



Action from yesterday's Star First Division football league match between Dhanmondi Club and Dhaka Wanderers at the Dhaka Stadium. The match ended in a goalless draw. — Star photo

Maradona gives it a second thought

BUENOS AIRES, July 7: Diego Maradona, who announced two weeks ago that he was giving up football for good, is having second thoughts, reports AFP.

The Argentine was sacked by Spanish club Sevilla last week after a dismal comeback season, following a 15-month ban for cocaine. Maradona, once the world's greatest footballer, returned here saying it was all over.

But he told a radio interviewer on Tuesday that he was now being tempted back.

Maradona said he had been contacted by Prospero Consoli, who was president of Argentine Juniors when the star made his debut for the First Division club at the age of 15.

He did not give details, saying only that Consoli wanted him to return to his old team.

Iran complete a deadly quorum

DAMASCUS, July 7: Iran completed the setting of a diplomatic minefield for World Cup organisers after they won their Asian qualifying group on Tuesday, reports AFP.

A 1-1 draw in Damascus with hosts Syria was enough to give Iran the top spot in Asia's qualifying Group B — and a place in the last stage of the continent's battle to reach next year's finals in America.

The International Football Federation, FIFA, could not have chosen six more difficult opponents to put in competition for Asia's two places.

Iran will take on Iraq, until five years ago their sworn enemies. Also in the group are Saudi Arabia, who led the Arab coalition against Iraq in the Gulf War, and a communist North and capitalist South Korea.

Japan are the only side not to pose a political quandary. But the Japanese have their own reason for being quietly successful in this potentially explosive second round tournament. They want to be the first Asian country to host the World Cup finals in 2002.

The world body has spent weeks trying to find a neutral country to stage the Asia tournament. After much discussion, FIFA announced Tuesday that should be held in Qatar, probably in late October.

The draw for this six-team event, with the top two qualifying for the finals, will be made in Zurich on July 15.

Iraq has already declared its intent on winning one of the places as a way of redeeming national honour after the Gulf War.

"Your mission is part of the confrontation between Iraq and the 'Forces of Evil' as embodied by the United States and their allies," the army newspaper Al-Qadisiya told the team recently.

FIFA were also warned of the protocol problems ahead by Iraqi television. "For the others, football may be a game, for us it's a battle" went a song played by government broadcasters after Iraq's 1-0 victory over China in their qualifying tournament in May.

That battle cost nine lives and left 120 others wounded by celebration gunfire in Baghdad after the win, according to Iraqi press reports.

STANDINGS

Group B standings (tabulate under played, won, drawn, lost, goals for goals against, points).

Iran	6	3	3	0	15	2	9
Syria	6	3	3	0	14	4	9
Aman	6	2	2	2	10	5	6
Taiwan	6	0	0	6	3	1	0

Deceptively easy win for BU

Sports Reporter



A sudden and swift breakdown in the Arambagh defence helped Brothers Union record a deceptively impressive 3-0 win in the Star Premier Division football league at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

Brothers led the first half one-nil.

Arambagh, who finished fourth in last year's league, were expected to give a tacky Brothers Union a real run for their money. But they failed to drive home the initial advantage and on a slushy ground

Armbagh remained glued to their collection of four from as many outings.

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Third-seeded Frana cruised by American Richard Schmidt 6-3, 6-4, while fourth seed Stafford pulled out a 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 victory over Gilad Bloom of Israel.

Matsuoaka, whose ranking slid from 64 to 171 due to a six-month ban with mononucleosis, got an early break in the first set to go 2-1 up and never relinquished his advantage, serving out the set.

Both played a rapid-fire serve-and-volley style in the two hour 28 minute battle and a double-fault by the Japanese Davis Cupper in the eighth game of the second set gave Shelton his first break opportunity.

The American seized the opportunity by firing a return at Matsuoaka's feet and later saved three break points to send the match into a third set.

Each player was in control from the service line and the match headed to a third set tie-break when Shelton failed to convert two break points in game nine and Matsuoaka proved unable to capitalise on a pair of Shelton double-faults in the 12th game.

