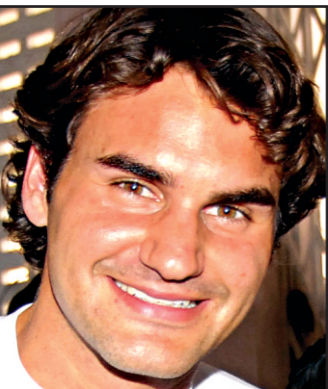




Did U Know?

Peter Edward 'Pete' Rose, Sr., nicknamed Charlie Hustle, is the all-time Major League Baseball leader in hits (4,256), games played (3,562), and at bats (14,053).



Roger Federer

(World No. 1 tennis player) "I know the sport is huge here. I follow it myself." After playing cricket on Saturday at a shelter camp for tsunami refugees in Sri Lanka.

Oldest stick earns \$1.9 million!

AFP, Montreal

The world's oldest ice hockey stick, a hickory shaft carved in the 1850s, sold for 1.9 million US dollars (2.2 million Canadian) here and will be displayed at the Hockey Hall of Fame.

An anonymous Canadian made the winning bid in an internet auction purchase, according to 45-year-old seller Gord Sharpe, an Ontario man who has owned the family heirloom since he was nine.

David Romeo, chief executive of selling agency Auction Wire, said the stick is among the most important items in hockey. "The buyer was a private individual, a Canadian, who wants to remain anonymous. He told us that he plans to have the stick over at Hockey Hall of Fame and to keep it there until he decides what he's going to do," Romeo said. "For now he wants to keep it in Canada."

Bowlers toil in heat

CRICINFO, undated

Munaf Patel picked up two wickets on his return from an ankle injury, but the Indian bowlers were made to toil on a hot and humid day at the Northwood Crusaders Ground as their two-day match against a Kwazulu-Natal Invitation XI ended in a draw.

Having declared on the overnight score of 270 for 6, the Indians were given the runaround in the afternoon session before some quick wickets prior to and after tea gave the scorecard a more respectable look.

When play was called off an hour after tea, the home side had progressed to 243 for 8, with Rivash Gobind and Michael van Vuuren having made eye-catching half-centuries.

Zaheer Khan and Sreesanth, who shared the new ball at the Wanderers, took it again on Saturday morning, and Munaf had to wait till the 12th over for his chance. The impact was immediate; with Fabian Lazarus struck on the pad in front of the stumps. But Ross McMillan and Gobind then rebuilt the innings slowly, as only 68 came in the 27 overs before lunch.

It was a different story after the interval. Sourav Ganguly, on to relieve the frontline pace bowlers, picked up McMillan and Martin Bekker in quick succession, but Van Vuuren and Gobind then pounded out a rapid 97-run partnership.

Irfan Pathan was flayed all around the park, and even Anil Kumble wasn't exempt from rough treatment, with Van Vuuren slamming two sixes and a couple of fours.

He and Gobind played superb shots all around the ground as the run-rate went up to a gallop.

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Aftab flays Abahani

DOHS, Victoria sail into semis

SPORTS REPORTER



Mohammedan Sporting Club won the season's first prestige battle against traditional rivals Abahani when they defended a small total to snatch a nine-run victory against their big-spending opponents in the Kai-Altech Premier Division Twenty20 League at the BKSP-2 ground yesterday.

Old DOHS and Victoria confirmed their semifinal berths from Group A by winning their respective fourth round games while City Club's left-arm paceman Kamrul Islam claimed a hat-trick but all eyes were on the perennial rivals' fight.

The archrivals' clash completely missed an electrifying atmosphere as it was played almost before an empty crowd at the remote venue of BKSP but there was no shortage of excitement among the players in the low-scoring affair which was evident during an altercation between Faisal Hossain and Tushar Imran when the popular Dhanmondi club batted.

Dashing national batsman Aftab Ahmed stood tall in an otherwise disappointing batting display as the right-hander scored more than half of his team's total (115-9 in 20 overs)

during his sparkling 66 off 60 balls after Abahani had invited their opponents from Motijheel to bat first.

Opener Imtiaz Hossain was the other batsman who reached double digit (12) as pace spearhead Mashrafe-bin-Mortuza returned with figures of 4 for 18.

When the target seemed to be an easy one to achieve, Mohammedan bowlers however decided not to let the match go without a fight and they were helped by Abahani's careless batting to restrict the opponents for 106-9.

Skipper Khaled Mashud was unbeaten on a 16-ball 15 but he simply failed to bat according to the situation as the veteran wicketkeeper was even struggling to pick singles when his side needed big hits with more than 40 runs required in the last five overs.

Despite their first defeat in four matches, Abahani still have a good chance to qualify for the semifinals if they win their last battle against Indira Road today while Mohammedan face-off Sonargaon Cricketers also today to decide the other semifinalists from Group B.

While the semifinals fate in Group B hung in the balance, defending champions Old DOHS and Victoria Sporting Club romped to the last four maintaining all-win record.

