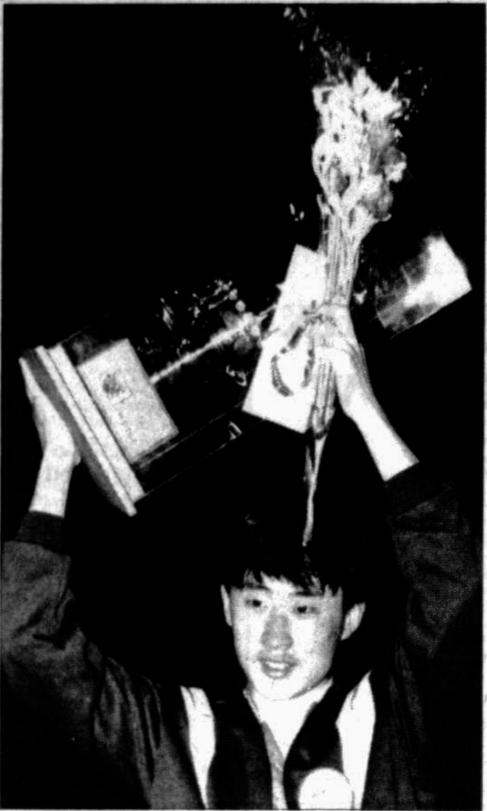


Li, Wang lift titles

Sports Reporter

Li Jung-Suk of North Korea and Wang Yonggang of China lifted the women's and men's singles titles respectively of the eighth Pepsi Asian Cup table tennis tournament which concluded at the Bangladesh Krira Shikhyia Pratishan (BKSP) gymnasium, Savar yesterday.



Men's singles champion Wang Yonggang of China shows off his trophy after beating Lee Chul-Seung of South Korea in yesterday's final. —Star photo

Fourth-seeded Chinese girl Fan Zianxin, who gave such brilliant displays in her quarterfinal and semifinal matches, was found wanting in skills and ideas against her more attacking North Korean opponent, the unseeded Li Jung-Suk who won in straight sets 21-11, 21-19, 21-10.

Although the scoreline doesn't quite suggest a keen tussle yet both Wang and Lee produced some handsome shots and brilliant placements that had the half-full 3000-capacity gymnasium crowd thoroughly thrilled.

The winners picked up a cash purse of US 3000 dollars

'It's not political': Capriati

BOCA RATON (Florida), Mar 9: A long carrying with a peace sign dangles from her earlobe, but Jennifer Capriati says she is not making a political statement, reports Reuter.

"It's not political," said Capriati, of the 1980s-styled carrying. "It's the in' thing. I want peace - it's cool."

Capriati is one of the shining stars of the women's international tennis circuit but she's still just a kid - she won't even turn 15 years old until March 29.

Capriati, however, is no stranger to the grown-up world of professional tennis.

This week's Virginia Slims of Florida event marks her first anniversary as a professional. She made her pro debut here in 1990 and went all the way to the finals before losing to Gabriela Sabatini.

As the fourth seed at this year's tournament, Capriati will have a rematch with Sabatini in today's semifinals. She reached the round of four an easy 6-1, 6-4 win over Germany's Claudia Porwik on Friday.

Easy success, however, may be soon over for Capriati according to some of her fellow-players.

A player's second year on tour is often a frustrating experience bringing about the so-called 'sophomore jinx'.

"Now people expect much more of her," said Steffi Graf, the dominant force in women's tennis the past three years.

"From the beginning, she did more than people expected."

"But, I think she has the mental strength and the right people around her, so she'll be all right. She has so much potential."

Capriati, rank 11th, has achieved a great deal already - she broke into the top-10 last year, earned nearly 300,000 dollars and reached the semifinals of the French Open.

Gigi Fernandez, Capriati's doubles partner this week, said the second year can be a difficult time.

"Being in your sophomore year is always hard for everybody," said Fernandez, who said Capriati was not playing as well as last year. "I think she'll feel the pressure because it happens to everyone. She might be the exception but I doubt it."

Capriati said she is aware people are expecting her to falter, but is totally unconcerned.

"Maybe, they'll know me better," said Capriati, acknowledging that opponents have studied her game. "They'll know how to play me better. But I'll just go in, play my best

England 'A' end tour with a grand win

COLOMBO, Mar 9: The visiting England 'A' cricketers concluded their six-week tour of Sri Lanka with a easy 6-1, 6-4 win over Germany's Claudia Porwik on Friday.

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each besides the glittering Pepsi Asian Cup trophies. The two runners-up collected 1500 dollars each. The top sixteen of the 24 male competitors shared a total prizemoney of 11,000 dollars while eight of the twelve women shared 9,000 dollars.

