

Gaints clash today

Sports Reporter

Traditional rivals Abahani Krira Chakra and Mohammedan Sporting Club will feature the first clash of the soccer giants this year when they face each other in the final match of the Independence Day football championship this afternoon at the Dhaka Stadium.

The match will kick-off at 3 pm.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will grace the occasion as chief guest.

Defending champions Abahani KC are yet to hit top form. They scrambled into the semifinals when they edged past BRTC 1-0 following the goal keeper's silly lapse.

Earlier, in their quarter-final match against Fakirpool they barely scraped home after winning 3-2 in a hard fought encounter.

The reigning champions' Abahani, bank heavily on goal keeper Mohsin, whose brilliant keeping helped the team reach the finals. Mohsin, on his day, is a tough customer for his rival side.

Abahani defence is heavily leaned on the star defender Munna (Sr).

He will have to ensure his colleagues, Rehan, Aman, and BKSP's young Masud Rana can rise to the big occasion. Rupu, Yousuf and Alamgir failed to function well in the two previous games. They will have to work hard to dominate the midfield as well as feed the forwards with good balls.

Ace-striker Aslam was a pale shadow of his past in Abahani's last match. But he has a brilliant record against Mohammedans. Rumi, who is recovering from a fever will be Abahani's man to watch. His one or two superb runs can change the fate of the match.

Dhaka Mohammedans, on the other hand, came into final in a commanding manner. They drubbed national champions Bangladesh Army 5-0 in the semifinal match.

Of course, they also had a tough time in their quarter-final tie against Mukti Juddha Sanghad. They beat Mukti Juddha in the tie-breaker 4-1 when Sayeed Hasan Kanan

stopped three penalty shots taken by the Mukti Juddha players.

Mohammedans' display against Army was top-class. The defence, midfield and forwards functioned like a well oiled machine. The flair and speed were the dominant factors in their game. If they can continue their current form, then Abahani will have a tough time stopping Mohammedans from running away with the trophy.

Mohammedans defence will be led by the vigilant Kaiser Hamid, Abul, Salauddin and Johnny are their support. Titu, Shabbir and Roxy will marshal the midfield. The forward trio Mamun, Nakib and Zakir are in a brilliant form to follow through.

This will be the 44th clash between Abahani and Mohammedan. 17 matches have been won by Mohammedan and 13 by Abahani with 13 encounters in ending in draws. So, Mohammedans hold a psychological advantage over Abahani in this respect.

But in the past it was seen that Abahani whenever playing as an underdog performed well.

BFF have already announced the rate of the tickets with galleries being at Taka 20 each. The tickets will be sold from 11.30 and the gate of the stadium will be opened at 12 noon.

