

## BFF strikes deal with ABA

UNB, Dhaka

Manchester-based football marketing agent ABA Marketing, Promotions & Sports Consultants on Saturday signed a five-year contract with Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) to pick young Bangladeshi footballers under their talent hunt programme.

Under the contract, ABA will initially select five to six talented Bangladeshi booters in 15-21 age group in the first batch for a couple of years to groom them under famous English football clubs like Manchester United and Oldham.

The selected players will fly for the United Kingdom under a long-term package program not only to be groomed under the English clubs, but will also have a chance to play in the junior team of the clubs.

The ABA scouts and representatives will finally select the players in May next year from a shortlist during the Bangladesh tour of English First Division club Oldham Athletic.

Oldham will arrive here on May 6 to play some exhibition matches against Abahani and Mohammedan.

ABA Business Development and Finance Director Brian O'Hehir and BFF president SA Sultan signed the contract for their respective sides at a simple function at the BFF office last evening.

## Batch 02 hold 04

SPORTS REPORTER

Reigning champions Batch 04 were held to a goalless draw by Batch 02 in their group encounter in the North South University Intra-batch Football tournament at the WAPDA ground yesterday.

In an action-packed encounter, Batch 04 pressed from the beginning but their opponents were resolute in defence, giving both sides a point each. Batch 04 now have four points in their two group matches, confirming their semi-final berth.

In the day's other match, Asif scored the solitary goal as newcomers Batch 06 triumphed over Batch 05. In an evenly contested match, Asif's crisp finish was the difference.

The remaining group matches will take place next week.

## Utsey confident

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Hasan's two each but Nafees's batting also seemed to be a permanent problem for them as the young opener smashed three unbeaten hundreds in a row.

Despite the heavy defeat in the first match, the young Zimbabwean skipper was hopeful about his team's chances of bouncing back in the series.

"We are now just one down and there are four matches to go. I played bad cricket in the last match but I am hopeful that we can bounce back from the last match's outcome," he said.

He was also excited with the arrival of two new players -- Graeme Cremer and Ed Rainsford.

"Two guys are coming from Zimbabwe to join the team and definitely their inclusion should strengthen the squad," said Utsey.

## Spectacularly

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team here soured when the communist North conducted a nuclear weapons test on October 9, raising tensions in the region.

Badminton champion Bao Chuntai carried the flag for China's huge delegation seeking to top the medal table for the seventh consecutive time since 1982.

ADoha resident, who brought his wife and children, said he thought the ceremony had been a great spectacle. "We are very proud for Qatar," he said.

Organisers had billed it as the most spectacular ever, eclipsing the Sydney 2000 Olympics which Australian company David Atkins Enterprises was also responsible for.

Qatar has spent more than 2.8 billion dollars building new stadiums and infrastructure for the Games, the first held in the Gulf region and only the second in the Middle East. Iran was host in 1974.

The Games run until December 15.

## Spurs gunned

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With Spurs' frustration evident, Jenas was lucky not to receive a second yellow after hauling Jungberg to the ground, whilst Adebayor was awarded a standing ovation when he was removed for Theo Walcott with four minutes to go. Eboue nearly scored a carbon copy of his strike against Hamburg in the UEFA Champions League in the dying minutes, but 3-0 was more than enough for Arsenal to silence their critics with a morale boosting victory over their arch-rivals.



The Bangladesh delegation wave at the crowd during their presentation in the opening ceremony of the 15th Asian Games at the Khalifa Stadium in Doha on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Win matters most: Veeru

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Virender Sehwag said that the Indian team would take tremendous confidence from their victory in the Pro20 game, and praised both his bowlers and batsmen for the six-wicket victory at the Wanderers.

"We clicked in both batting and bowling," said Sehwag. "It's a team game, doesn't matter who performs. An Indian win is what matters."

It was India's first experience of the Twenty20 format, with the inaugural World Cup less than a year away, and Sehwag was delighted with the experience. "It's an exciting form of the game and it's very fast-paced," he said. "You can learn with experience, and I'm sure that the Indian public will enjoy it when it's held there."

