

Big guns fire at large



SPORTS REPORTER

Big spenders Abahani, Old DOHS and Sonargaon Cricketers all won by big margins in the Kai-Altech Premier Division Twenty20 League in different venues across the city yesterday.

Abahani, who revitalised their side after a few years, won their second consecutive match when they defeated Young Pegasus by 57 runs in a high-scoring encounter at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium. Defending champions Old DOHS crushed Kalabagan by eight wickets at the Fatullah Stadium while last season's runners-up Sonargaon cantered to a nine-wicket victory over Indira Road at the same venue.

Mohammedan again had a close shave as they prevailed in a big-scoring match over Brothers Union by seven runs while Victoria and City Club also won their matches on the day.

In the morning match at the Dhanmondi ground, Nazimuddin, coming in at number three, raced to 63 off only 44 balls with four fours and as many sixes as Abahani piled on 185 for five in their 20 overs. The batsman from Chittagong was well supported by Tigers all-rounder Mashrafe bin Mortuza who clattered a 12-ball 27.

Young Pegasus gave a good account of themselves but never looked anywhere near chasing down the massive target. They stalled at 128 for seven.

All-rounder Mohammad Sharif took three wickets as Sonargaon dismissed Indira Road for only 101. Then, Ejaz Ahmed hit a half-century as his side won with three overs to spare and with nine wickets in hand.

Tigers opener Mehrab Hossain continued his good Twenty20 form as Old DOHS easily chased down a 108-run target set by last year's survivors Kalabagan. Mehrab struck six fours and a six in his 60-run knock. His opening partner, Tamim Iqbal, was however out first ball after his brilliant showing in the first match.

When Kalabagan batted, it was veteran Khaled Mahmud who was the pick of the attack taking two wickets for just 13.

Imtiaz Hossain ensured that Mohammedan went past the so-called safety mark of 150 runs as his 50-ball blitz of 76 runs got the popular Motihheel outfit to 170.

Imtiaz, who had a decent first-class foray this season, struck five massive sixes and six fours. Brothers Union, however, gave the giants a scare as they were almost on course for their first victory in the competition but 20 runs in the final over was too much as they only mustered 12 and lost by seven runs. Shahriar Hossain, Hannan Sarkar and Imran Ahmed all batted well but it was not enough. Incidentally, Brothers Union only lost two wickets in their chase.

City Club, though, ensured they had their first win as they outplayed Partex by 58 runs. Mir Mushtaq had the highest score of the day, clattering eleven fours and two sixes

to score 84 runs off only 59 balls as his side notched up 182-6. Partex, once again failed to make any attempt as they were stuck at 124 for 5.

In the second match at the bumpy venue in Dhanmondi, Bangladesh Biman rode on a half-century from all-rounder Mushfiqur Rahman to score 127 for six. But contributions from Golam Mabud, Nasiruddin and Waseeluddin ensured that Victoria kept their hundred per cent record intact as they reached the target in 16.3 overs. Waseel starred both with the bat and ball and was adjudged man-of-the-match.

CA Test Star, the new ball which was introduced to the competition in this round so far had no complaints from any players or match officials.

Today's matches: Old DOHS v City Club (DCS), Victoria v Partex (BKSP-2), Biman v Kalabagan (Fatullah) at 9am; Sonargaon v Abahani (BKSP-2), Mohammedan v Young Pegasus (NOS, Brothers Union v Indira Road (DCS) at 1pm.

SCORES IN BRIEF
ABAHANI: 185-5 in 20 overs (Nazimuddin 63, Sadat 38, Sharif 2-24).
YOUNG PEGASUS: 128-7 in 20 overs (Sunny 33, Mohon 21, Shahjada 2-16).
Result: Abahani won by 57 runs.
BIMAN: 127-6 in 20 overs (Mushfiqur 58*, Raqibul 22, Waseel 2-22).
VICTORIA: 128-3 in 16.3 overs (Waseel 30*, Nasir 30, Niaz 2-18).
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Abahani batsman Nazimuddin works the ball on the off-side during his quickfire knock of 63 against Young Pegasus in the Kai-Altech Premier Division Twenty20 League at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Did U Know?

WG Grace of England played his last Test aged 50, as captain and the oldest to do so.



Didier Drogba
(Chelsea's Ivorian star)
 "I am giving my best and I think everyone is happy with me not just because I am scoring goals but also because I am working for the team." After scoring the decisive goal against Newcastle in their League Cup quarterfinal tie.



ESPN
 English Premier Football League
 Fulham v West Ham
 Live at 6:40 pm
 Liverpool v Watford
 Live at 8:55 pm

STAR Sports
 English Premier Football League
 Aston Villa v Man United
 Live at 8:55 pm
 Wigan v Chelsea
 Live at 11:10 pm

Zee Sports
 Serie A
 Inter Milan v Atalanta
 Live at 10:00 pm

Bangladesh eves lose two games in India

Bangladesh women's football team lost their second match in a row in the tour of India when they went down 2-0 to Orissa State Women's Football Association at Baragarh, Orissa yesterday.

