

Masum steals Malhotra's thunder

Sports Reporter

An elusive lady luck robbed Ashoke Malhotra of the ultimate satisfaction in a team game like cricket when his side Gulshan Youth suffered a second successive defeat in the Navana Premier Division cricket super league — by three wickets to Brothers Union yesterday to undo his second unbeaten ton in a week at the Dhaka Stadium.

Ashoke Malhotra, the little stylish batsman once likened to Gundappa Vishwanath for his stature and wristy batsmanship, appeared at the wicket as a number six batsman with his side tottering on 30 for four and went on to weld his powerfisted willow for an effortless 104 off just 93 balls.

The naturalised West Bengal batsman from Haryana should find consolation in the fact that his side succeeded in reducing the margin of defeat from seven to three wickets yesterday. Malhotra had hit an unbeaten 106 and yet Gulshan had failed to defend a two hundred-plus score against GMCC only to lose by seven wickets in their super league opener last week.

Malhotra's disappointment yesterday was shared by his compatriot Arun Lal who chipped in with a quiet 91 to conjure up a 174-run partnership for the fifth wicket in 29.2 overs.

The man who caused the collective disappointment of Gulshan's two Indians was Zahid Razzak Masum who notched up the day's second hundred to pave the path for a three-wicket victory for the former champions. Masum hit 110 as Brothers collected 241 for seven wickets in 42.3 overs to register their first victory in super league.

In the morning, sent in to bat, Gulshan collected 240 for

six wickets from their quota of 45 overs. Malhotra and Arun Lal apart, only Nasir Ahmed Nasu, the Gulshan skipper, made it to double figures.

T L Fernando, Brothers Shri Lankan pace bowler, devastated Gulshan's upper order with a telling burst with the new ball. He sent back three batsmen and with his partner Golam Faruq Suru at the other end joining him, Gulshan were made to reel at 30 for four in 11.5 overs.

The stark contrast of class was to be seen to be believed as soon as Arun Lal, the number four batsman, was joined by Malhotra at the crease. The switched on pair sorted things out slowly and efficiently for Gulshan and soon the Brothers

of nine fours. Fernando took another wicket in his second spell to finish with four wickets for 40 runs. Suru and Salahuddin bagged one wicket apiece.

Zahid Razzak Masum, Brothers' tall opener took a cue from Gulshan's two 'A's — Ashoke Malhotra and Arun Lal — and kept his cool as wickets kept on tumbling at the other end as Brothers began their reply.

It started happening after Masum and skipper Nurul Abedin Nobel gave their side an ideal start of 69 in 12.5 overs.

Nobel left for 34 and three more batsmen followed him cheaply after that before Fernando turned one better

bowler with three wickets for 42 runs. Ehsan took two for 40 with his medium-pace.

Brothers, who lost to Abahani by three wickets in their first match, opened their account in the super league to raise their collection to 12 points from as many outings while Gulshan remain glued to 16, also from 12 matches.

NEW FIXTURE

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Cricket Control Board (BCCB) has suspended today's Navana super league engagement between Abahani Kirta Chakra and the Greater Mymensingh Cricket Club (GMCC) for undisclosed reasons.