The remaining group matches will take place next week.

Sehwag added that India's first domestic Twenty20 tournament would help in popularising the format. "It's important to play it at the domestic level because you can't go into the World Cup next year without experience. The selectors too can gauge which are the Twenty20 players."

Dinesh Karthik, whose unbeaten 31 fetched him the master blaster award, basked in the glow of the performance. A six off the first ball of the final over bowled by Robin Peterson set up the win, and Karthik suggested that it had been part of the plan, with nine needed from six balls. "I was confident that I could pull off a big shot," he said. "I had it all worked out in my mind. I knew there were a couple of areas where to hit."

Karthik indicated that India had always been in control of the run chase. "It was important that someone put up their hand and did well," he said. "Viru gave us a good start

and Dinesh (Mongia) played very well and consolidated. It was important to get off to a good start and from there on, we did pretty well."

Karthik has played as a specialist batsman on the tour, with Mahendra Singh Dhoni keeping his place behind the stumps, and he distinguished himself with some superb stops in the outfield today (Saturday). "The team management told me that I would be required and what was expected of me, and I prepared well," he said. "It was fantastic of them to tell me what was expected of me."

"I really worked hard on my fielding and the results were there. I don't want to be a liability on the field. I want to make sure that I'm one of the top three fielders in India. Even if I play as a batsman, I can stop runs in the field."

"If I was competing as a wicketkeeper, my mindset would be different, but now as I'm competing as a batsman I have more opportu-

nity to do well. I have six slots to push myself into the team."

Sehwag had to face the inevitable questions about being stripped of the vice-captaincy for the Test series. "I don't feel any pressure," he said, when asked how he had responded. "If I'm not vice-captain, it does not matter. I'm happy with whatever the selectors have decided."

VVS Laxman, who will now be Rahul Dravid's deputy in the Tests, arrived in Johannesburg on Friday morning, and Sehwag said that his arrival would give the team a boost. When asked to comment on Sourav Ganguly's selection in the squad, he suggested that too much shouldn't be made of it. "He'll come in like any other member (of the team)," he said. "There will be no special treatment. His record is very good, and he's played here before. He knows how to handle pressure at any time."

## Dinajpur in zonal final by default

SPORTS REPORTER

Rangpur left the field due to crowd trouble handing hosts Dinajpur a four-wicket victory in the zonal semifinal of the National Cricket Championship at the Dinajpur Stadium yesterday.

Some Rangpur players complained to the umpires when sections of the crowd apparently threatened them with sticks in hand. They walked off the ground with the hosts needing a further 13 runs to win in eight overs with four wickets in hand. As the players, led by skipper Ruben, refused to budge the umpires declared Dinajpur the winners by four wickets, placing them in today's zonal final against Gaibandha.

Earlier, Rangpur batted first and only mustered 173 for nine in 50 overs with alok top-scoring with 40. Labu and Mithu took three wickets each for the bowling side. In reply, Dinajpur's Faisal (46) and Sayem (32) took their side to a winning position when trouble began at the northern town.

In other matches, Chittagong rode on Robin's 66 to beat Comilla by seven wickets at the Chittagong Stadium. At the Barguna Stadium, Khulna completely outclassed Patuakhali by 163 runs with Himel taking six wickets for the winners.

Away at Faridpur, Manikganj won a low-scoring affair against Rajbari by 32 runs while Dhaka beat Gazipur by 14 runs, thanks to an all-round show by Sharifullah. He took 3 wickets and top-scored with 48 runs.

## DAVIS CUP FINAL Russia take 2-1 lead

AFP, Moscow

Marat Safin and Dmitry Tursunov handed Russia a crucial 2-1 lead in the Davis Cup final with a convincing doubles victory over David Nalbandian and Agustin Calleri of Argentina here on Saturday.

The Russians claimed a 6-2, 6-3, 6-4 victory in one hour 38min to give the hosts a crucial lead going into Sunday's deciding reversed singles rubbers.

"Together with Dmitry (Tursunov) we are a good and experienced team," Safin said after the match. "We worked out our plan for the match and everything worked perfectly."

