

Abahani, MSC to play Asian club soccer meets

Sports Reporter
Defending champions of the First Division football league Abahani Krira Chakra and runners-up Mohammedan Sporting Club will represent the country in this year's Asian Cup Cup and Cup Winners' Cup club-level soccer championships respectively.

IR in DU inter-dept cricket final

Sports Reporter
Department of International Relations moved into the final of the Dhaka University inter-department cricket tournament by outplaying Department of Management by seven wickets in the second semifinal at the Jagannath Hall ground yesterday.

International Relations will clash with defending champions Department of Finance and Banking in the final on the last day of this month.

Batting first Management could muster a paltry 118 losing six wickets in 30 overs with Selim Mushtaq topscoring with an unbeaten 44 and Shahed Shams and Masud getting 21 each.

Nafis claimed five wickets conceding 32 runs for International Relations. International Relations cruised past the opponents' total making 119 for three wickets in 27.1 overs with Suman remaining unbeaten on 49 and Ali Ashraf and Mawla getting 21 and 20 respectively.

DU SOCCER

Meanwhile, Department of Islamic History and Culture qualified for the final of the inter-department soccer tournament by edging past Department of Political Science 2-1 at the university playground yesterday.

Akhter and national defender Kaiser Hamid scored one goal each for the winners while Anwar pulled one back for the losers.

Zakia emerges as new queen of chess

Sports Reporter
Zakia Sultana of Narayanganj emerged as the new queen of the national women's chess. Zakia clinched the title of the 14th national women's chess championship by defeating former champion Syeda Shabana Parveen Nipa 2-1 in the title-deciding active chess play-off held at the National Sports Council chess room yesterday.

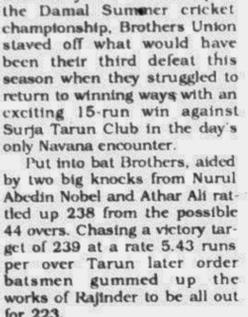


ZAKIA SULTANA

U-19 CHESS
Meanwhile, the 14th national junior under-19 chess championship got underway at the same venue yesterday.

BU return to winning ways

Sports Reporter
A gallant knock of 94 by Indian Rajinder Singh went in vain when Surja Tarun let Brothers Union off the hook in the Navana Premier Division cricket league tie at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.



ATHAR ALI ... 82

for victory with Tito and Raj leaving early to make the score a sickly ten for two. The resurgence began with the number four batsman, Indian Rajinder Singh, arriving at the wicket to team up with opener Nurul Hadi.

Brothers opening pair gave their side a fine start putting on 61 for the first wicket before Zahid Razzak Masum was bowled by Javed Omar Belim Golla for 29.

Suman left early but 139-run partnership for the third wicket between Nobel and Athar took Brothers to a seemingly unassailable position. Nobel hit a fine 90 made off 114 balls with the help of four fours and a sixer before Majbee, Tarun's pacer, bowled him in the rush overs.

Athar hit a solid 82 off just 76 balls, which included eight sparkling boundaries and three mighty sixes. Athar's was the last Brothers wicket to fall, with the total on 234.

Eventually Brothers amassed 238 for four wickets. Majbee, Gem and Golla picked up one wicket each as the frantic Tarun skipper employed as many as eight bowlers to keep the tabs on the run spree.

Tarun got off to the worst possible start in the face of a daunting task of getting 239 for five in the 39th over Tarun slipped to be all out for 223 in 43.2 overs, four balls short of their quota of 44 overs.

Salahuddin was the most successful Brothers bowler claiming four wickets for 33 runs. Fernando took two for 42, Masum bagged two for 25 while Mashed picked up one for 28.

TODAY'S MATCHES
Abahani vs Biman (Dhaka Stadium)
[PWD vs Victoria (DCS)]

Wasim Haider may play for Biman

Sports Reporter
Wasim Haider, one of the members of Pakistan's World Cup winning squad may play today for Biman in their important Navana league tie against Abahani Krira Chakra.

A right handed allrounder, who bowls medium pace and is capable of powerful hitting, was signed up earlier this year by Biman. Haider practised yesterday with the Biman players.

Meanwhile, Raisuddin Ahmed, vice president of the Bangladesh Cricket Control Board (BCCB) was to leave Dhaka for London to attend the two day ICC meeting to finalise the venue for next World Cup cricket championship. Representatives of all the Test playing countries as well as the associate members of the ICC will attend the meeting.

No confidence motion against TCCB defeated

LONDON, Jan 28: The MCC rebels failed on Wednesday to breach the bastions of that August body over the 'Gower Affair,' reports Reuter.

Rajshahi cricket

Friends Sporting Club recorded a massive 134-run victory against Cricket Clinic Club in the Rajshahi Bhorer Kagaj First Division cricket league at the Rajshahi Stadium yesterday, according to a message received in Dhaka.