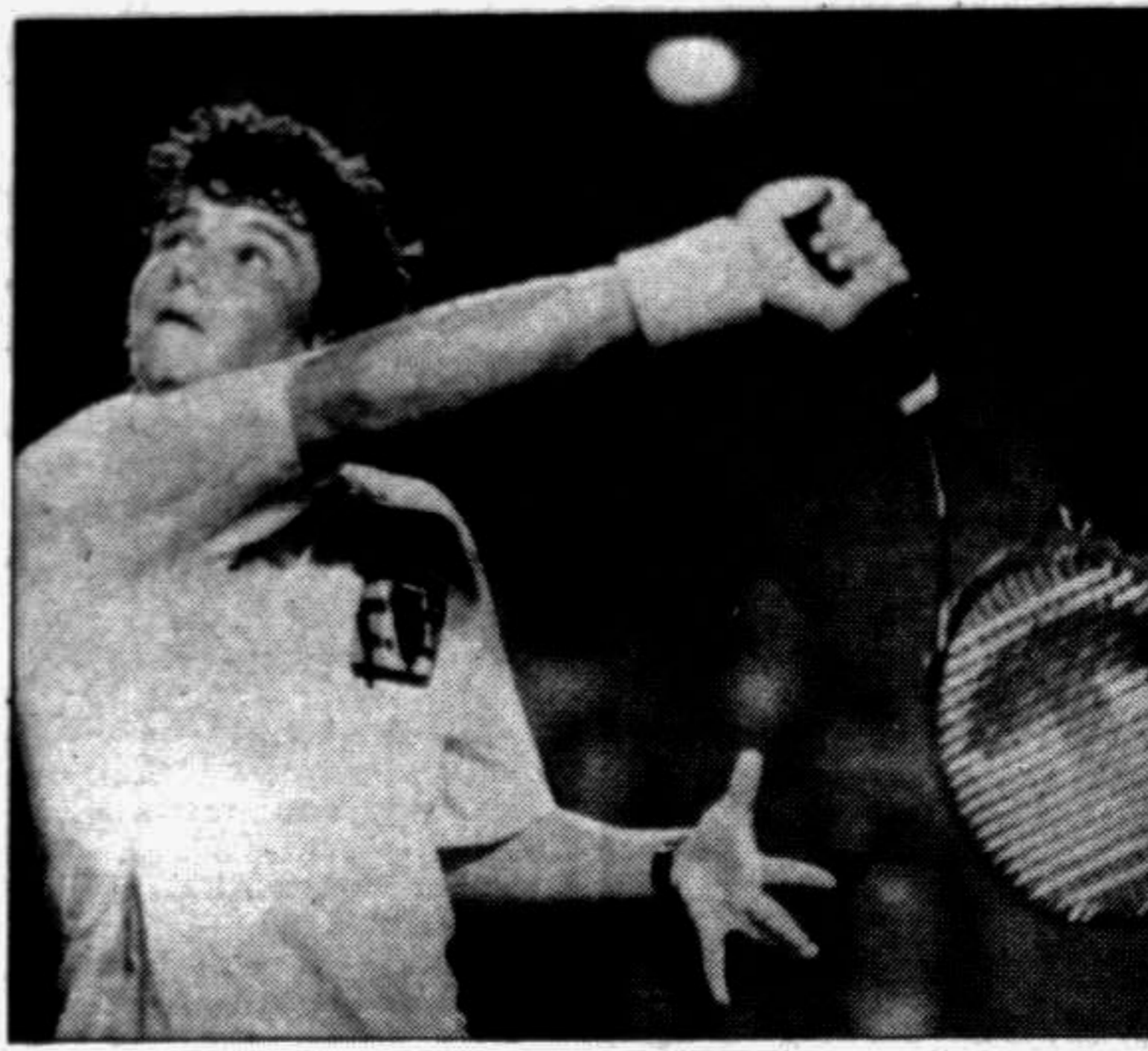
Bangladesh Television will give live coverage of the match. The football federation has also chalked out a programme to honour the Swadhin Bangla Football team on the occasion.

The team will walk round the stadium before the kick-off and later be presented with a BFF crest by the chief guest.

Meanwhile, in a joint statement issued yesterday, the managers of Mohammedan SC and Abahani KC urged for maintaining peace and discipline at the stadium during the match.

Probable teams : MSC : Kanan, Abul, Kaiser, Salauddin, Johnny, Titu, Shabbir, Roxy, Mamun, Naqib, Zakir.

ABAHANI : Mohsin, Aman, Munna, (Jr), Rehan, Masud Rana, Yousuf, Rupu, Alamgir, Kumi, Aslam, Munna (Sr).



Dutch player Richard Krajicek won the Hong Kong Open tennis title beating American Wally Masur in the final yesterday, April 7. Here he is seen in action during his semifinal win over South African Gary Muller Saturday.

— AFP photo

Faridpur, Dhaka Board in group final

Sports Reporter



Faridpur District Sports Association and Dhaka Education Board moved into their respective group finals of the Yuasa 11th National Youth hockey championship yesterday at the Hockey Stadium.

Faridpur had to sweat hard to overcome the stubborn Rajshahi Education Board by a solitary goal.

After a barren first half, Faridpur DSA shot into lead when Olayasuddin with a fine touch of stick work slammed the goal in the 50th minute of the play.

Faridpur will now meet Rajshahi District Sports Association in today's Group 'D' final match. Rajshahi DSA moved into the group final on Saturday when they defeated Pijpur 1-0.

Dhaka Education Board despite losing 1-0 to Munshiganj moved into the final of Group 'C'.

