

Russians inspire the champions

Sport Reporter



Abahani Krira Chakra, the defending champions, outclassed Dhaka Wanderers Club 2-0 in the Star First Division football league at the Mirpur Stadium yesterday afternoon.

Although 'outclass' may sound rather hyperbolic for a victory margin of two-nil yet it was the resonance of this particular word that kept reverberating after the ninety-minute tussle on the green. The touch of class that levitated the mundane men from Dhanmondi to almost Olympian heights was provided by the two foreigners—Alexey Arfiev and Sergei Zhukov—with the latter particularly spraying a fresh whiff of air in the reeking realm of local football.

Abahani, donned in glazing yellow, did not let their expectant, buoyant supporters to imagine how much difference fielding the two booters to for nearly the first thirty minutes of the match ran all over their opponents with everything falling into place.

Sergei Zhukov, wearing No 11 and Alexey Arfiev No 14, were fitted in the famished Abahani midfield along with Zakir, and the nutrients were galore with the forwards actually unable to keep pace with the steady supply of balls. The two foreigners did not really set anything ablaze with sheer individual brilliance. Rather, they lent ideas and width to their side which helped their local teammates to excel in their own roles.

Rumi, who was one of Abahani's two surprisingly early substitutions, launched the first deadly offensive when, with a sudden burst of speed, he raced inside the heart of the Wanderers defence and let go a powerful left footed daisy cutter which hit the side post in the 10th minute, with Aslam trying a desperate nod on the rebounder.

Wanderers, perhaps psyched out by the presence of the foreign footballers and the vocal battering of the Abahani supporters, only helped the cause of the rummaging Abahani players.

Nira, the Abahani left

sweeping back, overlapped to push a ball for a waiting Ghaus who beautifully freed himself on the left flank and found an unmarked Rumi with a low minus that had the stamp of clinical precision; Rumi romped home, with the petrified Wanderers custodian and defence watching helplessly. (1-0).

The scorer, looking sharp and hungry, tested the Wanderers custodian again in the 24th minute but Arun saved the stinging shot with a bit of an effort at the cost of a corner.

Wanderers paid one of their rare visits in the Abahani territory when diminutive Dolan took a shot that bounced off Abahani custodian Selim's chest and Rehan cleared promptly.

Arfiev, preferring to play in the role of a defensive medio, got a ball inside the Wanderers box in the 42nd minute, cleared the standing defender, cracked at goal but the power-packed right footer returned to play, much to the chagrin of the leaping, roaring supporters.

Abahani, who functioned like a well-oiled machine in the first thirty minutes with Zhukov and Arfiev giving delectable displays, held back, addressed passes and slackened their grip somewhat.

Abahani left-winger Ghaus rifled a sudden shot six minutes into the second half but Arun was in position to stop that from entering the net.

Nira, who had a fine match with his timely overlaps, supplied a nice cross across the Wanderers goalmouth; it eluded the forehead of a leaping Ghaus and came to Aslam and the veteran striker slammed home to double the margin 2-0.

Aslam's header in the 21st minute off on Alamgir lob had gone over the bar.

Abahani missed an absolute sitter in the 32nd minute when Zakir chested down a measured lob from Zhukov who showed a pronounced tendency to play with his left foot, on the path of an accelerating Aslam; the striker's fierce grounder came back off the post and Ghaus's attempt was steered out for a corner by

a grounded Arun struggling to be on his feet.

Monem Munna, the Abahani skipper, was lucky to escape the yellow card as he twice rather unnecessarily felled opponent players.

Ghaus, although playing a pivotal role, nevertheless tended to upset the rhythm generated by the foreign players by hanging on to the ball too long.

Both Zhukov and Arfiev offered an object lesson for our

wanting in reading the intentions of the two intelligent and imaginative Russians.

Diju of Wanderers was cautioned with the yellow card for rough tackling.

TEAMS

ABAHANI KC : Selim, Rehan, Nira, Munna, Alamgir, Alexey Arfiev, Sergei Zhukov, Munir, (Zakir), Shakir (Rumi) (Mamun Joarder), Ghaus and Aslam.

WANDERERS CLUB: Arun, Kamal (Niranjan), Bhutto,



Abahani striker Aslam (R) in action against Wanderers Club yesterday.—Star photo

booters on 'play without ball' with their superb positional sense but the local Abahani players were mostly found

Mansoor, Yousof, Diru (Moin), Nipu, Dolan, Belal, Mosharaf (Ujjal) and Mustakim. Referee : Abdul Aziz.

Police, Eskaton draw

Sports Reporter

Police Athletic Club and Eskaton Sabuj Sangha, the newcomers in this year's Star First Division league, shared the honours in the first match of the day yesterday at the Mirpur Stadium.