"We were just playing every single point allowing our opponents to make mistakes," Tursunov added. "And they were making mistakes throughout the match."

Not even the presence of Argentine football legend Diego Maradona, among the thousand or so Argentinian fans, could boost the visitors as Safin and Tursunov broke Nalbandian's serve early before racing to a 4-1 lead and wrapping up the first set in 26 minutes.

The second set was almost a carbon copy of the first. The Russians, who were champions in 2002, again raced to a 4-1 lead breaking Nalbandian's serve, and experienced few troubles in keeping their advantage to claim the second set inside an hour.

## Bangladesh's bad

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In the women's 50m breaststroke event, Dolly Akhter failed miserably as she finished seventh in the third heat, ending her swim in 36.99 seconds.

Bangladesh are also participating in athletics, weightlifting, judo, taekwondo, golf, archery and hockey.

## England on top

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clubbed Glenn McGrath for three fours in one over and raised his hundred with a scampering single off Clark before lunch.

He ran down the field holding his bat and helmet aloft in jubilation before a warm embrace from Collingwood on attaining his sixth century in his 20th Test.

Flintoff (38 not out) and Ashley Giles (27 not out) put on 60 runs before the skipper made the declaration immediately after passing 550.

It was a demoralising day for Australia's two great bowlers, Warne and McGrath, first and third all-time leading Test wicket-takers.

Warne was heading for his worst Test drubbing before he claimed his only wicket of the innings after conceding 145 runs. He finished the day with 1-167 off 53 overs.

It was Warne's worst Test return in an Ashes Test against England and was close to his all-time low of 0-147 against India in Calcutta in

1998. An exasperated Warne even resorted to bowling outside leg-stump in an attempt to entice Pietersen to get himself out to a rash shot, to no avail.

McGrath, heaved for six by Flintoff over square leg late in the day, claimed the unwanted milestone of going for 100 runs for the first time in 121 Tests with 0-107 off 30 overs.

First-change Clark was by far the best-performed bowler with 3-75 off 34 overs.

### SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at the close of the second day of the second Ashes Test between Australia and England at Adelaide Oval on Saturday:

**ENGLAND:** First innings (266 for 3 overnight)

Strauss c Martyn b Clark 14  
Cook c Gilchrist b Clark 27  
Bell c and b Lee 60  
Collingwood c Gilchrist b Clark 206  
Pietersen run out (Ponting) 158

Flintoff not out 38  
Jones c Martyn b Warne 1  
Giles not out 27  
Extras: (lb-10, w-2, nb-8) 20  
Total: (For 6 wickets decl in 168 overs) 551  
Fall of wickets: 1-32, 2-45, 3-158, 4-468, 5-489, 6-491

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Lee	34	1	139	1
McGrath	30	5	107	0
Clark	34	6	75	3
Warne	53	9	167	1
Clarke	17	2	53	0

**AUSTRALIA:** First innings

Langer c Pietersen b Flintoff 4  
Hayden not out 12  
Ponting not out 11  
Extras: (nb-1) 1  
Total: (For 1 wkt in 9 overs) 28  
Fall of wicket: 1-8

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hoggard	5	1	14	0
Flintoff	4	0	14	1

# England still far away

Cricket

REUTERS, Adelaide

England's cricketers say they still have a long way to go to win the second Ashes Test against Australia with the real hard work still in front of them.

England rebounded from their 277-run loss in last week's opening Test in Brisbane to finish the second day at Adelaide Oval in a strong position after declaring at 551-6 then reducing Australia to 28-1 at stumps.

Paul Collingwood made 206 to become just the third Englishman to score a Test double-century in Australia while Kevin Pietersen matched his highest Test score of 158.

The pair shared a record fourth wicket partnership of 310 but said they were wary about making any bold predictions for the match because the Adelaide Oval was so slow.

"We certainly haven't cracked it," Collingwood told a news conference.

"We've had two good days against them and you have to remember that this is a pretty flat, slow pitch and you're not going to be blasted out on this wicket.

