



PHOTO: STAR

A goalmouth melee during yesterday's Premier Division Hockey League match between Abahani and Bangladesh Sporting Club at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

Abahani & Mariners win big

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club crushed listless Sadharan Bima 8-0 in the Green Delta Premier Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The score is the largest victory in the ongoing league so far and this was Mariners' third consecutive victory.

Shishu, Prince and Proshanto scored two goals each while Rahul and Chandan netted one goal apiece.

In the other match of the day, Jimmy, Issa, Shuvo and Musa all scored in the heavy rain to give title aspirants Abahani a 4-1 win over Bangladesh Sporting Club.

Jimmy opened the account as early as the 9th minute with a field goal utilizing a right flank pass from Sumon. Issa doubled the margin in the 21st minute as he converted a penalty corner taken by Musa.

Sajib then pulled one back for Bangladesh Sporting to give them a ray of hope going into the half-time break.

But Abahani's Shuvo increased the margin in the 47th minute from another Musa penalty corner. Musa then rounded off the scoring with a 58th minute shot to goal.

Ajax Sporting Club take on Azad Sporting Club in the first match of the day today while big guns Mohammedan are up against Sonali Bank afterwards.

Bindra bats for Azhar

Cricket

AFP, Mohali

A former Indian cricket chief on Saturday demanded that a life ban on Mohammad Azharuddin be lifted while accusing the International Cricket Council (ICC) of hypocrisy.

Punjab Cricket Association chief Inderjit Bindra said the Indian board should lift the ban on Azharuddin and other players accused of match fixing because other countries did not come down as hard on their players.

"We should revoke all such action. What was the ICC doing when other countries swept the issue under the carpet?" said Bindra, a former president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

Bindra reacted after the ICC said

it was not pleased that former skipper Azharuddin was among a select list invited for the inauguration of the board's new office in Mumbai next month.

"The ICC has a zero tolerance policy on corruption and we'd like all our members to have a similar attitude," ICC spokesman Brian Murgatroyd had said.

Bindra, a key backer of political heavyweight Sharad Pawar whose panel wrested power from former ICC chief Jagmohan Dalmiya's faction in board elections last year, accused the ICC of double-standards.

"The ICC seems to have different standards for India and Pakistan. I think we were foolish to take action against Indian players facing match-fixing allegations," said Bindra.

The Indian board handed life bans to Azharuddin and Ajay Sharma while Ajay Jadeja and

Manoj Prabhakar got five-year bans in 2000 after the match-fixing scandal broke out.

Bindra's outburst came just two days after board vice-president Lalit Modi accused the ICC of 'neocolonialism'.

"The avaricious and snooty officials are behaving more as masters and less as paid executives," Modi had written in a column in a leading newspaper.

"Everything including accreditation and security is being handled by companies based in London or South Africa who have no clue about ground realities here," he wrote about the ongoing Champions Trophy.

Bindra said Modi had made some valid points.

"I agree with whatever Modi said the other day," said Bindra.

Maria seeks shorter season

Tennis

AFP, Paris

Russian pin-up Maria Sharapova added her voice to calls for the women's tennis season to be slashed after figures showed an alarming rise in the number of top players hobbling out of events.

The US Open champion, and former world number one, fell victim to the curse herself on Friday when a hip injury forced her to withdraw from the Kremlin Cup quarterfinals in Moscow.

"I feel strongly that the tennis season needs to be made shorter, with more breaks for players to rest in order to be in peak condition when we do play," said Sharapova, the world number three.

"I know the Tour is taking this issue seriously and I'm looking forward to the changes that will lead to a healthier schedule for players."

The WTA Tour on Friday released figures showing that top player withdrawals have reached an all-time high this season.

The report showed that top 10 player withdrawals from the Tour's

high-profile tournaments have more than doubled (from 13 to 31) from 2005 to 2006.

In the last five years, the figure has increased by 72 percent.

WTA Tour chief executive Larry Scott has organised a committee to develop specific rule changes for 2007 that he hopes will improve the situation.

Scott also confirmed the need for the Tour's 'Roadmap 2010' plan to be accelerated by one year, to 2009.

This plan is aimed at creating a better schedule, a longer off-season and more breaks for top players.

"Fans and tournaments deserve to see the top players and to be able to count on them to show up, but injuries and withdrawals from a season that overtaxes our players is hurting the fan experience," said Scott.

"Women's professional tennis needs to enact bold reforms in the name of player health and the continued global growth of the game."

"This latest data is a clear signal that our season is simply too long and too gruelling for even the finest women athletes in the world."