Ten teams - China, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Chinese Taipei, India, Thailand, Iran, Pakistan and hosts Bangladesh took part in the four-day meet organised by the Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation with sponsorship from Pepsi Cola. While Bangladesh had three players - two men in Saaduddin Ahmed Kislou and Gaus Atiq Anki and national women's champion Zulekha Akhter, Iran and Pakistan sent only two male players each. The Bangladesh trio failed to proceed beyond the preliminary round robin phase. South Asian champion Arif Khan also was a big disap-



Li Jung-Suk of North Korea beams proudly with her trophy after lifting the women's singles title in the Pepsi Asian Cup TT meet at the BKSP gymnasium yesterday. —Star photo

pointment, failing to make it to the quarterfinals. The Indians did not qualify for the round of eight either.

Presidential Advisor for Foreign Affairs Fakhruddin Ahmed gave away the prizes, yesterday as the chief guest. Senior government and BTTF officials attended the closing ceremony.

A highlight of the meet, held at the newly-constructed indoor gym of the BKSP that was fitted out with a modern, multipurpose synthetic non-skid mat, was the presence of the International Table Tennis Federation chief Ichiro Ogimura of Japan at the opening ceremony Wednesday.

One positive outcome of Ogimura's visit was that Bangladesh received an invitation from him to take part in the 41st world championships, to be held in Japan from April 26 to May 4 next.

Evert expecting

BOCA RATON, Florida, Mar 9: Chris Evert, the former women's tennis champion, and her husband Andy Mill are expecting their child in early October, the couple said in a statement issued by their office here on Friday, reports Reuter.

and try not to think about it."

Basically a baseliner, Capriati is working with former touring pro Tom Gullikson to expand her game and develop a serve-and-volley attack.

Not everyone thinks Capriati is headed for a lightning bolt.

Sabatini, who remembers being in a similar situation, given the young American the benefit of the doubt.

"She's still very young," said Sabatini, who has a 3-0 career advantage over Capriati. "She still tries to learn many things. She's young and learning a lot."

England 'A' end tour with a grand win

Middle-order bat Hemantha Wickremaratne top-scored with 39 for Sri Lanka 'A' who were never in the run-chase after the early collapse. Newport ended with 3 for 39 off 8 overs.

Spinners Richard Illingworth and Mark Ramprakash kept the batsman on a leash in their full quota of nine overs each.

England 'A' set Sri Lanka 'A' 247 runs to win after the touring skipper Hugh Morris won the toss and elected to bat under bright skies. The visitors showed their intentions from the outset, maintaining a high five runs per over rate.

Morris backed up his gamble with a five 54 and associated with Richard Blakey in a second wicket stand of 87 that gave England 'A' a good start.

The English skipper, who was named man of the match, hit five boundaries in his innings which came off 70 balls. He was brilliantly run out from a direct hit from cover point by Hemantha Wickremaratne. Blakey scored five fours and a six over the mid-wicket fence off spinner Roshan Jurelasinghe.

England 'A' had previously drawn three five-day internationals with Sri Lanka 'A'.

National tennis from today

Sports Reporter

The national tennis championships organised by Bangladesh Tennis Federation begins today at the National Tennis Complex.

Eighty players including 10 women from all over the country will take part in the six-day meet.

Vega on course

Sports Reporter

Vega Sports Club kept their championship hope alive with a narrow 61-56 points victory over Dhaka Winners in the super league match of the Partex First Division basketball league yesterday at the wooden floor basketball gymnasium.

Vega led 34-17 at the breather.

Vega's West Bengal recruit Sanjay Goel topscored with 17 points though he looked quite out of form with his slow movements. Young Moby was the second highest Vega scorer with 15 points. Asif Hossain and Arif Zafar netted 19 and 16 points respectively for Dhaka winners.

In another match, bad refereeing and unruly behaviour by the partisan crowd helped Gregs to post a nailbiting 71-70 points victory over the helpless Josephites.

Josephites foreign recruits Eddie Smith and Bob were nakedly fouled in the dying minutes of the match which both referee overlooked as if they were not present in the field.

Josephites players and officials were seen protesting against the partisan refereeing after the end of the match.

Kasparov boosts victory chances

LINARES (Spain), Mar 9: World chess champion Garry Kasparov boosted his chances of winning the Linares international tournament on Friday after he beat fellow Soviet Alexander Beljavsky in 35 moves of a Sicilian defence, reports Reuter.

Beljavsky retained the lead after the ninth round with young Soviet Grandmaster Vasily Ivanchuk, the only unbeaten player in the tournament, who drew against Yugoslav Ljubomir Ljubojevic of Yugoslavia in a Sicilian defence.

Rupali relegated

Sports Reporter

Rupali Bank went bankrupt when they were relegated to the Millers First Division cricket league after conceding a 110 runs defeat against the Greater Mymensingh Cricket Club in the Navana Premier Division cricket league match yesterday at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Resuming yesterday morning on 21 with out loss and needing another 232 runs for their maiden victory in the remaining 66 overs, they crashed to 142 all out in 63 overs.

