

Sport

Sylhet face uphill task

Sports Reporter

Star-studded Sylhet DSA would find it an uphill task to stage the set for a revanche as the last year's runners-up were bowled out for a paltry 192 against former champions Bangladesh Biman on the first day of the second semifinal of the 19th Gold Leaf national cricket championship at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.



A A AZHAR... 4 for 41

Sylhet lost to Chittagong — who have already fortified themselves in a position from where they can either retain or renounce the title with a very comfortable victory against Dhaka University in the first semifinal on Monday — in last year's national final.

Things would have been far more worse for Sylhet had Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu, the former national skipper who had recently inspired Abahani Kirta Chakra to win the 1992-93 Navana Premier Division cricket league title, not scored a sedate half-century. His 53, followed by a typical 42 from national cricketer Aminul Islam Bulbul came as what might turn as the saving grace in the long run.

Earlier, sent in to bat, Sylhet made a heavy weather as Biman paceman Mizanur Rahman Babul clean bowled opener Liton for one, with the score on two.

Despectacled Azhar Hossain Shantu teamed up with Rafiqul Alam to steer Sylhet to relative safety with some cautious batting against Saiful and company.

With the score on 56, Anwarul Amin Azhar hovering

in the twilight zone of his career, dealt double blows in quick succession with his off-spinners to push the Sylhet innings in a limbo. Shantu displayed his now all too familiar streak of appearing surfeited and blase after twenty or thirty runs against his name and Babul took his miscued stroke in the deep to send the lethargic batsman back for 24.

If Shantu's was a case of motivation Rafiq brought his downfall for sheer impemperance and the veteran Barisal-born batsman left the stage for 31 with Mahbubur Rahman Selim taking his catch off Azhar.

Saiful, the fire-breathing paceman, sent Athar Ali back into the pavilion for eight and from a tottering stage of 80 for four, Bulbul and Lipu took the score to 138 with some disciplined batting.

Once again Sylhet suffered a double blow with Bulbul departing first, for a well made 42. Substitute Rafiq took his catch as the diminutive batsman with quicksilver footwork chanced his arm against Ahmad Iqbal Bachchu.

Enamul Haq Moni, the Biman skipper, joined Azhar in the demolition act and Gazi

Ashraf Lipu, who hung around to compile a fine 53, stred a stroke off the left-arm spinner and Selim held the second of his three catches without much fuss.

The finger-spinning duo of Azhar and Moni gave the Sylhet tail no chance to wag and although veteran Waheedul Ghani remained unbeaten on 12 Sylhet were all out for 192 in 71.1 overs with more than eight overs of their allotted quota of 80 overs to spare.

Azhar extracted some spin from the wicket to finish with flattering figures of four for 41. Moni, too, added to the miseries of the Sylhet batsmen with figures of two for 26.

With the wicket assisting the spinners Sylhet with slow left-armed Sharfuddin Saikat seasoned leggie Waheed and offie Shantu in their ranks may discover a total of 192 is not all that inadequate as the air-liners begin their innings today.

SCOREBOARD

SYLHET:

Liton lbw b Babul	01
Shantu c Babul b Azhar	24
Rafique c Selim b Azhar	31
Bulbul c sub (Rafique) b Bachchu	42
Athar Ali b Saiful	08
Lipu c Selim b Moni	53
Suru c Selim b Azhar	05
Nasu run out	01
Saikat b Moni	01
Prince b Azhar	10
Wahid not out	04
Extras: (b-1, lb-5, wb-4, nb-2)	12
Total: (71.1 overs)	192

Fall of wickets: 1-2; 2-56; 3-65; 4-80; 5-138; 6-143; 7-155; 8-156; 9-184.

Bowling:

	O	M	R	W
Saiful	11.2	1	32	1
Babul	16	4	31	1
Selim	3.4	0	14	0
Bachchu	11	0	39	1
Moni	12.1	2	26	2
Azhar	16	3	41	4
Shaheen	1	0	3	0

New Boxing Fed committee

The National Sports Council (NSC) yesterday reconstituted the executive committee of Bangladesh Amateur Boxing Federation with Major General Amin Ahmed Chowdhury as its president, reports BSS.

