grass of the All-England Club to take home Wimbledon.

American James Blake won the ATP Tour comeback player of the year award. The 26-year-old Blake recovered from a broken neck and a bout with Zoster to win an event in New Haven, Connecticut while making the quarterfinals of the U.S. Open in 2005. Blake moved from No. 210 in the world to No.24 by year's end.

## Gaibandha Cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Brave Heart Sporting Club handed a six wicket defeat to Sapient Sporting Club in the Naheed Cotton First Division Cricket League held at the Gaibandha stadium yesterday.

Brave Heart toppled the meagre total of 78 runs set by Sapient Sporting Club in only 16 overs losing four wickets.

Noyon of Brave Hearts was adjudged the man of the match for picking up five wickets.

# Tigers sweat to see off Kenya

SPORTS REPORTER



As was widely expected, Bangladesh clinched the one-day series against Kenya with one match in hand but their 20-run victory in the third game at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium on Thursday was not a fitting riposte to what has so far been a very comfortable series.

The Tigers had outclassed their East African opponents in their previous two matches but they had to fight hard to manage the series deciding win.

And it was nothing other than the familiar top order hiccup, which forced them to lose their way slightly before capturing the match.

The Bangladesh team also accepted that their flaws, especially during the batting, dampened their series win against the comparatively weaker opponents.

"I agree that our performance was not up to the mark if you consider the performances of previous two matches. Our top order failed to keep up their momentum but I think our main failure was not to bat the

full 50 overs," said vice-captain Khaled Mashud, who attended the post-match briefing in the absence of Habibul Bashar.

Bangladesh were bowled out with 4.1 overs still remaining.

The openers failed to deliver like the previous encounters, when Javed Omar peculiarly shuffled for an on-drive against Thomas Odoyo but only top edged a simple catch to David Obuya at mid-off with the scoreboard reading eight.

Aftab Ahmed (24) initially looked dangerous but him, captain Bashar (0), who came to bat for the first time in the series, and Mohammad Ashraf (3) frustrated their side with soft dismissals which saw Bangladesh reduced to 68 for 4 at one stage.

"I think initially we failed to read the slow and low pitch which caused the damage but Nafees and Rafique repaired the innings nicely and then I had a very good partnership with Kappali. We were in a position to score 270 to 280 but unfortunately we failed to play the full overs which was frustrating," said Mashud, who was associated in an 89-run seventh wicket stand with Kappali.

The dismissal of Shahriar Nafees was particularly frustrating, although he was the top scorer, as he looked well set to carry his bat

through the innings before he mistakenly attempted a rash slog sweep to spoil his initiatives.

"But I must say that through all of these frustrating things we had something to cheer about as we proved that we can win a match from any situation. We are looking to win the last game to complete a white-wash. Actually our heads never fell during the match which is the most positive thing," the former Bangladesh skipper added.

Mashud also heaped praise on his spinners as he thought that they made the difference in the match.

"Our spinners made the difference in the pitch as they have the experience to exploit such kind of surface. Rafique once again came up with the goods to make us successful," he said.

The 35-year-old spinner Mohammad Rafique was also delighted with his first ever five-wicket haul for 47 in his 88th one-day match.

"I was adjudged man of the match in our first one-day victory against Kenya in India for my batting but I must say today's perfor

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2



Mohammad Rafique is all smiles as he holds up a stump as a souvenir after his first ever five-wicket haul in a one-day match against Kenya on Thursday.

# Sunny joins in criticism



AFP, New Delhi

Former Indian captain Sunil Gavaskar joined other leading stars of the game on Thursday in condemning a spineless performance by India's batsmen in the third and final Test against England. The highly-rated line-up folded for just 100 runs in their second innings on Wednesday after they were set a target of 313 allowing England to stroll to their first Test victory in India in 21 years and level the series 1-1.

Gavaskar was critical of the home side's decision to field first on a pitch that was expected to help seamers early on, but felt the Test could still have been saved.

"That India were all out once again in less than 50 overs tells a story of how too much one-day cricket and too much shuffling of the batting order has had an adverse effect on the confidence of the players," Gavaskar wrote in the Hindustan Times. "It may work against a weak Sri Lanka but against quality bowling, it comes a cropper like in Pakistan and Mumbai," wrote the legendary

opener. "It is not just the defeat but the manner of losing without a semblance of a fight that needs examination; accountability and responsibility fixed. Not look for some convenient, low profile scapegoat."

