



Did U Know?

Eight countries will play their debut FIFA World Cup in 2006 -- Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Czech Republic, Serbia & Montenegro and Ukraine. The last three are appearing under their new flag.

What to WATCH

ESPN

South Africa v New Zealand
2nd Test, Day Three

Live at 2:00 pm

English Premier Football League
Charlton Athletic v Blackburn Rovers

Live at 10:10 pm

STAR Sports

English Premier Football League
Chelsea v Man United

Live at 5:25 pm

Liverpool v Aston Villa

Live at 7:55 pm

TEN Sports

West Indies v Zimbabwe
First ODI

Live at 7:30 pm



TALK TURKEY



Imran Khan

(Pakistan cricket legend)
"Mohammad) Asif is an asset, not only for Pakistan but for world cricket and I see a great future ahead of him if he maintains discipline and the will to learn more and more."

ICC, BCCI sing same tune

PTI, New Delhi

Softening their stand, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said it was not averse to the concept of either the Champions Trophy or the 20-20 format of the game and was willing to toe the ICC's line provided there was a consensus among all other member boards.

"We met and discussed about it. Although we are not favourable (to 20/20), ultimately if a decision is taken unanimously in ICC, we will respect it," BCCI president Sharad Pawar said at a press conference on Friday.

Asked about India's reluctance to take part in future Champions Trophy which it said was becoming a long-drawn affair, Pawar said, "the report is not authentic."

Pressed further, citing BCCI Vice-President Lalit Modi's remark that India could make more money by playing in a bilateral series than in the Champions Trophy, Pawar said "it is his personal view. It is not the view of BCCI."

Pawar also denied that there would be additional burden on BCCI in hosting the championship, which would run over 30 days.

"The ICC finalised the schedule after consultations with us. We had full knowledge of the schedule and we totally agree to it."

Aussies beef up for Ashes

AFP, Sydney

Cricket Australia on Friday opened a state-of-the-art facility that its Test team will use as a base while fine-tuning plans to regain the Ashes from England.

The new Centre of Excellence in Brisbane includes a video analysis room, a top-class gymnasium and integrated sports science facilities.

Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland said the host nation would use the facilities to

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PHOTO: STAR

PERFECT START: Australia debutant Mark Cosgrove slams a cover drive on his way to scoring a sparkling 74 in the third and final ODI against Bangladesh at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium on Friday.

Tigers' nightmarish end

Gilchrist finds improvement

SPORTS REPORTER



The stage was all set for Bangladesh to finish their final match of the home season on a high note against the mighty Australians at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday. The Tigers impressed one and all with their brilliant showing during the first Test at the same venue. The match on Friday was a major opportunity for them to repeat Test match performance and prove a point.

Bangladesh brought back Mohammad Ashraf and Aftab Ahmed, skipper Habibur Bashar won the toss and Australia fielded a much weaker side, presumably to give their youngsters a go at international level. But the Tigers capitulated quite easily in front of a 15,000 strong holiday crowd. The loss by nine wickets was a fair reflection of the day's performance.

The vibe was indifferent from the beginning, as Bashar and coach Dav Whatmore vented their disappointments.

"We didn't expect to end the series like this at all," said a visibly dejected Bashar.

"I am not sure why it happened as we were playing in our own conditions. We won the toss, but we couldn't make use of it."

Whatmore explained why a good start is so important. "We seem to be losing more wickets in the first few overs. If we start off well in batting or bowling, it gives us a good base to have a good game. If we bowl badly in the first few overs, it puts a lot of pressure on the spinners."

But some solace for the two came from the opposition, in the form of Australian captain for the day Adam Gilchrist.

"From what I have seen, Bangladesh have certainly played in their home conditions better."

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Bowler	O	M	R	W
Johnson	8	1	24	2
Dorey	4	1	12	1
Hopes	5	3	8	1
Hussey	5	1	13	0
Cullen	7.3	1	25	2
Cosgrove	4	0	12	0
Clarke	3	0	13	1
Hogg	6	0	17	3

AUSTRALIA				
Cosgrove b Razzak	74			
Katich not out	42			
Hogg not out	7			
Extras: (w-4, nb-3)	4			
Total: (For one wktn in 22.4 overs) 127				
Fall of wicket: 1-123.				