"The Tour's Roadmap plan is designed to address this fundamen-

tal issue and create a healthier calendar in which top players are consistently able to compete on our biggest stages."

Scott's calls were supported by American tennis legend Billie Jean King.

"For women's tennis to be successful, top players need to be consistently playing each other in the Tour's top events," said King. "We've got a challenge on our hands today with the increasing number of top player injuries and withdrawals."

"We all know that the season is too long and that top players need breaks so that their bodies don't break down."

The Roadmap 2010 plan would see a shortened season ending in October, more breaks for top players after Grand Slams, a reduction in the number of tournaments top players must play from 13 to 11, the creation of four combined mandatory events with the ATP men's tour as well as a simplified ranking system.

PCA ignores Bhaji issue

PTI, Mohali

The Punjab Cricket Association (PCA) distanced itself from the controversy over an advertisement by a liquor brand featuring Harbhajan Singh with his hair open.

"It is Harbhajan's personal matter. It is for his conscience to decide and PCA has nothing to do with it," PCA president IS Bindra told reporters here.

The Shromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee, the apex religious body of the Sikhs, had recently voiced strong resentment over the Punjab cricketer featuring in the advertisement.

Harbhajan subsequently apologised.

"It is either for Harbhajan or conscience keepers of the religion to decide," Bindra said.

Bindra, himself a Sikh, said he did not have any moral authority to tell Harbhajan anything as he himself trimmed his beard and had cut his hair.

The PCA had earlier this year slapped a show cause on Harbhajan for his comments on coach Greg Chappell.

The advertisement, which also features Harbhajan's teammates Yuvraj Singh and MS Dhoni, now shows the spinner donning a 'patka' or an under-turban.

SGPC said it not only wanted the cricketer to refrain from wearing his hair open, prohibited according to Sikh tenets, but also to withdraw himself from the advertisement of the liquor company.

Inzi disallowed

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PCB apparently has also denied stand-in captain Younis Khan the permission to write columns in Indian newspapers.

The present dispensation in PCB, under Naseem Ashraf, is seen to enforce discipline among players following reports that the players had enjoyed too much powers during the regime of Shaharyar Khan.

The air now seems to be blowing against Inzamam who just the other day brooked no opposition in Pakistan cricket's set-up.

Inzamam has been confirmed captain for the forthcoming series against the West Indies but PCB has said his captaincy would be reviewed after the home series.

"After the home series against the West Indies, we will sit down and review things and the person who has form and fitness would be named captain for the tour of South Africa and the World Cup," Ashraf had said.

Boycott's money not on England



AFP, London

Former England batsman Geoff Boycott believes England have little chance of doing well at the Champions Trophy because so many top players are missing.

England face India in Jaipur on Sunday in their Champions Trophy opener but are without Marcus Trescothick, Michael Vaughan, Ashley Giles and Simon Jones.

"We don't have the quality reserves to shore up the better players being injured," Boycott told the BBC.

"The reserves do the best they can but it does lessen the team's quality when you have too many fill-in players."

England reached the Champions Trophy final when they hosted the event in 2004 but since then have won only 16 of their 43 one-day games.

This summer they were thrashed 5-0 by Sri Lanka before coming from 2-0 down to draw 2-2 with Pakistan.

Newcomers like Jamie

Dalrymple and Michael Yardy have been brought in to the squad to cover the absence of key players but Boycott believes they are not long-term answers.

"We're without so many good cricketers and people are being moved around to fill gaps," said Boycott.

"We don't know if England are a poor one-day side or quite a good one when all the players are fit."

"If we've got everybody fit, particularly Vaughan for his captaincy, we might be a lot better and be able to surprise ourselves that we're quite a decent one-day side."

Boycott believes that moving skipper Andrew Flintoff up to either open the batting or go in at number three could pay off.

"I don't have a problem with that because there's only two people out on the boundary, it's usually third man and fine leg, and he's a four-ball hitter anyhow," he explained.

"I think people have to play their natural game. It is his natural game to play shots. When he times the ball, it goes twice as quick as when someone like me times it because he's a big lad and it's difficult for the in-fielders to stop it."

Senate calls up PCB

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistani cricket officials have been asked to appear before a Senate committee probing the Oval Test fiasco and the controversy leading to the resignation of board chairman Shaharyar Khan.

Saleem Altaf, the Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) director of cricket operations, said the meeting of the standing committee on sports would be held on October 30.

"They want to know what led to the Oval Test incident and the resignation of Shaharyar last week," Altaf told Reuters on Saturday.

"The performances of the team will also come under discussion."