Changpai cricket

Pragati Sangha trounced SS Sporting Club by ten wickets in the only match of the Changpai Cup cricket tournament yesterday, says a press release.

Palash of Pragati Sangha was adjudged the man-of-the-match.

Seles, Graf in Aussie Open final

MELBOURNE, Jan 28: Steffi Graf and Monica Seles face yet another personal battle in this year's Australian Open final after preserving the status quo in women's tennis with a straight sets win against Arantxa Sanchez Vicario and Gabriela Sabatini today, reports Reuter.

Graf was the most stretched before downing Sanchez Vicario 7-5, 6-4, but Seles was back in the locker room inside and hour after a 6-1, 6-2 thrashing of the Argentine third seed.

The German world number two, the oldest player in the last four at the age of 23, has an extra incentive to beat Seles in Saturday's final.

If she manages it, Graf can regain the number one slot from her great rival by winning in Tokyo next week.

Seles, though, has still to lose a match at the Australian Open in three years of coming to Melbourne and is still her favourite to complete a hat-trick of titles.

Sanchez Vicario's only consolation is that she rises to number three in the world rankings, ahead of Sabatini, despite her 17th career loss to Graf in 20 matches.

Graf, sporting a 'Save the Rhino' T-shirt, said of the final: 'It's a great opportunity to play against the best woman in the world. I'm very excited about it.'

'I played sort of okay today, nothing special, when it was important I played well but there were a few times when I didn't play aggressive enough,' said Graf, who lost her number one ranking to Seles in March 1991.

The last time Graf and Seles met was at Wimbledon last June when the Yugoslav, knocked off her stride by grunting controversies and rain breaks, lost 6-2, 6-1.

It has been a rare blip on an otherwise prodigious record which already includes seven Grand Slam titles, but Seles played down the significance of another clash with Graf.

'To me it doesn't matter... I am playing the same people so many times a year I am just used to it,' Seles said. Of their nine previous matches, Graf leads 6-3.

Sabatini suggested she may have been suffering from a virus and complained of feeling below par.

'I am not feeling very well, I think I have a virus because I just feel very weak and very tired.' She also predicted a Seles win in the final. 'I would say Monica seems more prepared... The way she is playing she is going to be very tough to beat.'

Spain's Sanchez Vicario actually led 4-2 in the first set after winning four games on the trot, but could not make it pay.

'If I had won the first set everything would have been different,' Sanchez Vicario said. 'I was a little bit unlucky because I hit good shots but she came back with good winners.'

Sanchez Vicario's three wins over Graf have all been in Grand Slam events, most recently in the US Open quarter-finals last year.

The Spaniard's form in the first set suggested a possible repeat, coinciding as it did with a sharp downturn in Graf's game compared to her quarter final against Jennifer Capriati.

But Sanchez Vicario failed to convert two break points for a 5-2 lead which even at such an early stage seemed dangerously wasteful.

So it proved as Graf came roaring back, holding off a late Spanish revival to wrap up victory in exactly one hour and a half.

Even Seles cannot boast Graf's record of reaching the final without dropping a set, but the manner of Sabatini's demise was ample proof that the set Seles dropped to France's Julie Halard has been more of a mental help than hindrance.

Seles feigned equal unconcern when asked how the potential loss of her number one ranking would affect her.

'It is a fun thing to be but it is not something I worked for or wanted to achieve. It is not the biggest thing in my life. I just want to be happy and healthy that's about all.'

'Up to now here I have played some good solid tennis but I haven't played anything incredible.'

Saturday will be Seles' eighth successive Grand Slam final, closing on the record of 13 set by Graf between 1987 and 1990.

Women's officials have worked out that if she maintains her level of success, she will have earned over US dollar 20 million in prize money alone by the turn of the century, given a five per cent increase in purses each year.

MEN'S SEMIS TODAY
There was no men's singles play scheduled for Thursday.

The men's semifinals will be played Friday with defending champion Jim Courier of the United States facing No 14 Michael Stich of Germany.

Two-time champion Stefan Edberg of Sweden will face No 3 Pete Sampras of the United States in the other semi.

According to IBM/ATP Tour statistics, Courier, Edberg and Sampras all have the chance to be ranked No 1 in the world at the end of the tournament.

Courier will retain the top ranking if he wins, or if he loses to Edberg in the final.

Edberg will regain No 1 only if he beats Stich in the final.

Sampras will leapfrog to No 1 if he wins the title or if he loses in the semis or final and Stich goes on to win the title.

The tournament offers prize money of \$18.482 million. The women's final is Saturday and the men's final on Sunday.

Eden's ambience worries Fletcher

CALCUTTA, Jan 28: England manager Keith Fletcher, a veteran cricket campaigner in India, has warned his team of the Eden Gardens 'cauldron' ahead of the first Test, reports Reuter.

