



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh national captain Habibul Bashar executes a cover drive during his knock of 54 for Acme Laboratories while Epyllion wicketkeeper Mohammed Salim looks on, during their semifinal clash of the CCL at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.



Did U Know?

The first international football match was played in 1872 between Scotland and England.



Brian Lara

(West Indies cricket captain) "It's nice to be playing the world champions in the (Champions Trophy) final. It says a lot about our effort... getting past South Africa, and beating India and Australia in group matches. So, we are looking forward to the challenge."



- BTV & SET Max**
ICC Champions Trophy Final
Australia v West Indies
Live at 2:45 pm
- ESPN**
English Premier Football League
West Ham v Arsenal
Live at 7:25 pm
Tottenham v Chelsea
Live at 9:55 pm
- STAR Sports**
English Premier Football League
Aston Villa v Blackburn Rovers
Live at 7:55 pm
Primera Liga
Real Madrid v Celta Vigo
Live at 11:55 pm
Espanyol v Valencia
Live at 2:00 am (Monday)

Athletes go to India

SPORTS REPORTER

Eighteen national sportsmen from three different disciplines left Dhaka yesterday to attend a month-long higher training at the Tata Sports Academy in Jamshedpur.

They are Mohan Khan, M Mahfuzur Rahman Mithu, M Masudul Karim and Al Amin (athletes); Mahmud Ali Mithu, M Abdur

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Bashar, Aftab fire Acme into final

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar struck a commanding half-century after a scintillating knock by his Tigers teammate Aftab Ahmed as Acme Laboratories reached the final of GrameenPhone Corporate Cricket League defeating Epyllion by seven wickets in the first semifinal at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

The victory gave Acme their first final berth after they chased down 206 runs in only 38.4 overs after last year's runners-up Epyllion, who batted first, were bowled out for the modest total in 43.5. They now await the winners of today's second semifinal between Beximco and Partex at the same venue.

The 34-year-old Acme captain Bashar came in to bat in the 17th over after opener Hannan Sarkar and one-drop Aftab Ahmed shared a

fantastic 81-run second wicket stand. Bashar struck eight sweetly-timed fours in his 61-ball unbeaten knock of 54. Bashar's score was his first half-century in any competitive match since his 70 against visiting Australia in April. He was involved in an undefeated fourth wicket partnership of 83 runs with young batsman Marshall Ayub, who was not out on 35 off 45 balls. His knock included one six and four boundaries.

But it was Aftab who set the stage for Bashar. He warmed up with a brilliant six over mid-off off medium-pace Tareq Aziz early in the piece. The 21-year-old Chittagong batsman forced an immediate change in tactics for the Epyllion skipper Tushar Imran who quickly had to bring on the spinners. But both left-armers Nabil Samad and Enamul Haque struggled to stop the flurry of boundaries from Aftab and Hannan, who top scored for the finalists with a steady 55. The discarded opener struck eight boundaries in his 85-ball innings. Only seamer Forhad Hossain and the occasional spin of Tushar put the brakes on as they

took a wicket each.

Epyllion, when they batted, were rocked early despite a rapid start from openers Nazmus Sadat (10) and Gazi Salahuddin (29). But skipper Tushar held the innings together even though wickets fell around him. He played a superb knock, anchoring the innings all along, striking 11 fours and a six. Earlier in the tournament, Tushar played a similar knock against Partex where he struck 63 against Bangladesh Biman after his top-order failed in a similar manner.

Bangladesh vice-captain Shahriar Nafees was the notable failure when he was dismissed for only two while all-rounders Sakib Al Hasan and Forhad Reza both fell cheaply. On a placid wicket with some bounce, it was expected that a score in excess of 250 runs would have been defendable.