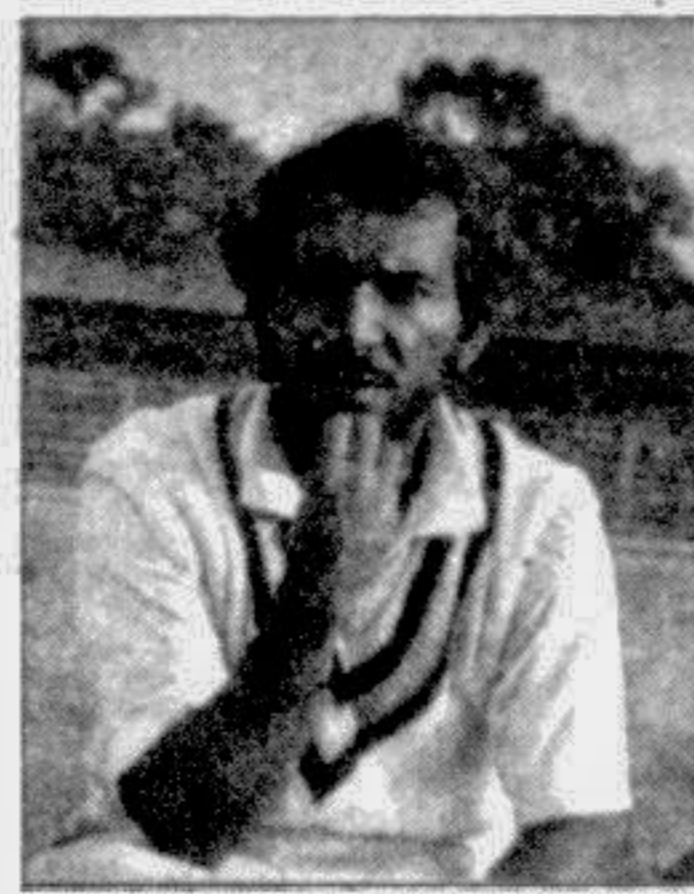
The match will now be



A MALHOTRA ... 104 n.o



Z R MASUM ... 110



ARUN LAL ... 91

bowlers were made to run for cover.

There were no fireworks from the Indians. The two experienced batsmen just picked the holes normally missed by the myopic local batsmen and a rickety Gulshan appeared stout enough at the end of their 45-over campaign.

Although Arun Lal fell for a well-made 91 off 126 balls, including four hits to the fence, Malhotra remained unconquered for 104 with the help

with the bat to redeem Brothers' position. Seventy-one runs were garnered for the fifth wicket in 12.1 overs between as Masum completed a fine hundred — 110 off 122 balls with the help of ten fours and a sixer before being caught and bowled by left-arm spinner Asif.

Fernando made 36 off 30 balls as Brothers posted 241 for seven wickets in 42.3 overs. Asif was the most successful

played tomorrow.

However, that has got nothing to do with league leaders Abahani's predicament of playing without their Shri Lankan batsman Athula Samarasekera who has been suspended by the BCCB for one match because of his shown 'dissent' to a leg before decision against him in the Biman-Abahani match. Abahani lost the match yet retained the lead in the points table with 20 points from 12 matches so far.

Nirman finals from Mar 12

Sports Reporter

The final round of the eleventh Nirman schools cricket championship will be held from March 12 to 21 at several city venues.

Twenty-one schools including 17 outstanding teams will participate in the fortnight-long knockout meet.

The schools are Dhaka zone champions Willes Little Flower School, runners-up St Joseph's High School, losing semifinalists St Gregory's High School and Scholastica International, Jhalokathi High School, Pabna Radhanagar Majumdar Academy, Gaibandha Govt High School, Khulna Gazi Memorial High School, Rajbari Govt High School, Patuakhali Adarsha Secondary High School, Sylhet Aided High School, Madaripur United Islami Govt High School, Tangail Bindu Bashini Govt High School, Narayanganj High School, Comilla Zilla School, Barisal B M School, Netrokona Arjuman Adarsha Govt High School and Satkhira Govt High School.

The Mymensingh, Jessore and Rajshahi zonal champions will fill in the other three final round berths.

Each side will bat for 40 overs up to the quarterfinals while the semifinals and final will be 45-overs-a-side.

The semifinals will be held on March 19 at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium and the Dhanmondi Club ground and the final will be played on March 21 at the Dhaka Stadium.

Nirman International Ltd is sponsoring the meet organised by the Bangladesh Cricket Control Board.

