

Friendly football

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Mackwa Eleven clinched the title of the Journalist Friendly Football Tournament-2006 held yesterday morning at the Chittagong MA Aziz Stadium amid enthusiasm among the members of the media in the port city.

Mackwa Eleven won the final 2-1 in the tiebreaker against Iqbal Khan Eleven after the keenly contested regulation time ended goalless. A total of four teams contested in the day-long festival. The other two teams in the meet were Abu Taher Putu Eleven and Kalu Sing Eleven. The teams were named after four former prominent footballers and sports organisers of Chittagong as a mark of tribute to their memories.

Later, a prize giving ceremony was held at the Chittagong Press Club with its president Abu Sufian attending as chief guest.

Pollock boost for Proteas

CRICINFO, undated

Injury-hit South Africa have been boosted by the news that Shaun Pollock will arrive in Sri Lanka on Thursday following the birth of his second child.

Pollock's wife Trish gave birth to the couple's second daughter, Georgia, in Durban on Friday and is expected to leave hospital later on Monday. Pollock had also missed a Test match when his first daughter Jemma was born during the fourth Test against England in 2003. "There was never a chance that Shaun could have arrived in time for the first Test," said Gordon Templeton, the team's spokesman. "But he will be here for the second game and also the one-day series."

Pollock will reach Colombo on the same day that the first Test begins at the Sinhalese Sports Club. However, he will have enough time to acclimatise to the hot and humid weather before he takes the field in the second Test from August 4.

Pollock needs six more wickets to join the 400 club. He has toured Sri Lanka twice before, in 2000 and 2004, and has taken 21 wickets in five Tests at 21.00 apiece with a best of 4 for 48 at Galle in 2004.

The great Wayne robbery

THE GUARDIAN

Police were Sunday hunting for thieves who broke into the home of Wayne Rooney's parents and stole football memorabilia belonging to their son, the England star.

The burglars struck at the house in West Derby, Liverpool, on Saturday between 5pm and 11.20pm, forcing a rear upstairs window and removing jewellery and mementoes of the Manchester United striker's career, including a World Cup 2006 shirt, Cup Final shirt, England caps, and the BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year 2004 trophy.

Merseyside police warned the public to be alert to such items being offered for sale.

England alter

FROM PAGE 17 the state associations," a CA spokesman said.

"(But) There are no statutes that we are aware of that would prevent it from being possible."

Tiger hails great

FROM PAGE 20 and 2005 but insisted this victory meant more to him considering events surrounding the tournament. "No doubt about it," he said. "Absolutely no doubt about it. "Basically to win your first tournament after my father had passed away, and for it to be a major championship, it makes it that much more special."

Woods opted for a rigid strategy and stuck rigidly to it throughout the four rounds.

He decided not to use his driver, and instead to employ his irons off the tees to limit the chances of playing wayward shots and missing the fairways.

He said his approach was born out of the influence his father had on his game. "He would have been very proud," Woods said. "He was always on my case about thinking my way around the golf course and not letting emotions get the better of you, because it's so very easy to do in this sport. "He would say just use your mind to plot your way around the golf course and, if you had to deviate from the game plan, make sure it is the right decision to do that. "He was very adamant I play like that my entire playing career."



Abby Wambach of the United States jumps over Ireland goalkeeper Sarah Peters as the former attempts to score during the international women's soccer game at the Torero Stadium in San Diego, California on Sunday. USA defeated Ireland 5-0.

USA thump Ireland

Football

AP, San Diego

Cat Whitehill scored two goals and the US Women's national team defeated Ireland 5-0 in an exhibition match Sunday.

The United States has won five consecutive matches against Ireland, scoring five goals each time and allowing a total of one.

USA controlled the match, outshooting Ireland 36-3.

Heather O'Reilly gave the US a 1-0 lead in the 20th minute on a nifty setup by Christie Welsh.

O'Reilly was on her way to making the 2003 Women's World Cup team, but suffered a broken leg while scoring a goal against Ireland.

She was the youngest player on the 2004 Olympic Team at age 22.

"I tried not to think about those bad memories," O'Reilly said.

The U.S. made it 2-0 in the 39th minute when defender Whitehill kicked a rebound past goalkeeper Emma Byrne, who had made an outstanding save on Tina Frimpong.

"I think once we got that first goal, we felt that everything was work out well," said USA coach Greg Ryan, whose record with the US team is 16-0-4 since April, 2005. "A lot of times when a team sits back like that (Ireland) you just have to be patient. And we were patient and took our chances well."

Abby Wambach scored a sensational goal on a header after a magnificent setup on a 20-yard kick from

Lori Chalupny in the 62nd minute. It was her 56th career goal.

