

DRU sports from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) annual sports competition begins today at its premises.

Some 476 participants will compete in 10 disciplines -- chess, bridge, carrom, ludo, shooting, swimming, table tennis, badminton, archery and marathon.

Jubok Housing and Real Estate Development are sponsoring the competition by providing 375,000 taka.

The details were disclosed at a press conference at the DRU conference room yesterday.

DRU president M Shafiqul Karim and managing director of the sponsors Mohammad Lokman Hossain spoke on the occasion.

India not to host tri-series

CRICINFO, undated

India will not host a tri-series featuring West Indies and Sri Lanka in 2007 as originally planned, and will instead play separate bilateral series against both teams. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has announced that India would play a maximum of eight to ten one-dayers in January as a build-up to the World Cup.

The new plans were discussed when Zorol Barthley, chief cricket operations officer of the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB), met with BCCI officials during his visit to Mumbai. Niranjan Shah, the BCCI secretary, confirmed the new proposal and reasoned that the change in plan was to ensure that India gained as much match practice as possible before the World Cup began in March.

"It is more a build-up, so the more matches we play the better it will be before the World Cup", Shah told The Times of India. "So we are pressing for a bilateral series."

India's tour of South Africa concludes in early January, while Sri Lanka return from New Zealand in the second week of January. West Indies do not have any international commitments scheduled for that period, so it is likely that the bilateral contests will be held in mid-January.

SLC to demand compensation

CRICINFO, undated

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) has invited Percy Sonn, the ICC president, to spend a few days in Colombo and assess for himself the security arrangements that are in place for touring teams.

Sonn, a former president of Cricket South Africa, is expected to arrive in Sri Lanka on August 20 and spend about four days as the guest of Sri Lanka Cricket.

"I have invited Percy to come and see for himself the security arrangements that are in place for India and judge for himself whether they are adequate," said Jayantha Dharmadasa, the interim committee chairman of SLC.

Dharmadasa said that the Sri Lankan board will make use of Sonn's visit to press forward their case towards gaining compensation from South Africa following the cancellation of the Unitech Cup tri-series which was scheduled to be held in Colombo from August 14-29. The cancellation came about when South Africa pulled out of the tournament and returned home citing security concerns following a bomb blast near their hotel in Colombo while India, the third team, decided to stay back.

Although the South Africans were assured of the highest security protection -- normally given only to heads of state -- they decided to return home basing their reasons on two similar security reports which said the Sri Lankan government was unable to guarantee the physical security of the team.

Dharmadasa said that although Cricket South Africa had stated that both Boards could reschedule the tournament there was no way that Sri Lanka could have another tri-series involving India because of their international commitments.

Ritu rattles

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"I am really frustrated. This was not the real strength of my team and what I can only say that my boys even failed to give one fourth of their strength," said Wazed.

TEAMS

NARAYANGANJ: Mohammad Ali, Shahidul Islam Dulal, Quazi Nazrul Islam, Omar Faruque, Pradip Kumar Shaha, Md Abul Hossain, Zumratul Hossain Mithu, Md. Hanif Prodhan, Md. Rashedul Alam Dipu, Majibur Rahman Ritu, and Mithun Chowdhury.

JOYPUHAT: Md. Nahid Alam, Obaidur Rahman Mukul, Shamimul Haque, SM Suman, Saklain Hossain Shubhra, Saiful Islam, Mahhub Hossain, Salahuddin Rakan, Sanwar Hossain Sana, Kamrul Hassan and Wahidul Islam.



PHOTO: AFP

US star Andy Roddick forces a backhand towards Andy Murray of Great Britain during their quarterfinal tie at the Lindner Family Tennis Center in Cincinnati on Friday.

Roddick tames Murray



AFP, Cincinnati

Nearly three weeks of top tennis caught up with Andy Murray Friday as the Scottish challenger lost a tight 6-3, 6-4 quarterfinal to Andy Roddick at the ATP Cincinnati Masters.

Murray, who ended Roger Federer's run of 17 straight finals appearances with a second-round upset of the mighty Swiss, felt the fatigue after playing 14 matches in 17 days.

"I still took Roddick 16 aces and five match points to close out the win in 90 minutes. I played a sloppy game and then he played well on serve," said the American of his late-match wobble. "He had nothing to lose, he was smacking winners at the end."

"I got tight when I tried to serve it out," added Roddick, who next faces either Chilean Fernando Gonzalez or Spain's David Ferrer. "But I'm so happy to be through and get a win."

Roddick struck 31 winners to just 17 for Murray, who has reached the final in Washington and the semifinals in Toronto in the past two weeks.

An aggressive Roddick snarled and clinched his fist at every opportunity, well aware that another loss

to the Scot would undo his tough-guy reputation.

Roddick had already lost twice this year to Murray, in San Jose and at Wimbledon.