Karpov, Kasparov share 2nd place at Linares

LINARES, Spain, Mar 8: Former world chess champion Anatoly Karpov moved to joint second place with his longtime rival and compatriot Gari Kasparov in the Linares tournament Sunday by winning an adjourned game against the US Soviet-born hopeful Gata Kamsky, reports AFP.

After eight rounds out of 13 the two Ks remain a half-point behind Indian prodigy Viswanathan Anand who has six points out of eight.

Kasparov is to take on Anand with the white pieces in the ninth round beginning today.

The 14 Grandmasters competing in the Linares tournament include nine of the world's 10 highest-rated players.

Standings: 1. Viswanathan Anand (India) 6 points out of 8; 2-3. Gari Kasparov (Russia) and Anatoly Karpov (Russia) 5.5 pts; 4. Alexei Shirov (Latvia) 4.5 pts; 5-9. Alexander Belavsky (Ukraine), Gata Kamsky (US), Vladimir Kramnik (Russia), Valery Salov (Russia) and Jan Timman (Netherlands) 4pts; 10. Vasily Ivanchuk (Ukraine) 3.5 pts; 11-13. Yevgeny Baruyev (Russia), Artur Yusupov (Russia) and Lkubomir Ljubojevic (Yugoslavia) 3 pts; 14. Boris Gelfand (Belarus) 2 pts.

Graf denies Sanchez title



DELRAY BEACH, Fla., Mar 8: Steffi Graf earned her 70th career title and her first this year, beating Arantxa Sanchez Vicario 6-4, 6-3 Sunday at the Virginia Slims of Florida, reports AP.

Graf crafted the win using her favourite weapons, the forehand and serve. Sanchez Vicario had predicted a match with long rallies, but Graf hit with too much pace to let the Spaniard find her rhythm.

The victory total means nothing, Graf said, but winning means everything — even in a tournament that rivals Monica Seles and Martina Navratilova chose to skip.

"Many players — some of the men — think the Grand Slams are the only ones to win, but I don't think that way," Graf said. "I take every tournament very seriously."

She chuckled and added, "You have noticed, I'm sure." Then Graf's sense of humor went back under wraps. Since her first tournament title at age 16, she's been reluctant to crack a smile in public. These days her focus is on winning more championships, and that's no joke.

"I've never thought about reaching a certain amount of wins," Graf said. "I'm not finished yet. I'll probably care more afterwards, but not right now. Every tournament you

play is a new one, and you don't really look back."

Still only 23, Graf ranks sixth among women in tournament titles. Martina Navratilova leads with 163.

For her first championship of 1993 — and her fourth in this event — the top-seeded Graf won dlr 75,000. Sanchez Vicario, seeded second, won dlr 30,000.

Sanchez Vicario entered the match with plenty of momentum after losing only five games in her previous two matches. But Graf broke serve five times, and her own serve overpowered Sanchez Vicario. During one stretch of three service games, Graf lost only two points.

"She has been a great champion and she's still very good," Sanchez Vicario said. "You really have to play your best to beat her."

The second set was on serve at 4-3 when Sanchez Vicario requested a three-minute injury timeout so a trainer could wrap her thigh.

She moved poorly in the final two games, and lost the last one at love. Graf finished with a 98 mph (158 kph) ace, her third.

"I couldn't reach the ball like I wanted to," Sanchez Vicario said. "Maybe if I feel better it would be a different match."

The injury did not keep her from playing a doubles match

after losing to Graf.

Sanchez Vicario, who has been trying to come to the net more, had success there in the first set but stayed on the baseline after that.

Graf improved to 18-3 against Sanchez Vicario and earned her first title since the Virginia Slims of Philadelphia in November. Graf, who lives only 10 minutes from the Delray Beach Tennis Centre, also won this tournament in 1987, 1989 and last year.

"I still have room for improvement," said Graf, who is second to Seles in the computer rankings. "Today wasn't exactly what I wanted to do."

