

# Abahani crawl into final

Sports Reporter

An unpalatable mistake by BRTC goalkeeper Moslem allowed defending champions Abahani Krira Chakra to move into the final of the Independence Day football tournament with a solitary goal victory over the road transport corporation team in yesterday's semifinal at the Dhaka Stadium.

Both teams failed to break the deadlock by the halftime. Mohammedan Sporting Club and reigning national champions Bangladesh Army will clash today at 3 pm in the second semifinal match at the same venue.

Abahani despite the inclusion of ace striker Sheikh Mohammed Aslam, disappointed the biggest crowd of the season with their lacklustre and listless display. There was hardly any combination between their midfield and the forwards. The defence looked ragged and on numerous occasions, specially in the second half, had a torrid time in checking the BRTC frontliners.

Abahani held the upperhand in the first half but in the second session BRTC made the champions sweat hard to stop them. As usual Mohsin in the goal looked a picture of confidence. There was hardly any worthwhile contribution by the defence. Alamgir, Yousof and Rupu in the midfield failed to assist, non could they feed their forwards with enough

balls. BRTC, on the other hand, look time to settle down but in the second half looked a much organised side compared to their rivals. It was only the poor finishing by their forwards that deprived them of a victory which they could have easily achieved.

BRTC's goalkeeper Moslem, who looked a cool customer throughout the match, paid dearly for a momentary lapse of concentration in the 77th minute of the match. He had even brilliantly stopped a penalty kick taken by Abahani's Rumi in the first half. Rubel (Sr), Farhad Ata and Milan worked hard in the defence. Rubel (Jr), Sujit and Noman took more possession of the ball than their fancied rivals. Tutul, Riaz and Litu time and again breached Abahani's defence in the second half. Only good goalkeeping by Mohsin and the erratic shooting by the BRTC forwards prevented Abahani from disaster.

Aslam, in the very second minute, headed over the bar Masud Rana's cross with the goalkeeper completely beaten. Rupu sent a long through pass to Rumi on the right flank and the latter's minus to Munna (Jr) saw him shooting straight at the advancing BRTC goalkeeper's legs.

BRTC defender Rubel (Sr) in a desperate bid to clear, only managed to hit teammate Farhad on the hand and the referee promptly awarded a

penalty which Rumi, playing with a fever, muffed by shooting feebly straight at goalee Moslem who collected confidently. This happened in the 33rd minute.

BRTC's Tutul, in the second half, twice came very close to scoring only to see Mohsin thwarting his efforts.

In the 77th minute, Abahani's BKSP recruit Masood Rana sent a looping cross.

BRTC goalkeeper Moslem saw Aslam advancing toward the goal and in order to avoid Aslam, he attempted to collect the ball facing his own goal, only for the ball to slip from his grip and cross the goalline to give Abahani their much-delayed lead.

Rivals supporters in the stands started pelting and brickbating each other towards the middle of the second session.

Police had to restore order by resorting to minor lathicharge.

### TEAMS

**ABAHANI KC** — Mohsin, Munna (Sr), Rehan, Aman, Masud Rana, Rupu, Alamgir, Yousof (Hira), Munna (Jr), Aslam and Rumi (Krishna).

**BRTC SC** — Moslem, Ataur, Farhad, Milon, Rubel (Sr), Noman, Sujit, Rubel (Jr), Tutul, Reaz and Litu.

### TODAY'S MATCH

Mohammedan vs Army (Dhaka Stadium 3:00 pm)



Midfield action from yesterday's Independence Day soccer semifinal between Abahani Krira Chakra and BRTC at the Dhaka Stadium. — Star photo

# Satkhira, Pabna win big

Sports Reporter

Not unlike in the past, this year's national cricket championship got off to an inauspicious start with three walkovers in the six matches scheduled for the opening day at various venues across the country yesterday.

Chandpur DSA failed to turn up for their Zone A match at Pabna, giving former national champions Faridpur a walk into the next round.

In Zone B at Faridpur, Feni failed to keep their appointment with Sunamganj, who move on to the next phase, which is the zonal semifinal.

At Nilphamari, Bangladesh railway failed to reach the venue on time, giving a walkover to Jessore DSA. In the matches that were held, Satkhira and Pabna registered impressive wins to make their respective zonal semi-

finals. At Jessore, Satkhira crushed Bagerhat by nine wickets in their Zone C tie.

