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DAYS TO GO

'You can't create goalscorers'
"You can't simply create players whose job it is to score goals. It's an instinct you're born with. You need to have the mental composure to look at the goalkeeper before you shoot."
-- Zico, Japan coach
REUTERS, Tokyo



Did U Know?

Defender Luis Monti became the first player to take part in two World Cups for two different teams. In 1930 he was on the losing side with Argentina (who were beaten by Uruguay in the final) but went one better four years later (1934) when he won the title playing for Italy.



Yuvraj Singh
(Indian star batsman)
"Being in the Test side has helped me most. A lot of players play one-day cricket. But actual cricket is Test cricket. When you go out and perform in Test cricket, you feel confident that you belong at this level."

What to WATCH
ESPN
England v Sri Lanka
1st Test, Day Five
Live at 3:30 pm

DAY'S EVENT
Asian Games Hockey Qualifier
Hong Kong v Singapore (2:00 pm)
Oman v Chinese Taipei (4:00 pm)
Venue: Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium

Sports awards handed over

UNB, Dhaka
Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on Sunday directed the authorities to be more careful in selecting delegations for participation in international sporting events abroad so that any embarrassing situation for the country could be prevented.
"The practice of taking unnecessary people in a group on foreign trip in the name of participating in international events, wasting hard-earned foreign currency, will have to be discouraged," Khaleda Zia said while giving away the National Sports Award 2005 at the International Conference Centre of the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.
The head of government also deplored the vanishing act of some members of Bangladesh team at the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, terming it as an 'embarrassing situation' for the country.
In Melbourne one athlete defected from camp while another, a shooter, was accused and found guilty of sexually harassing a volunteer at the Games Village.
The PM however expressed her happiness over the good news that Bangladesh is going to be the co-host of 2011 Cricket World Cup and wished overall success of the event.
Eleven sportsmen and women and persons were adjudged for the National Sports Award 2005, the

Bangladesh almost there

Hockey
SPORTS REPORTER

Mamunur Rahman Chayan slammed the first hattrick as Bangladesh continued their winning run in the Jamuna Bank Asian Games qualifying round with a 5-3 victory over Iran at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

The third consecutive win almost confirmed their qualification to the 15th Asian Games to be held in Doha in November this year. Four top teams from this competition will make their entry into the final round. Bangladesh now head the seven-team table with nine points as they earlier defeated Chinese Taipei 3-2 and blanked Sri Lanka 3-0.

Favourites Bangladesh kept pointless Iran under pressure from the very beginning of the match and deservingly took an unassailable 4-0 lead. But the home side paid the price of resigning to a casual approach, conceding three goals in a row.

The hosts led the first half 1-0 through a 26th minute strike by Jahid Bin Talib who broke the packed Iranian defence with fierce hit from a penalty corner.

After the breather, man of the match Chayan converted three penalty corners in the 40th, 43rd and 52nd minutes respectively to complete his treble and in all occasions Jahid and Shahidullah set the ball for him.

But all went wrong for the hosts
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PHOTO: STAR
Bangladesh players Jahid Bin Talib (L) and Asaduzzaman celebrate after the former scored a goal during their 5-3 win over Iran in the Asian Games Qualifying Round match at the Maulana Bhasani Stadium yesterday.

Ashrafu's poor batting on

Football
SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Ashrafu's batting woes continued as he scored just 25 for his English club side Rainhill Cricket Club in the Merseyside and Southport Cricket Alliance First Division at the Worsley Club ground on Saturday, according to the club's website.

The right-hand batsman from Dhaka took 31 balls to score his runs before being trapped lbw against Worsley Cricket Club, who were bowled out for just 130 runs.

But his innocuous leg-spin was very effective as he took five wickets for 35 runs to help his side win by 42 runs.

Ashrafu, who moved to England earlier this month, scored only 18 in his first match against Norley.

ICC okays WI & India deal

CRICINFO, undated

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has given its blessing to the new profit-sharing agreement, which will see the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) exploiting the lucrative American market.

The WICB and the BCCI have agreed to play between three and five one-dayers in the United States and Canada in August and September.

"This will give the West Indies a chance to exploit a huge fan base
SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

The science of penalties

Football
AFP, Paris

Way back in September 1891, when Wolverhampton Wanderers' John Heath, in a match against Accrington Stanley, stepped up to take the world's first penalty, the spotkick was a simple case of hoofing the ball into the back of the net.

The penalty had been introduced a few months earlier to thwart the use of fouls to prevent goals. But the sponsors of this change hardly suspected that penalty-taking would one day become so important it would be elevated almost to the status of science.

So many big matches these days are decided on the 12-yard (10.97-metre) place kick that sports physicists, psychologists and biomechanicians are often recruited to try to give an edge to striker and keeper.

