

Tushar leads BD A from front

SPORTS REPORTER

An unbeaten 96 by captain Tushar Imran guided Bangladesh A to a four-wicket victory over Zimbabwe A in the second one-day at the Queen's Sports Club ground in Bulawayo yesterday.

The second string Bangladesh side took a 2-0 lead in the five-match series after the visitors' 26-run win in the opening game.

Dashing right-hander Tushar paired with young left-hander Mehrab Hossain Jr to associate in a 96-run stand for the fourth wicket as Bangladesh A scored 208 for six in 45.3 overs to overhaul their opponents' 204 in 41.1 overs.

Tushar played 122 balls to remain not out on 96 while Mehrab contributed 38 off 75 balls.

All rounder Forhad Reza was the other notable scorer with a quickfire 29-ball 30.

Earlier left-arm spinner Sakib Al Hasan grabbed four wickets for 30 runs in 9.1 overs to wrap up the Zimbabwe A innings. Tinotenda Mawoyo made a 62-ball 61 and Hamilton Masakadza smashed 60 that came from only 47 balls.

Forhad, Abdur Razzak and Enamul Haque took two wickets each.

India, Windies to meet in Canada

CRICINFO, undated

The proposed series of one-day matches between India and West Indies planned for North America is back on, although all the games are now likely to take place in Canada and not in the USA as originally intended.

It is reported from Canada that a deal was done between the Indian board (BCCI) and the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) when their respective chairmen met during the ICC executive meeting at Lord's this week.

The series, which is likely to be played in Toronto in September, had been reportedly scrapped and the boards were said to be looking at alternative venues in the Far East. The sticking point was that the grounds in the USA had not received ICC clearance, but there are no such issues in Toronto, which has already hosted one-day games.

There are other issues, which could prove a stumbling block, not least that, the West Indies players are said not to have been consulted about their participation in the series, which they need to be as it falls outside the ICC's Future Tours Programme. The WICB, which is heavily in debt, will have to make separate financial arrangements with them.



Did U Know?

Mario Zagallo coached Brazil to the 1970 World Cup, becoming the first man to both play in a Cup winning side and also coach the tournament winners.



TALK TURKEY



Juergen Klinsmann (Germany football coach) "Our objective was to make it to the final but we narrowly missed it. However the team can still be proud of their achievements."

What to WATCH

STAR Sports Wimbledon Championships Men's Singles/Women's Doubles Final Live at 6:30 pm



French tennis player Amelie Mauresmo clenches her fist as she scores a point against Belgium's Justine Henin-Hardenne in the women's singles final of Wimbledon on Saturday.

Mauresmo starts French party



AFP, London

Amelie Mauresmo became the first Frenchwoman in 81 years to win the Wimbledon singles title when she conquered a severe bout of stagefright to beat Belgium's Justine Henin-Hardenne 2-6, 6-3, 6-4 on Saturday.

The 27-year-old's victory was also her second career Grand Slam victory and was the first step towards what could be a memorable weekend for French sport with France facing Italy in the World Cup final in Berlin on Sunday.

Mauresmo was blown off Centre Court in the first set before she recovered to claim a victory which will be more satisfying after her Australian Open win in January was tainted by Henin-Hardenne's decision to pull out injured in the second set of that final.

It also broke France's long, long wait for a women's champion here

after Suzanne Lenglen won the last of her six titles in 1925.

Defeat meant that Henin-Hardenne failed, for now, to become only the 10th woman in history to win all four Grand Slam titles.

Mauresmo endured the worst possible start. After winning the toss and electing to serve, the 27-year-old was broken by a fired-up Henin-Hardenne.

The Frenchwoman squandered a chance to break back in the sixth game and Henin-Hardenne then made her pay with two stunning backhands which gave her a second break of the opening set and a 5-2 lead.

Henin-Hardenne quickly went to three set points and took the opener 6-2 with a thunderous ace after just 31 minutes of one-sided action.

However, the Belgian went dramatically off the boil at the start of the second set and dropped serve in the second game to slip 0-2 down which soon became 0-3 as the Frenchwoman started to find her range with her serve-and-volley game.

Mauresmo wasted two more chances to break again in the fourth and sixth games and Henin-Hardenne took full advantage with a break back to trail 3-4.