Eskaton led one-nil at half-time. Eskaton drew the first blood when Arman, a promising player, shot over the bar in the fourth minute of the meet after Shahjahan had done the spadework.

Rinku, however, put Eskaton ahead in the 30th minute when he scored from a neat minus by Arman.

Police came back strongly in the second half and Shahjahan's shot hit the post in the 23rd minute.

Police got the equaliser two minutes from the final whistle when Shahjahan headed home from a flag kick by Ashutosh.

Yellow cards : Shyamol and Arman of Eskaton and Mohan of Police.

ESKATON SS : Nizam, Daboo, Symol, Raja (Subal), Milan, Ruhul Amin, Akkas, Arman, Rinku, Shahjahan and Swapan (Sharif).

POLICE AC : Firoj, Monesh, Shahjahan, Mohan, Mukles, Zakir, Mukul, Ashutosh, Romesh (Khokon) Selim and Iman (Iqbal) (Lulu).

Referee : Mozaffar Hossain.

TODAY'S MATCHES

Victoria SC vs Rahmatganj

Mohammedan SC vs BJMC

SC (5 pm).

Yeltsin to meet Samaranch on Saturday

MOSCOW, Jan 20: Russian President Boris Yeltsin hopes to meet IOC chief Juan Antonio Samaranch on Sat. to discuss the formation of a unified Olympic team representing the former Soviet republics, reports Reuter.

Yeltsin cancelled a meeting scheduled for last Saturday to discuss how the new Commonwealth of Independent States would be represented at the Albertville Winter Olympics next month and the Barcelona Summer Games.

Russian officials said he had been too busy to receive the International Olympic Committee (IOC) president.

Tass news agency today quoted remarks made by Yeltsin at a weekend volleyball tournament, where he said he hoped to meet Samaranch either on Tuesday or Saturday.

A government spokesman later ruled out a Tuesday meeting.

Yeltsin said that if Samaranch came, "we intend to organise a unique tennis match" involving four presidents.

He said he and Shamil Tarishchev, president of the Russian Tennis Federation, would play against Samaranch and Vitaly Smirnov, head of the Commonwealth's National Olympic Committee.

Seles faces Huber in slugfest



MELBOURNE, Jan 20: Two of the hardest hitters in women's tennis will slug it out Tuesday in the quarterfinals of the Australian Open, reports AP.

Top-seeded Monica Seles will pit her grunting, two-fisted shots against No 12 Anke Huber, the 17-year-old German known for taking chances with her sizzling groundstrokes no matter what the score.

No 3 Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina, who has yet to drop a set in two tournaments in Australia, faces 15-year-old Jennifer Capriati, the American No 5 seed, who has said she feels ready to win a Grand Slam tournament.

The other pairings have No 4 Arantxa Sanchez Vicario of Spain meeting No 9 Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere of Switzerland and No 7 Mary Joe Fernandez taking on unseeded Amy Frazier in an all-American battle.

Huber hasn't won more than four games against Seles in their two previous meetings, including the quarterfinals here last year. "I don't think about my match with her other than I just want to play a good game," the 12th seed said Sunday after ousting No 6 Jana Novotna, the loser to Seles in last year's final. "I lost very easily the last time."

But Huber says she has improved since then and is trying to add a net attack to round out her game. Her victims last year as she moved up the rankings included Martina Navratilova.

Seles heaped praise on the teen-ager who enters the match a heavy underdog but seems immune to pressure. Novotna served for the match at 5-4 in the second set and held a 4-1 lead in the third only to fall to Huber's relentless baseline power.

"She attacks the ball very strong," Seles said. "She never gives up, a fighter. She proved she can play well under pressure, and she's going to be a very tough player."

Seles, who won all three Grand Slam events she entered last year, hasn't looked her usual invincible self here while trying to overcome the lingering effects of a strained neck. She was pushed to three sets Sunday by Leila Meskhi, who netted several easy volleys that could have put heavy pressure on Seles in the final set.

Sabatini has a 7-3 record against Capriati, but the Floridian has won three of their last four meetings. The last time they met in a Grand Slam quarterfinal, Capriati prevailed at the US Open last year, winning a second-set tiebreaker.

"I'll just have to keep the rallies going and be more consistent," said Capriati, who struggled with the wind in one match and had to overcome Zina Garrison's net game to reach the quarterfinals.

"Definitely, I'm eager for the title." By contrast, Sabatini has looked very sharp. She has lost only 11 games in four matches, and beat Sanchez Vicario in the finals of the New South Wales Open, a warm-up event.