Bagerhat batted first but could muster only 93 runs in 42.3 overs with Rakhi making 12 and Sujon 11. Khokon was the wrecker-in-chief with a haul of four wickets for 13 runs. David, two for ten, and Raju with two for 14 lent him able support.

In reply, Satkhira rattled off the 94 runs needed for victory for the loss of just one wicket in a mere 23.2 overs with Shampos remaining 34 not out. Azad made 21 while Lahu was unbeaten on 20. The sole Satkhira wicket to fall went Sujon's way at a personal cost of 11 runs.

Satkhira will play the winners of Sunday's match between Khulna and Sirajganj on April 10.

In the Zone E tie at

Thakurgaon, Pabna beat Gaibandha by a massive 171 runs to earn a zonal semifinal clash against Nilphamari on April 9. Nilphamari received a 9first round bye.

Batting first, Pabna amassed 227 for nine wickets in their 40 overs. In reply, Gaibandha were skittled out for a paltry 56 in only 19.3 overs.

The result of the Zone F clash between Manikganj and Sherpur at Joypurhat was not available at the time of going to press.

forty-nine teams are taking part in this year's competition, organised by the Bangladesh Cricket Control Board. The winners of the six zonal championships will meet the four semifinalists of last year — Dhaka University, Narayanganj, Chittagong and Bangladesh Bitan in the final round, to be held after the Eid.

# Meshki upsets Capriati

**HILTON HEAD, South Carolina, Apr 5:** A listless and error-prone Jennifer Capriati suffered one of the earliest defeats of her budding career when she fell to Soviet Leila Meshki 3-6, 6-3, 6-3 in the third round of the 500,000-dollar Family Circle Cup tennis tournament on Thursday, reports Reuter.

With her first victory over a top-10 player, the ninth-seeded Meshki earned a quarter-final meeting with third-ranked defending champion Martina Navratilova.

Top seed Navratilova advanced with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Petra Langrova of Czechoslovakia.

Second seed Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina also moved up beating Canadian Helen Kolesi. Sabatini will next

face seventh-seeded Czechoslovak Helena Sukova, 6-4, 6-0 conqueror of Argentine Mercedes Paz.

Capriati, who turned 15-years-old last week appeared to recover from a shaky 0-3 start when she reeled off six successive games to take the opening set.

But the 10th ranked American began making uncharacteristic errors in the second set and repeatedly failed to take advantage of opportunities.

Meshki took control of the baseline duel and levelled the match on her fourth set point when Capriati netted a backhand.

Capriati's backhand continued to let her down in the third set and she appeared sluggish and reluctant to go for winners as Meshki built a 5-2 lead.

The American teen sensation finally displayed some fight as she produced a trio of match-saving winners to pull to 5-3 before the 17th-ranked Soviet served out the match in the ninth game.

"I really didn't go for it and she was making everything," said Capriati.

"I got the feeling that I didn't want to go for it," she continued. "May be I was scared I was going to miss because I was making a lot of errors, especially off the backhand."

Today's other quarter-finals put third seed Arantxa Sanchez Vicario of Spain against unseeded Italiani Federia Bonisgnori and fourth seed Jana Novotna of Czechoslovakia against eighth seed Natalia Zvereva of the Soviet Union.

# Chang endures in HK

**HONG KONG, Apr 5:** Michael Chang became the only seed to reach the quarter-finals of the upset-filled Hong Kong Open tennis tournament when he struggled past South Africa's Christo van Rensburg on Thursday, reports Reuter.

The top-seeded American, who has sparked unprecedented adulation amongst teenaged Chinese fans here, won a three-hour second round marathon despite feeling unwell.

Chang, the son of Taiwanese emigrants, triumphed 7-5, 6-7, 6-4 in a match which produced 11 breaks of serve in the final two sets.

"I had a few problems (with my health) but it did not bother me all that much," said Chang, who is ranked 12th in the world.

"I knew it would not be an easy match, you cannot take anybody lightly. There is only one seed left and thankfully it's me. It's tough in tournaments like this — that's the nature of the men's tour."

Amos Mansdorf of Israel was the seventh of the eight seeds to falter before the quarter-final stage of the 234,000-dollar Association of Tennis

Professionals (ATP) tournament.

Mansdorf, seeded seventh, was ousted by Germany's Alexander Mronz 6-7, 6-4, 6-2 in an entertaining encounter.

"He was seeded and was obviously expected to win," said Mronz, ranked 33 places below Mansdorf in the world. "But the standards are getting better all the time and the gap is narrowing noticeably."