SCOREBOARD				
Nafees lbw b Johnson	0			
Saleh b Clarke	37			
Aftab c Gilchrist b Dorey	1			
Ashrafu c Cullen b Hopes	13			
Bashar st Gilchrist b Hogg	33			
Kapali c Katich b Hogg	5			
Mashud st Gilchrist b Cullen	11			

Sublime Flemo punishes SA



AFP, Cape Town

Stephen Fleming hit the first double century by a New Zealander against South Africa as the tourists built a big first innings total on the second day of the second Test at Newlands on Friday.

New Zealand were 427 for seven at tea, with the New Zealand captain on 207 not out.

Fleming and fellow left-hander James Franklin (46 not out) put on a record unbeaten 148 for the eighth wicket to take the advantage away from South Africa.

Both benefitted from dropped catches. Fleming gave a straightforward chance to first slip off Dale Steyn five balls after lunch when he was on 136, while Franklin was put down by Jacques Kallis, diving far to his left at second slip, off Makhaya Ntini when he 28.

Two runs later Franklin survived a concerted appeal for a catch behind off Ntini. In the next over he was struck on the helmet by a bouncer from Ntini and fell to the ground before resuming after treatment.

Apart from the dropped catch, it was a masterly performance by Fleming. He acknowledged after reaching his century on the first day that he did not have a good record of converting fifties into hundreds, but he has now turned three out of nine centuries into doubles.

Fleming went past the previous highest score by a New Zealander against South Africa, 170 by Scott Styris in Auckland in 2003/04, and went on to notch the highest score by a visiting player in 40 Tests at Newlands, beating the 189 by Jim Burke for Australia in 1957/58.

Fleming reached his double century off 331 balls with 28 fours, with his second hundred made off

141 deliveries. Franklin, who has made a first-class double century, confirmed his reputation as a capable batsman as he and Fleming humbled the South African bowlers on an easy-paced pitch. It

was the best eighth wicket stand in Tests between the two countries.

The only wicket to fall was that of Daniel Vettori, in the third over of

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PHOTO: AP

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming plays a lofty stroke behind square during his brilliant double-hundred on the second day of the second Test against South Africa at Newlands on Friday.

NATIONAL SCHOOL SOCCER

Three more in second round

SPORTS REPORTER

Kakordia Terodal School, Motherganj MB High School and Mominpur High School reached the second round of the banglalink tiger trophy National School Championship winning their zonal finals on yesterday.

Manzur and Zakir scored one each in Kakordia's 2-0 win over Al Emdad High School at the Osmani Stadium in Sylhet while two-goal Mim inspired Motherganj blank Kashtra High School 3-0 at the Thakurgaon Stadium.

At Meherpur, goals by Ripon and Liton helped Mominpur beat Hashimpur High School 2-0.

In the day's other matches, Hironpur High School drew 2-2 with Motijheel Boys High School at the Mymensingh Stadium while Achmita George Institute defeated Gourodhar BL High School 2-0 at the same venue.

At Patuakhali, Kashipur High School beat Tajmuddin Chandpur Senior Madrassah 2-0 and Kuthalia Pilot High School edged Barguna Collegiate High School 2-1.

NAT'L ATHLETICS

Beauty sets new 200m record

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Nazmun Nahar Beauty of BJMC set a new national record in women's 200m sprint on the opening day of the 31st National Athletics Championship at the Army Stadium in Banani yesterday.

Beauty clocked 24.50 seconds to touch the line, surpassing the previous national record of 24.65s.

The athletes from BJMC ruled the first day of the meet bagging six gold, six silver and three bronze medals.

Bangladesh Army followed them with four gold, one silver and one bronze.

Chief of Army Staff and Bangladesh Olympic Association president Lt Gen Moen U Ahmed declared the two-day meet open as the chief guest. Bangladesh Athletics Federation president Abdus Salam, general secretary Ali Imam Tapan were present.