Top seed Monica Seles beat Leila Meskhi of Georgia on way to the quarter-finals of the Australian Open in Melbourne Jan 19. Seles won 6-4, 4-6, 6-2. —AFP photo

Frazier is facing a seeded player for the first time, thanks to the withdrawal by Steffi Graf before the tournament began and a third-round loss by No 15 Helena Sukova. Fernandez was a finalist here two years ago and has beaten Frazier in both their previous meetings. The first came in the final at Tokyo in 1990 for Fernandez's first title.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes a solution time of 24 mins and a grid with letters.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with numbers 1-11 and letters Q, N, W, B, X, W, C, B, U, X, T, V, B, L, N, I, G, Y, Q, X, K, L, G, A, Z, B, K, S, L, X, B, N, Q, X, S, B, X, I, C, Q, U, T, Z, O, A, B, Y, Q, E, W, L, X, Q, T, I, B, V, Q, E, B.

Yesterday's answer 7-20 CRYPTOQUIP Q N W B X W C B U X T V B L N I G Y Q X K L G A Z B K S L X B N Q X S B X I C Q U T Z O A B Y Q E W L X Q T I B V Q E B Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN TERRIFIC BARBERSHOP BURNED DOWN, IT WAS CALLED A BRUSH FIRE. Today's Cryptoquip clue: U equals P The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

China beat Japan



KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 20: China beat Japan 2-1 in the second day's play of the Asia Olympic soccer qualifying round tournament for Barcelona Olympics at the Merdeka Stadium here Sunday, reports AFP.

Both teams were tied 1-1 at half time.

The Chinese who were tipped to score an easy win over a depleted Japanese team took the initiative right from the start and within three minutes came near to scoring.

Wei Yimin, who collected a loose ball inside the box, volleyed it inches over the crossbar.

However, it was the

Japanese who opened the account when Takeo Harada caught the Chinese keeper Jiang Jin flat-footed when he unleashed a stiff grounder from five metres inside the box in the 19th minute.

The Japanese forwards gained momentum after this lead and launched several attacks from the left flank. But the more aggressive Chinese got the equaliser through one of their swift counter attacks when Haq Haidong, who came in as a substitute in the 31st minute, lobbed the ball over the Japanese defence.

In the ensuing scramble Cai Sheng headed in the equaliser in the 38th minute.

Flo-jo's best isn't good enough



MIAMI, Jan 20: Three-time Olympic Gold medal sprinter Florence Griffith-Joyner improved her

personal best by 22 seconds but still finished 10th among a field of 14 elite women in a 5-km race on Sunday, reports Reuter.

Running in only her third 5-km since retiring from the sprints after the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, the 32-year-old Griffith-Joyner finished in 20 minutes 30 seconds. Her previous best was 20:52 run last October.

Olympian Erg Weinstein, 32, of Peru won the race in 16:49. Martha Jimenez, 20, of Mexico was second in 17:11 with Martha Tenorro, 25, of Ecuador third in 17:32 in the race run through the streets and over two bridges in downtown Miami.

Gerardo Alcalá, 30, of Mexico, a 1984 Olympian, won the men's race in 14:13. Silvio Guerra, 23, of Ecuador was second in 14:20 followed by his compatriot Alfonso Polonia in 15:48.

"I ran the first mile at 6:36 and felt pretty good," said Joyner. Then I looked at the bridge and thought it was the Empire State Building. Once I got over it, it wasn't that bad. I'm just happy to keep improving my times because it's still early in my training."

Griffith-Joyner, who four years ago set world records in the 100 and 200-metres, said she is training for a marathon and would like to qualify for the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

"I love to run track and field," Joyner said. "It's been a part of my life for 22 years and it is something I said I would do the rest of my life. It's a long way from 100 metres to 26.2 miles and it's going to



JOYNER-GRIFFITH

take a lot of distance work between them."

Compared to the bold, one-legged running suits she wore at the US trials and Olympics in 1988, Griffith-Joyner wore a subdued outfit on Sunday — a black lace camisole sleeveless top, black leggings, and black and white print bikini briefs. Her finger nails, still very long, were painted bright pink.

Cameroon, Nigeria in semifinals



DAKAR, Jan 20: Cameroon and Nigeria played mean football to reach the African Nations Cup

semi-finals on Sunday and are good bets for the final, reports AFP.

Second-half substitute Ernest Ebongue scored four minutes from time against unlucky Senegal and Cameroon's Lions now play Ivory Coast or Zambia on Thursday for a place in next Sunday's final.

A scrambled goal from Rashid Yekini in the 22nd minute saw Nigeria's Eagles beat Zaire in a hard-fought quarter-final.

They face Ghana or Congo who also play off today.

Zaire's Leopards chased Nigeria throughout but could not get in at the kill.

