

Suhrawardy Cup from today

Sports Reporter

The eighth national youth soccer championship for the Suhrawardy Cup, organised by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), kicks off today at eight different venues across the country.

A record 56 teams — 55 district sports associations and an Education Board — are taking part in this year's competition, divided into eight zones. The tournament will be played on a knock-out system.

Ten teams — eight zonal champions and defending champions Peni DSA and Naogon, the hosts for the final round, will take part in the final round scheduled for the third week of January.

Thirty-four teams took part in the seventh national championship for players un-

der 19 years of age held in 1987. The tournament, which was earlier a biennial affair, will be held annually from now on. On the opening day today, Narayanangj will play Madaripur at Narasingdi, Mymensingh will meet Gazipur at Netrokona, Moulvibazar will face Lakkhipur at Habiganj, Sylhet will take on Bandarban at Brahmanbaria, Satkhira will clash with Patuakhali at Jhenaidah, Jessore Education Board will face Magura at Kushtia, Lalmonirhat will meet Thakurgaon at Kurigram and Bogra will play Natore at Gaibandha.

The participating teams are NARSINGDI ZONE — Narasingdi, Faridpur, Tangail, Narayanangj, Munshiganj, Madaripur and Gopalganj. NETROKONA ZONE — Netrokona, Dhaka, Mymen-

singh, Jamalpur, Manikganj, Kishoreganj, Gazipur, Sherpur and Rajbari.

HABIGANJ ZONE — Habiganj, Chittagong, Noakhali, Chandpur, Laksmipur and Moulvibazar.

BRAHMANBARIA ZONE — Brahmanbaria, Sylhet, Comilla, Sunamganj and Bandarban.

JHENAIDAH ZONE — Jhenaidah, Jessore, Barisal, Satkhira, Patuakhali, Jhalakathi, Bagerhat and Barguna. KUSHTIA ZONE — Kushtia, Khulna, Jessore Education Board, Magura, Chuadanga, Narail and Meherpur.

KURIGRAM ZONE — Kurigram, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Panchagar, Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat.

GAIBANDHA ZONE — Gaibandha, Rajshahi, Pabna, Bogra, Serajganj, Natore and Chapal Nawabganj.

Shuktara in N'ganj final

Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Dec 6: Shuktara Juba Sangha reached the final of this year's Muldhara First Division soccer league when they beat Mohsin Club 4-2 in the tie-break after the normal period of today's semifinal at the Osmani Stadium ended in a thrilling 3-3 draw.

It was sweet revenge for the Group A runners-up Shuktara JS who had failed to reach the final in 1988 — the last time the local league was held — having lost out in the penalty shoot-out to Mohsin Club, who this year topped Group B.

In the first semifinal, held Thursday, BSEC Dockyard trounced Nitaiganj Krira Chakra 3-0.

In a match marred by poor supervision by Dhaka referee Nazir Hossain who failed to prevent boisterous play by the players of either side, Mohsin Club despite packing their team with hired Senior Division league stars from Dhaka, trailed 1-3 at the breather.

Alfaz put Shuktara ahead in the tenth minute and then doubled the lead ten minutes later. Another ten minutes elapsed before Mukhtar slammed home the third goal for Shuktara.

No one would have expected Mohsin Club to recover from this staggering deficit yet, to their credit and the immense pleasure of the large crowd, they rose like the proverbial phoenix to not only reduce the margin but to level the scores 3-3 at the end of the regulation period.

Indeed, Shuktara owed their victory to the superlative performance by their goalkeeper Rabiul who thwarted repeated Mohsin Club onslaughts.

Mohsin Club's hired help from Dhaka Mohammedans Ayaz Khan pulled one back in the 31st minute while Mamoon made it 2-3 in the 20th minute of the second session. Salahuddin, another Dhaka Mohammedan player, put Mohsin Club on par 3-3 in the 30th minute of the second half.

In the tie-breakers, Mosharraf, Nazim, Iqbal and Mukhtar converted their penalties while fortune played a cruel joke on two-goal hero Alfaz of Shuktara.

For Mohsin Club, Salahuddin and Ayaz Khan netted their spot kicks while the veteran national star Yousuf of Abahani Krira Chakra surprised and shocked all Mohsin Club supporters by missing his penalty. Amr, too, wasted his kick for the losers.