But when Tushar fell as the ninth wicket in the 44th over to occasional spinner Sandeep Sharma, it was all over for Epyllion. Acme's foreign recruit Sharma took

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'Value your opportunity'

Kumar Sangakkara had an eye on the final of the ICC Champions Trophy but it was a pity for the leading Sri Lanka cricketer to come to Dhaka to play the Corporate Cricket League for semifinalists Beximco. The elegant left-handed batsman and wicketkeeper was a little frustrated with his team's early exit from the second biggest tournament to the World Cup. However, he was left more disappointed with the fact that the final of the meet is going to take place today in Mumbai without any team from the subcontinent. The 29-year-old Sri Lanka vice-captain talked to **The Daily Star** reporter **Bishwajit Roy** after his first practice session with Beximco at the Nabin Sangha Club ground. Following is the excerpt of the conversations:

DS: What is your take on the fact that none of the Asian teams are playing the ICC Champions Trophy final this year?

KS: I think West Indies have so far played good cricket in the tournament but the fact is that they have to play with only two frontline bowlers. That's why I will give the advantage to Australia. But what I want is a tense final.

DS: How is it being included in the World Test Team Of The Year?

KS: I still don't know about the inclusion but I know that Mahela (Jayawardene) was named captain of the year. I think it was a recognition of the recent performance of the Sri Lanka team and it is really good for our players. It is fantastic that Mahela got it because he deserves the honour. It's been a great year for Sri Lankan cricket even though the ICC Champions Trophy didn't come our way.

DS: Why do you think Sri Lanka failed to qualify to the semifinal even though they were pre-tournament favourites?

KS: I think there was hardly any major problem in the team for the

ICC Champions Trophy failure but the fact was that we didn't play well against Pakistan and couldn't recover from that. But mind it -- we won four games out of six, so there were lot of positives for us. I think

there are some minor details that we have to work out before taking on New Zealand. I think Tom (Moody), Mahela and rest of the players are well committed in getting those problems sorted out.

DS: In only your sixth year in international cricket, you are an influential member of Sri Lanka team. How do you see your role in the team evolve as time goes by?

KS: Sri Lanka has a very long tradition of cricket and I feel proud that I could be part of it and I am very lucky to be part of it. Now I can play 12 Tests and 30 ODIs in a year whereas great players like Arjuna (Ranatunga) and Aravinda (de Silva) could play only one or two Test matches for a whole year. So, I would say I am a very fortunate cricketer.

You can make good living out of cricket these days. You can enjoy the game and can travel a lot. But it was a great challenge for me when I came to international arena in 2000 because I had to work hard to get runs.

I still think I have long, long way to go to leave a mark because finally no one is just playing the game for the sake of playing.

I think we should play with a goal in mind. If you are a batsman you have to score over 20 centuries and if you are a bowler you have to take a number of wickets at the end of the day. Those are the things I want to do.

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PHOTO: STAR

Sri Lanka star Kumar Sangakkara (R) greets ex-Bangladesh skipper Aminul Islam at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium on Saturday.

MSC take on Usha today

SPORTS REPORTER

Fresh from thrashing arch-rivals Abahani 3-0, Mohammedan Sporting Club take on defending champions Usha Krira Chakra in the Green Delta Premier Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium today.

The match will kick off at 2:45pm. Usha maintained a joint-lead along with Abahani on 18 points from seven outings while the last match's success helped Mohammedan to move to third place with 13 points from six matches.

In the day's match yesterday, Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club crushed bottom-ranked Bangladesh Sporting Club 8-1 at the same venue.

With their fifth victory Mariners improved their tally to 15 points from seven matches while Bangladesh SC are yet to open their account from same number of outings.

Mariners dominated the first half 5-0.

Chandan led the goal-fest with three strikes in the 16th, 28th and 45th minutes while Prince struck twice, in the 11th and 42nd minutes. Rahul, Sohail and Shishu added one apiece to the winners' tally.

Mithun netted the consolation goal for Bangladesh SC in the 65th minute.

Pillay to play for Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Indian skipper Dhanraj Pillay will arrive in Dhaka tomorrow to play for title aspirants Abahani in the ongoing Green Delta Premier Hockey League.

Abahani already roped in two Indians Ronald Kiron and Prakash Chalke but are desperately looking to strengthen their squad before the vital clash against Usha Krira Chakra on November 8. Abahani lost their last game against arch-rivals Mohammedan 3-0.