Former England opener Geoffrey Boycott felt the Indian batting was nowhere near what it had been over the past few years. "To me, this batting line-up is not what it was two years ago in Australia, though the names may be the same," Boycott wrote in a column in the same paper.

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# Mubarak powers SL A

SPORTS REPORTER

Jehan Mubarak led from the front as the opening day of the first four-day match belonged to Sri Lanka A yesterday. The visitors reached 304-4 at stumps against Bangladesh A at BKSP.

The hosts did not capitalise on a good start by the bowlers as left-handed Mubarak smashed 140 in his four-hour stay that contained sixteen fours and a six. He shared a 174 runs fourth wicket stand with Warnapura, who is also batting on a hundred himself.

For the hosts, Baisya, Nazmul, Enamul Jr. and Riyadh picked up one wicket each.

**BRIEF SCORES**  
SLA: 304 for 4 in 90 overs (Mubarak 140, Warnapura 100 batting, Wijekoon 29 batting).

# Rajib retains lead

SPORTS REPORTER

International Master Enamul Hossain Rajib retained his solo lead with 11.5 points after the end of the 12th round games of the final phase in the Mercantile Bank 32nd National Chess Championship.

Rajib beat fellow table-topper IM Abdullah Al Rakib while Zia, Reefat, Niaz Murshed, Nasir and Shakil won their respective matches.

# Nat'l Kabaddi

SPORTS REPORTER

The semifinals of the 26th National Kabaddi Competition were held yesterday.

In the first semifinal, Bangladesh Police defeated Khulna district by 53-12 with four lonas. In the day's other semifinal BDR entered the final after beating Tangail by a lopsided scoreline of 77-27 which also included four lonas.

The final between Police and BDR will be held today at 4 pm.

# Afghan catches Gating!

AFP, Mumbai

Fast bowler Hafti Gulabid claimed the prize wicket of Mike Gating as an Afghanist side won their first ever match against the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) here on Thursday.

Gulabid, a 22-year-old from Jalalabad, induced an edge from the former England captain's bat, and his brother Karim Sadiq, took the catch behind the stumps.

"I am so happy, he's a senior player," said the bowler. "I'm 22 -- and he has probably been playing for longer than that."

Gating was philosophical about his dismissal. "I got a decent ball," he said.

The Afghanistan side posted a formidable 356-7 in their 40 overs against a team predominantly made up of minor counties cricketers from England.

Mohammed Nabi top scored

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# Dhaka spoil Rajshahi's party



SPORTS REPORTER

Champions-elect Rajshahi could not finish off their already successful one-day campaign with a win. Rather they were handed a crushing 126-run defeat by Dhaka in the tenth and final round of the Ispahani Seventh National Cricket League yesterday.

In other matches, Sylhet beat Khulna by 53 runs, despite an unbeaten hundred from Khulna's Sazzadul Hasan. Chittagong also rounded off their limited overs campaign with a clinical win over Barisal division by 64 runs.

Rajshahi confirmed their title with two matches in hand and finished with 16 points. Chittagong and Dhaka are equal on 12 points, with the runners-up spot to be decided after calculation of the net run-rate or else a play-off will be held between the teams. Sylhet gathered 10 points to end up on fourth position while Barisal finished fifth with 6 points.

Khulna ended their campaign at the bottom of the table with meager 4 points.

## DHAKA-RAJSHAH

At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, Mehrab Hossain and Sajjad Kadir hit half-centuries after yet another impressive start from Uttam Sarker.

Mehrab hit four 4s and a six in his 65 ball knock of 62 runs while Sajjad Kadir scored 55 runs off 61 balls, as they shared in a 68 runs stand late in the innings, as Dhaka piled on 285 runs.

Mosharrif Hossain took three wickets while Md. Sharif and supersub Ashraf Khan took two each, as Rajshahi lost wickets at regular intervals to be bowled out for 159 runs in the 40<sup>th</sup> over. Only Naeem Islam smashed a rapid 44 runs knock off only 21 balls.

## KHULNA-SYLHET

Three half-centuries on the top of the order was enough to take Sylhet to a mammoth 316 runs at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium.

Imtiaz Hossain smashed 76 runs in only 46 balls as he shared a 119-run opening stand with Golam Rahman, who also scored a rather

patient 77.

Imtiaz's knock included 15 boundaries and two sixes. Golam Mowla also scored 57 runs.