Jashim of Mohsin Club and Rabiul of Shuktara JS were the only two cautioned by the referee with yellow cards in a game that was once held up for 15 minutes following Mohsin Club's second goal. The referee, who came close to being manhandled by the players, first called Mamoon's goal invalid and whistled for a foul against Mohsin Club. But amazingly enough, Nazir Hossain quickly changed his mind in less than a second and ruled the goal valid.

The date for the final of this year's league, in which twelve teams took part from two groups, is yet to be finalised.

Italy, England top seeds

NEW YORK, Dec 6: Italy and England go into Sunday's World Cup qualifying draw here as top seeds in the European zone, reports AFP.

The standings will be based on results in the last three finals and Italy, winners in 1982, quarter-finalists in 1986 in Mexico and semi-finalists last year, head the way.

England's showings in Spain 1982, where they reached the second phase, Mexico 1986 (quarter-finals) and Italia '90 (semis) leaves them second.

Belgium, Spain, France and the Soviet Union, who will have to decide whether to pick players from breakaway states Ukraine and Georgia, will complete the upper echelon.

Scotland and Ireland will be in the second group along with Poland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslo-

vakia, and Austria.

The newcomers in the European section include the three recently independent Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, along with Israel, who resigned from the Asian Confederation because many of its members refused to play against them.

Germany qualify automatically as defending champions. In the African zone, 36 nations will be chasing three places in the finals, an allocation increased from two at Europe's expense after a series of good results, notably Cameroon's quarter-final place in Italy.

Asia has 28 teams chasing two berths in the finals and South America nine teams for three automatic spots. The 10th South American member, Chile, is banned after goalkeeper Roberto Rojas faked injury and the team left the

pitch in a 1989 qualifier against Brazil.

The United States qualify directly as hosts, with the other 22 North and Central American teams competing for one place. A second team from the region will go into a play-off with the winner of the Oceania section.

European zone seedings: Band 1 : Italy, England, Spain, Belgium, Soviet Union, France.

Band 2 : Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Netherlands, Scotland, Austria, Ireland.

Band 3 : Romania, Denmark, Poland, Hungary, Portugal, Sweden.

Band 4 : Ireland, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Norway, Greece, Wales.

Band 5 : Turkey, Iceland, Finland, Albania, Malta, Cyprus.

Band 6 : Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, San Marino, Faroe Islands, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Israel.

Pak players banned for stealing

CARDIFF, Wales, Dec 6: Two Pakistani squash players have been banned for a record two years over the alleged loss of clothing worth 400 pounds sterling (720 dollars) and rackets at last month's Kiel Open tournament in Germany, reports Reuter.

Mir Zaman Gul, world number 18, and Zarak Jahan Khan, ranked 34, were also fined 500 pounds (90 dollars).

The International Squash

Players' Association (ISPA) said on Thursday the bans, the longest they have ever imposed, were for "conduct contrary to the integrity of the game."

The second year of the ban is suspended as long as there are no further breaches of the ISPA code of conduct in 1993.

The suspensions follow an officials complaint by the tournament promoter and relate to articles on two sponsors' exhibition stands. Police were not called in.

An ISPA board, which heard

evidence from the players, said in a statement: "As organisers of the event had cause to search the players' room prior to their departure from the tournament hotel and found items of clothing and squash rackets for which they had no proof of purchase, we feel that the players have brought the name of the association into disrepute."

The two men have until December 14 to appeal against the bans.

Barcelona for shorter opening

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, Dec 6: The organisers of next year's Barcelona Olympics want to curtail the traditional team parade to stop the Games' opening ceremony dragging on into the night, Olympic officials said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

They said the Barcelona organisers told senior members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Wednesday they were afraid the ceremony could last over three hours.

Pedro Palacios, spokesman for the Barcelona Olympics Organising Committee (COOB), said the price of that success was an overlong opening ceremony that could spoil the "mediterranean extravaganza" planned by the city.

Barcelona has already signed up star tenor Placido Domingo and Prima Donna Monserrat Caballe for the July

25 ceremony, with music directed by tenor Jose Carreras. Up to 40 Heads of State, many of them fresh from a Pan-American Congress in Madrid, are expected to attend.

But with the team parade as presently planned taking at least 2-1/4 hours, organisers fear the whole evening could last over three hours.

It's a warm-up tour for Scots

NEW YORK, Dec 6: Scotland will turn up for their first European Championship finals in Sweden next June on a mini tour of north America, reports AFP.

The Scots have agreed to play the United States at Denver, Colorado, on May 17, and Canada at Montreal on May 20 before flying to Oslo for the friendly with Norway who took three points off Italy in the qualifying competition.