This was Rupali Bank's eighth defeat in a row. Even if they win their last encounter against defending league champions Abahani, K.C, it would not be enough to save them from relegation next season as their nearest rivals at the bottom of the table, Kalabagan with two points and Lalmatia Club with four points, are beyond Rupali's reach.

GMCC, on the other hand, marched to their fourth straight win after starting the season with three defeats in a row.

Overnight batsmen Bilu and Dulu started the mornings proceedings for Rupali Bank. They took their team's score to 39 when Dulu fell for 17 runs. This was the beginning of Rupali's downfall with wickets tumbling at regular intervals. The bankers were finally bowled out for 142 runs.

Bilu topscored with 30, Babu made 20, Nipun 15 and Kader 13.

GMCC's skipper the Veteran Ramchand Goala spun his magic spell to claim four wickets for 34 runs while his side's Sri Lankan recruit Duminda supported his captain with three wickets for 19 runs. Zakir also got his name among the wicket takers with two wickets for 29 runs.

Earlier, on the first day Friday, GMCC scored 252 all

out in 63.3 overs.

Zakir, 44 not out, Duminda, 44, and Nasu, 41, were the leading GMCC batsman Prince and Babu captured four wickets each for 48 and 39 runs respectively for Rupali.

Surja Tarun Club completed the formality of beating Lalmatia by four wickets in the other Navana league tie at the Dhaka Stadium.

Tarun, chasing Lalmatia's meagre total of 125 runs, scored 126 for the loss of six wickets in 40 overs.

Rupon topscored with 39 not out, Zakaria made 28, Shaheen 15 and Aruna De Silva with 11 were the leading Tarun scorers.

Shaon and Sanjeva took two wickets each for Lalmatia.

Abahani KC and Brothers Union will meet each other in today's crucial Navana encounter at the Dhaka Stadium.

Both sides need to win this match in order to stay in title contention.

Women's champion Li Jung-Suk in action in yesterday's Asian Cup TT final against Fan Zianxin of China.



Women's champion Li Jung-Suk in action in yesterday's Asian Cup TT final against Fan Zianxin of China. —Photo Mohsin

Cason bags mens' 60 metre gold

SEVILLE (Spain), Mar 9: Andre Cason of the United States stepped into the Ben Johnson - Linford Christie feud and won the gold medal in the men's 60 metres Friday at the World Indoor Track and Field Championships, reports AP.

The American won the final in 6.54 seconds, holding off Christie at the tape by one hundredth of a second. Chidi Imoh of Nigeria was third in 6.60 and Johnson fourth in 6.61.

Cason took a commanding lead midway through the final and he stayed ahead despite Christie's strong comeback in the final strides.

The American held the fastest times in both the heats and semifinals, and proved to be the fastest and most consistent in the field.

Irina Sergeyeva of the Soviet Union beat heavy favorite Merlene Ottey of Jamaica to win the women's 60 metres in 7.02 seconds. The Soviet sprinter ended Ottey's string of wins at 73 over the past year and a half.

Johnson said he ran a good semifinal but he had no wind left in the final.

"There was just no power. I am pleased considering what I

have had to go through in these two years, but I'll get my power back later in the season and things will work out as I figure," he said.

It was Johnson's first final in a major international competition since he began his comeback from a two-year ban for steroids use two months ago.

Johnson struggled in his first two races, nearly falling in his first heat and then pulling up in the semifinal just before the end.

Christie, the Olympic silver medalist and Johnson's long-time rival, won the semifinal in 6.56 seconds, with Chidi Imoh of Nigeria second with 6.60 and Johnson third in 6.63.

Johnson got off to a good start in the semifinal and led for over 50 metres but then looked left at Christie who was running in the lane next to him and pulled up as both Christie and Imoh passed him.

In the morning heat, Johnson was in trouble from the very start. After a couple of steps he nearly fell and finished in a poor 6.75 seconds, he said he slipped when coming out of the blocks but it appeared as if he had his timing wrong in trying for a push with little strength.

Cason of the United States had the fastest time in the

semifinals with 6.55. Cason had 6.52 in the heats, third fastest this year and his personal best.

World record holder and two-time defending champion Nelli Fiere-Cooman of the Netherlands failed to make the final.

Johnson was banking on his Seville performance to get revenge over critics who opposed his comeback and to restore a good reputation after the discovery of his steroid use shook the world of track and field.

It also cost him an Olympic gold, two world records and millions of dollars in lost endorsements.

"Most of the athletes have been pointing a finger at me. I haven't been pointing a finger at them. But that's always the way it's going to be," he said before the competition.