The Bangladesh eves lost to the same team by an identical margin in their first exhibition match at Sambalpur, also in Orissa, on Thursday.

Bangladesh will play five more matches before returning home on December 30.

V-Day golf concludes

The two-day long Banglalink Victory Day Golf tournament ended yesterday at the Kurmitola Golf course.

Kutubul Alam Chowdhury won the men's title while Medeau Pascale bagged the ladies' title in the tournament where 348 golfers took place.

Lt Gen Moeen U Ahmed, Chief of Army Staff and president of Kurmitola Golf Club, distributed prizes among the winners.

Div I kabaddi results

Shaheed Mozaffar Sampriti Sangha beat Sinha Sangha 56-20 with four lonas in the First Division Kabaddi League at the Outer Stadium Kabaddi court yesterday.

In the day's other matches, Shaheed Surujaman Smriti Sangsad crushed Maniknagar Kabaddi Club 70-22 while Maniknagar Unnayan Samity outplayed Diamond SC 46-32.

Sanath show sinks NZ



BBC ONLINE, undated

Sanath Jayasuriya rolled back the years with a blistering half-century as Sri Lanka beat New Zealand by 18 runs in a rain-affected Twenty20 match.

The tourists were 62-1 after 5.5 overs in Wellington when the weather closed in and were later declared the winners via the Duckworth-Lewis calculations.

Jayasuriya hit a six and 10 fours in his 51 not out off 23 balls.

He also took 3-21 in New Zealand's innings after Brendan McCullum (39) and Stephen Fleming (38) put on 80.

The home side began with a potentially important edge in experience in the shortest form of the game, having played three previous Twenty20 matches, and went along at more than 10 runs per over at the start of their innings.

Farveez Maharoof eventually bowled Fleming but it was the introduction of spinners Muttiah Muralidaran and Jayasuriya that finally enabled Sri Lanka to exercise a measure of control.

Muralidaran removed McCullum, who struck four sixes in his 22-ball cameo, with the help of Upl Tharanga's catch at deep mid-wicket and also won an lbw decision against Ross Taylor (21).

Jayasuriya, meanwhile, had James Franklin lbw for 18 after he was promoted to number three by the Kiwis and bowled the dangerous Nathan Astle, who made 19 off 13 balls.

James Marshall became Jayasuriya's third victim after managing only a single and New Zealand would have been disappointed to add only 30 in the final five overs of their innings.

Sri Lanka began their reply with a flourish as Jayasuriya hit two fours in Shane Bond's first over, the first a fortuitous top-edged pull over the keeper, and three off Franklin, who took the new ball at the other

end.

Bond made a breakthrough in the fifth over when he had Tharanga caught at gully for six by Fleming, but it did not check Jayasuriya's uninhibited approach.

Andre Adams was brought on in the sixth over and his second ball was driven through the covers for four, his third was picked up over the leg-side for six, his fourth was drilled past mid-on for four and his fifth was carved over backward point to take Jayasuriya to fifty.

But he was spared further punishment as the rain began to fall and the umpires decided the players should return to the dressing room.

The two teams will meet again in another Twenty20 match in Auckland on Tuesday before beginning a series of five one-day internationals.



Sri Lanka's Sanath Jayasuriya follows through on a square-drive during the first Twenty20 match against New Zealand at Wellington on Friday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

Cricket took a backseat



AFP, London

Shane Warne's announcement of his Test match retirement this week was just the latest in a series of events beyond the boundary which dominated the cricket headlines in 2006.

Warne, widely regarded as the greatest leg-spinner the game has known and with a world record 699 Test wickets to his name, said he would call time on his Australian career at the end of the ongoing Ashes series against England.

And with all the perfectly judged flight and spin of one of his trademark leg-breaks, Warne now has the chance to become the first man to take 700 Test wickets at the Melbourne Cricket Ground -- his home venue -- when the Boxing Day Test starts there on December 26.

"People have turned up, I like to think that I've given them entertainment and I've tried my guts out

every single time," said Warne, who will continue to play for English county side Hampshire.

Australia responded to last year's Ashes defeat by winning 13 of their 14 subsequent Tests with one draw and racing into an unbeatable 3-0 series lead in their current series with England, the Ashes regained in 15 days.

England suffered a blow when opener Marcus Trescothick withdrew before the Test series with a recurrence of a stress-related illness, his exit further ammunition for critics of the seemingly non-stop international schedule.

England, beset by injuries, poor planning and muddled selection ended 2006 in faltering fashion but could take heart from the form of rising stars such as left-arm spinner Monty Panesar, a crowd favourite wherever he played.

Meanwhile arguably the most dramatic cricket event of the year revolved around no play at all.

Pakistan's refusal to take the field

against England at The Oval in August after being penalised for ball-tampering saw Inzamamul Haq's men become the first side in 129 years of Test history to forfeit a match.

Australian umpire Darrell Hair, widely regarded as the prime mover in penalising Pakistan, was in the spotlight again when it was revealed he'd offered to resign in return for 500,000 dollars.

His actions gave Hair's critics among the powerful Asian bloc of nations the pretext to drop him from the ICC's panel of elite umpires.