The United States, who won nine of their 18 matches this year, have also agreed to play the Soviet Union twice in their build-up to the 1994 World Cup.

"It's a very long time. We would like a shorter performance," Palacios said.

There is also the possibility that athletes competing in the Games may not be able to see the whole ceremony.

IOC spokeswoman Michelle Verdter told reporters the number of athletes and officials was limited to 15,000 by the size of Barcelona's Olympic village.

COOB told the IOC's Executive Board, however, that only 10,000 people could fit into the central arena of Barcelona's Olympic Stadium.

"We will have to find a solution that is agreeable to everyone, especially the athletes," Verdter said.

One idea already mooted is to limit the number of officials accompanying each parading team to six, with only the team leaders staying behind in the stadium. Older ex-athletes may also be prevented from parading with their teams.

COOB will decide on the best methods to keep the ceremony short and sweet in March, when IOC delegation is due to visit Barcelona.

Soviet sports goes bankrupt

MOSCOW, Dec 6: The Soviet State Sports Committee, known as GosSport, has disbanded, cutting off funding and salaries to 25,000 athletes and 1,200 coaches, the Tass news agency reported Friday, reports AP.

The Soviet news agency did not say why the committee was folding or who made the decision.

However, the committee's main source of funds government grants and a national lottery — have all but dried up due to the country's economic and political crisis.

GosSport was the sports body which prepared Soviet athletes for the Olympics, and its First Deputy Chairman Leonid Drachevsky told Tass its dissolution "means a break-up of long standing ties and destruction of the whole system of preparing athletes for the Winter and Summer Olympics."

Drachevsky noted the decision to disband GosSport comes soon after the remaining 12 Soviet republics agreed to field a single Soviet team at the 1992 games. The three former Soviet Baltic republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, which became independent after the failed August coup attempt, will field their own teams.

Tass quoted Drachevsky as saying the end of gosSport means that 25,000 athletes competing for places on the Soviet Olympic team and 1,200 coaches will lose their salaries.

Financing and organizing sports competitions has stopped, and training camps in the country will be closed, he indicated.

Drachevsky said gosSport officials sent a letter to Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev on Friday asking him to keep the committee afloat or to create a new inter-republican body to Albertville, France, and the Summer Games in Barcelona, Spain.

Injury hampers Johnson's return

TORONTO, Dec 6: A nagging knee injury is hampering the comeback of sprinter Ben Johnson but his manager said on Thursday he did not believe it was career-threatening, reports Reuter.

Johnson has pulled out of an indoor meet in Hamilton, Ontario, on January 10, the anniversary of his return to the track after a two-year suspension for using banned body-building drugs.

"I don't think it's a career-ending or even a season-ending thing," Johnson's manager Kemeel Azan said.

It is a nagging pain. It is not something which needs to be operated on."

Azan said Johnson, who turns 30 this month, still plans to compete in Los Angeles in mid-February.

The sprinter, stripped of his Olympic gold medal and world record after failing a drug test in Seoul, is still able to train. The speed is there, but he can't do knee squats using very heavy weights," Azan said.

It's a take it or leave it deal for EBU

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, Dec 6: European television has been offered a take it or leave it deal for coverage of the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta at a cost of nearly three times what they are paying to show the Barcelona Games next July, reports AFP.

The European Broadcasting Union is being asked to guarantee the International Olympic Committee and the Atlanta Organising Committee 250 million dollars for rights to the Games.

"That's the only figures we can deliver to you today," said Bill Payne, who heads the committee. "This is the result of a readjustment project."

The EBU paid less than 30 billion dollars for the Seoul Olympics and settled at 90 million for Barcelona.

But Payne says he has plenty of time to let the Europeans oook if they balk at the sum.

"There is no urgency in selling rights in the US now," he said. "The market has reduced and is not favourable. We are in a situation that we can wait."

Oliva defeats Saldivia

SAN PELLEGRINO TERME, Italy, Dec 6: European welterweight champion Patrizio Oliva defeated Argentine Jose Luis Saldivia on Wednesday night in a 10-round match in preparation for a title defence, reports AP.



Students of Sunbeams Kindergarten School performing a PT display at the Dhanmandi Women's Sports Complex yesterday. —Star photo

New global realities face FIFA

NEW YORK, Dec 6: When the World Cup bandwagon starts to roll with Sunday's draw for the 1994 tournament a cluster of newcomers will be clambering aboard bidding to make the finals in the United States, reports AP.

The re-birth of the Baltic states after months of turmoil in the Soviet Union sees newly-independent Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania line up in the European zone.