Chalupny was playing in her second game since coming back from a concussion suffered in China in January.

Natasha Kai scored in the 75th minute and Whitehill got her second goal of the game in the 89th minute. Whitehill's goals were the eighth and ninth of her career.

Goalkeeper Hope Solo had an easy afternoon and made a couple of grabs on some Ireland corners as she posted her 15th career shutout.

"America is the best in the world, no doubt in any of our minds," said Byrne, who made seven saves. "It's a little depressing that every time we play them they beat us by five."

USA will play Canada next Sunday in North Carolina.

Micky pleased with draw

AFP, Colombo

South Africa were held to a draw in their three-day tour match against Sri Lanka A on Monday but coach Micky Arthur was pleased with the work-out ahead of a two-Test series.

South Africa, who had gained a huge 303-run first innings lead, reached 245-8 in their second innings before declaring at tea on the final day.

Set an improbable target of 549, Sri Lanka A reached 89-1 by close.

South Africa decided not to declare earlier as coach Arthur did not want to push his bowlers too hard.

"We didn't want to spend more than 30-40 overs on the field. Scoring wasn't as easy as in the first innings and all we wanted was to give just seven-over spells for our bowlers to get their rhythm," said Arthur.

"There was no point in going flat-out with the Test just two days away," he added.

South Africa shuffled their batting order, sending A.B. de Villiers, Mark Boucher, Ashwell Prince and Nicky Boje ahead of Hashim Amla and Jacques Rudolph, who had made hundreds in the first innings.

De Villiers top-scored with 75 while Rudolph got 58, adding 78 for the eighth wicket with Andre Nel (20 not out).

Leg-spinner Upul Chandana bagged 3-80.

BRIEF SCORES SOUTH AFRICA: 465-4 declared and 245-8 declared (De Villiers 75, Rudolph 58, Chandana 3-80) SRI LANKA: 162 and 89-1

Waugh latches on Eng misery

BBC ONLINE, undated

Steve Waugh says England have lost their edge after winning the Ashes.

England, who face the Aussies again this winter, have won only two of 10 Tests since, losing 2-0 in Pakistan and drawing 1-1 with Sri Lanka and India.

"There is no doubt they have lost the momentum of the Ashes. They should have won against Sri Lanka 3-0," the former Australia skipper told the Independent.

"They lacked the killer instinct, they were very casual and they fell back into some of their old bad habits."

England have been beset by injuries since beating Australia 2-1 last year -- their first Ashes series victory for 18 years.

Simon Jones missed the series in Pakistan and India, while captain Michael Vaughan, Marcus Trescothick and Ashley Giles played no part in the India Tests.

But Waugh says the huge celebrations which followed the Australia series last summer also played a part in their demise.

"I think the Pakistan series was a hangover from the Ashes. The boys had been on a bit of a celebratory run and they lost sight of the ball, maybe," he added. "All of a sudden they found themselves back in another series and it was tough."

England will again be without Vaughan for this winter's five Tests, while there are doubts about the availability of spinner Giles and paceman Jones.

Star all-rounder Andrew Flintoff will be out three months after undergoing ankle surgery but chairman of selectors David Graveney is confident he will be fit for the start of the series, which begins in Brisbane on 23 November.

Blake clinches Indy

Tennis

AP, Indianapolis

James Blake was happy to win the RCA Championships and seemed to be just as pleased to see Andy Roddick back on track.

Roddick said he played one of his best finals, but Blake won the all-American matchup 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (5) on Sunday.

Blake replaced Roddick this month as the highest-ranked American man, and lived up to his new status. But he said Roddick is starting to look like the guy who once was No. 1 in the world.

"I feel like I've kind of earned the No. 5 ranking," Blake said. "but I know (Roddick) will be better than that. It's nice to see the old Andy. I look for him to be number one or two in this U.S. Open series."

Blake claimed his sixth career ATP win and third of the year.

"It's the best I've ever played, then better," he said. "That's what I had to do against Andy."

Roddick has 20 ATP career wins, but none this year. The subject of much criticism since a third-round exit at Wimbledon, he said he's starting to regain his confidence.

"For six months, I've been

hearing I don't know how to play tennis," Roddick said. "You don't get to number one, number two, number three without knowing how to play tennis."

"I've been playing badly for a while ... My confidence has been restored."

The win capped a stunning turnaround for Blake. He was ranked No. 210 last April. In May 2004, Blake suffered a fractured vertebra in his neck when he slammed head first into a net post during a practice session. Later that summer, he learned he had shingles, a condition which affected his vision and caused temporary paralysis on one side of his face. In July 2004, his father, Thomas, died from stomach cancer.