Dhaka Education Board lodged a protest against vice-captain and goalkeeper Nafiz of

Munshiganj for being over-aged for this tournament. The tournament committee in a hurried meeting declared Dhaka Board as the winners when Munshiganj failed to produce necessary papers regarding Nafiz's age.

Mymensingh DSA will face Dhaka Board in the group final match today at the Hockey Stadium.

Jatrabari clinch kabaddi title

Sports Reporter

Jatrabari Farooq Smriti Sanghad came from behind to clinch the championship title when they defeated Rifles Public High School 18-13 points in the final match of the Independence Day youth kabaddi championship yesterday at the Outer Stadium kabaddi court.

The winners trailed 2-10 at half time.

Mr Kamaluddin Hossain, former Chief Justice gave away the prizes among the winners as chief guest.

Nat'l cricket results

Sports Reporter



Comilla District Sports Association, Khulna District Sports Association, Kurigram District Sports Association, Patuakhali DSA and Thakurgaon DSA won their respective matches to reach their respective zonal semifinals yesterday at various venues across the country.

At Pabna, Comilla recorded an impressive 87 run victory over Gazipur DSA in a Zone A match.

Comilla after winning the toss scored, 172 for 9 in 30 overs. Mamun, 39, Zintoo 30, Liton 31, Baglu 19 were the notable Comilla scorers. Nizam 2/22, Liton 2/17 and Montu 2/28, were the successful Gazipur bowlers.

Gazipur in reply were 85 all out in 29.2 overs. Nizam 20, Raja 18, Rumon 15, scored for Gazipur. Taleb 3/21, Baglu 2/12, were the successful Comilla bowlers.

In a Zone C match at Jessore, Khulna defeated Serajganj by 67 runs.

Khulna scored 196 for 7 in 33 overs. Pappu 52, Aslam 56, Babu 13 were the prominent Khulna scorers.

Rafi 2/20 and Sobel 2/47 were the leading Serajganj bowlers.

Serajganj made 129 for 8 in 33 overs. Kafi 35, Uzzal 39, Ananda 13 were the main Serajganj batsmen. Shahan two for 24, and Arif two for 24

Brothers score massive 207

CHITTAGONG, Apr 7: Dhaka Brothers Union scored a massive 207 for four wickets in the stipulated 40 overs in the CJKP Star summer cricket's first semi-final against Dhaka Abahani here today, reports BSS.

Electing to bat first, Dhaka league champions Brothers' opening pair Masum and Indian Test player Raman Lamba gave the winners a solid start with a 123-run partnership.

National Star Masum top-scored with 70. He hit four boundaries and two sixes in a knock which lasted 100 balls.

Raman Lamba made 64 with the help of five boundaries. Another Indian Test player Monoj Probakar scored 47 runs for Brothers. Abahani's only successful bowler Nadirah got three wickets for 40 runs.

In reply, Abahani scored 64 for the loss of three wickets in 21 overs. Play resumes tomorrow morning. Golla with 6 and Selim with 4 are now on the crease for Abahani.

were the strike bowlers for Jaypurhat.

At Joypurhat, Kurigram DSA beat Kishoreganj by 5 wickets in a Zone F match.

Kishoreganj: 92 for 8 in 25 overs. Arman 26, Kabir 15, were the main scorers. Emil 3/8 and Bappt 2/10, were the successful Kurigram bowlers.

Kurigram: 95 for 5 in 22.3 overs. Mushfik 15, Tapas 15.

Patuakhali and Thakurgaon DSAs received walk overs against Noakhali and Dhaka DSAs in Zone B and D matches respectively.

Nirman results

Sports Reporter

Morning Sun School outplayed Bangladesh Rifles High School by eight wickets in the Dhaka Zone match of the Nirman School cricket championship yesterday at the Dhanmndi Cricket Stadium.

BDR school, batting first, were bundled out for a paltry 56 runs in 18.5 overs. None of the BDR school batsmen could reach double figure marks while twenty-seven runs came from sundries.

Remon ripped through to claim four wickets for 18 runs. Tasleem and Babla assisted him with two wickets each for 8 and 13 runs respectively.