Courier cruises past Ferreira

INDIAN WELLS, California, Mar 8: Top-seed Jim Courier solidified his hold on the world number one ranking with a solid straight sets win over 14th-seeded South African Wayne Ferreira at the 1.4 million dollar Champions Cup tennis tournament on Sunday, reports Reuter.

"I'm off to a great start this year," said Courier, who picked up his third title of the young tennis season and 335,000 dollar for a 6-3, 6-3, 6-1 victory in the two-hour, best-of-five sets final.

The baby-faced 17th-ranked Ferreira earned 123,000 dollar for reaching the final of the hard court tournament that featured eight of the top players in the world.

The victory extended Courier's lead over second-ranked fellow American Pete Sampras to 675 points on the ATP rankings computer — his biggest lead ever as number one.

Courier, who has a 17-1 match record in 1993, dedicated the victory to father Joseph Dispenza, his mental guru and sports psychologist who died earlier this year.

"I got the job done. I didn't give him too many points. If I can make the guy earn his points on my serve, it will be a long afternoon for him, and it was for Wayne. Overall, it was a solid match," Courier said.

The Australian Open champion broke Ferreira for 4-2 in the first set and then saved three break points in the next game before serving out the set.

Ferreira, who received treatment on a sore right shoulder throughout the second set, looked as if he would stay close to Courier when he turned back four break points in the fifth game, eventually taking it with two aces and service winner.

Courier, undefeated however, broke Ferreira in the seventh and ninth games, while surrendering just one point on his own serve in the set.

Rest of World XI beat Pakistan

DUBAI, Mar 8: A sparkling unbeaten 84 by West Indian opener Desmond Haynes powered a Rest of the World XI to a convincing seven-wicket victory over Pakistan on Sunday, reports Reuter.

Chasing Pakistan's modest 163 all out in 36.4 overs, the Rest of the World team reached the target in the same number of balls but with seven wickets intact.

Another West Indian, Carl Hopner, ended the match with an off-driven six. Haynes slammed four sixes and six fours.

The world team, led by India's Kapil Dev, earned a 15,000 cash prize and lifted the Dubai Cup.

Waqar Younis led the Pakistan side, who played without Wasim Akram and his predecessor as captain, Javed Miandad.

Aamir Sohail (50) and Rameez Raja (30) gave the world champions a good start but the other batsmen failed miserably against Indians Sachin Tendulkar, Venkat Raju and Hooper, who grabbed four, three and two wickets respectively.

Scores: Pakistan 163 all out off 36.4 overs (Aamir Sohail 50; Sachin Tendulkar 4-33). Rest of the World XI 166 for three off 36.4 overs (Haynes 84 not out).

Selectors keep faith in Crowe

WELLINGTON, Mar 8: New Zealand cricket selectors kept faith with captain Martin Crowe today, naming him to lead the Kiwis into the third Test against Australia in Auckland starting Saturday, reports AFP.

New Zealand lost the first of the three Test series and drew the second which ended here today.

Crowe's captaincy has been troubled recently by erratic performance and off field tension surrounding rumours over his health and marriage.

Dropped from the team is fast bowler Chris Cairns who has had an indifferent season this year. Replacing him is Chris Harris.

Team: Martin Crowe (captain), John Wright, Mark Greatbatch, Andrew Jones, Ken Rutherford, Tony Blain, Chris Harris, Dipak Patel, Danny Morrison, Murphy Su'a, Willie Watson, Michael Owens.

Nat'l jr cricket final round from tomorrow

Sports Reporter

The final round of the Beximco 12th national youth under-19 cricket championship begins tomorrow in the city with the defending champions Jessore taking on Jhenidah at the Mirpur Pallabi ground and Chittagong playing Comilla at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Eight teams will participate in the over-limit knockout finals. The other four teams are last year's runners-up Rajshahi, the Bangladesh Kirta Shiksha Protisthan (BKSP), Gaibandha and Dhaka.