Nothing stopped Blake on Sunday, not even Roddick's serve that often exceeded 140 miles per hour.

"He's just playing great tennis right now," Roddick said. "It couldn't happen to a better person."

Roddick finished with 17 aces, but was constantly frustrated by Blake's foot speed. In the tie-breaker, Blake chased down one of many balls that appeared unreachable to go up 6-4.

Roddick served an ace to make it 6-5, but Blake closed it out on the

next point. "We want to prove that Americans are back on our surface," Blake said. "I feel like I'm on a new level on hard courts."

James Blake of the United States returns a shot to Andy Roddick of the United States during the finals of the RCA Championships in Indianapolis, Sunday, July 23, 2006. Blake won the match 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (5).

Roddick came into the match having won 40 consecutive service games. That increased to 45 before Blake broke him on a backhand return winner to take a 2-0 lead in the second set. It was the first time in the tournament, singles or doubles, that Roddick's serve had been broken.

Blake nearly broke Roddick's serve again for a 4-0 lead, but Roddick won the game.

Blake has a reputation for making difficult returns.

"You expect that," Roddick said. "It's frustrating, but it really wasn't getting me down. It's fun to play in a match that's that high-level. It was a really good week."

And Roddick didn't come away from tournament empty-handed.

He and Bobby Reynolds beat Paul Goldstein and Jim Thomas 6-4, 6-4 to win the doubles championship on Sunday.



South African captain Ashwell Prince drives on the off-side during the final day of a three-day practice match against Sri Lanka A in Colombo on Monday.

FORMULA 1

Alonso to 'halt' Shumi

BBC ONLINE, undated

Renault driver Fernando Alonso said he was "very optimistic" of halting title rival Michael Schumacher's run of form at Sunday's German Grand Prix.

Ferrari star Schumacher has won the last two races to close to within 17 points of Alonso in the championship.

But the reigning champion said he was confident of a return to winning ways.

"I am feeling very optimistic," the Spaniard said. "We had a strong first half of the season and I think we can finish 2006 the way we started it."

But Alonso admitted it was important to turn the tables on Ferrari as soon as possible -- and especially so at Schumacher's home race.

"It's important to beat Michael at every race -- not just Hockenheim," Alonso said.

"We know that at this stage of the season, we have to be finishing in front of the Ferraris."

"But I think that a win in Germany could be worth more than 10 points because of the psychological aspect."

"I try to win all the races -- but it

would mean a lot to take the victory here."

Renault have struggled to match Ferrari in the last two races as the Italian team's tyre supplier Bridgestone has appeared to enjoy an advantage over Renault's partner Michelin.

Alonso said: "We are in the middle of a good fight between the tyre manufacturers at the moment."

"Michelin and Bridgestone are pushing each other hard at every race."

"We have fantastic tyres on the car and Michelin are giving us the extra performance, that's why we are leading the championship."

"I am confident for the rest of the year and certain that Michelin can become champions again."

Renault have some major upgrades to their car for the German race, following on from Ferrari doing the same for the last event in France.

And Alonso said he was sure Renault's car development could keep pace with Ferrari.

"I think we are developing the car in a good way at the moment," he said.

"We began the season with a fantastic car, so maybe that left us a little less room to improve than the

other teams.

"But even though our competitors are developing and trying to come back, we are still winning races. The team hasn't stopped improving the car and engine."

Renault engineering director said this year's title battle with Ferrari was much tougher than last year's against McLaren.

"Last year, our rivals had a speed advantage and their Achilles heel was reliability," Symonds said.

"We were on the same tyres, which meant it would be hard to race them -- so we went conservative to benefit from their reliability problems."

"This year, Ferrari are on different tyres to us, so their performance is not in synch with ours. What's more, they have had bloody good reliability."

"As a team, we have improved our performance in every area, scored more points and finished more races.

"But that isn't enough this year, we have to develop aggressively and race aggressively too, which is a much more fun way of going racing. In retrospect, 2005 seems almost boring in comparison!"

Bronze will suffice

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competition but Nepal have not given their entry. Bangladesh produced perhaps their best ever performance in international hockey when they lost to Pakistan in a 3-2 thriller at the Radha-krishnen Memorial Hockey Stadium in Madras. However, they almost lost the bronze as Sri Lanka pulled off a late equaliser in a 1-1 draw. Better goal-difference saved the blushes of Bangladesh and the players will have to be on guard against the home side.

The four-team competition will be held in league basis at Matala, a hill station near the picturesque Kandy, from August 21-25 but Bari thinks that the height would not be a major for the players.

"Yes we are a little behind in terms of physical fitness but I don't think the players will be able to adopt to the condition. The problem is that we could not hold the camp throughout June due to judicial matters.