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq was banned for four matches at an International Cricket Council (ICC) hearing last month after refusing to continue play in the fourth Test against England at The Oval.

He led a protest against the umpires' decision to change the ball and penalise Pakistan five runs for alleged ball-tampering.

The tampering charges were dropped by the ICC due to insufficient evidence.

Shaharyar admitted in a newspaper interview on Saturday that mistakes were made in The Oval fiasco.

Modi threatens future no-show

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Lalit Modi, the vice-president of the Indian cricket board and the chairman of its marketing committee, has clarified that his statements regarding India pulling out of future ICC events were quoted out of context.

"I was asked what would happen in the worst-case scenario and stated the obvious," he said while addressing the media on the eve of the India-England game.

"We're already having several discussions with the ICC and will continue to do so with Malcolm Speed arrives in India on Sunday.

"We're trying to sort things out.

You can't go by worst-case situations."

Earlier this week Modi accused the ICC of bullying on the issue of signing the Members' Participation Agreement (MPA) covering major one-day competitions.

"It is a unilateral agreement which gives the ICC the right to modify and amend it any time they wish," Modi told the BBC on Friday. "I've never seen an agreement in which one of the signatories has that right. We don't have to play all tournaments. If things don't work out, we could choose not to play in the Champions Trophy and the World Cup."

Though Modi affirmed that the BCCI was working towards a solution with the ICC, he warned that

discussions would not be simple. "If the BCCI does not sign the MPA, then the ICC's income would be reduced to 5 per cent of what it currently is". According to Modi, there were other member countries supporting the BCCI.

The ICC has set about finalising negotiations with television broadcasters for the rights to global events eight years beyond 2007. Malcolm Speed, the ICC chief executive, responded to Modi's earlier comments, which he termed "inflamatory and provocative", and said he would be pleased to meet with him so that the various issues could be discussed.

Ashraf to reset his board

PTI, Karachi

Chairman of Pakistan Cricket Board Dr. Naseem Ashraf has embarked on a mission to restore the democratic set-up of the board which has been run on an ad-hoc basis since the 1999 World Cup.

Ashraf said the Board would start working under a new constitution from January 1, 2007.

PCB Director Cricket Operations Saleem Altaf said elections for picking representatives of each of the eleven regional units of the Board would be held next month after which the process to restore its executive council will begin.

The elected council and general body of the board have remained suspended since the 1999 World Cup with the board being run by people handpicked by the President of the country who is also the chief patron of the board.

Ashraf, meanwhile, said the Board had restricted the players, currently in India for the Champions Trophy, from having individual contracts with the media.

India to fight Freddie

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tournament, but actually go on and win the World Cup. So we are starting on a level playing field."

The Indian captain did not believe his team's recent unimpressive record was a major worry.

"What's happened in the last seven-eight games has very little relevance to what is going to happen tomorrow," he said. "Prior to that, we had a successful run against England, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. The fact that we had a slightly shaky start to the season is not really playing on my mind."

"I am pretty happy with the way we have trained. If we get on a roll early I think we are going to be a force to reckon with."

TEAMS

ENGLAND (likely): Andrew Strauss, Ian Bell, Andrew Flintoff (captain), Kevin Pietersen, Paul Collingwood, Michael Yardy, Jamie Dalrymple, Chris Read, James Anderson, Sajid Mahmood, Steve Harmison.

INDIA (from): Rahul Dravid (captain), Virender Sehwag, Sachin

Tendulkar, Dinesh Mongia, Suresh Raina, Mohammad Kaif, Romesh Powar, Yuvraj Singh, Mahendra Dhoni, Ajit Agarkar, Irfan Pathan, Harbhajan Singh, Munaf Patel, Rudra Pratap Singh.

SCHEDULE

GROUP A:	Australia, India, England, West Indies		
Oct 15	India v England	Jaipur	
Oct 16	N Zealand v S Africa	Mumbai	
Oct 17	Pakistan v S Lanka	Jaipur	
Oct 18	Australia v W Indies	Mumbai	
Oct 20	N Zealand v S Lanka	Mumbai	
Oct 21	Australia v England	Jaipur	
Oct 24	S Africa v S Lanka	Ahmedabad	
Oct 25	N Zealand v Pakistan	Mohali	
Oct 26	India v W Indies	Ahmedabad	
Oct 27	Pakistan v S Africa	Mohali	
Oct 28	England v W Indies	Ahmedabad	
Oct 29	India v Australia	Mohali	
SEMIFINALS			
Nov 1	A1 v B2	Mohali	
Nov 2	B1 v A2	Jaipur	
FINAL			
Nov 5	Mumbai		

Trophy Treats

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hundred against the same opponents at Harare two months back as his best innings so far in the shorter version of the game.