The shocks, including the demise of John McEnroe and Germany's Davis Cups star Michael Stich, continued with little-known Felix Barrantos of the Philippines defeating 1985 Wimbledon runner-up Kevin Curren 1-6, 6-1, 7-5 in the second round.

The 23-year-old Barrantos, who perfected his game in the United States, shocked American Curren with his mobility and tenacity.

"There are a lot of good players coming up in this part of the world. Given the right training, exposure and opportunities they will do well," Curren said.

His first quarter-final place in an ATP tour event gave Barrantos the biggest pay day of his career.

"The most I have ever won in a tournament before is 1,200 dollars," said the 249th-

ranked Barrantos, who is guaranteed 6,850 dollars even if he loses to Australia's Wally Masur in the quarter-finals

### Agassi advances

**ORLANDO, Florida, Apr 5:** Top seeded Andre Agassi eliminated Sweden's David Engle 6-4, 6-4 Thursday night as second-round play concluded at the Prudential Securities Tennis Classic, reports AP.

"I won a lot of crucial points tonight by coming into net," Agassi said. "I dug out some low volleys that would have made Boris Becker proud. I'm starting to understand the logic of coming into the net, but I'm still not really comfortable with it."

Agassi's win paved the way for an all-American quarter-final round, the first time that's happened on the pro tour since the Volvo pro indoor tournament in April of 1987, a span that includes 275 men's professional events.

Defending champion Brad Gilbert and Maliva Washington also advanced to the quarter-finals.

The hard-serving Engle extended the points just enough to keep Agassi's victory from being routine.

# Reynolds' request rejected

**CINCINNATI, Ohio, Apr 5:** American sprinter Butch Reynolds' request for a court order allowing him to compete while he challenges a two-year suspension for alleged steroid use was rejected here Thursday by a federal appeals court, reports AFP.

Reynolds, who holds the world record in three 400-meters, tested positive for the anabolic steroid Nandrolone and was dealt a two-year suspension last October by the Athletics Congress, which governs track and field in the United States.

Reynolds denies ever having used steroids and has challenged the suspension in court, saying he was barred from competition without a hearing, a violation of the due process of law.

A US district court turned down Reynolds' request for the court order allowing him



**BUTCH REYNOLDS** to compete last month and a three-judge appeals panel again rejected his arguments but granted him an expedited of his lawsuit against tack. A hearing could be held as early as May.

### Bubka wins for breaking barriers

**OVIEDO, Spain, Apr 5:** Pole vault world record holder Serguei Bubka won the 50,000-dollar Prince of Asturias 1991 sports prize here on Thursday for his "continual effort to break barriers," reports Reuter.

The jury, chaired by International Olympic Committee chairman Juan Antonio Samaranch, praised the Soviet athlete's "extraordinary progress" which led him to better time after time successive world records in his speciality since 1984.

Bubka has improved the record four times going from 6.08 m in February to 6.12 in doors on March 23.

### Jahangir in quarter-finals

**PARIS, Apr 5:** Jahangir Khan of Pakistan, who has returned to top form by winning the last two Grand Prix squash tournaments, moved into the quarter-finals of the French Open by beating Ross Norman 15-13, 15-10, 15-12 at Marne-la-Vallee on Thursday.

New Zealand's Norman scored the finest win of his career when ending Jahangir's five and a half year unbeaten run in the 1986 World Open final at Toulouse.

But the number eleven seed rarely looked like repeating that famous victory on Thursday despite leading 13-11 in the first game.

### Nirman results

**Sports Reporter**

Three matches were decided in the Dhaka Zone Nirman School cricket championship yesterday at different venues around the city. Rahmatullah Model High School scored an exciting one run victory over Baganbari Adarsha High School at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Rahmatullah School, batting first, scored 156 all out in 28.4 overs. Baganbari in reply managed 155 for eight wickets in their stipulated 30 overs. Baganbari's Ali for his six wicket for 17 runs and scoring 45 runs was named the man of the match.

Udayan Biddalaya scored a comfortable five wickets victory over Arab Mission Public School at the Dhanmondi Club ground.

Arab Mission, batting first, scored 176 for the loss of eight wickets in their allotted 30 overs. In reply, Udayan rattled up 177 for the loss of five wickets in 19.1 overs. Taposh for 64 not out and two wickets for 14 runs was adjudged as man of the match.

St. Gregory's High School registered a 48 run victory over Dhaka Government Muslim High School at the Mohakhali T and T ground. St. Gregory scored 168 for six wickets and in reply, Dhaka Govt. School scored 120 runs. St. Gregory's Shabbir received man of the match award.