Pillay is a familiar name in the country's domestic circuit as the playmaker last played for Abahani in the 2002-2003 season.

Abahani are now jointly leading the table with Usha on 18 points from seven matches.

NCL from Nov 9

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday announced the six divisional squads for the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea eighth National Cricket League (NCL) which begins on November 9 across the country.

Like last season the national selectors, led by Faruque Ahmed, picked six teams to ensure a balanced tournament.

The selected players of Chittagong, Khulna, Sylhet and

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Grand finale today

Both Australia, Windies talk of title



AFP, Mumbai

The West Indies are determined to cash in on their winning streak and retain the Champions Trophy when they clash with favourites Australia on Sunday.

"It's nice to be playing the world champions in the final. We look forward to the challenge and back ourselves to win," said Windies captain Brian Lara ahead of the title clash under lights at the Brabourne Stadium here.

Lara's defending champions, ranked eighth in the world, stunned the rest of the cricket world by coming through the qualifying rounds to make the final of the biennial tournament with five wins from seven matches.

One of those wins was against Australia in the league stage at the same venue on October 18 when first bowler Jerome Taylor became the first West Indian to take a limited-overs hat-trick in a sensational finish.

The West Indians, restricted to 234-6, bowled out the mighty Australians for 224 on a dusty wicket with Taylor picking up the last three wickets in three deliveries.

The wicket for Sunday's final promises to be more batsmen-friendly, setting the stage for a rousing contest that should fill the stands despite hosts India being knocked out early.

Australia, the undisputed leaders in both forms of the game who won the last two World Cups in 1999 and 2003, hope to make their first-ever appearance in the Champions Trophy final a memorable one.

"This is one trophy missing from our cupboard and we are obviously keen to take it home," said captain Ricky Ponting, whose side won three straight matches after the defeat to the West Indies.

"The momentum we have gained in the tournament gives us the confidence to win the final."

Lara conceded Australia will not be

beaten easily even though the West Indies share a 2-2 record in their last four games against the world champions.

"I am sure the Aussies are very, very buoyed and confident of their chances on Sunday," he said. "We have to realise that we are going to play a completely different opposition to the one we played against in the league match."

"In that game, Australia were playing their first match on that pitch and so we had a sort of an advantage. But now we must go back to basics and plan carefully."

Lara said the West Indian resurgence bodes well for the World Cup the Caribbean nations will be hosting in March next year.

"We are building up momentum, and the guys are believing in themselves, believing in the plans and executing it well," he said. "These are going to be exciting times ahead for us."

The West Indians will once again bank on brilliant opener Chris Gayle to continue his good form that has given the left-hander three centuries in the tournament, including an unbeaten 133 against South Africa in the semifinal on Thursday.

Gayle remains the front-runner for the man of the tournament award with the leading aggregate of 437 runs from seven matches at an average of 87.40.

"I am almost sure that Chris will not

want to leave the centre-stage to anyone in the final," said Lara. "He has always been a top player -- with the bat, with the ball and in the field."

Fiery Australian fast bowler Brett Lee, whose contest with Gayle could be one of the highlights of the final, said he was raring to go.

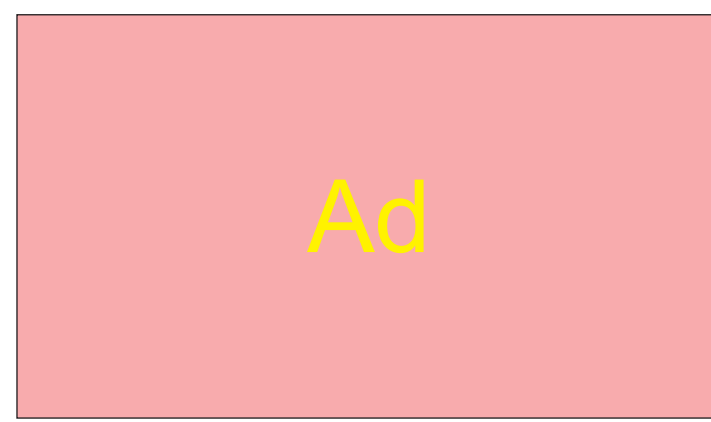
"A lot has been said about Australia's track record in the Champions Trophy," said Lee. "So this time we are really determined to make a mark."