Mauresmo, so often let down by a brittle temperament, hit back straightaway to lead 5-3 and held her nerve against three further break points to take the second set 6-3 with a fourth ace to level the final after 80 minutes of action.

The French wine lover was quickly in charge in the decider leaping into a 2-1 lead as Henin-Hardenne saw her own game fall apart.

That became 3-1 thanks to only her second love-service game of the final.

She saved a break point in the fourth game before a sweet volley extended her lead to 4-2.

Mauresmo kept her composure with captain Michael Vaughan (knee), pace bowlers Simon Jones (knee) and James Anderson (back) as well as left-arm spinner Ashley Giles (hip) all unavailable.

Hoggard scare for England

AFP, Canterbury

Matthew Hoggard gave England fresh injury scare just days before the first Test against Pakistan after sustaining a freak hand injury here Sunday.

During the warm-up before play on the third day of the first-class match between England A and Pakistan, Hoggard had his hand trodden on by fellow Yorkshire pace bowler Tim Bresnan.

He had to have two stitches inserted in his right, bowling hand and England selector Geoff Miller later told reporters that Hoggard would not be able to bowl during Saturday's third day and possibly not on Sunday either.

The first of a four-Test series against Pakistan starts at Lord's on Thursday where England will be without another senior pace bowler in Andrew Flintoff, missing because of an ankle injury, although they hope to have him back in time for the second Test at the all-rounder's Lancashire home ground later this month.

Meanwhile England have several long-term injuries to senior players with captain Michael Vaughan (knee), pace bowlers Simon Jones (knee) and James Anderson (back) as well as left-arm spinner Ashley Giles (hip) all unavailable.

Final could

FROM PAGE 17 final kicks off, organising committee spokesman Gerd Graus said.

The temperature is forecast to be at around 25 degrees Celsius.

"The match will be played tomorrow, we have no qualms about that," Graus told a media briefing on Saturday.

The pitch at the stadium had not been covered, he added.

"There was a lot of rain, but the pitch is in the condition to absorb it.

"There is no reason to cover it. In these kind of temperatures, covering the grass would actually have harmed it."

FIFA spokesman Markus Sieglar said that in the event of a major storm during the match which put the safety of players and spectators at risk, the organisers would decide whether to delay the kickoff until later in the evening, or even until Monday.

"In the worst case scenario it could be delayed until Monday," he said.

The German capital was hit by a major thunderstorm on Friday evening after days of unseasonably hot weather and the heavy rain continued into Saturday morning.

WC BRIEFS

FROM PAGE 20 injured of 26 people hurt when a car burst through security barriers at the Fan Mile. The driver of the car is receiving psychiatric treatment.

No doping Every drugs test has produced a negative result for the third consecutive World Cup, FIFA Chief Medical Officer Jiri Dvorak said on Saturday. Two players have been tested after each match, with urine samples analysed and testing for the endurance-booster EPO also carried out. Dvorak said FIFA no longer tested blood samples because "there is no scientific evidence that blood samples offer any additional information or give any additional proof" than urine testing.

Goleo goes million More than a million dolls or toys featuring Goleo, the shaggy lion mascot of the World Cup, have been sold during the month-long tournament, German toymakers Nici said. The two best-selling versions of the mascot have been a key holder and a stuffed toy measuring about 25 centimetres (10 inches). Nici has suffered severe financial problems since paying 28 million euros (35 million dollars) to win the license to produce Goleo. The increased sales came too late to prevent the company laying off 120 workers in a bid to stay afloat.

Nadal & Federer to fight for supremacy on grass

Dream Wimbledon final today



AFP, London

King of clay Rafael Nadal will attempt to dethrone Roger Federer as the undisputed superman of grass after setting up a dream Wimbledon final against the triple champion on Friday.

Twenty-year-old Nadal beat dashing Cypriot Marcos Baghdatis 6-1, 7-5, 6-3 to become the youngest men's finalist since Boris Becker in 1986.

The win also gives the double French Open champion the opportunity to extend his staggering dominance of Federer, over whom he holds a 6-1-career record including all four meetings this year.

"It's a dream for me to make the final. I feel really emotional right now," said Nadal who also shrugged off his record over the Swiss world number one.

"This is his surface. It will be very tough. I'm surprised to be in the final because this is the most difficult tournament for me each year.

"Roger is the best in history on this surface, so I need to play the best match of my life to win on Sunday."