DOHS handed a three-wicket

defeat to Biman at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium and it was none other than Nadif Chowdhury who paved the way just like the previous match with his second successive fifty.

Man-of-the-match Shahadat Hossain captured three for 15 as Biman completed their 20-over quota for a paltry total of 127-5 and then Nadif smashed 51 and Mehrab Hossain 25 as DOHS reached the target of 128 for seven with four balls to spare.

At BKSP, left-arm paceman Kamrul notched the first hat-trick of the tournament in the last over but it was not good enough for City Club to avoid a 30-run defeat to Victoria.

Man-of-the-match Golam Mabud hammered a 43-ball 52 as Victoria amassed 166-8 and then restricted the club from Mirpur for 136-9.

Away at Fatullah, Sonargaon bounced back from their third round defeat to keep their semifinal hopes alive with a four-wicket success against Brothers, riding on Alok Kapali's 38-ball 56 to post 121-6 in 19.5 overs in reply to 120-9.

At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, Young Pegasus registered their first victory when they defeated Indira Road by 50 runs. Pegasus rode on a 15-ball 33 unbeaten cameo from number

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Mohammedan's star batsman Aftab Ahmed lifts the ball over the infield during his match-winning 66 against arch-rivals Abahani in the Kai-Altech Premier Division Twenty20 League at the BKSP cricket ground yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

KP brands Warne 'idiot'



AFP, London

Kevin Pietersen admitted he thought Shane Warne was an "arrogant Australian idiot of a cricketer" after the pair clashed during the first Brisbane Test of the ongoing Ashes series.

Last month at the Gabba, Warne almost hit Pietersen when throwing the ball to Australia wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist.

An unimpressed Pietersen fended the ball away with his bat and made his feelings clear to Warne, whom he has often cited as a close friend.

Warne is Pietersen's captain at English county Hampshire and last year championed the South African-born shotmaker's cause ahead of his Test debut in the first Ashes clash of the 2005 series.

All that though was forgotten out in the middle at Brisbane. "For a few mad seconds I thought, mates or not, I am never going to speak to that dickhead again," Pietersen told the

News of the World, Britain's biggest-selling Sunday tabloid newspaper.

"The Ashes battle of 2005 was never like that," added Pietersen, who was dropped early on by Warne during his innings of 158 in the final Test at The Oval in September last year which sealed England's 2-1 series win.

However, he insisted that his falling-out with the champion leg-spinner did not last long. "We chatted at the end of the Test and got over it."

Australia are an unbeatable 3-0 up in this series heading into the fourth Test starting at the Melbourne Cricket Ground -- Warne's home venue -- on December 26.

Earlier this week the 37-year-old Victorian, just one dismissal away from becoming the first man to take 700 Test wickets, announced he would retire from Test cricket at the end of this Ashes series.

Pietersen, who said Warne was "the greatest bowler who ever walked on this planet," added: "Shane has been a major influence on my career. He's one of the reasons I moved from Nottinghamshire to Hampshire." And he praised Warne for the

way in which he still managed to be Australia's star during the 2005 Ashes despite the highly public collapse of his marriage to wife Simone.

"Splitting with Simone must have made those summer months in England last year so tough -- yet he took 40 wickets and scored nearly 300 runs."

And Pietersen, 26, who again scored 158 in the second Test of this series, at Adelaide, said he'd never known anyone more competitive than Warne. "He never stops. Shane seriously expects to get a wicket with every delivery."

"Warney is box office -- that is what every cricketer should aspire to be."

"Take our confrontation in Brisbane. There's no denying it got the pair of us going and, for the next couple of hours, our battle was compulsive viewing as neither wanted to let the other win. "I'm pleased that almost every time Shane Warne has been billed to face Kevin Pietersen, we've provided entertainment for cricket fans."

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Bangladesh golfers clinch Saarc men's crown

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh men's team emerged champions in the 8th Saarc Golf Championship which concluded in Lahore on Sunday.

It was the first time Bangladeshi golfers brought laurel from the regional tournament, where India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and hosts Pakistan participated from December 19-22.

Siddikur Rahman claimed the individual championship trophy while his teammate Milon Ahmed bagged the 'hole in one' trophy. The other member of the men's team was Mohammed Shahid.

Fatema Matur of women's team, which took part in the competition for the first time, won the 'nearest to pin' trophy. The other member was Shaheen Khan.

Tough draw for youth booters

SPORTS REPORTER

Both the Bangladesh youth teams got tough draws in next year's qualifiers for the AFC Under-16 and 19 championships.

The Under-16 team have been drawn with Iraq, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Sri Lanka and Mongolia in Group A while the Under-19s are pitted against Tajikistan, UAE, Uzbekistan, Palestine and Turkmenistan in Group D.

Both the final rounds will be held in 2008. The draws were held in Kuala Lumpur on December 22.