Nigeria had an earlier score disallowed for offside against Stephen Keshi, a defender who plays for

Strasbourg in the French Second Division.

Then Yekini drove home through a crowd of players after Samson Stasia's shot was blocked. Zaire's defence was to blame for failing to clear a cross from Friday Elahor, who plays his club football for Denmark's Brøndby.

Cameroon goalkeeper Joseph-Antoine Bell, who made a great save two minutes from time, was lucky not to be sent off for striking Senegal forward Jules Bocande in the first half.

Senegal had twice as many chances and Bell was just as lucky to deflect a Souleymane Sane cross-shot with his chest.

Cameroon coach Philippe Redon, involved in an unpleasant post-match argument with Senegalese fans, said they badly missed Roger Milla, their World Cup scoring star.

"A player of his calibre is difficult to replace," Redon said.

"And some of our established players needed a shake-up."

However, his decision to drop World Cup veteran Cyril Makanaky, Louis-Paul Miede and Stephen Tattaw and replace them with newcomers Hans Agbo, Guy Tapoko and Roger Feutznba was not wholly successful.

"I can't say I'm totally pleased with the way we played but we won. And you can always develop from that," he added.

Senegal coach Claude Le Roy said they should have tried for extra-time instead of continuing to attack.

"We left ourselves open to a counter-attacks. It was only the second chance Cameroon had," he said.

Courier, Stich cruise into qtrs



MELBOURNE, Jan 20: Jim Courier overwhelmed Marc Rosset 6-3, 6-1, 6-3 Monday to cruise into the quarterfinals of the Australian Open. He was joined by Michael Stich and Amos Mansdorf, who found life a lot tougher, reports AP.

Courier, the No 2 seed and French Open champion, had too much firepower for unseeded Rosset, who missed a succession of simple volleys and groundstrokes.

Stich, the No 4 seed and Wimbledon champion, beat Australian Wally Masur 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7-5), 6-4.

Mansdorf advanced to the first Grand Slam quarterfinal of his career when his American opponent Aaron Krickstein withdrew with an upset stomach in the fifth set of their match.

Mansdorf led 6-2, 4-6, 1-6, 7-6 (7-4), 4-1 when Krickstein quit complaining of feeling unwell in the heat.

The American sat at court-side for almost five minutes before walking shakily off court.

On-court temperatures again soared to 51.4 C (124 F) and the wind gusted frustratingly, making conditions unpleasant for both players and spectators.

Krickstein was favoured once the match went into a fifth set. He was 22-6 in five-sets, while Mansdorf was 6-8.

Mansdorf, a stocky 26-year-old former Israeli army soldier, had previously made the fourth round at the Australian Open, US Open and Wimbledon, but never had advanced further.

"I've never had luck in

straight games. "I felt for sure I was getting sunstroke," he said. "I felt so dizzy."

Mansdorf said he was motivated by the fact that Krickstein appeared to be willing in the fourth set.

"I had a feeling he might be even more tired than I was," he said.

Krickstein said his stomach pains increased as the match went on.

"The heat didn't help," he said. "But I wasn't tired. It is frustrating, because I'd been playing pretty well here."

The tall, powerful Courier took a 3-1 lead in the first set and was never put under pressure by his erratic, impatient Swiss opponent. He was simply too quick, too slick and too powerful for Rosset.

Courier, 21, broke Rosset's serve three times in the second set as he had a run in which he won 10 out of 11 games, including 16 points straight at one stage.

Rosset made 73 errors to Courier's 31.

Rosset was playing in the fourth round of a Grand Slam tournament for the first time, while Courier was runner-up at the US Open and made the quarterfinals at Wimbledon last year in addition to his French Open triumph.

He was grateful to get off court in just one hour and 40 minutes and escape the oppressive heat.

"You could have a heart attack out here," Courier said. "Fortunately, my strokes are hit kind of short, so I didn't have a lot of trouble with the wind."

Courier, the French Open champion, now will face Mansdorf.

Kim voted Asian booter-of-year

Kim Joo-Sung of Royal Daewoo Football Club of South Korea has been declared the Asian booter-of-the-year by the Asian members of the International Federation of Football History and Statistics (IFFHS), reports BSS.

The South Korean player secured the highest 31 votes, a member of IFFHS said in Dhaka yesterday.

Kim's teammate Young Hwan-Chung got the second highest votes with 28 followed by Abdul Samad Marfavy of Esteghal (IRAN) bagging 18 votes.

Kim Joo-Sung of Royal Daewoo Football Club of South Korea has been declared the Asian booter-of-the-year by the Asian members of the International Federation of Football History and Statistics (IFFHS), reports BSS.

The South Korean player secured the highest 31 votes, a member of IFFHS said in Dhaka yesterday.