The two semifinals will be held on March 12 and 13 while the final is scheduled for March 15 at the Dhaka Stadium.

Earlier, 35 teams in five zones participated in the qualifying round with the group champions making the final round.

Div II cricket Sports Reporter

Ajax Sports Club registered an exciting nine-run victory against Gandaria Cricketers in the Second Division cricket super league at the Dhanmondi Club ground yesterday.

Batting first Ajax made 216 for the loss of six wickets in the stipulated 40 overs with Sohail topscoring with 67 and Rupam and Rafiq making 49 and 18 respectively.

Extras contributed 24 runs to the total. Zakir claimed two wickets conceding 44 runs. Gandaria Cricketers were restricted to 207 for the loss of nine wickets. Dipu topscored with 52 and Bulbul and Zakir got 46 and 35 respectively.

Shelly with three wickets for 24 was most successful of the Ajax bowlers while Bhola and Russel chipped in with two wickets apiece.

The result left both teams at par on two points from as many super league outings. Shantinagar Club B beat Kathalagan Three Star Club by 30 runs at the Mirpur Pallabi ground in the other match of the day.

Kiwis hold on for a draw

WELLINGTON, Mar 8: The rain-shortened second Test between Australia and New Zealand ground to a draw today, all hopes of an Australian victory blunted by New Zealand's stubborn batting resistance, reports Reuter.

Australia's chances of taking a two-nil lead in the best-of-three series faded throughout the final day as New Zealand's middle order gruffly shut out Australia's spin attack on a slow turning wicket.

New Zealand began the day in the precarious position of 40 for three, only 71 runs ahead, nervously eyeing the prospect of young legspinner Shane Warne, who bundled out the hosts on the last day of the first Test in Christchurch.

Warne took four for 63 to help Australia crush New Zealand by an innings and 60 runs then and was again seen as the tourists' main weapon on a pitch heavily pitted by three and a half days' fast bowling.

But Warne struggled to find a tight line and length early in the morning session, allowing overnight batsmen Andrew Jones and wicketkeeper Tony Blain to settle in and grind out 71 runs for the fourth wicket, effectively saving the match and sentencing players and spectators alike to a quiet day's play.

When Warne did find the deep footmarks he dismissed Blain for 51 and Jones for 42 with sharply turning deliveries floated up in to the bitter southerly wind that swept the ground.

All but 12 overs of the first day were lost due to rain. Today, stumps were drawn an hour before the scheduled end of play with New Zealand 241 runs ahead on 210 for seven wickets, with John Wright playing a stalwart role on 46 not out.

The loss of most of the first day due to heavy overnight rain and persistent daytime drizzle proved the death knell for the Basin Reserve Test.

"If we had had an extra day we could have had an interesting finish," said Australian captain Allan Border after stumps were drawn.

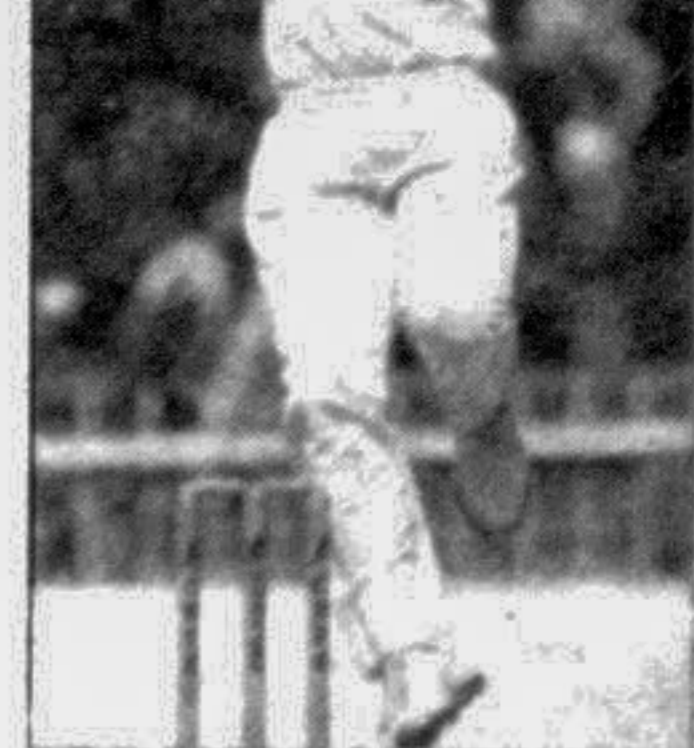
"We felt we still had a sniff," he said of the Australian position at the beginning of the day. "But the wicket did die a