The other members of the 25-member committee are: Vice presidents — Lt Col (ret'd) M A Latif, M Reza and Lt Col (ret'd) Harunur Rashid.

General Secretary — Latifur Rahman Khan.

Joint Secretaries — Momtazuddin Bhuiyan and Yusuf Ali Khan.

Treasurer — S M Alam.

Members — Saidur Rahman, A K Asadullah, Abdul Gader, Sultanuddin Ahmed, Siddiqur Rahman Bhuiyan, Abdul Halim, Sheikh Nur Hussain, Qazi Abdul Mannan, Amjad Hossain, Ekramuzzaman, Dr Jahangir Alam, Yusuf Sona, and one representative each from Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Rifles, Bangladesh Police and the National Sports Council.

Bahrain beat Bangladesh in Davis Cup

Bangladesh lost to Bahrain 1-2 in the Davis Cup Asia-Oceania zone Group Three match held in Doha, Qatar Monday, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday evening.

Bangladesh lost the first singles when Faisal Syed Huq was beaten by Essam Jaffar Abdul-aal 2-6, 4-6.

National number one Hira Lal brought parity (1-1) defeating Shehab Rashed Shehab 6-2, 6-3 in the second singles.

Bangladesh suffered a shock 1-2 as the Bahrain pair won the doubles by two sets to one. Essam Jaffar and Nader Jaffar beat Bangladesh's Faisal Syed Huq and Sk Moinuddin Wailullah 6-2, 4-6, 6-2.

Shovan Jamaly was the other player in the four-member Bangladesh Davis cup team.

The UAE, Qatar, Singapore, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Bahrain and Singapore are playing in Group Three.

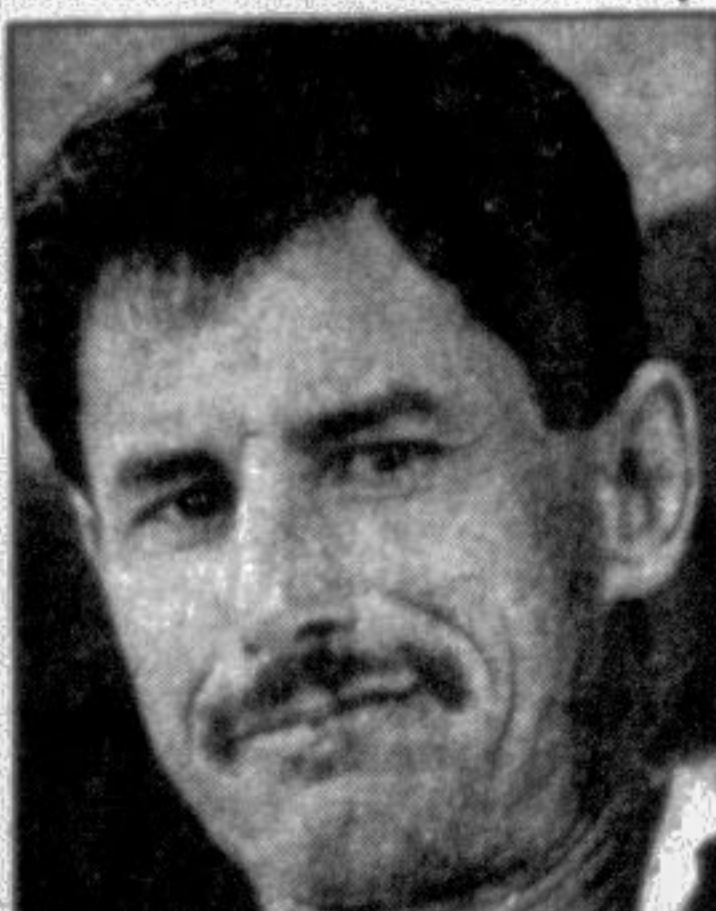
In opening day matches, the UAE beat Qatar 3-0, Singapore outplayed Syria 3-0, Saudi Arabia defeated Lebanon 2-1, reported BSS.



Action from fourth schools kabaddi tournament match between Mirpur Bangla High School and Dholaiapar High at the Outer Stadium kabaddi court yesterday. Dholaiapar won the tie 37-9.