He managed to prevent Murray from joining the group of players who have beaten him three times in a season -- Federer, Aussie Lleyton Hewitt and German Rainer Schuettler.

The early games featured body shots from the American against his opponent as well as some hard stare-downs between points.

Murray is coached by Roddick's ex-trainer Brad Gilbert, with that pair parting under questionable terms in December of 2004.

Unseeded Spaniard Juan Carlos Ferrero buried the prospect of a star-studded finale by eliminating compatriot Rafael Nadal.

Ferrero dominated Nadal 7-6 (7/2), 7-6 (7/3) after play had been interrupted by rain and will now play Spaniard Tommy Robredo, who beat fourth seed Ivan Ljubicic 7-6 (8/6), 6-2.

"This result is important for me, mentally I'm very strong now," said Ferrero. "This is a special win against one of the best players in the world."

Robredo's win was his first over Ljubicic after four losses.

"I'm practicing a lot less and enjoying a lot more," said Robredo, unbroken in 40 service games so far.

Hingis rides to semis



AFP, Montreal

Former world No. 1 Martina Hingis reached the semifinals of the 1.34 million-dollar WTA hardcourt tournament here Friday with a straight-set win over Svetlana Kuznetsova.

The seventh-seeded Swiss downed the fourth-seeded Russian 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 to give herself a chance to add another Canadian title to those she won in 1999 and 2000.

Hingis improved to 2-1 against Kuznetsova this season. Hingis captured the first meeting in straight sets at Doha in March, but Kuznetsova bounced back in Miami a month later, rallying from a set down for a third-round win en route to her lone title of the 2006.

Kuznetsova, the 2004 US Open champion, was the highest seed remaining in the tournament after top seed Kim Clijsters was forced to retire with a wrist injury and No. 3 Nadia Petrova was upset Wednesday.

Second seed Maria Sharapova opted out before the tournament started pleading fatigue.

In the semifinals, Hingis will face another Russian in Anna Chakvetadze, who battled past Israel's Shahar Peer, 7-6 (7/3), 7-5. Chakvetadze, who upset Petrova in the second round, advanced to the semifinals for the second time this season.

In her previous trip to the round of four at Warsaw in May, Chakvetadze lost to Kuznetsova 6-1, 6-1.

In the top half of the draw, ninth-seeded Russian Dinara Safina continued her quest for her first title of the season as she stormed past Australian Nicole Pratt 6-1, 6-0 in just 48 minutes.

"I've had a really good draw for a Tier I event," said Safina, who has beaten three qualifiers en route to the semifinals.

Despite her quick win, Safina had her mind elsewhere, as her brother, Marat Safin, was involved in an auto accident Thursday.

"My brother Marat was in a car accident in Cincinnati last night and I didn't find out about it until this morning," Safina said. "It sounds like he'll be OK, but he does have some pain in his neck. I couldn't concentrate at the beginning of the match, but I managed to pull off the win."

Marat Safin still took the court for his doubles match in Cincinnati on Friday, but lost.

"My family is really close, you know, and we communicate with each other regularly. Right now, Marat is in Cincinnati, I'm in Montreal and my parents are in Moscow. It's tough. I hope he'll be OK."

Her next opponent -- No. 13 Ana Ivanovic of Serbia and Montenegro -- should give her a greater challenge.

Ivanovic took advantage some extra rest to post a 6-4, 6-4 victory over No. 14 Katarina Srebotnik of Slovenia.

Dravid writes off Wright claims

PTI, New Delhi

Indian captain Rahul Dravid has dismissed former coach John Wright's remarks regarding the controversial declaration in the Multan Test against Pakistan in 2004 as pure "guess work".

Wright, in his recently published book 'Indian Summers', went public saying that Sachin Tendulkar felt "let down" when Dravid, who was the stand-in captain during that Test, declared the innings leaving the little master stranded on 194.

Though the two senior players or the team did not make an issue out of it, the timing of the declaration was widely debated across the world.

"I haven't read his book. There is nothing I need to worry about and explain. The two people most involved in the event -- Sachin (Tendulkar) and me -- are very clear about what it was all about," Dravid said.

"We have discussed it and put it well behind us a long, long time ago. We continue to share a healthy respect and friendship. We are the only two people who actually know what we discussed, and so anyone else's view on what happened can only be pure guesswork," Dravid was quoted as saying in 'Outlook' magazine.

Dravid admitted it was indeed tough and frustrating to take decisions like dropping senior players like VVS Laxman and Anil Kumble out of one-day squad but said he had learnt to take it in his stride.

Malik back for ODIs

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistan all-rounder Shoaib Malik has been declared fit for the five match one-day series against England, chief selector Wasim Bari said on Saturday.

"We have informed the team management that Malik is now fit and has been cleared to play by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) medical panel. The management has to decide when to call him," Bari told Reuters.