The battle to be one of the 12 qualifiers from Europe is further complicated by the first appearance in the zone of Israel, the Faroe Islands, Liechtenstein and San Marino.

South Africa's emergence from the misrule of apartheid comes too late for the International Football Federation (FIFA) and they will miss out, but the African

continent has earned a third slot in the finals of the 15th World Cup at Europe's expense.

In South America, where three will qualify, Brazil will be struggling to re-establish their reputation which has been flagging since their third World Cup victory in Mexico 21 years ago.

New coach Carlos Alberto Parreira is optimistic. "The standard of Brazilian players is still one of the best in the world," he says.

But they crashed out of the 1990 finals in Italy in the second round, lost the South American championship title and even went down 1-0 Wales in September.

"Brazil has always been admired for technique and skill and we want to start playing this type of football again," said Parreira, who guided the United Arab Emirates to the finals in Italy.

Just two teams will qualify from Asia, where the traditionally strong Koreans will again be challenged by Iran, Iraq and the oil-rich Gulf states as well as China.

Central and North America have one spot to aim for while hosts United States and champions Germany go directly into the finals and void the pitfalls facing the other 142 would-be qualifiers.

The last place will be decided on an intercontinental play-off between teams from Oceania, North and Central American and South American.

Plans for sweeping changes to make the game more attractive, which might have helped teams such as Brazil, have been virtually scrapped.

FIFA general secretary Sepp Blatter now sees little chance of major tampering with the rules or the format of the 24-team finals.

Suggestions ranging from bigger goals and an alternative to the controversial penalty shoot-outs have all been dropped, he said.

The only changes likely are a ban on back passes to the goalkeeper, the outlawing of tackles from behind and a move towards younger, fitter referees.

"We need a better application of the laws of the game, that's all," Blatter said.

The laws are practically perfect. What we have to do is help referees to be better trained and in better physical shape. It is they who can stop destructive play and protect creative players.

Recommendations on back-passes and tackles from behind could be introduced next season, Blatter said. The maximum age limit for referees would be cut from 47 to 45 for the US finals and then to 42 at a later date.

Crucial Italian league tie to feature German superstars

MILAN, Dec 6: The 13th-round Italian League match between Juventus and Inter Milan on Sunday will feature five of Germany's world champions, reports AP.

But with Juergen Kohler, Stefan Reuter, Juergen Klinsmann, Lothar Matthaus and Andreas Brehme split on rival sides it may be Italian players who will decide the clash between the league's top contenders.

Forwards Salvatore Schillaci and Roberto Baggio are likely to be key if Juventus is to break through Inter's defense while Milan's frontline of Klinsmann and Matthaus will depend on Italian midfielders Nicola Berti and Stefano Desideri.

Baggio and Schillaci, Italy's World Cup heroes, both have been criticized this season for their inconsistent performances.

The renowned "Toto"—the World Cup leading scorer—has only two goals and Baggio one, that on a penalty kick. That is far below expectations of the two best said Italian players.

However, Schillaci gained confidence and determination scoring against Roma last

Sunday while Baggio promised great things in the new role that coach Giovanni Trapattoni has given him — setting up other forwards rather than scoring himself.

The match in the sold-out Delle Alpi stadium of Turin will be emotional for Trapattoni, who coached Inter for five years until last season.

"Inter is something that I have helped to build. I know its qualities and I am aware it will be difficult to beat them," Trapattoni said.

Juventus enters the game in second place, one point behind AC Milan, and four better than Inter.

Juventus is 8-3-1 while Inter at 4-7-1.

Klinsmann, who ended a 12-week slump by scoring the game-tying goal against Milan last week and added a decisive goal in a Cup of Italy game against Como Wednesday night, said he was prepared for Sunday.

"I am going to face two of the best world defenders, Kohler and Reuter, and the traditionally best sector of Trapattoni's teams," Klinsmann said.

Trapattoni is a long-time supporter of tight defense and had some differences with the

German stars of Inter who suggested more aggressive tactics when he coached in Milan.

Milan, the only unbeaten team in the league this season, takes on Torino which fields one of the league's best defenses and has seven draws this season, many of them recently of the goalless variety.

AC Milan may struggle against the Torino defense if Dutch stars Ruud Gullit and Frank Rijkaard do not recover from recent injuries.

Milan centerforward Marco Van Basten, the league leading scorer with eight goals, always had problems in scoring when missing the support of his fellow Dutchmen.