In reply, Morning Sun raced to victory scoring 57 runs for the loss of two cricketers. Parash 13 not out and Tasleem 10 not out were the notable Morning Sun batsmen.

Shubhadya High School received a walkover against Pagash High School.

More rain at Port-of-Spain



PORT-OF-SPAIN, Apr 7: West Indies and Australia on Saturday agreed to bring forward the rest day

in the third cricket Test to Sunday after torrential rain had restricted play to only 143 minutes over the first two days, reports Reuter.

Only eight overs were bowled on Saturday as Australia reached 75 for one in their first innings before more heavy rain left the pitch under water and caused play to be abandoned for the day.

Australian coach Bobby Simpson said the West Indies Cricket Board of Control had asked the visitors if they would agree to have the rest day on Sunday instead of Monday as

originally planned.

"We were happy to do so provided the umpires felt the pitch would not be fit on Sunday, which is the case," he said.

"It is a sensible idea. Obviously it will be difficult to get a result but this is our best chance of getting some good cricket in."

When play was called off for the day Australia had added 20 runs to their overnight 55 for one, with opener Mark Taylor unbeaten on 35 and Davin Boon 18 not out.

West Indies have a 1-0 lead in the five-match series.

The Queen's Park Oval was covered with large pools of water after torrential rain Saturday.

"The possibility of play on

Sunday is extremely remote and the WICBC, with the agreement of the management of both teams and the umpires have decided in keeping with the playing conditions of the series, there will be no play tomorrow (Sunday) and the rest day Monday will be a playing day," the board said in a statement.

Even with this decision, with just three days remaining in the match, the possibility of an outright result appeared doubtful.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the second day of the third cricket Test between West Indies and Australia on Saturday:

Australia: first innings (55 for one);

Marsh c Hooper b Ambrose 10
Taylor not out 35
Boon not out 18
Extras (lb-7 nb-5) 12
Total (for one wicket) 75
Fall of wicket 1-36.

To bat: A. Border, D. Jones, M. Waugh, S. Waugh, I. Healy, C. McDermott, M. Hughes, B. Reid

BOWLING: O M R W
Ambrose 11 3 19 1
Patterson 5 2 7 0
Marshall 10 3 34 0
Walsh 5 2 8 0

West Indies: Viv Richards (captain), Desmond Haynes, Gordon Greenidge, Richie Richardson, Carl Hooper, Gus Logie, Jeff Dujon, Curtly Ambrose, Malcolm Marshall, Patrick Patterson, Courtney Walsh.

The tarnished idol still gleams



BUENOS AIRES, Apr 7: Diego Maradona's most memorable present was a soccer ball at the age of three.

"I slept clutching it all night," he said at last year's World Cup, reports AP.

The youngster had talent to match his dreams. At 15, he won a spot on the national team. At 18, he led Argentina to the world junior championship.

At 20, his star carried Boca Juniors to the Argentine First Division championship.

That was a decade ago. Since then, Maradona has played on the world stage, winning the acclaim of teammates, opponents and fans as the sport's best player, the heir to the great Pele, and maybe even better.

After being named most valuable player in the 1986 World Cup for leading Argentina to the title, the young man raised in a Buenos Aires Shantytown received 100,000 dollars for an exhibition match played in Saudi Arabia.

Now he reportedly receives three times as much for a single soccer clinic in Japan.

His contract with Napoli pays him more than 2 million dollars a year. Commercial endorsements are worth perhaps six times that amount. He drives a Ferrari. His weekend home has its own private soccer field.

On Saturday, Maradona's career, livelihood and life-long passion were put on hold.

The captain of Argentina's national team and leading scorer for Napoli in Italy's first Division was suspended for 15 months — the rest of this season and all of the next — testing positive for cocaine. The ban will be recognised by FIFA and enforced worldwide.

Fans' last view of Maradona on a soccer field, for a while and possibly forever, was Napoli's March 17 victory over Bari in which the brilliant, moody forward lifted a pass with typical pinpoint accuracy to a teammate who headed it home for a goal. Napoli won, 1-0.

"I've had enough. I'm tired of struggling. I'm retiring for good," he told the Milan newspaper Corriere Della Sera last Tuesday during the long flight home from Rome.