The 24-year-old, who has played in 15 Tests and 118 one-day internationals, had to return home before the first Test of the current tour with an elbow injury.

"He is now okay and keen to resume playing again. His inclusion will further increase Pakistan's options for the one-day series which is also important for us," Bari said.

Pakistan lost the second and third matches to concede a Test series in England for the first time since 1982, however, Bari said the team would aim to redress the balance in the one-dayers.

The former Test wicketkeeper said no final decision had been taken on retaining Mohammad Hafeez for the one-dayers as yet although he was in fine form.

"I think he should stay for the one-dayers as he is a very useful all-round player but let us see what the team management wants."

Hafeez was sent to England to shore up the batting and scored 95 on Friday in the final Test at the Oval on Friday after a three-year absence from the side.

Both Malik and Hafeez are opening batsmen, off-break bowlers and sharp fielders and have had their bowling actions reported in recent times.

Pakistan sent back openers Taufiq Umar, Salman Butt and left-arm pacer Samiullah Niazi before the Oval Test and Bari said a decision on the final one-day squad would be made in the next week.

Booters crash

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yards went miles over the unguarded post. In the dying moments, Ujjal beat one defender but Shilton pulled off another great save on the shot to take three-time champions India into the semifinals with five points.

Bangladesh finished with two points from a 1-1 draw against Nepal and a goalless with Afghanistan.

For Cruciani, it could well be the last match in the hot seat as the Bangladesh Football Federation had only extended the Argentine's contract for a month -- for the SA Games -- after the initial one-year contract. There is very little chance that the contract will be renewed as Cruciani.

"We presented India with the goals in the first-half. Everything looked bleak to me but hats off to my boys because they played wonderful football in the second-half," Cruciani said after the defeat.

"It's a sheer bad luck we have lost here today. We created so many chances and just as I had said earlier, there won't be any title for us if we could not utilise opportunities," he added.

BANGLADESH TEAM

Shakil (Tareq), Siraj, Ariful, Waly (Jahirul), Titu, Arman Aziz, Rintu, Ujjal, Topu (Robin) and Emily.

Hafeez knew he'd be back



AFP, London

Mohammad Hafeez insisted he'd never doubted his return to Pakistan's Test side after marking his comeback match from a three-year exile with 95 in the fourth and final Test against England here at The Oval.

"I was thinking all the time one day I will come back to Test matches. Three years is not an easy time to wait for a comeback but it worked for me."

Hafeez's stand of 177 with Mohammad Yousuf (115 not out) helped Pakistan finish the second day on 336 for three, a lead of 163, in reply to England's meagre first innings 173.

With Hafeez's fellow opener Imran Farhat making 91 it suggested Pakistan might be on the way to solving the first-wicket partnership problems that have plagued them this series.

Already a losing 2-0 down in the series, Pakistan have used four different opening combinations in as many Tests in England in the absence of proven performer Shoaib Malik, out with an elbow injury.

Hafeez, who retired hurt on eight with a leg muscle injury before resuming Friday, had only recently arrived in England.

And his performance was all the more impressive as this was his

first Test since September 2003 when he made the last of his three previous appearances, all against Bangladesh, at Multan.

"It was a good knock, especially as I was under pressure because I was coming back to Test cricket after three years. But after this innings I feel much happier and much better," Hafeez told reporters.

Hafeez, who can also bowl off-spin, has played 30 one-day internationals and it looked as if he'd been brought to England primarily for the upcoming five-match limited overs series.

"I was in good nick. I scored 180 against Australia on the A tour and I was thinking I might get a chance to play a Test match and I would like to thank my coach (Bob Woolmer) and captain (Inzamam-ul-Haq) for the trust they've placed in me."

The 25-year-old Hafeez, who previously had two spells playing club cricket in Yorkshire, northern England, said he was now determined to nail down his place at the top of Pakistan's order.

"I will try my level-best to get a place permanently in the side. I know the problem is in the opening area but you need to work hard to get a place at international level."

"It's not insecurity you feel, it's pressure. Whenever you get a chance for your country you have to perform," added Hafeez, who in his second Test scored 102 not out against Bangladesh.

In sight of his second Test cen-

tury, Hafeez's 177 ball innings with one six and 14 fours, ended when he chipped pace bowler Matthew Hoggard to England captain Andrew Strauss at short mid-wicket.

"To score a century in a comeback game would have been a very happy moment for me. I was lazy with the shot that got me out."

Well though Pakistan batted, there was no disguising a lacklustre display by England's attack. Too many of their bowlers were off-target and four catches, all off Hoggard, have been dropped in the innings so far with Yousuf missed on five and nine.

"It was as bad as it looked," Hoggard admitted. "We were below par bowling, below par fielding and we were below par batting yesterday (Thursday)."