All the federation activities were restricted due to a court order from late May to June.

"Apart from winning bronze, our aim is to play better hockey against India and Pakistan. It would also be a good exposure to the team ahead of the Asiad.

In replying to a question, Bari said that playing with a target of becoming third among four teams would not down the morale of the team.

"We know where we stand in

Asian hockey. And we will be facing two great teams," he added.

According to coach Jamal Haider, the players have achieved 70 percent fitness and need harder work in the next three weeks. He also pointed out the gap in the training as a reason behind this lack.

The former national stick welder thinks that the current squad is more balanced than the side that lifted the Asian Cup qualifiers last May, especially after the inclusion of senior players like Mia brothers Issa and Musa and Ashique.

Still, his expectation from the boys was just giving their best against India and Pakistan and beating Sri Lanka to hold on to the bronze.

General Secretary of Bangladesh Chess Federation Jamilur Rahman speaks during a press conference at the NSC conference room yesterday.

Kevin looks on

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It was announced on Saturday, which will leave Flintoff on the sidelines for the next three months, ruling him out of the remainder of the Test and one-day series against Pakistan. He is also a major doubt for October's Champions Trophy in India.

But Pietersen stressed: "This creates an opportunity for the youngsters and creates opportunities for someone else to come in, do well and play for England."

"It will be a pretty big series to win without Freddie but we will be giving everything we can to beat Pakistan."

Pietersen conceded that missing Flintoff would be "a big blow, but injuries are injuries and it's just a case of wishing him well."

He added: "We hope he will get himself right, to get back on that field for the Ashes, which he says he will do. He's a big influence on the dressing room. He messes around and jokes about and he will be someone that is missed."

Akhtar admits

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healed, there is zero pain and I can't wait to start playing again," he told a cricket portal.

Akhtar said he needed to listen to the experts while handling his injuries and fitness.

"I don't feel that is up to me because if it was I would be playing tomorrow and running in hard again. I feel really fit and just want to bowl but after what happened last time I know I need to listen to advice from the experts," he said.

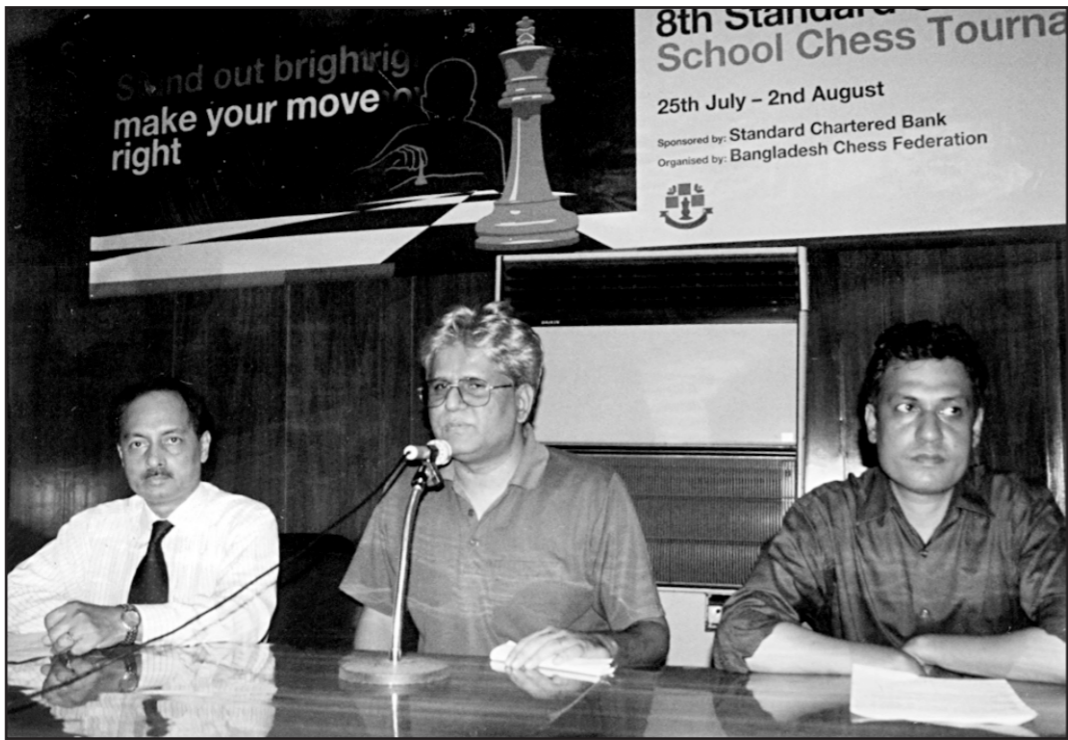


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