Statistically, penalty-taking is loaded heavily in favour of the kicker. In World Cup finals dating back to 1982, the penalty success rate ranges from 73 percent in 1990 to 80 percent in 1998, the year after FIFA changed the law to let keepers to move along their line.

But these figures only tell part of the story.

Penalties are no-lose situations for the keeper, because almost all of the pressure is on the striker -- as Roberto Baggio, who catastrophically blew it for Italy in the 1994 final against Brazil, could tell you.

Psychologists can enhance this advantage in a number of ways. One of them is in training keep-

ers in body language. Keepers who are alert to the kicker's eyes, body posture and angle of his feet in the runup can gain as much as half a second in which to move in the right direction.

Scientists at John Moores University in Liverpool showed goalkeepers life-sized video footage of penalties being taken, filmed from the viewpoint of a keeper standing in the centre of the goal.

The film was stopped four times during the sequence -- 120 milliseconds before the kick; 40 milliseconds before; at the point of impact; and 40 milliseconds after -- and the goalkeepers were asked at each stage to predict where the ball was being placed.

The researchers found that biggest clue was the position of the striker's hips just before the strike.

"If the taker's hips are square-on to the goalkeeper in a right-footed kicker, the penalty goes to the right-hand side of the keeper," says the university's Mark Williams.

"If his hips are more 'open', or angled away from the goalkeeper, the kick tends to go to the left of the keeper."

University of Greenwich researcher Al-Amin Kassam says keepers can also further improve their chances by playing mind games.

"This can be done by a goalkeeper employing time-wasting tactics, making himself look as large as possible and moving around sideways on his line in order to confuse the striker as to where he is going to dive."

But science can also help the penalty-taker, too.

A study in biomechanics carried out at the University of Bath in 2004

determined the maximum reach of a goalie's dive, regardless of his size.

It showed that, if the goalie stays on his line in accordance with the rules, 28 percent of the goal is an "unsavable zone" that guarantees a score provided the ball is kicked accurately and with reasonable force.

Even if you can't kick accurately, blasting is still a good option.

"Hit your penalties as hard as possible," advises Kassam. "Research indicates that a penalty struck at more than 20 metres per second (73 kilometers, 46 miles per hour) stands a greater chance of hitting the back of the net than a slower one, as a goalkeeper has less time to analyse visual clues and react."

Simple psychological tactics can also improve the success rate of a team in the all-important penalty shootouts.

A 2000 study found that if the weakest players take their penalties earliest in the sequence, with the strongest last, there is a big improvement in the team's chances. It also recommended that coaches bring on key substitutes with penalty-taking skills when matches are deadlocked close to the end of extra time.

That said, there is no substitute for practice.

In the days before computers and penalty specialists, the Hungarian great Ferenc Puskas used the simplest of techniques to ensure that he would slot home a penalty.

He would hang a disc 80 centimetres (one yard) below the crossbar and aim at it, again, again and again, until he got it right.

Barthez No 1, Giuly out
France announce squad

AFP, Paris

Fabien Barthez has won the battle to be France's first choice goalkeeper at next month's World Cup finals.

The Marseille player had been in fierce contention with Lyon's Gregory Coupet for the position, but after long reflection coach Raymond Domenech opted for the 77-times capped Barthez, a veteran of the 1998 World Cup winning side.

In announcing his 23-strong squad on Sunday, Domenech mainly went for experience with the only mild surprises being the inclu-

sion of two uncapped players -- Wigan defender Pascal Chimbonda and Marseille midfielder Franck Ribery.

The Guadeloupe-born Chimbonda was struggling last season in the French league at Bastia where he was the victim of racist taunts from fans before signing for promoted Wigan in England.

That move away from France helped revive the 27-year-old's career and his consistent form brought him the Premiership's right-back of the year award.

"This is the reward for all the hard work I have put in," he said. "The coach had always said that the door to the squad was open."
The 23-year-old Ribery has been outstanding at Marseille this season being named the French league's

Young Player of the Year and has been added to an ageing midfield to provide the option of some youth and drive.

"For any professional player the chance to play in a team like France with players like Zinedine Zidane would be a dream come true. I will do all I can to get the team into the final," he said.

As expected there was no place for Barcelona winger Ludovic Giuly, Arsenal's Robert Pires or troublesome striker Nicolas Anelka all of whom failed to convince Domenech that they could be valuable assets in Germany.

But the ever-cautious coach, who took over after France's poor
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PHOTO: AFP
Liverpool's Steven Gerrard holds aloft the FA Cup as Britain's Prince William (C) looks on following their victory over West Ham in the final at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff on Saturday.

Thakurgaon win big

SPORTS REPORTER

Narayanganj won a low-scoring thriller against Manikganj in the Dhaka Bank Under-19 Youth Cricket Championship at the Cridpur Stadium yesterday.