"We've gone along with and

given ourselves a lot of confidence over the past two innings of doing well against them. We're heading in the right direction. We've had a couple of good days here but we want to press on."

Pietersen said England's success in getting the wicket of Justin Langer cheaply just before stumps had given the team the confidence to go on with the job on Sunday.

"It was really important. That's what we set ourselves out to do," he said.

"We set ourselves a target of going out there and coming hard at the Aussies and picking up a wicket. "Our target was one wicket and it's just a case of hitting our disciplines tomorrow (Sunday), setting really good fields, positive defensive fields possibly and boring the Australians."

Collingwood admitted he was a bundle of nerves after starting the day on 98 not out.

The 30-year-old was dismissed for 96 in Brisbane when he had a rush of blood but made no mistake this time, clipped express paceman Brett Lee through midwicket for three runs in the second over of the day.

"It's a nice feeling. It's been a good day for us," Collingwood said. "I turned up this morning and needed two more for my century, there were a few nerves around."

"It wasn't just the century I was looking at I wanted to make a big one."

"It was the nervous nineties that got me out last week. I just wanted to get out of the way and go on."

Pietersen also made amends for falling agonisingly short of a hundred in Brisbane when he was out for 92 as he brought up his sixth Test ton off 149 balls in 199 minutes.

He was eventually run out for 158, the same score he made against Australia in the last Ashes Test in 2005 and again against Sri Lanka at Lord's this year.

"You can probably see from that way I walked off the field, I was full of laughs and giggles thinking surely not," Pietersen said about his run of 158.

"If you'd have given me 158 yesterday (Friday) I would have taken it but it is disappointing getting so close but it's not a bad problem to have."

"To get ourselves to 550 shows a lot of grit and determination and they way we play our cricket."

"For Colly and I to be part of most of those runs is fantastic. The way he plays and the way I play complement each other really well."

"It's a flat wicket. Our bowlers are going to have to bowl really, really well and we're going to have to catch all our catches."

# India win at last

Cricket

AFP, Johannesburg

India ended their losing streak on their tour of South Africa with a six-wicket win with a ball to spare in a Twenty20 international at the Wanderers Stadium Friday.

India's bowlers set up the victory by restricting South Africa to 126 for nine on a surprisingly lively pitch before captain Virender Sehwag blazed to a quick 34.

India were heading for an easy win in their first 20-overs international but there were some jitters towards the end as left-hander Dinesh Mongia was out for 38 to left-arm spinner Robin Peterson, leaving India with 19 to win off the last 15 balls.

It came down to nine off the last over, bowled by Peterson, but Dinesh Karthik hit the first ball for six over square leg and India were able to get the remaining three runs in singles.

"The bowlers did a fantastic job," said Sehwag. "Everybody's happy. We've got the confidence and we'll take this to Sunday's game."

India play South Africa in the fifth and final one-day international at Centurion Sunday. South Africa led the series 3-0 with one match remaining.

Karthik, who finished with 31 not out, was given out by umpire Brian Jerling, caught at slip by Graeme Smith off Albie Morkel, when he had six. Karthik stood at the crease before starting to move towards the dressing room.

The umpires consulted and the decision was referred to television umpire Karl Hurter, who gave Karthik not out when replays showed the ball had bounced between hitting the bottom of his bat and going to Smith.

Smith won the toss for the fourth successive time against the tourists and decided to bat on a pitch which had a green tinge and gave the bowlers plenty of assistance.

Zaheer Khan set the tone with a superb spell of two for 15 in four overs, including the wicket of Smith

for the fourth time.

Smith, who made only one run in three innings in three one-day internationals, falling to Khan on each occasion, made 16 and looked in reasonable form until he was trapped leg before by the last ball of Khan's spell.

Ajit Agarkar started his spell with a rare maiden over, which included the wicket of Herschelle Gibbs, but had to leave the field with a groin injury three balls into his third over when he had figures of one for ten.

Left-handed Albie Morkel hit three sixes and top-scored with 27 off 18 balls. One of his sixes, off Harbhajan Singh, sailed over midwicket and out of the ground into a neighbouring block of flats.