Following are the gold medalists of 11 events on the first day:

Long jump (men's): Al Amin (BJMC); hammer throw (men's): Afsar Ali (Army); shot put (women's): Hazera Akter Dolly (BJMC); high jump (women's): Sathi Parveen (BJMC); 100m hurdles (women's): Sumita Rani Das (BJMC); 200m sprint (men's): Nazmun Nahar Beauty (BJMC); 200m sprint (men's): Masudul Karim (Army); 800m (women's): Rawshan Ara (BJMC); 800m (men's): Selim Mia (Army); 5000m (men's): Rafique Islam (Army); Javelin throw (women's): Hazera Akter Dolly (BJMC).

Vaughan to play ODIs

BBC ONLINE, Undated

Michael Vaughan dismissed suggestions that he could decide to stop play limited overs internationals in order to prolong his Test career.

"I've never made that comment. I enjoy cricket and when I get back playing, I'll be making myself available for both forms of the game," he said.

Vaughan believes he is still "a few weeks away" from a return to Test cricket following knee surgery.

The selectors will name a squad on 7 May for the first Test against Sri Lanka at Lord's, starting on May 11. But that match may come too soon for Vaughan, who had to return home early from England's recent tour to India.

"I'm just trying to tick all the right boxes during my rehab. I'll play when the knee's ready, not when the schedule suggests," he commented.

England have a busy summer ahead with three Tests against Sri Lanka and four later in the summer against Pakistan, as well as 10 one-day internationals and two Twenty20 games against the tourists.

After that, they travel to India for the ICC Champions Trophy before beginning a winter which encompasses an Ashes series in Australia and the World Cup in the West Indies.

Vaughan added his voice to those expressing concern about player burn-out because of the hectic international schedule.

"We are paid a decent amount of money to play for our country. But when you see teams resting players because of the burnout, it does suggest there's probably a little bit too much cricket played," said Vaughan.



Australia's tour to Bangladesh ended with the worst display of batting by the home team getting dismissed for a mere 124 runs inside 43 overs. It was a good toss to win by captain Habibur Bashar who elected to bat first on a good batting track, in fact this was the best wicket so far as the ball was

AKRAM INSWINGER

coming to the bat nicely. Shahriar Nafees was unlucky to be given out lbw to Johnson as he had clearly edged the ball. He is a talented player, has lot of strokes but he has to learn to play defensive and straight to see the new ball off.

Most of the batsmen played poor shots and got themselves out against a weak Australian attack. Rajin Saleh played a very slow innings getting bogged down most of the times as he was never looking for singles. Rotating the strike is the key to build innings and the batsmen should know how to work out singles by pushing in the gap. Mohammad Ashrafu looked completely out of form and obviously being dropped in the previous game, he was under lot of pressure to perform and failed once again. It is the responsibility of the skipper to motivate and build confidence in a player, especially when they are down and lack confidence. Bashar must have been happy to be the highest run getter in the ODI series but I don't understand why he bats at number 5 in ODIs and at number three in Test matches? He seems to be the only

consistent batsmen for Bangladesh, so he should lead from the front and bat at number three all the time.

The Australians bowled well, especially Brad Hogg, who used his wrong ones very effectively which the Bangladeshi batsmen had no clue, ending the ODI series with highest wickets.

Chasing only 125 runs was no pressure on Australia, whose batting was dominated by Cosgrove, who scored a classy 74 in 69 balls on his debut to win the man of the match award. He is a very talented player with a bright future. The way he batted using his wrist and good footwork will surely get him a lot of runs.

The series was a complete whitewash, rather disappointing from Bangladesh point of view, especially when they had a good start of the Test series dominating the first two days. With the progress of series the team performance went down as they could not handle the pressure. I hope Bangladesh team take lesson from this series and be ready for the next series and hopefully perform well.

WI, Zim out to impress



AFP, St. John's

West Indies and Zimbabwe enter their seven-match limited-overs international series that begins on Saturday and Sunday at the Antigua Recreation Ground with plenty to prove to themselves and the rest of the world.

West Indies are eighth on the official ICC limited-overs international rankings and will be looking to transform their fortunes in the shortened version of the game in which they have won three of their last 18 matches since winning the ICC Champions Trophy in Britain two years ago.