Two of Johnson's most prominent competitors - American Carl Lewis and Christie - have criticized all the attention focused on Johnson and the rich appearance money he has been getting from meet organizers since his comeback began Jan. 11.

Johnson has made no secret that one of his main goals is to beat Lewis and Christie again.

In the women's race, favourite Ottey made a dreadful start as Sergeyeva stormed out of the blocks to pull away from the field in the first 10 meters.

Ottey tried to power her way back but though she moved through to second place, she was never in position to challenge the triumphant Soviet sprinter who won in 7.02, the fastest time of the year.

Sergeyeva, 22, who has shot out of obscurity this season, was within 0.02 of a second of Dutch racer Nelli Fiere-Cooman's world record as she became the second fastest woman ever over 60 metres.

Ottey was second in 7.08 and Liliana Allen of Cuba third in 7.12. Last year's European triple gold medalist outdoors, Katrin Karabe of Germany, finished a disappointing sixth in 7.20.

There was disappointment too for the two defending sprint champions, Fiere-Cooman, the winner at both the previous world indoor championships, failed to qualify for the semifinals.

Andres Simon of Cuba, men's champion in Budapest two years ago, was fifth in the final, clocking 6.61 seconds, the same time as Johnson.

Werner Guenther of Switzerland won the men's

shot in the only other medal event of the first day of the three-day championships.

Back in action after a long injury lay-off, the sturdy Swiss set the standard with a 20.74-metre effort on his first throw before putting himself off to reach with a 21.17-metre fourth throw.

Klaus Bodenmueller of Austria took the silver with a 20.42-metre effort and Ron Backes of the United States the bronze with 20.06 metres.

Algerian middle-distance runner Noureddine Morceli, returning to the track where he set a world indoor 1,500 metres record just eight days earlier, cruised to victory in his semifinal.

Morceli set the pace for most of the race before making a break 300 metres from home to win in three minutes 44.06 seconds, almost 10 seconds off his record time.

Marcus O'Sullivan of Ireland, gold medalist over the distance at the last two championships, came in fourth and qualified for today's final only as one of the fastest losers.

A latest AP reports adds: American hurdler Greg Foster was the fastest qualifier in the 60-metre heats at the World Indoor Track Championships Saturday as he bid to erase the memory of Indianapolis 1987.

At his only other appearance in the championships, the 32-year-old hurdler collided with Canadian Mark McKoy in the final and the two crashed to the ground, leaving another American, Tonia Campbell to race to victory.

In Saturday's heats, Foster cruised to victory in the second race, clocking 7.52 seconds.

McKoy, running in the first heat, was second fastest qualifier for the semifinals later Saturday with 7.58. Another American, Jack Pierce, also made it to the semifinals by winning in 7.62.

In the women's 60-meter hurdles, world record holder Ludmila Narozhilenko of the Soviet Union won her heat in 8.00 seconds, but her time was beaten by two French runners.

Ann Piquereau and Monique Ewanje-Epee both their heats in 7.98 seconds.

In field events, there was disappointment for American indoor champion Charles Simpkins, who made three no jumps and failed to make the final Sunday.

Leading qualifier was Soviet jumper Igor Lapshin with a leap of 16.81 meters (55.1 feet).

The American 1,600-meter relay team clocked the second fastest time ever in the heats.

Gullit thinks Gazza fit for Lazio

MANELLO, Italy, Mar 9: England World Cup star Paul Gascoigne would have to work hard to adapt to life in Italy but could be well-suited to Rome-based Lazio, AC Milan's Ruud Gullit said on Friday, reports Reuter.

Romans are open. They speak with their hearts and that's something Gascoigne likes. He also speaks with his heart, the Dutchman said.

You have to understand the Culture. You are in another country, you have to accept that you must learn another language.

If you learn the language you will also play better (and) you can handle your private life more easily," Gullit said in an interview at the European champions retreat in Milan outside Milan.

Several Italian First Division Clubs are thought to be interested in the Tottenham and England midfielder and on Friday the Gazzetta Dello sport newspaper said Lazio had offered 12 million dollars for him. Lazio declined to com-

Div II cricket

Sports Reporter

Lalbagh Anwar Club became Group E' champion when they beat Eskaton Sabuj by 24 runs in the play-off match of the Rank Xerox Second Division cricket league yesterday at the Mirpur Pallabi ground.

Eskaton Sabuj also qualified for the super league as the Group E' runners-up team.

In another play-off match Gandaria Cricketers beat Spread Eagles by four crickets to qualify for Group 'A' as the runners-up team.

Ten teams from five groups have moved into super league. They have been placed in two groups.

In Group 'A' teams are: City Club, Azad Boys Club, Lalbagh Anwar Club, Nabin Sangha, and Ajax Club. While in Group 'B' teams are: Dhanmondi Club, Victoria Sporting Club, Gandaria Cricketers, Orient SC and Eskaton Sabuj.