Triple Wimbledon champion Federer made the final with an easy 6-2, 6-2, 6-0 win against Swedish veteran Jonas Bjorkman and Nadal seemed on course for an equally comfortable afternoon after a one-sided first set.

But Baghdatis, who knocked out 2002 champion Lleyton Hewitt in the quarterfinals, won over Centre Court with his big-hearted resistance, which eventually proved fruitless.

"I had chances in the second and

third sets but it was a good experience for me," said Baghdatis, the Australian Open runner-up.

"I played the semis of another Grand Slam. I feel close to Federer and Nadal. That's the most important thing, now I need more experience."

Nadal, bidding to become the first Spanish Wimbledon men's

the line to take the second set 7-5 after an entertaining 94 minutes on court.

Baghdatis had two more break points in the opening game of the third set.

Again, Nadal was equal to the challenge and he got his reward for his tenacity when he clinched a break to lead 3-1 with a stirring



ROGER FEDERER



RAFAEL NADAL

champion since Manolo Santana in 1966, stormed through the first set with three breaks in just 30 minutes.

Baghdatis recovered his composure in the second and had chances to break in the third and seventh games but the Spaniard, who came into the match not having lost his serve since the second round, held on.

The Cypriot had Nadal on his toes, but he still had to fight off two set points in the 10th game and another in the 12th.

But he could do nothing with the fourth set point when Nadal unleashed a vicious forehand down

mixture of defence and attack on a point that Baghdatis had dominated.

A love service game followed for the Spaniard as the fight drained from the Cypriot wasted five break points in the seventh game which would have put him back in the tie.

Nadal punished his opponent for the last time when he took the match with a smash on his second match point after an enthralling two and a half hours.

Both men walked off to a standing ovation with Nadal sportingly saluting his opponent.

The final hurdle

FROM PAGE 17 Champions League crown he won with Juventus.

While a fairytale finish beckons Zidane and France, Italy too are driven by their own sense of destiny, having seen their domestic football buried in an avalanche of corruption scandals in the weeks leading up to the finals.

Lippi's role in forging such a battle-hardened team against such a lurid backdrop will go down as a masterpiece of man-management.

"We have shown that we have got some great footballers and that we are not criminals," said Italy's veteran striker Alessandro Del Piero. "Everything that has happened off the pitch has brought us the closer together."

France may take a slight psychological advantage into the final having beaten the Italians three times in major tournaments since 1986.

Their most recent victory over the Azzurri came in the final of Euro 2000, when Italy were just 17 seconds away from winning before

France equalised and David Trezeguet struck a memorable golden goal winner.

Italy have moved on since then. Only two members of the side beaten in Rotterdam - captain Fabio Cannavaro and Francesco Totti - are expected to start in Sunday's final at the 69,000-seat Olympic Stadium. France on the other hand will take to the field with five of the side that prevailed in Holland.

Italy have seen their back four breached just once in six matches, due in part to the superb form of their captain Cannavaro.

France's defensive effort has been similarly hard-nosed, with only two goals conceded so far. The evergreen Thuram, one of four veterans of France's 1998 triumph, has been outstanding at the heart of the French defence, shielded brilliantly by Claude Makalele and the resurgent Patrick Vieira.

But none has been better than Zidane: the ultimate goodbye awaits.

Hunger

FROM PAGE 17 "I would say France are better than Germany. Germany can be a team that go on to be very successful. They're very young, but they don't yet have the experience that France has," he said.

Tormenting rain in Berlin means that neither Italy or France can train on the Olympic stadium pitch before the final, but Lippi said FIFA had assured him the playing surface would be fine for Sunday's show-piece.

"We've been told that the pitch has been covered and that it will be in excellent condition for the final," he said.

Lippi then dismissed press speculation that he is interested in becoming the coach of English Premiership giants Manchester United.

When asked if he was going to Old Trafford, he replied: "All I'm interested in is winning the World Cup. It's pointless talking about these things."

"There's no truth in this story and you will find out where I am going in the next 15 to 20 days, maybe a month. But I'm certain it won't be Manchester."

Lippi's contract with Italy ends after the World Cup, but the Italian football federation are keen for him to stay on.

Zidane's last

FROM PAGE 17 "He means so much to the French people," Domenech said of his captain in the build-up to the final curtain.

"He gives them something to cheer and he has done that now for 10 years. And we hope there is another day to come on Sunday."