"The earlier loss to the West Indies was a wake-up call for us. Now we are ready to take them on again."

TEAMS

AUSTRALIA (from): Ricky Ponting (captain), Adam Gilchrist, Nathan Bracken, Daniel Cullen, Michael Clarke, Brad Hogg, Michael Hussey, Mitchell Johnson, Simon Katich, Brett Lee, Damien Martyn, Glenn McGrath, Shane Watson, Andrew Symonds.

WEST INDIES (from): Brian Lara (captain), Ramnaresh Sarwan, Chris Gayle, Shivnarine Chandernpaul, Runako Morton, Dwayne Bravo, Dwayne Smith, Carlton Baugh, Fidel Edwards, Corey Collymore, Ian Bradshaw, Jerome Taylor, Marlon Samuels, Wavell Hinds.



Ad



PHOTO: AFP

Australia captain Ricky Ponting stretches during a training session in Mumbai on Saturday ahead of the final of the Champions Trophy against West Indies on Sunday.

Ricky being humble

Cricket

AFP, Mumbai

Captain Ricky Ponting expressed surprise at being named Test Player of the Year as Australia dominated the International Cricket Council awards here.

Ponting, who was also voted as Player of the Year, said Shane Warne should have been named the top Test cricketer.

"To be honest, I was shocked when I was named the Test player of the year," said Ponting. "I thought Shane deserved it more than me."

Warne took 96 wickets in the year while Ponting played 16 Tests in the voting period, scoring 1,791 Test runs at an average of 68.88.

With the Australians ruling both Test and one-day cricket, Ponting was also named on the ICC teams for both versions of the game, but surprisingly was not made captain.

Mahela Jayawardene of Sri Lanka was named the year's best captain over Ponting, England's Michael Vaughan and India's Rahul Dravid.

The choice of Dravid as the Test captain and Jayawardene as one-day captain over Ponting drew gasps from many in the crowd at the

awards function late Friday.

David has led India for only a year, losing an away Test series to Pakistan, beating Sri Lanka and drawing with England at home, before winning a rare Test series abroad in the West Indies.

Jayawardene, who replaced the injured Marvan Atapattu as Sri Lankan captain, convincingly won the one-day series in England but failed to make the semifinals of the ongoing Champions Trophy.

"I am as confused as the next man on how these awards were decided," said former Indian batsman Gundappa Vishwanath, who attended the ceremony. "I am not surprised that Ponting is more shocked than happy."

However, Ponting also hailed a bumper night for Australian cricketer with Michael Hussey named One-Day Player of the Year, Karen Rolton the first Women's Player of the Year and Simon Taufel best umpire for the third successive time.

Australian players also dominated both the Test and one-day teams.

"It's a great night for Australian cricket," said Ponting. "It has been a satisfying year personally and also for the rest of the team."

"We have set a new standard for ourselves, we've worked hard and

thankfully it's paying off for us at the moment."

He said the stunning loss of the Ashes to England last year had strengthened Australian resolve to win the return clash starting later this month.

"I think we learned a lot from that Ashes series and we are a better team for that so I think we will be a very difficult side to beat this summer."

"The challenge for us now is to try to win the Champions Trophy final against the West Indies on Sunday and then head back to Australia and try to win the Ashes back."

England batsman Ian Bell won the Emerging Player of the Year award while England picked up the Spirit of Cricket award.

Voting for the awards was done by a 56-member ICC Awards Academy, comprising the 10 Test captains, the ICC match referees, the elite panel of umpires, legends of the game and some members of the media.

The Academy members cast a 3-2-1 vote (three votes being the greater value) from the list of nominees, with the votes tallied to produce a winner.

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