Hadlee to play once again

LONDON, Apr 20: Sir Richard Hadlee, the world's leading Test wicket-taker, has been persuaded out of retirement for a match on Saturday



SIR RICHARD HADLEE

by English northern league club Leyland, reports Reuter.

The former New Zealand all-rounder has agreed to play against Lancashire in place of Gordon Greenidge, who is in the Caribbean to receive an award for his services to West Indian cricket.

Hadlee, 42, has not played competitively since a heart bypass operation two years ago. He is in England on a speaking tour.

His Test haul of 431 wickets is currently under threat from Indian all-rounder Kapil Dev.

Maradona & co suspended

MADRID, Apr 20: Argentinian stars Diego Maradona and Diego Simeone of Sevilla have been suspended by the Spanish Football Federation here on Monday for failing to appear at a disciplinary hearing, reports AFP.

They were due to be questioned over fighting which broke out among players following a league match between Cadiz and Seville on March 21.

Club trainer Carlos Bilardo, his assistant Miguel Angel Lemme and club president Luis Cucruvas were also suspended for failing to appear.

The players will not be allowed to play and the trainers not sit on the bench until the suspension is lifted.

All five have been ordered to appear before a new hearing next Wednesday.

Bird, Bucknor not impressed

PORT OF SPAIN, Apr 20: The pitch used for the first Test between the West Indies and Pakistan is to be criticised by the umpires, reports AFP.

England's Dickie Bird and Jamaica's Steve Bucknor — who gave a world record 17 lbw decisions during the match at the Queen's Park Oval, won by the home side by 204 runs — will criticise the wicket in their report.

Pakistan manager Mudassar Nazar agreed that the pitch was of very poor quality but he would not blame the surface for his side's defeat.

"With the ball keeping low, our batsmen should have been more at home for they are mainly front-foot players," he said.

"Also Pakistani bowlers tend to bring the ball in, which is the more dangerous ball in the circumstances."

The match saw 17 wickets fall in the first day but Mudassar believed match fitness had caused Pakistan's downfall, adding: "We will be more attuned for the second Test."

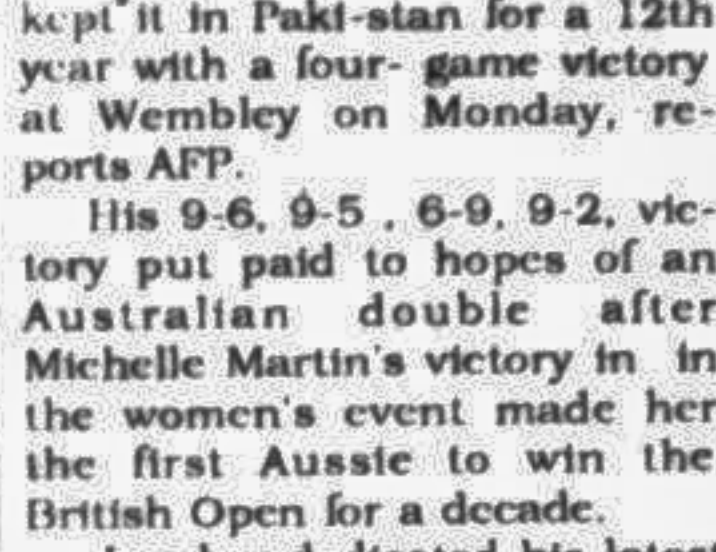
He said there would be fare changes in the batting, a hint that veteran Javed Miandad, the most capped of all Pakistan's cricketers, could be dropped.

Mudassar added: "Javed is not fully fit. His back keeps giving him trouble from time to time."

Leg-spinner Mushtaq Ahmed will definitely not play in the Barbados Test, after more pains in his back. The Pakistan management is contemplating flying him to London for a second operation on his injury.

Jansher asserts Pak supremacy

LONDON, Apr 20: Jansher Khan won the British Open squash title for a second consecutive year and kept it in Paki-stan for a 12th year with a four-game victory at Wembley on Monday, reports AFP.



JANSHER KHAN

His 9-6, 9-5, 6-9, 9-2, victory put paid to hopes of an Australian double after Michelle Martin's victory in the women's event made her the first Aussie to win the British Open for a decade.