### 6 bids for '98 World Cup

**ZURICH, Apr 5:** Six countries have confirmed bids for the 1998 soccer World Cup ahead of Friday's midnight deadline, reports Reuter.

The International Football Federation (FIFA) said on Friday Brazil, England, France, India, Morocco and Switzerland had confirmed

# Sylhet drub Rangpur

Sports Reporter

**Sylhet DSA** drubbed Rangpur DSA 7-0 to march into the group final of the Yuasa 11th National Youth hockey championship yesterday at the Hockey Stadium.

Sylhet will play against Dhaka DSA in today's Group 'B' final match at 2.30 pm.

Blaka Lusai with three goals, Rafiqul with two and Dina and Salman with one goal each were the Sylhet goalscorers. Sylhet led 4-0 at the breather.

Chittagong DSA scored a fighting 3-2 victory in a tie-breaker over Narsingh DSA in this morning's match. After both the teams failed to break the deadlock in the

regulation time, umpires had to restore to tie breaker.

Farooq, Lohkman and Shown scored for Chittagong DSA in the tie-breaker, while Akash and John scored for Narsingh.

Chittagong DSA will face Jessore DSA in the group semifinal match today at 4 pm.

Mymensingh DSA recorded a comfortable 2-0 win over Patuakhali DSA in the others match of the day to move into the semifinal.

Omar Sharif and Naufol scored one goal each for Mymensingh.

Pirozpur DSA will take on Rajshahi DSA in the Group 'B' semifinal today at 8 am at the Hockey Stadium.

# Abahani in Star semis

**CHITTAGONG, Apr 5:** Dhaka Abahani moved into the semi-final of CJKP Star summer cricket tournament beating Chittagong Rising Star Club by 27 runs at the stadium here today, reports BSS.

Abahani face Dhaka Brothers Union in the first semi-final on April 7.

The out-field of the stadium became unplayable due to heavy rain last night. The match started at 12 noon instead of 9 in the morning and the scheduled 40 overs had to be reduced to 30.

Abahani batted first and scored 130 runs for nine wickets.

Abahani lost their first six wickets for only 81 runs. Then Golla and Ehsan put on 42 runs in the seventh wicket helping Abahani to cross the 100-run mark.

Tutul with 31, the highest scorer for Abahani, was followed by Ehsan 28, Nadirshah 15, Golla 10 and Selim 10.

# Napoli's future looks clouded

**ROME, Apr 5:** Diego Maradona took Napoli to the top of Italian soccer. The question being asked now is whether the club can avoid plunging as far as their fallen idol, reports Reuter.

When Maradona left Italy for Argentina this week facing up to a two-year ban after testing positive for cocaine, it may have signalled the end of a great era at the club.

"He was the team's guiding light, he decided matches on his own, said team mate Gianfranco Zola.

The light which has been fading all season was finally extinguished this week.

As Maradona scampered home, Napoli, the defending league champions, lost their last chance of honours this season when Sampdoria eliminated them from the Italian Cup in the semifinals on Wednesday.

Eleventh in the 18-team league, they are nearer relegation four sides go down — that a place in the UEFA Cup they won in 1989.

They know they must buy a big-name star again to retain their new status alongside the



**DIEGO MARADONA** Italian giants in Milan, Turin and Rome.

Italy's sports dailies have speculated on a post Maradona Napoli for most of the season while their Argentine star showed his disenchantment with the club, missing training and matches and saying he wanted to leave Italian football.

England star Paul Gascoigne, Bologna's Hungarian playmaker Jajos Detari, New German international Matthias Sammer and Marseille's Yugoslav Dragan Stojkovic have been among those mentioned as possible heirs to the 1986

World Cup star's number 10 shirt. Napoli are chasing 23-year-old Francesco Dellannop of Second Division Udinese, although they face stiff competition from the rich northern clubs for the talented midfielder.

The end of the Maradona era also looked like the end of coach Alberto Digo whose contract runs out at the end of the season.

They have already agreed terms with Cagliari's Claudio Ranieri to replace him. But despite their traumatic season, Napoli are in reasonable shape and were unlucky to lose to Sampdoria on Wednesday, according to both Digo and commentators.

"Napoli showed they know how to react well even without their best footballer," said Digo, who guided Napoli to their second league title last season.

Napoli can build on this squad for the future, former Italy star Roberto Bettega said after they dominated Sampdoria but came up against fine goalkeeping by Gianluca Pagliuca, and lost 2-0.