Reefat finally

FROM PAGE 17 Federation official.

"I'm now a relieved man. You all know that I had to wait for long to achieve the feat and thankfully it finally came my way. Now my main target would be to improve my ratings," said delighted Reefat.

Reefat, who bagged his first 10-game GM norm at the New White Plus Grand Master tournament in 2002 and added the second one in 2003 from Leonine Grand Master Chess tournament, took a decade to complete his GM norms since becoming an International Master in 1993.

"Actually we have lack of international tournaments in the country and we have little opportunity to take part competitions in abroad which is the main reason behind the delay. No doubt there were many people behind my success but I specially would like to thank Bangladesh Biman for making my foreign trips possible," said Reefat, who started his career at the age of seven.

"The other reason was my education and then the job. I was always serious with my formal education and now with my job because you know it is very much difficult to play the game as a professional," said Reefat, who is working for an international NGO.

ICC okays early finish to Tests



CRICINFO, undated

The International Cricket Council's (ICC) Chief Executives' Committee has approved the recommendation that a Test match be called off on the final afternoon if there is no chance of a result. The new regulation, which will come into effect immediately, allows the game to be called off once a minimum of 75 overs have been completed in the day's play.

This effectively means that the captains can forego the last hour of play, instead of the 30 minutes the old regulation allowed.

Percy Sonn, the new ICC president, unveiled the second edition of

the Strategic Plan at the annual conference at Lord's. The Plan will run for five years, ending 2010, and will chart the ICC's priorities and areas of functioning.

"It has been put together following an extensive consultation process between an ICC project team, our members and stakeholders", Sonn said. "It is the organisation's roadmap for the next five years - years that should be great for cricket."

The CEC also adopted the ICC Gender Recognition Policy, enabling cricketers who have undergone gender reassignment surgery to play women's cricket at international level provided they meet the required criteria. This policy is being followed by other leading sporting organisations.

Wimbledon throws in the towels

AFP, London

Multi-millionaire tennis players, including world number one Roger Federer, are at the centre of the mystery of the missing Wimbledon towels.

The All England Club, where the Grand Slam tournament takes place, confirmed that half of the 5,000 towels made available to players each year were not returned - at a value of around 60,000 pounds (111,000 dollars).

Triple champion Roger Federer, who has earned 13 million pounds (24 million dollars) in his career admitted that he occasionally takes home the towels, which sell for 24 pounds (44 dollars) in the official shops.

"I do take a few," the Swiss star admitted. Players are allowed two official

KEY BATTLES

FROM PAGE 20 tasks will be to pressurise him into missing his targets.

After a quiet season for Juventus, Vieira is now flourishing and when freed from his usual destructive duties might have Pirlo doing some chasing of his own having twice found the net.

Gianluca Zambrotta v Eric Abidal Zambrotta lines up at right back but has spent so much of this tournament on the attack that he could be called a winger.

Superb stamina allows him to make endless overlapping forays and once in the danger area his delivery is usually good - he set up Luca Toni for Italy's third goal on the attack after opening the scoring himself.

France will hope Florent

Palermo and Udinese and has been willing to leave big name players, such as Del Piero and Filippo Inzaghi, on the bench.

At the World Cup he has rotated his players well, utilising all his outfield players at some stage in the competition and he has altered his tactics to suit the opponents Italy have faced.

His most impressive decision-making came in the semi-final win over Germany when, with the game goalless and in extra time, he made two positive substitutions - taking off midfielders for strikers and gambling with four forwards. Italy struck two late goals to earn a place in Sunday's final.

Lippi's contract with the Football Federation comes to an end after Sunday's game and his future is closely tied to the outcome of the final - as is his reputation.

Will he be remembered as the supreme winner and club and international level or recalled as a man whose teams stumbled in the biggest games of all?

Malouda forces Zambrotta to concentrate on his defensive role but when he does break it will fall to the impressive Eric Abidal to keep him in check.

Franck Ribery v Fabio Grosso Ribery began the tournament having never started a game for France but finishes it as an automatic choice and his side's productive source of attacking ammunition.

He has grabbed his opportunity, playing as an old-fashioned winger, happy with the ball at his feet and prepared to take on his fullback at pace and deliver a series of crosses.

Italy will want to ensure he does not get in behind them and will throw midfielder Simone Perrotta in his path with the long-legged Grosso ready to provide a second barrier.