Jansher dedicated his latest triumph to his mother, whose heart attack last month caused worries that he might not defend the British Open.

But there were just a few minutes, in the third game and early in the fourth, when it seemed the lack of training her illness had caused might be troubling him.

After dominating the first two games with his breath-taking government, he seemed to slow and Dittmar started to

score more often at the front of the court.

The left-handed player from Adelaide also finished the third game with two delectable high backhand volley drops

in reality, Jansher was often able to match Dittmar's excellent front court skills and was superior in both speed and stamina.

There was even less doubt about the victory of Martin by 9-7, 9-0, 9-4 in the Women's final against the surprise finalist from England, Suzanne Horner. Horner appeared to have left her best behind in the two previous rounds when she beat two other members of Australia's world title winning squad Liz Irving and Sarah Fitzgerald.

She recovered from 3-6 to 7-7 but after failing to reach game point by missing a chance for a winning drop, the match ran away from her.

Martin won the second game impressively in only five minutes and began to look capable of becoming a permanent number one in succession to New Zealander Susan Devoy, whose eight unbroken years as number one recently ended with retirement.

India fight to stay alive

NEW DELHI, Apr 20: India are waging a desperate battle to save what is fast becoming an endangered species — world class hockey players, writes AFP.

The eight-time Olympic champions have fallen on such hard times that no one wants to play hockey anymore in a country once regarded as the masters of the game.

Major reverses over the last decade — India have drawn a blank since bagging a devalued gold at the boycotted Moscow Olympics in 1980 — have sapped the interest in a game that was once India's national sport.

No one loves a loser and, not surprisingly, young Indians are taking to more glamorous and financially rewarding games like cricket, tennis and golf.

The situation is so bad that a worried Indian Hockey Federation (IHF) has spread the dragnet far and wide to unearth raw talent, but with little success. There is no potential Dhyan Chand in sight.

The situation is, frankly, appalling," laments IHF president Raghunandan Prasad. "No one has a clue where the next good hockey player will come from."

Says respected Indian hockey critic S. Thyagarajan: "We are close to bankruptcy in terms of talent. The game now hardly has the glamour to attract the youth."

Bad planning and an unending debate over the style of play to adopt have left Indians dispirited and confused, causing a massive decline in the country's fortunes.

In an era of synthetic turfs, the IHF still insists on holding the nationals on grass or clay, leaving the bewildered players no room to adjust at international meets which are all played on synthetic surfaces.

More serious is the dilemma over whether to adopt the unconventional, but successful "total hockey" concept of the Europeans or stick to the aesthetically appealing 5-3, 2-1 Asian line-up.

India went to the Barcelona Olympics last year under coach Balkishen Singh, a known exponent of total hockey, but finished a poor seventh to be relegated to the qualification round for the Atlanta Games in 1996.

An angry IHF responded by sacking Balkishen and 11 of the 16-man squad including captain Pargat Singh amidst allegations that the players preferred to negotiate deals with foreign clubs rather than concentrate on the game.

The reins are now in the hands of 22-year-old half-back Shaukel Khan, one of the five survivors from Barcelona, as a new look Indian team prepares for a short tour of South Africa in May and the inter-continental meet in Poland later this year.

Balkishen's successor as national coach is former winger Zafar Iqbal, who led India at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics but has no formal coaching experience.

The 37-year-old Zafar wants to revert back to the traditional Asian style because it is the right approach as is evident from Pakistan's success.

Botham wants to sign off with Ashes

LONDON, Apr 20: The ball, delivered by one of the world's most lethal bowlers, was fast, short and sickeningly accurate. It struck an 18-year-old Somerset hopeful called Ian Botham in the mouth and a packed Taunton crowd feared the worst, reports Reuter.

Instead, ignoring the blood and West Indian paceman Andy Roberts, the youngster picked himself up and almost single-handedly won an important one-day match with an over to spare. English cricketer the remarkable Botham has announced this season will almost certainly be his last. At 37, with 102 Tests and 10 operations behind him, even Becy is starting to acknowledge the odds are against further miracles.