Morkel and Johan van der Wath (21) put on 37 off 23 balls for the sixth wicket in the only productive partnership of the innings.

India became the last of the Test nations to participate in the shortest form of international cricket. South Africa were playing in their fourth match, having won one and lost two.

South Africa rested six of the players who have given them an unbeatable 3-0 lead in a one-day international series, including star performers Jacques Kallis, Shaun Pollock, Mark Boucher and Makhaya Ntini.

Rain started to fall in the 12th over and it would probably have been enough to stop play in a normal one-day international but the umpires kept the players on the field and the Indians continued uncomplainingly.

The rain eased before the end of the innings and the weather was fine during India's innings.

Sachin Tendulkar had another disappointing innings, being bowled off an inside edge for 10 by Charl Langeveldt, but Sehwag was in sparkling form, hitting five fours and a six in his 29-ball innings, before he was run out following a mix-up with Mongia.

Mongia shared stands of 43 for the second wicket with Sehwag and 37 for the fourth wicket with Karthik before sloggong Peterson to deep mid-on.

# China fire early

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easily won the women's Trap individual event with a tally of 89 points, nine more than the joint 80 scored by teammate Zhu Mei and Lin Yi Chun of Taiwan.

Zhu took the silver on the tie-breaker to make it a 1-2 for the Chinese.

"The wind created a problem but I had prepared for that well over the last two days," said Li.

"It is nice to end the day with both the team and individual golds."

In the team event, Li and her compatriots scored 195 points while North Korea won the silver with 186 points and South Korea the bronze with 174 points.

China had earlier won the first gold medal of the Games when they claimed the men's 10m Air Rifle team event.

South Korea won the silver and India bagged the bronze.

Twenty gold medal events will be decided Saturday including six in the swimming pool. Six titles were also won on the shooting ranges, with the rest of the spoils shared between judo, weightlifting and artistic gymnastics.

For many countries, particularly China, the Games are crucial preparations in the lead up to the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and performances here are being watched closely.

As well as medal events, the basketball competition continues with China making its first outing, minus NBA superstar Yao Ming.

They take on Kazakhstan, aiming to regain the gold they lost after a

16-year reign to South Korea in Busan in 2002.

In Yao's absence, they will look to former Miami Heat centre Wang Zhizhi to lead from the front, aided by future NBA rookie Yi Jianlian.

Football group matches resume after a day's break with quarter-final slots at stake. South Korea takes on Vietnam, while Kuwait plays the Palestinian territories and United Arab Emirates are up against Jordan.

## Fergie shrugs

FROM PAGE 20

will be back, as will Park Ji-Sung and we will also have Henrik, so our squad will be stronger.

"The spirit in the place is fantastic. We are playing great football and we are defending better than we have in my entire time at this club."

"We will still be at the top when Henrik comes - don't worry about that."

## Veron facing

FROM PAGE 20

Parma (1998-99), Lazio (1999-2001) and Inter Milan (2004-06).

He also played for Manchester United and Chelsea in the English Premiership from 2001-2004 but at the end of last season returned to Argentina to re-sign for his first club Estudiantes de la Plata.

# NZ turn back to Sinclair

Cricket

AFP, Wellington

Mathew Sinclair's two-year exile from New Zealand Test cricket has ended with the two-time double centurion recalled Saturday to the New Zealand squad to play Sri Lanka.

Sinclair, who made 214 on debut against the West Indies in 1999, has rarely been an automatic selection and last played against Australia in Adelaide in November 2004.

Mills, the Black Caps stand out bowler during last month's Champions Trophy in India, has broken down with a patella tendon injury, while O'Brien and Mason, who have just three tests between them, are both on the comeback trail from back injuries.

### SQUAD

Stephen Fleming (captain), Craig Cumming, Jamie How, Mathew Sinclair, Nathan Astle, Jacob Oram, Brendon McCullum, Daniel Vettori, James Franklin, Shane Bond, Chris Martin, Michael Mason, Ian