Four days earlier, the Italian

league announced Maradona's urine sample taken after the Bari match had tested positive for cocaine. He faced a maximum of a two-year suspension.

Maradona wouldn't directly answer the question: did he take cocaine?

Teammates say he didn't and are sure their tempestuous, indomitable leader, who is capable of carrying a team on his broad back and thick thighs, will change his mind and play again.

"As well as ever," is the prediction of Oscar Ruggeri, a defender on Argentina's 1986 and 1990 World Cup teams.

Others aren't so sure. "Coming back after a long layoff, at his age, won't be easy," said Eric Weil, sports editor of the Buenos Aires Herald. "And it's not clear he really wants to."

Argentines remember his million-dollar wedding two years ago and his penchant for lavish cars, trips, homes. The shiny stud in his left ear is a diamond. He puts on weight easily. He recently fired his

longtime business manager amid reports of squandered funds.

"I wouldn't like to see him wind up like just anyone else. He was so splendid," said Roberto Gomez, a middle-aged lab technician.

"I don't know that he'll end up poor, but the myth of Maradona is finished," said Claudia Bilbao, a young marketing specialist and university lecturer.

Maradona is an idol in Argentina. He demonstrated that talent is rewarded; the poor can become rich; Argentina's best is as good as any in the world. President Carlos Menem last year named him the country's honorary "sports ambassador."

The idol is tarnished, but still gleams.

Maradona is still the all-time leading scorer for the Boca Juniors, the Argentine national team, and is the highest scoring foreigner to play in the Italian League, considered the world's most competitive.

Maradona to appeal

BUENOS AIRES, Apr 7: Diego Maradona will fight an Italian league decision to ban him from world soccer for 15 months for failing a dope test, his agent said, reports Reuter.

The league's disciplinary committee, meeting in Milan on Saturday, banned Napoli's captain after a test revealed he had taken cocaine before a league match last month.

Agent Marcos Franchi said the committee's decision was not firm and that Maradona's lawyers would appeal against the suspension before the league's federal appeal commissions.

"We must be prudent. We have elements for our defence which we know are valuable and convincing. But that is in our lawyers' hands now," Franchi told Reuters at Maradona's flat.

"I can't tell you much right now but I can say that many UEFA rules and procedures were not followed in these tests," he said.

The disciplinary committee rejected Maradona's lawyers' demands for more tests after they argued that the traces of

cocaine in his urine sample were too weak to be properly identified or used in evidence.

Maradona's contract with Napoli runs until 1993, but Franchi insisted he would return to Italy "only as a tourist or due to a judge's order."

He said the player would have to consider the outcome of various Italian court cases he was involved in before making long-term plans.

"If he is not punished, he will keep on playing, so I can't say what he might do next," Franchi added.

When asked if Maradona was addicted to cocaine, Franchi said: "No way. I can say that in the many months I have lived with him I have never seen any evidence of that being so."

Franchi said the former Argentine captain was in good spirits and that he had received phone calls from his Napoli team mates who said they stood by him.

Since returning to Buenos Aires on Tuesday, Maradona has rarely left the flat where he is staying with his wife Claudia Villafane and two daughters.

DIEGO MARADONA

Three years after signing with Napoli in 1984, he led it to its first league championship in 83 years. Last year, he led it to their second.

Die-hard Napoli fans tattoo his face on their arms. A street bears his name. Expecting miracles, Neapolitans compare him to St. Gennaro, the city's patron saint.

Lately, however, with the applause has come criticism. His play isn't as stellar and Maradona has feuded constantly with Napoli management. He publicly said he wants out of his contract, which has two seasons remaining on it. He sits out practices and games.

Off the field, police investigating narcotics trafficking and prostitution have questioned him, and a woman not his wife claims she bore his child.

Many Argentines don't care. "Nothing has happened. Nothing has happened. We love Diego in good times and bad," thousands of fans chanted at a soccer match Friday where Maradona was the invited guest of honour. He didn't attend.

In words that now sound prophetic, Maradona also said at last year's World Cup, "When I was nobody, I was very happy."