For Zimbabwe, ranked at ninth on the ICC list, they are looking to come

out of the shadow of the players' crisis that has enveloped the game over the last few months and left their side bereft of quality and experience.

The hosts' captain Brian Lara recognises that the Champions Trophy win has now faded into memory.

"I think we have to accept our position in international cricket - that we are two or three from the bottom in Tests and limited-overs internationals - and I think we have to build a team accordingly that will allow us to climb back to the top of world cricket," he said.

Lara has called for the selection committee of the West Indies to widen the talent pool and use the Zimbabwe series to find the right combination of players, particularly ahead of the 2007 ICC World Cup in the West Indies.

"Let's test the waters with other players and see what they can do, so that for the World Cup we know we have the best possible squad," he said.

The political situation in Zimbabwe forced the cream of their crop to migrate hither, thither and yonder, then differences between the management of Zimbabwe Cricket and the players saw the departure of the remaining experienced players including former captain Tendata Taibu.

"We have a very young side - the average age is just over 20 - because many of our players have given up over the last year, but the side we have has been hard at work over the last few weeks and they are learning very quickly," manager Andy

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PHOTO: AFP

A worker hangs a banner bearing the FIFA 2006 World Cup logo near Berlin's Victory Column (background) on Friday. Berlin will host six matches including the final.



BITS AND BOBS

Xavi returns to squad

REUTERS, Madrid

Spain midfielder Xavi returned to the Barcelona squad on Friday five months after suffering a serious knee injury.

It is a major boost to his chances of making Luis Aragones's Spain squad for the World Cup finals in Germany.

He tore the cruciate ligament in his right knee during training at the beginning of December.

Barcelona can retain their Primera Liga title this weekend if they beat struggling Cadiz in the Nou Camp on Saturday and second-placed Valencia fail to beat another relegation-threatened side Alaves at home on Sunday.

Cisse still hopeful

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool striker Djibril Cisse is hoping his late season goalscoring form will catch the eye of France coach Raymond Domenech and earn him a World Cup call-up.

The 24-year-old has come under much criticism this season despite his two goals against West Ham on Wednesday, in an FA Cup final dress rehearsal, taking his tally to 17 for the campaign.

Now he is looking towards a potential double celebration as the

season draws to a close with an FA Cup victory and World Cup place at stake.

Cisse is hoping good performances in Liverpool's last two matches of the season, starting this weekend against Aston Villa, will propel him into the first team at the Millennium Stadium for the FA Cup final and earn him a plane ticket to Germany.

Liverpool are the firm team in the Premiership have racked up nine straight victories in all competitions including the last two in the space of four days.

"It is always good when you play two games in such a short space of time and you can come away with a victory. I think it is a good advantage for us," said Cisse.

"It is nice for me to get these goals with the FA Cup final just a couple of weeks away."

"I really enjoyed being back in the team and I am determined to do my best when I have the chance to play. I am delighted that I managed to score two goals."

Messi on track

AFP, Buenos Aires

Barcelona starlet Lionel Messi is making good progress from a leg injury and could be close to making his return to action, according to Argentina team doctor Donato Villani.

The 18-year-old has been out for a month with a pulled muscle in his

cafe, sustained against Chelsea on March 7 in the Champions League, after he tried to return too quickly from a previous injury.

"The injury has healed very well but we cannot yet put a date on his return to action because that would put too much psychological pressure on him," said Villani.

Messi and his Argentina teammates face a tough group in the World Cup which starts on June 9, faced with the Netherlands, Ivory Coast and Serbia-Montenegro.

Germany 'well prepared'

AFP, LUXEMBOURG

Germany was praised by European justice commissioner Franco Frattini Thursday for its attempts to combat forced prostitution at the World Cup from June 9 to July 9.

"I believe that Germany is well prepared against this threat," said Frattini in Luxembourg at a meeting for EU interior ministers.

"After the World Cup, Germany will share their experience with us and that will act as a base for future events."

According to some non-governmental organisations and women's groups, thousands of

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