'There is a total din as the bowler starts his run, then a deathly hush when he delivers, and if it strikes you on the pad or suchlike — the roof comes off,' said Fletcher.

'It can be an intimidating place. People can freeze in the atmosphere.'

Fletcher, who was out for 16 and five in his first Test at Eden Gardens in 1972/3, returned as captain nine years later to make 69 and 60 not out.

The big question when the match starts on Friday is will India, their morale battered by defeat in South Africa, put England to the sword?

Or will they play safe and look for a draw in the hope they can sneak the three-test series later in the campaign?

The indications are that they will, against expectations, be bold.

It is a policy that could well be rewarded as England are suddenly as vulnerable as a rickshaw-man on Calcutta's congested streets.

Philp DeFreitas, a key bowler, has been ruled out with a torn groin muscle and a flu virus is sweeping the team.

Morale remains high but the latest two victims, captain Graham Gooch and leg-spinner Ian Salisbury, could not be more crucial.

'I don't feel too good. My joints ache and every time I cough I get a pain in my chest,' said Gooch, who missed net practice. Salisbury, who was promoted from a net bowler to the first-choice spinner of four, also stayed in bed.

Fast bowler Paul Taylor felt weak after bowling and batting in the nets on Wednesday. John Embury and Devon Malcolm are still feeling the after-effects of their illness.

But Gooch seems determined to make his 100th Test appearance.

With that in mind it is no surprise that the Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin is considering playing as many as three spinners.

England, Gooch and Mike Gatting apart, have looked susceptible to turn throughout the tour.

It will be Azharuddin's biggest — and possibly his last — Test as captain. The only home Test he has been in charge for was a 1990 defeat of Sri Lanka at Chandigarh, his only win in 17 Tests.

Reappointed initially for just this Test, he said: 'We are going to be positive. There is no point in hanging out there for a draw.'

But statistics seem to favour England.

Of the 78 Tests played between the two countries, England has won 31, India 11 while 36 have been drawn. On Indian soil, 40 Tests have been played of which England have won 10, lost 9 and drawn 22.

On Thursday, the Cricket Association of Bengal reported it has sold out tickets in the 95,452-seat stadium, and news reports say at least 90,000 fans are expected to attend the first day.

The official world record for Test attendance is the 1936-37 Australia-England match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground which was watched by 350,534 people in five days with the average daily attendance being 70,000.

'The cricket lovers of Calcutta are all set to break further records in their devoted pursuit of the game,' said The Hindu newspaper.

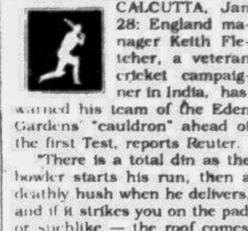
For the first time in 26 years, the CAB will open the daily ticket sales counters at the stadium. The practice was abandoned during the 1966-67 West Indies Test series after frustrated fans who could not get tickets set fire to the stadium, forcing the great all-rounder, Sir Garfield Sobers, to flee for his life. Since then lotteries were held to decide who could buy tickets.

Both sides will look to bat on winning the toss, despite the possibility of dew being on the wicket after the early morning start.

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INDIA: Mohammad Azharuddin (captain), Navjot Sidhu, Woorkeri Raman, Vinod Kambli, Sachin Tendulkar, Ajay Sharma, Praveen Amre, Kiran More, Kapil Dev, Manoj Prabhakar, Jagavallu Srinath, Rajesh Chouhan, Venkat Raju, Anil Kumble.

ENGLAND: Graham Gooch (captain), Michael Atherton, Alec Stewart, Robin Smith, Mike Gatting, Graeme Hick, Chris Lewis, Ian Salisbury, Paul Taylor, Paul Jarvis, Phillip Tuftnell, Devon Malcolm, Neil Fairbrother, John Embury.

Calcutta Test begins today



KEITH FLETCHER

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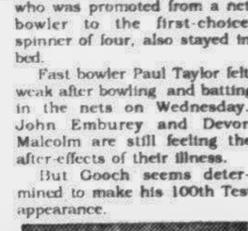
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Dalmiya hopeful but...



JAGMOHAN DALMIYA

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The venues of the two previous Cups — Pakistan and India in 1987 and Australia and New Zealand in 1991 — were decided by a simple majority and India would the same procedure to be followed again.

But Dalmiya voiced worry that Australia and England could use the veto powers as founding members of the ICC to block the joint bid to ensure England gets a fourth chance at staging the tournament.

He warned against the exercise of the veto right. 'If the veto power is used then it will result in a stalemate and it will have a far-reaching impact.'

Dalmiya was the brain behind pulling the World Cup out of England in 1987 after it had played host to three consecutive World Cup tournaments since 1975.

India and Pakistan staged the 1987 edition.

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