"I think the first one was better than the second one. I was struggling here to cope with the conditions. I just wanted to make sure I batted for as long as possible. It would not have been easy for a new batsman to get set and score immediately," explained Nafees.

TIGERS VISIT AJMER SHARIF

Bangladesh cricket team capitalized on their last day stay in Jaipur with a visit to the Ajmer Sharif, the final resting place for 'Gharib-Nawaz', Moinuddin Chisti.

People of all religions visit the Dargah as the shrine is considered to be a place of wish fulfillment for those who pray with devout and pure hearts.

The lake side city of Ajmer is located in central Rajasthan and it was just one and half an hour drive by bus.

The Tigers will leave the Pink City today for Delhi and then fly home on October 17.

Maharoor mauls WI

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Lara and Hinds took the score from 13-3 to 51 when Maharoor hit back with two wickets in the space of four deliveries.

Lara, who made 13 off 35 balls with two boundaries, failed to build on the sound start when he was trapped leg-before by Maharoor with a delivery that kept low.

Dwayne Bravo was also leg-before to Maharoor for no score to leave the West Indies tottering at 55-5.

The lights had just been switched on at the Brabourne Stadium when the match ended.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the Champions Trophy qualifying match between Sri Lanka and the West Indies at the Brabourne Stadium on Saturday:

WEST INDIES

Gayle c Sangakkara b Vaas	8
Chandernaul c Sangakkara b Malinga	0
Sarwan lbw b Vaas	0
Lara lbw b Maharoor	13
Hinds c Jayasuriya b Maharoor	28
Bravo lbw b Maharoor	0
Samuels b Maharoor	1
Smith c Muralidaran b Maharoor	0
Baugh lbw b Maharoor	1

Edwards b Malinga	4
Collimore not out	18
Extras: (lb-5, w-2, nb-10)	8
Total: (all out in 30.4 overs)	80
Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-12, 3-13, 4-51, 5-55, 6-58, 7-58, 8-64, 9-67.	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Vaas	6	2	6	2
Malinga	5.4	0	26	2
Fernando	5	0	15	0
Maharoor	9	2	14	6
Muralidaran	5	0	14	0

SRI LANKA
Tharanga b Edwards 0
Jayasuriya not out 45
Jayawardene not out 34

Extras: (w-1, nb-3)
Total: (For one wkt in 13.2 overs) 83
Fall of wicket: 1-0.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Edwards	4	0	17	1
Collimore	5	0	21	0
Smith	3	0	29	0
Samuels	1.2	0	16	0

Result: Sri Lanka won by nine wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Farveez Maharoor.
Toss: West Indies

BEST TROPHY BOWLING

6/14	F Maharoor	Sri Lanka v West Indies at Mumbai, 2006
5/11	S Afridi	Pakistan v Kenya at Birmingham, 2004
5/29	M Dillon	West Indies v Bangladesh at Southampton, 2004
5/30	J Kallis	South Africa v West Indies at Dhaka, 1998
5/36	J Oram	New Zealand v USA at London, 2004
5/37	G McGrath	Australia v New Zealand at Colombo, 2002

before securing her place in the Bangkok Open final with a convincing 6-4 victory over Shaughnessy.

Tamarin, Vania in final

Tennis

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's Tamarine Tanasugarn secured her place in the WTA Bangkok Open final Saturday with a win over France's Severine Bremond, while rising star Vania King took another step towards her first WTA title.

Tamarin overcame the tournament ninth seed Bremond 6-2, 6-3 to reach her seventh career final, and will face 17-year-old King of the United States, who overwhelmed compatriot Meghann Shaughnessy 6-1, 6-4.

Tamarine, 29, did not get off to a good start, allowing Bremond to break in the opening game of the set. However, the local star settled down to establish a 5-2 lead.

And it was the Thai who broke Bremond in the final game of the first set to close it at 6-2.

The second set followed a similar pattern, with Tamarin allowing Bremond to break and begin with a 1-0 lead, before she came back and tied it at 3-3.

Tamarin, the world number 97,

then broke Bremond in the eighth game of the second set to lead 5-3 before she won her service game to take the match 6-3.

"Her style of playing is like that - she always breaks the opponent first," Tamarine said after her victory.

"She tried to pressure me, especially on the second serves. I am lucky to close this match well. Today, my serves were not good but it really went well," said Tamarine, who reaches her first final in Thailand in 10 years.