Batting first, Narayanganj were bowled out for just 82 runs with part-time spinner Mithun taking 4-19 for Manikganj.

But Satil did even better for Narayanganj, who pulled off an exciting 7-run victory. His devastating spell of 5-20 shot Manikganj out for 75.

Chaudanga also won a close match against Magura by 11 runs at the Khulna Divisional Stadium. Gaibandha beat Sirajganj by five wickets in yet another low-scoring affair.

Zakir took four wickets as Thakurgaon crushed Dinajpur by 135 runs.

Thakurgaon notched up 216 runs with help from Mortuza's 47. Dinajpur were bowled out for 81 runs.

Cox's Bazar and Narsingdi were the other winners of the day, but the match between Khulna and Sathkira at the Magura stadium was abandoned due to heavy rain.

Liverpool lift FA Cup

Football
REUTERS, Cardiff

Liverpool won one of the most dramatic FA Cup finals in the competition's 134-year history on Saturday with a 3-1 penalty shootout win over West Ham United after a heart-stopping match ended 3-3 after extra time.

Steven Gerrard, with two blistering goals, emerged as one Liverpool hero, while goalkeeper Jose "Pepe" Reina, who was at fault for two of West Ham's goals, was the other after saving three penalties in the shootout.

Liverpool recovered from going 2-0 down inside 28 minutes -- the worst start to a final by any team for 47 years -- and invoked the never-say-die spirit they showed a year ago when they came back from 3-0 down to draw 3-3 with AC Milan and win the European Cup on penalties.

This time they hauled themselves up off the Millennium Stadium floor to break the hearts of the West Ham fans who had been

dreaming of their first FA Cup win since 1980.

West Ham had gone ahead when Jamie Carragher turned a low cross into his own goal after 20 minutes and went 2-0 up eight minutes later when Dean Ashton pounced after Reina spilled a Matthew Etherington shot.

Djibril Cisse pulled one back with a neat volley after 32 minutes and Gerrard, whose pinpoint pass led to that goal, levelled with a thunderous shot in the 54th as both teams poured everything into attack.

Just when it appeared that West Ham had lost their impetus as well as their lead, they suddenly regained it from an unexpected source in the 64th minute.

Fullback Paul Konchesky attempted a long lofted cross from the left but the ball caught out Reina and curved into the top corner.

Liverpool looked down an out until Gerrard, limping through cramp, seized on a headed clearance a minute from time to drive a screaming 30-metre shot beyond Shaka Hislop.

There were few chances in extra

time as injured and exhausted players dropped all over the pitch but Reina needed to produce an acrobatic save to tip a Nigel Reo-Coker flicked header against the post in the 119th minute.

It then became the second successive FA Cup final to be decided on penalties and with a record of eight wins from nine previous shootouts, Liverpool were favourites.

Dietmar Hamann gave Liverpool the early advantage with the first penalty before Bobby Zamora saw his kick brilliantly saved at full length by Reina.

Sami Hyypia then saw Shaka Hislop save his weak effort before Teddy Sheringham made it 1-1 from the spot. The 40-year-old became the third oldest man to play in the final when he came on as an 85th minute substitute. He is also now technically the oldest player to have scored in a Cup final, though shoot out goals are not included in the record books.

Likewise Gerrard scored his third 'goal' of the afternoon to put

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Now Sabina Park's turn

CRICINFO, undated

The history of Sabina Park might be littered with instances of great West Indian fast bowlers hammering hapless opposition, but when India play their opening two one-dayers next week, the only hammering might be from the Northern Stand.

In scenes that are likely to be reminiscent of the Boxing Day Test of 2003, when Melbourne geared up for the Commonwealth Games, or even the Feroz Shah Kotla in 2004, when the ground was being renovated, fans at one end will be complemented by rubble at the other.

Only 9500 spectators will be
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Van Basten opts for youth

AFP, The Netherlands

Dutch coach Marco van Basten plumped for a youthful look when he announced his final squad for the June 9-July 9 World Cup in Germany on Sunday.

As expected, veterans Edgar Davids, Clarence Seedorf and Roy Makaay, who had already been left out of a provisional squad of 28 a

week ago, failed to make it into the final 23-man party.

But there was also disappointment for Middlesbrough midfielder George Boateng, Feyenoord striker Romeo Castelan, Hamburg midfielder Nigel de Jong, Ajax forward Klaas-Jan Huntelaar and AZ Alkmaar defender Barry Opdam who were all cut from the 28.

Despite the exodus of top Dutch stars to the big European leagues of England, Spain and Italy, van Basten selected 14 Dutch-based players with Ajax and Alkmaar
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PHOTO: PID
Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia sits amongst the National Sports Award winners for 2005 during a ceremony at the International Conference Centre of the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.