Pakistan faced fresh controversy when Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif were both banned for drug-taking by their national board, a widely praised move, only for the two fast bowlers to have their suspensions overturned on appeal.

On the field, the balance between bat and ball appeared to be shifting in favour of the batsmen.

South Africa's successful chase

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Tigers to play four ODIs in Zimbabwe

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh cricket team will reach Zimbabwe on February 1 and play four one-day internationals as part of preparation for the next year's World Cup.

The cricket committee of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday confirmed the timetable at its meeting where some other important decisions were also taken.

"It is now confirmed that the Bangladesh team will land Zimbabwe on February 1 and return home on February 11 after playing four one-day internationals," informed BCB general secretary Mahbubul Anam, also the chairman of the cricket committee, after a lengthy meeting.

He also informed that the 30-member probabilities for the World Cup in the West Indies will be announced on January 13 and the 15-member final squad will be made public exactly a month later.

In another important move the committee has decided to formulate a doping policy for the board.

"We will formulate a doping policy and it will be placed at the next board meeting for approval. We will prefer random doping tests before the World Cup," informed Mahbub. The next board meeting is likely to be held on sometimes next month.

The committee has taken the initiative to go with the worldwide doping policy by the International Cricket Council (ICC). The issue came into spotlight after two Pakistani fast bowlers -- Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif -- tested positive during the ICC Champions Trophy in India.

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Gambhir, David look fluent

CRICINFO, undated

Gautam Gambhir powered his way to 79 before retiring as the Indians piled on the runs after lunch against a Kwazulu-Natal Invitation XI at the Crusaders Ground. Rahul Dravid too retired after making a fluent 38. VVS Laxman made only four, and Sourav Ganguly and Irfan Pathan took it through to tea at 171 for 3.

Gambhir, looking to play himself into the Test XI, did his cause no harm with an entertaining innings against a mediocre attack. There was some lovely drives through the covers and midwicket, and when Taron Pillay came on to bowl legspin, he targetted him straight away, pinging him for two sixes over the leg side. David started in circumspect fashion, and then opened up with some superb drives and late deflections.

The only blot in the afternoon session was the cheap dismissal of Laxman, who tickled one from McMillan behind the stumps. With Tendulkar sitting out the batting

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McGrath not going soon



AFP, Melbourne

Australian paceman Glenn McGrath on Friday quashes rumours he would follow teammate Shane Warne by retiring from Test cricket after the current Ashes series against England.

McGrath dismissed a report in Sydney's Daily Telegraph that he would retire from Test cricket after the fifth Ashes match in Sydney but continue to play one-day internationals.

"To me, I'm just preparing for another game. Nothing's changed since the end of the Perth Test match, apart from the fact that Shane Warne's retiring at the end of the Sydney Test," he told Sky News after arriving in Melbourne for the fourth Test.

But Australian captain Ricky Ponting, who sat next to McGrath on the flight, said the paceman had told him he was stunned at the

reports.

"I actually sat next to him on the plane today and he can't believe some of the attention and some of the things that have been written in the paper, particularly today," Ponting said.

"I certainly haven't had the conversation with Glenn that I had with Shane the other night so that would to me indicate that he's thinking about playing a bit longer yet," he said.

McGrath, who has claimed more Test wickets than any other fast bowler, will play in the domestic one-day series and the World Cup in the West Indies which begins in March.

But he did not make any promises about playing in Australia's next Test match in 11 months' time.

"I don't look that far ahead. In

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Botham urged Warne to stay



AFP, London

Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne revealed Friday that England legend Ian Botham was among those who had tried to talk him out of retiring.

Warne, 37, announced Thursday he will quit international cricket after the final Test against England following Australia's Ashes-winning victory in Perth.

"A few people tried to talk me out of it. Ian Botham was one. He told me I'm still at the top of my game, that I'm the greatest cricketer that ever lived and that people in England would love to see me play

in the Ashes series in 2009," Warne wrote in his column in The Times.

"Ricky Ponting (Australia captain), whom I told after we'd won in Perth, was a bit shocked but said he respected my decision. I had actually had a chat with him about it before the Brisbane Test so he already had inkling about my intentions."

"I also shared a beer with Ian Chappell (former Australia captain), whose opinion I greatly respect. He said it was better to be asked 'why are you?' rather than 'why don't you?'."

Warne has no regrets about his decision.

He said: "I'm happy. It's good to be leaving Australian cricket in such a healthy state."

"I'm looking forward to playing again for Hampshire both next year and in the 2008 season."

"I don't think I could give up the game totally yet and I signed a three-year contract last year that I always intended to honour."

Warne admitted that he would have continued playing if Australia had lost international cricket's oldest trophy again.

"Had we not won the Ashes this time round, I can safely say I would not be retiring," he said.

"I would have played on until 2009 and gone to England that year to try to get the urn back."

"The Ashes means that much to me -- they are special. I grew up

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TEXTBOOK: Indian skipper Rahul Dravid poised to drive ball on the first day of the two-day tour match against Kwazulu Natal Invitation XI at the Crusaders Ground in Durban on Friday.

PHOTO: INTERNET