slow death."

New Zealand captain Martin Crowe said he took heart from his team's second Test performance, particularly after criticism in the wake of the heavy defeat in the first Test.

"We have come off the floor from Christchurch," Crowe said after the match. "If we continue the improvement we can look forward to a good tussle in Auckland."

The third and final Test, starting in Auckland on Friday, will be New Zealand's last



D. MORRISON ... m-o-m chance to salvage a home Test victory this season.

New Zealand lost a one-off Test against Pakistan in Hamilton in December before the Christchurch loss and have not won at home for three years.

The team's poor recent results triggered criticism of the team and captain Martin Crowe in particular. Crowe silenced critics of this personal form in his Test with his first innings score of 98, the highest individual score in the match.

But doubts about his ability to captain the side remain. New Zealand coach Warren Lees said that Crowe briefly handed over his captaincy duties to vice-captain Ken Rutherford for the fourth day.

At a news conference after the third day Crowe complained bitterly of Media lies and innuendo which had demoralised him and his family.

Result: Match drawn. Australia lead three match series 1-0. The final Test starts in Auckland on March 12.

Smith's shoulder is a worry

COLOMBO, Mar 8: England batsman Robin Smith is expected to be fit to face Australia in the Ashes series in the Ashes series, reports Reuter.

Smith has experienced pain when throwing the ball during the current tour of India and Sri Lanka and is lined up to see a specialist on his return home.

In a worst-case scenario that could mean an operation but, even if it did, it would not be expected to keep the powerful right-hander out for long.

While England physiotherapist Dave Roberts believes the condition does not require surgery he does not have adequate facilities on tour to be certain, hence the proposed visit to a Nottingham specialist.

Roberts said on Sunday: "The Hampshire physio, David

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World number two Steffi Graf of Germany holds her Virginia Slims of Florida trophy after her final against Spaniard Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario at Delray Beach on Sunday. Graf won 6-4, 6-3.

Captain Crowe takes a break

WELLINGTON, Mar 8: Martin Crowe, facing problems on and off the pitch, handed over the New Zealand captaincy temporarily during the fourth day of the second Test against Australia on Sunday, reports Reuter.

New Zealand coach Warren Lees said Crowe, under pressure over his captaincy and an



M CROWE gered by allegations concerning his private life, took a break for a period after lunch but stayed on the field while Ken Rutherford took charge.

Lees said it did not mean Crowe's position as captain was in jeopardy.

"Martin didn't sleep too well last night. We had bit of a chat at lunchtime and decided that for 20 to 30 minutes after

Crowe offered to resign after the first Test loss but said after stumps were drawn he would be happy to lead the side in the final Test if selected.

Australia's strong performances in both New Zealand Tests will put some of the sparkle back into a season blighted by a narrow series loss to the West Indies at home.

The continued development of legspinner Warne and the return to form of opener Mark Taylor and middle-order batsmen Steve Waugh will hearten the Australians going into their Ashes tour to England.

Taylor has 132 runs from his two Test innings in New Zealand while Waugh's first innings 75 was the highest individual score by an Australian in this Test and his own highest score in New Zealand.

Scoreboard at stumps today, the final day of the second cricket Test between Australia and New Zealand at the Basin Reserve:

NEW ZEALAND: First innings