Third-place Napoli, which had an impressive performance against Roma in the Italian Cup on Wednesday night, will be favored in a home match against Cagliari.

Italian champion Sampdoria of Genoa, which is struggling in 14th place in the 18-team league, could lose its seventh game when it visits Foggia, a major league newcomer which has moved into seventh place with a 5-4-3 record.

"I can't think of another defeat. It would plunge us deeper into the relegation area and this could cause us big psycholo-

logical problems," said striker Gian Luca Viali.

Viali and Brazilian veteran Toninho Cerezo scored for Sampdoria in Wednesday night's 2-2 extra-time draw against Bari, which barely qualified the Genoan team for the Italian Cup quarter-finals.

Bari, which said it will stay with Polish coach Zibi Boniek despite elimination from the Cup and six consecutive league defeats, will be looking for its first victory of the season at Ascoli.

Ascoli, 1-2-9 and one point ahead of last-place Bari, has allowed a league-high 22 goals in 12 games.

Lazio of Rome, which is tied with Inter in fourth place, is expected to have an easy task against Cremonese.

Lazio's German centerforward Karlheinz Riedle, who scored two goals against Napoli last Sunday, is in top form and is expected to add to his seven goals on the season.

In other games Sunday Fiorentina plays Verona, Genoa is at Parma and Roma takes on Atalanta.

Atalanta will be without its Brazilian centerforward Carlos Blanchetti, who was suspended for two league games for rough play.

UEFA compromise on Belgium

NEW YORK, Dec 6: UEFA said Thursday it will continue its policy of not staging finals for any of the European Cups or the final tournament of the European Championship in Belgium, but stopped short of banning all UEFA-sanctioned games in the country, reports AP.

It said it will request Belgian government and soccer authorities guarantee security at all international matches, but did not state what it would do if those assurances were not given.

UEFA had reportedly been considering a total ban on all of its sanctioned games in response to a Belgian court decision regarding the Heysel Stadium riots and subsequent appeals court rulings, the last of which was handed down on Oct 28.

The courts sentenced the former head of Europe's governing body for soccer, Hans Bangerter of Switzerland, to a three-month suspended prison sentence and fined him, holding him partially responsible

for the deaths of 39 people at the 1985 European Champions Cup final in Brussels, Belgium.

Fans of the English club Liverpool were convicted and Belgian government officials also were held responsible when riots broke out in the stands causing a wall to collapse and crush spectators.

UEFA has steadfastly maintained it cannot be held responsible for security at all of its sanctioned matches, saying those matters are left to local organizers.

"In order to allow such matches to be played in Belgium also in the future, the (UEFA) Executive Committee requests the Belgian Federation to give the necessary assurances stating the Belgian government or the competent authorities will guarantee the safety and security at international matches," UEFA said in one-page statement without elaboration.

"The Executive Committee... for the time being maintains the decision precluding the Royal Belgian Football Federation from organizing either a final tournament or a final tie of the European Championship or a final tie of the UEFA Club competitions."

Earlier this year, UEFA withdrew its initial plans to stage the 1992 Champions Cup and Cup Winners Cup final because of court rulings.

UEFA press officer Rudi Rothenbuhler would not further explain the release and other UEFA officials were not immediately available for comment.

Whether UEFA would still ban games if the Belgian government or federation did not issue the necessary assurances was unclear.

"Everything is possible," Rothenbuhler said. "But the text is quite clear."

The statement also made no mention of other measures that reportedly were being considered by UEFA, such as an appeal of the decision to the European Court of Justice or the European Court of Human Rights.

UEFA was meeting for the second day in New York in preparation for two days of meetings by FIFA with the qualifying draw for the 1994 World Cup set for Sunday.

Cruyff asked to coach Dutch national squad

AMSTERDAM, Dec 6: Barcelona coach Johan Cruyff has been asked to take over the Dutch national team next year and mastermind their 1994 World Cup campaign, a Dutch Soccer Association official said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

The official, Paul Boels, told Dutch Television that Cruyff had responded positively to an offer to succeed Rinus Michels who plans to step down as coach after the 1992 European Championship finals in Sweden.

"But we will have to bear in mind that Cruyff's contract with Barcelona runs until mid-1993," Boels said.

During a dazzling playing career with Ajax Amsterdam and Barcelona, Cruyff was voted European footballer of the year three times. He was the cornerstone of the Dutch team which reached the 1974 and 1978 World Cup finals.

As a coach Cruyff has led both Barcelona and Ajax to victory in the European Cup winners Cup.