Meshki in final at Martina's cost



HILTON HEAD, South Carolina, Apr 7: Lella Meshki finished off top seed Martina Navratilova in a suspended quarter-final, then came back to oust fellow Soviet Natalia Zvereva on Saturday to reach the final of the 500,000-dollar Family Circle Cup tennis tournament, reports Reuter.

The ninth-seeded Meshki, who single-handedly knocked out both of last year's finalists with her upsets of sixth seed Jennifer Capriati and defending champion Navratilova, faces Gabriela Sabatini in today's final.

The second-seeded Argentine, who had crushed every opponent in her run to the semifinals, needed two hours 45 minutes to turn back third-seeded Spaniard Arantxa Sanchez Vicario 4-6, 6-4, 6-3

on the green clay of the Sea Pines Racquet Club.

"I'm very strong mentally, that is the reason why I won this match," Sabatini said.

Meshki needed only to hold serve to oust Navratilova after their match was halted by rain with the Soviet leading 5-4 in the third set.

Navratilova came out on the attack, taking the first two points on volley winners. But consecutive errors by the top seed levelled the game.

Navratilova, Meshki said, "It was just patience, patience and more patience."

Navratilova said she played poorly Friday and couldn't recover.

"As flat as I was yesterday, I was better off with the rain. I would have liked to have had some of the energy I had today, yesterday," she said.

Krajicek denies Masur HK title

HONG KONG, Apr 7: Dutch player Richard Krajicek beat Australian Wally Masur 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 on Sunday to win the 234,000-dollar Salem Hong Kong Open, reports AP.

The 19-year-old Krajicek, ranked 93rd in the world, took the first set with service breaks in the first and seventh games.

Masur, winner in Hong Kong in 1983, fought back in the second set, which he won after break in his opponent in the sixth game.

The 27-year-old Australian, who is ranked 60th, lost the match after he was broken in the eighth game of the final set, when he felt a line call went against him.

"The ball was good," Masur said, adding, "I was waiting for some one to call it good, but no one did."

Krajicek, who played two singles matches on Saturday because rain delayed the quarterfinals, was visibly tired in the second set but lifted himself for the final set.

"I am feeling very tired and my knees hurt, but I am also very happy to have won my first tournament," Krajicek said after the one-hour, 26-minute match.

"In the final set, I never thought I would have any chances, but I managed to get a lucky break," he said.

Krajicek, who beat South African Gary Muller in the semifinals, collected 33,700 dollars while Masur received 19,000 dollars.

Ponsford dead

SYDNEY, Apr 7: Former Australian cricket great Bill Ponsford, regarded as one of his country's best batsmen ever, died at the age of 90, Australian newspapers reported Sunday, reports AP.

Ponsford died Saturday in his sleep at a nursing home at Kyneton in his home state of Victoria.

He was a key member of the Australian test team during the 1920s and 30s after coming to prominence in 1923 with a world record 429 in 477 minutes for Victoria against Tasmania.

He also scored 437 against Queensland in 1927-28, becoming the first player to twice score 400 in first-class matches.

Ponsford was made a Member of the British Empire for his services to cricket.

He retired at the age of 34 with a Test average of 48.22 and a total of 2,122 runs. He scored 13,819 runs in first-class cricket at an average of 65.18, with 47 centuries.

Ponsford scored centuries in his first two Tests against England in 1924-25 and made seven Test hundreds in his career.

Berkoff's return

FEDERAL WAY, Apr 7: World 100-metre backstroke record holder David Berkoff made a successful return to competitive swimming with a victory in the event at the US swimming spring national championships on Saturday, reports Reuter.



US President George Bush (C) attracts a small crowd while jogging in a Houston, Texas park on April 6.

— AFP photo

Holmes hopes to get lucky



HOLLYWOOD, Florida, Apr 7: Larry Holmes sparred with Phil Brown in a hotel showroom while the instructions from a cornerman rang out, reports AP.

"Get outta there," the handier hollered. Or, "put 'em together."

The advice was for Brown. Not a word for Holmes.

What do you tell a man who was a heavyweight champion of the world for seven years?

There are some people who

would tell the 41-year-old Holmes, who has fought only once in almost five years, that instead of coming back he should stay home in his role of millionaire family