Not that the touring Australians arriving in England next week should relax. The great man still wants one final tilt at his oldest adversaries and, judging by his past record, nothing should be ruled out.

This is the all-rounder who destroyed Australia with ball and bat in 1981 in one of the most extraordinary displays of modern times. He has 383 Test wickets to his name, 14 Test centuries and 120 catches. Statistics, though, tell a fraction of the story.

Botham has unquestionably been the most controversial cricketer of his era, notably in 1986 when he was banned for two months after admitting he had once smoked cannabis.

Legend has it he once knocked Ian Chappell off a bar stool, while Anglo-Australian relations were not improved when he was arrested for allegedly assaulting a fellow passenger on an internal flight while playing for Queensland.

Captain on England on 12 occasions, he also caused an international furore by insisting Pakistan was a country he would not even want to inflict on his mother-in-law.

But the moody streak has been more than balanced by extraordinary efforts for his favourite leukemia charity. He has retraced Hannibal's steps across the Alps and covered the length and breadth of Britain on fund-raising walks.

As on the cricket field, few could keep pace with him, but the years of playing to the limit have taken their toll.

"I had the 10th operation of my career 10 weeks ago and I think my body is starting to tell me something," said Botham.

"But I feel fine at the moment and, if I can get off to a good start, I hope to be given the chance to do well against

the Australians."

The current selectors, pilloried for England's poor showing in India and Sri Lanka may just tempt to reach for the Botham magic one more time.

When Both went out to bat or came on to bowl, people left their eyes off the cricket. He generated excitement, and

Chairman of selectors Ted Dexter described Botham "in his pomp" as one of the all-time great Test bowlers.

"From 100 to 250 Test wickets, Ian was right at the top of the tree — a magnificent performer for England," said Dexter.

"I always felt his batting depended quite a lot on his bowling — if he was bowling well and taking wickets, his confidence was high and he could go out there and smash the ball around."

Dexter and his fellow selectors showed their faith in Botham's ability even at the age of 36 when they allowed him to miss most of England's Test tour of New Zealand the winter before last but still play in the World Cup.

The all-rounder responded magnificently, particularly against Australia at Sydney when he helped to bowl the old enemy to defeat with a magnificent spell.

Botham is about to start the second season of a two-year contract with Durham and although he was troubled by a shoulder injury last season, he added "I am seeing a specialist this week but I'm not expecting any problems."

The good news for Durham is that Botham is determined to help them win a trophy.

"I would love to see Durham do something before I leave," he said.