Meanwhile, seven Bangladeshi referees -- the highest number from the Saarc region -- were elected in the AFC Elite Referring Pool for 2007. They are: Tayab Hasan and Ramkrishna (referees), Mahubur Rahman, Shahidul Islam, Munaf Sarkar and Amanat Ali Haider (assistant referees) and Abdul hannan Miron (fourth referee).

Two more for Arambagh

SPORTS REPORTER

Arambagh registered two more footballers for the coming B.League -- the inaugural Professional Football League -- on Sunday.

The club, which enrolled two players earlier, retained their old defender Imdadul Haq Monu and roped goalkeeper Piaruzzaman Piru from Farashganj. Both the players have signed one-year contracts.

BFF AGM tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) executive committee is expected to present a few important propositions for approval to its councillors in tomorrow's annual general meeting.

The AGM will start at 11am at the BFF Bhaban.

The BFF high-ups, who were at one stage looking forward to hold the next federation election within the tenure of the Caretaker Government, seemed to back off from the idea. The officials, however, want to hold the polls before April 30, when the term of the existing executive committee expires.

Rather than holding an early election, the EC's focus will be on trying to convince its councillors to make amends to the constitution in a bid to start implementing FIFA statutes.

"The FIFA has urged us to go full professional, that is to have a full paid executive secretary and his working staff. But we cannot do it before 2011 due to the present structure," said BFF general secretary Anwarul Hoque Helal last night.

"But we are moving with the

provision of giving honorarium to four of our secretaries. It would not be salary," he confirmed.

"Other than this, we are going to fully implement the FIFA statutes," he added.

The future general secretary, who would be the executive secretary, his deputy and the joint-secretaries would receive honorarium if the councillors vote for the change.

The BFF will also go for forming a five-member emergency committee headed by the federation president to take instant decisions.

It could well create more controversies. The president used to take decisions on his own in crisis scenarios but adding four more members might only slow the process. During his tenure, current BFF president SA Sultan's solo decisions, however, never solved any problems rather creating more.

The 12 participating clubs in the inaugural Professional Football League, the Women's Sports Association and the Coaches' Association will get new councillorship while the National Sports Council will lose one of their two councillors. Lack of activities might cost the national universities their councillorships.

Out of 11 national stars in the squad, eight have played more than a decade in national colours. Newly appointed coach Abu Yusuf will have the entire squad from the last season including

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Muktijoddha do it silently

SPORTS REPORTER

While Abahani announced their presence loudly in this season's transfer scene, Muktijoddha quietly completed formalities to build the strongest team on paper for this year's Professional Football League.

Abahani had gone for the up and coming national stars who showed their loyalty to the sky-blues in a contract signing ceremony last week.

Muktijoddha, however, secured the contracts of their desired ones -- mostly experienced players of the national team -- at their club tent yesterday afternoon.

The Reds' big signings this year are young defensive midfielder Arman Aziz, midfielder and striker Matur Munna and Alfaz Ahmed all joining from Mohammedan. Parvez Babu has joined Muktijoddha from Brothers Union.

Out of 11 national stars in the squad, eight have played more than a decade in national colours.

Newly appointed coach Abu Yusuf will have the entire squad from the last season including

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'Drug duo not cleared yet'

WADA's ruling may come into play



AFP, Lahore

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) may be able to reinforce the ban against doping-tainted Pakistani pacemen Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif, the country's anti-doping tribunal chief said on Sunday.

"According to the WADA code they can apply for provisional suspension," barrister Shahid Hamid told AFP, quashing suggestions the pair is now in the clear.

Hamid headed the three-member Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) tribunal which last month banned Akhtar for two years and Asif for one year, after the new-ball pair tested positive for the banned steroid nandrolone.

Both bans were overturned by a committee headed by a retired high court judge earlier this month, which ruled the pair had not been fully educated about doping matters.

As a result, the PCB insisted the doping case was closed and that any action by WADA or the International Cricket Council (ICC) would not stop the pacemen from playing. Akhtar and Asif were

included in their preliminary squad for next month's tour of South Africa. However, Hamid said Pakistan was obliged to follow WADA rules.

"It is a fact that Pakistan government signed the Copenhagen declaration in 2003, like other 186 governments, including 38 countries in Asia," he said.

"Pakistan government has paid to WADA the annual and subscription fee for the years 2006 and 2007.

"This declaration, through culture and sports ministries, binds us to follow the WADA codes and

under clause 13 of their codes, the WADA has the right of appeal against the decision of a national anti-doping commission whether it is done during the competition or out of competition."

WADA last week challenged the lifting of the bans in the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) in Lausanne, Switzerland, saying any overturning was against its code, a stance backed by the ICC.

CAS was expected to hear the case in the new year.

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PHOTO: INTERNET

IT'LL BE DOING IT FOR A FEW MORE DAYS: Australia's legspin superstar Shane Warne signs a cricket bat during a practice session on Sunday ahead of the Boxing Day Ashes Test against England at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Tuesday.

Ad