In reply, Khulna managed to score 263 runs, thanks to a superb 106 by Sazzadul Hassan. He remained until the end after coming into bat at number four. He shared a 105-runs fifth wicket stand with Ziaur Rahman, who cracked a quickfire 65. He hit four sixes and five fours in his 57-ball knock. Zakwan Ahmed of Sylhet picked up four wickets after he came on as a supersub.

## BARISAL-CHITTAGONG

Away at the Barisal Divisional Stadium, Chittagong posted 242 for 9 in 50 overs. In reply, the home team were bowled out for 178 runs as Ilias Sunny and Yasin Arafat picked up three wickets each. Sajju Datta also chipped in with two wickets for 24 runs, as the three spinners ran through the Barisal batting order.

Test discard Hannan Sarker

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Bangladesh opener Shahriar Nafees guides one down to third man during his knock of 57 against Kenya on Thursday.

# Shaun boost for SA Second Test from today



AFP, Durban

Shaun Pollock, South Africa's leading wicket-taker, was set to take his place in the South African team for the second Test against Australia at Kingsmead on Friday after bowling without any injury worries in the nets Wednesday. Pollock missed the first Test in Cape Town last week, which Australia won by seven wickets inside three days, with a back strain.

Durban resident Pollock has yet to play in a Test against Australia in his hometown - and has only played in two home Tests over three series against the world champions.

The Kingsmead pitch is expected to offer pace and bounce, with batsmen likely to face a tough challenge on the first two days. In recent years it has become easier for batting the longer a game goes

on, but with overcast and humid weather expected it could offer something to the bowlers throughout. After a batting failure in the first Test, with no home batsman reaching 50, South Africa will be seeking a major improvement to avoid surrendering the series with one match still to play - a fate which has befallen them in the previous two home series against Australia.

Ace Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne said Wednesday that he believed Australia had an edge over South Africa in Test cricket. "I think our seamers exposed a few technical problems in their batting. Their middle order are always getting exposed because they are one or two down early." Warne also criticised South Africa for the late watering of the Newlands pitch for the first Test.

"I've always been brought up to believe that you leave the grounds-men to prepare the best wicket he can, and both sides play under the

same conditions. "If they want to wet the wicket and they don't want to bat last and face me, that's fine. But then they're going to have Brett Lee, Stuart Clark and Michael Kasprovic to deal with." South African vice-captain Jacques Kallis said he expected a normal Kingsmead pitch. "It's a wicket that goes around a bit and then becomes a good batting wicket," said Kallis, who discounted Warne's comments about South Africa's frailty.

"He's there for entertainment. He always comes up with statements, and the guys don't take too much notice of what he says. He creates a laugh or two in the change-room, but we don't worry about what he says."

South Africa are likely to field an all-seam bowling attack, with all-rounder Andrew Hall keeping his place at the expense of left-arm spinner Nicky Boje. Australia are

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# FICA warns of burnout



CRICINFO, undated

The Federation of International Cricketers Association (FICA) has expressed surprise and disappointment with the ICC executive's decision to endorse the Future Tours Programme.

Tim May, FICA's chief executive, told reporters that the move "not only conflicts with volume and scheduling restraints that the ICC adopted as principles in the construction of the new six-year cycle, but appears to fly in the face of concerns expressed previously by the ICC's president and CEO."

He warned of the increasing dangers of player burnout. May's unease stems from the volume of

cricket being played, and there are so many series that there are often no periods between them to allow players to rest. Recently, Sri Lanka returned home from a punishing VB Series in Australia and flew straight to Bangladesh for another series there. Next month, Australia finish their Test and ODI campaign in Australia and within three days of the end of the Johannesburg Test they are due to play an ODI in Bangladesh.

In 2004, Malcolm Speed, the ICC's chief executive, warned that "we have come very close to saturation point in terms of the volume of cricket, not only in a commercial sense, but also in respect of the demands it is placing on international cricketers." Ehsan Mani, the ICC president, also stated when he took office that there were issues

regarding the amount of cricket being played.

May said that although the ICC had introduced principles around which the FTP would be built, "these have been largely ignored in the final program."

He continued: "Instead of easing player workloads, the ICC program commits more matches to be played at the Champions Trophy, more Full Member matches against Associate Countries, a further international [Twenty20] competition, regular Twenty20 matches on a bilateral basis and allows countries to fill in any other downtime that players may enjoy with series loosely tagged as 'icon series'."

It is likely that FICA will now consult its members before deciding on its next course of action.



A section of the Fatullah crowd dressed up in colourful masks add a festive touch to the atmosphere during the first international match at the venue on Thursday.

PHOTO: STAR