Asked to explain a display that saw strike bowler Stephen Harmison well below his best with none for 78 off 15 overs, Hoggard added: "If we knew that we'd be quite rich."

"We weren't complacent. Pakistan are the third best team in the world and we know we have to play well to beat them," Hoggard, England's leading bowler so far in this innings with two for 79 from 22 overs, added.

"They might have lifted their game a little bit and we've dropped our game. At this level you cannot afford to be five percent off your mark or you will be found out."

A complete failure: Hoggard



REUTERS, London

Matthew Hoggard said England had failed to perform in all departments after being dominated by Pakistan during the first two days of the fourth and final Test at the Oval.

"It was as bad as it looked," the seam bowler told a news conference on Friday after Mohammad Yousuf hit an unbeaten 115 to lead Pakistan to 336 for three in reply to England's first innings 173.

"We were below par bowling and fielding and we were below par batting yesterday."

England have an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series.

"We didn't go in with any form of complacency. At this level you can't

afford to be five percent under your marker or you will be found out," said Hoggard, who had three catches dropped off his bowling.

"When Yousuf gets in, he gets runs. He's one of the best players in the world at the moment. Unfortunately we dropped him twice and he made us pay."

Yousuf also scored a double century in the opening Test and 192 in the third.

"Obviously we're disappointed," said Hoggard. "I'm sure a couple of individuals are angry. We've got three days to put that right."

Hoggard was England's best bowler, with two for 79 off 22 overs.

He said he was struggling for rhythm but added that paceman Steve Harmison, England's poorest bowler on Friday, was not injured.

US dominate Day 2



AFP, Victoria

The United States, led by multiple world record-holder Michael Phelps and rising star Katie Hoff, captured seven of eight gold medals on offer Friday at the Pan Pacific Swimming Championships. Phelps followed up his world record-setting performance in Thursday's 200m butterfly by clocking a meet record 4min 10.47sec to win the 400m individual medley.

He was well shy of the world record of 4:08.26 that he posted at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, a result he blamed on a shaky opening leg.

"It was my first 100," he said. "Every other split except the butterfly was as good as Athens."

Phelps also led the men's 4 x 200m freestyle relay team to gold,

swimming alongside Ryan Lochte, Petere Vanderhaar and Klete Keller. The US squad outdistanced a strong Canadian team by more than seven seconds, setting a new American and Pan Pacific record with a time of 7:05.28.

Current world record holders Australia placed third.

Phelps said it was encouraging to finish within six-tenths of a second of the world mark the Aussies set in 2001.

"We weren't even in the same universe of that record even two years ago," he said.

Hoff confirmed her status as the most promising US talent heading to Beijing, the 18-year-old phenom capturing a pair of golds to go with her win Thursday in the women's 200m freestyle.

Hoff set a new meet record in the women's 400m medley with a time of 4:36.82, almost three seconds faster than teammate Ariana Kukors

and five seconds ahead of Australian Stephanie Rice.

She also anchored the women's 4 x 200m free team to a convincing three-second win over Australia.

Japan, who went into the day's action in second place in the team standings, posted a respectable time of 8:00.65 to place third in the women's relay.

One of the night's most anticipated races featured American Brendan Hansen, who shattered the world record in the men's 100-metre breaststroke two weeks ago at the US nationals with a time of 59.13sec.

Hansen, however, fell victim to what he called "a rookie mistake" and had to settle for gold and a meet record of 59.90.

"I was rushing the stroke a bit and when I rush the stroke I'm just a little bit low in the water," he said. "I was already shaking my head at the 50."

An odd result in the women's 100-metre breaststroke saw Americans Tara Kirk and Megan Jendrick finish one-two, then see teammate Jessica Hardy swim nine-tenths of a second faster in the "B" final for a meet record of 1:06.43.

Meet rules prohibit more than two finalists from any one country, and Hardy, third-fastest, in qualifying, was bumped to the consolation final.

Natalie Coughlin bested fellow American Amanda Weir by five-hundredths of a second to take the women's 100m freestyle, while Australian Melanie Schlanger placed third.

The only non-US swimmer to win gold was Canadian Brent Hayden, with a surprise victory over the USA's Jason Lezak in the men's 100m free.

Australian Eamon Sullivan placed third in that race, a half second back of Hayden.

Reds start

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the stranded Reina.

The visitors ploughed forward in search of an equaliser and got out of jail when Styles awarded Gerrard a penalty despite television replays showing Chris Morgan hardly touched the rampaging midfielder.

Fowler made no mistake and Liverpool returned home to Merseyside breathing a huge sigh of relief.



PHOTO: AFP

American superstar swimmer Michael Phelps in action during the 400m individual medley final at the Pan Pacific Swimming Championships in Victoria, Canada on Friday. He won the event with a timing of 4min 10.47sec.