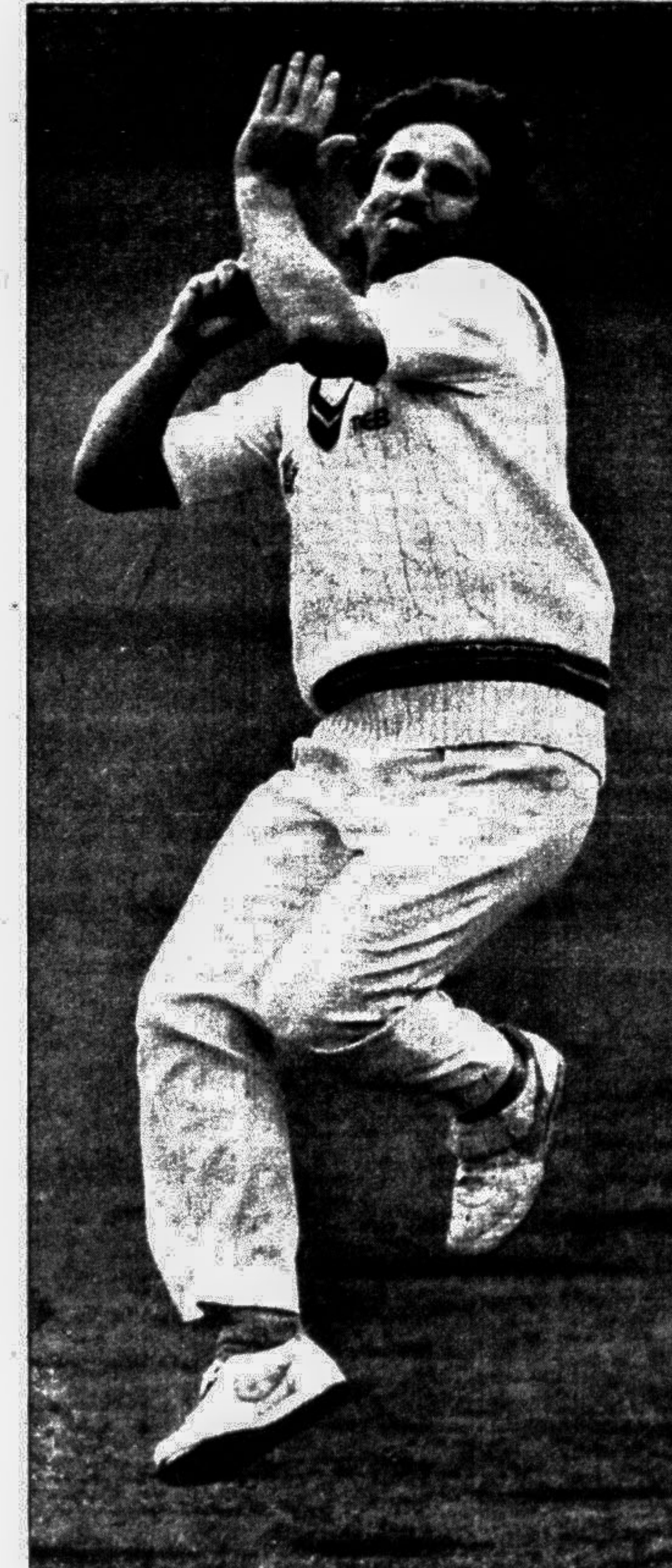
When Botham does pack his kit bag for the final time — the farewell party should be something else — and go in search of new challenges, there will undoubtedly be a gaping void in English cricket.

There will also be one unfulfilled detail in a career which, among other feats, saw him become the youngest player to record the Test double of 100 wickets and 1,000 runs as well as, for a while, the highest Test wicket-taker of all time.

Botham had admitted a desire to play first-class cricket with his highly promising 16-year-old son Liam, due to attend Lancashire nets later this year.

"Liam is going from strength to strength," said his proud father. "I would have loved to have played with him but I want to go while I am still at the top."

If Botham junior is any sort of chip off the old block, perhaps English cricket is not in such a desperate state after all.



IAN BOTHAM... never too old

WTA's top 20

ST PETERSBURG, Florida, Apr 20: Leading money winners in women's tennis this year, as issued by the Women's Tennis Association on Monday:

1. Steffi Graf (Germany) 485,175 US dollar
2. Aprantxa Sanchez-Vicario (Spain) 446,136
3. Monica Seles (Yugoslavia) 429,138
4. Martina Navratilova (US) 281,250
5. Gabriela Sabatini (Argentina) 206,609
6. Natalia Zvereva (Belarus) 193,288
7. Gigi Fernandez (US) 187,108
8. Jana Novotna (Czech Republic) 179,097
9. Mary Joe Fernandez (US) 173,928
10. Conchita Martinez (Spain) 173,541
11. Larisa Neiland (Latvia) 158,905
12. Jennifer Capriati (US) 142,043
13. Amanda Coetzer (South Africa) 123,283
14. Zina Garrison-Jackson (US) 112,760
15. Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere (Switzerland) 103,952
16. Pam Shriver (US) 101,947
17. Kimiko Date (Japan) 99,183
18. Patty Fendick (US) 78,571
19. Nathalie Tauziat (France) 75,875
20. Elizabeth Smylie (Australia) 73,034

Mini-marathon tomorrow

The Biman mini-marathon, organised jointly by Biman Bangladesh Airlines and Bangladesh Amateur Athletic Federation, will begin at 6-30 am on Friday simultaneously from the Zia International Airport and the Army Stadium at Banani, reports UNB.

All participants in the seven categories of the competition are to collect their chest numbers today, Thursday, between 4 pm and 8 pm, from the Athletics Federation office at the Dhaka National Stadium.

The participants will have to report at the starting points with their chest numbers by 6 am on Friday, April 23, says a press release of the organisers.