Napoli looked quite good. They're progressing, Italy's 1982 World Cup midfielder Marco Tardelli said.

Napoli forward Giuseppe Inocciati believes they can regain lost ground immediately. "Playing like this we can still get into the UEFA Cup,"

he added. "I came to Italy and to Napoli above all to play with Maradona and for this reason, turned down other contracts," Carrea said.

Together with Diego I've won so much and it certainly won't be the same playing without him beside me. But I have a contract with Napoli and I respect it to the end, he added.

The Brazilian World Cup star said Maradona's successor could come from within the club.

Watch out for Zola. Gianfranco is growing up from match to match and since becoming a first team player he seems to have found greater responsibility.

"It could be a guarantee for Napoli's future," Carrea said. Maradona twice this season handed 24-year-old Zola Napoli's number 10 shirt, donning the number nine himself.

"It will be difficult to wear that shirt," Zola reflected.

# Platini — a wizard without a wand

**PARIS, Apr 5:** Where Michel Platini hides his magic wand no one knows, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to believe his denials of its existence.

How else can you explain the way he was transformed a mediocre French national team, wallowing in lack of self-esteem, into a confident, thrusting outfit of world-beaters?

All this in the space of little more than two years and using, give or take a name or three, the same players, reports Reuter.

"This team may not have the style and technique of past French national sides but it plays with its heart and its guts and it wants to win," Platini said.

It is also in a state of grace, doubtless induced by some Platini spell, as shown by its record in the last two years played 15, won 12, drawn 3, goals for 32, against 8.

With five wins out of five in qualifying Group One of the European championship, the French already have one foot in next year's finals in Sweden.

That marks quite a change for a team which failed to reach last year's World Cup finals because it could not beat Cyprus back in October 1988, a latefall match which saw trainer Henri Michel fired and succeeded in the seat by Platini.

"I have no magic wand," he said on sure exactly where we are," he said after his team's 5-0 win over Albania in Paris last Saturday. "But what I do know is that to beat us you have to be strong."

The team's record is certainly more impressive than its play, which lacks the brilliance and improvisation of that magnificent 1980s side in which Platini the player reigned supreme while his supporting cast, Alain Giresse and Jean Tigana, caressed the ball and cajoled the opposition into submission.

But though they tend neither to dominate nor delight, they do just keep on winning. In the past two seasons, five teams which reached the World Cup finals have played France and all have lost, including world champions West Germany.

"My team is getting better," Platini said. "We took 10 points out of 10 in the qualifiers and it would be difficult to do better. But there's still a lot of hard work to do."

As a player, the magic in Platini's feet was obvious to all. As national selector his official title the wizardry is less visible though less effective.

Only three of the side which faced Albania were introduced to the national team by Platini. But what he has succeeded in doing is to give his players a coherent tactical framework and an unquestioning belief in themselves.

"They have learned one basic thing," Platini said. "The French team is not the federation's nor is it mine... this



**MICHEL PLATINI**

French team is theirs. It belongs to the players.

Apart from Marseille's Jean-Pierre Papin, regarded as one of the best strikers in Europe many would say the best France have no real stars.

Platini has aimed to form a tightly-knit squad and he has been repaid with the emergence of several of his relatively unknown proteges as accomplished internationals. Midfielder Franck Sauzee,

who grows in stature with each game and who cracked home two direct free kicks Platini-style against the Albanians, is the symbol of the new French team with his all-out commitment and hunger for success.

"When he learns to pace himself and not to do everything at 200 kph, he will be something else," Platini said admiringly.

Under Platini's benevolent umbrella, keeper Bruno Martini has developed into one of Europe's best while Laurent Blanc has blossomed as a classy sweeper and Bastille Boli has become a stopper few strikes would willingly engage in battle on a dark night at the Parc Des Princes.

Oldtimers from the Platini playing era, skipper Manuel Amoros and Luis Fernandez, add that vital sprinkling of experience to the French squad.

But Platini's master stroke was the recall of enfant terrible Eric Cantona as Papin's striking partner. Suspended for a year after crudely insulting Michel, Platini brought him back and nurtured him into scoring seven goals in the next eight games.

The brooding, hot-tempered Cantona has a reputation as a trainer's nightmare. But for Platini, who keeps faith with him even when he cannot get a place in his Marseille team, he behaves like a lamb.

It's one more bit of pro of that Platini really has a wand hidden away somewhere.