Matsuoaka finally found his return in the tie-break when a low backhand return gave him a mini-break for 4-3.

After winning the next two points on big first serves, he rifled a low forehand return to dethrone the champion.

Shelton follows the trend

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Brothers shot into the lead through midfielder Uttam. Boris and Ripon teamed up to lay the ball on the path of the speeding medio who dodged two Arambagh defenders inside the box and place the ball into the net past Bijoy (1-0).

The second of the match did not see any marked improvement in the standard of the game. Brothers, who lacked pace upfront, controlled the midfield better mainly because of the three Russians who outweighed their Arambagh counterparts not by sheer physical weight but also by their better ball sense.

Arambagh could not make any headway in this session mainly because of the Brothers defence who backed up the hardworking midfield with a non-nonsense approach in the evening.

Skipper Moon was particularly impressive in the Brothers defence nipping any Arambagh ambition in the bud with some clinical tackling.

Boris Spyrin, the most imaginative of Brothers' Russian trio, helped his side's defence breathe easily when he paved the path for the second goal 29 minutes into the

second half. He freed Ripon with an excellent through ball and the forward, who has been scoring almost regularly these days, hit the back of the net (2-0).

Two minutes later the shabby Arambagh defence allowed Rakib to force his way through following a Manik through and the striker of the national team had little problems in beating a muzzy Bijoy (3-0).

With this win Brothers now take their points tally to seven from five matches while Arambagh remain glued to their collection of four from as many outings.

GOALLESS DRAW

Dhanmondi and Wanderers Club shared points in the Star First Division football league encounter held earlier at the same venue yesterday.

Unbeaten still Wanderers upped their collection to seven from five matches with yesterday's one point.

Dhanmondi have four points from five matches.

TODAY'S MATCHES

Farashganj Vs BRFC (4-30)

Mohammedans Vs Rahmatganj (6-30)

League suspended till tomorrow

Pandemonium puts play off

Sports Reporter



The crucial Green Delta First Division hockey league encounter between Abahani Krira Chakra and Usha Krira Chakra was abandoned after four minutes of the second half play as players of the two teams indulged in a brawl at the Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The match was going goalless when trouble broke out.

It all started when Abahani's star Pakistan forward Qamar Ibrahim stormed into the Usha defence where his compatriot and Usha defender Sarfraz blocked his way and a skirmish followed. Sarfraz hit Qamar and as soon as the local players rushed to aid their respective goals, all hell broke loose.

Usha's Kismat stole the show of the day by getting involved in a duel with Abahani's Piru. Later the temperamental Usha forward chased the Abahani officials as extra players and officials of both sides intruded the field looking more like the tele-snippet's showing clashes between the different rival groups in South Africa or elsewhere.

Some of Usha's extra players roughed up Qamar Ibrahim a bit as the vaunted Pakistan star seemed to be the target of a pre-determined assault. The reason for this wrath could be traced in the final day.

H'ball training course ends

MAJDEE COURT (Noakhali), July 7: A week-long handball training course for the female players concluded at the Chatkhil Government Girls' High School ground Sunday, reports UNB.

Thirty female players, below 16 from Chatkhil, Azam and Panchgaon Girls' High Schools and Taltala Adarsha Girls' High Schools took part in the course.

A handball competition among the participants, organised by the District Sports Association, was also held on the final day.

Chatkhil Thana: Nirbahi Officer distributed certificates among the trainees.

the recent allegations of duplicity against Qamar by some Usha officials. According to Usha officials, Qamar had earlier gave them word to play for them and took clearance from the Karachi Hockey Association but later opted to play for Abahani to go back on his word.

The flare-up in the field resulted in heavy brick-battling in the galleries which left two spectators injured.

Meanwhile, the league committee suspended Green Delta First Division hockey league upto July 9. The committee will meet in an emergency meeting to decide the fate of the match between Abahani and Usha.

With the first big match of the league leading to serious law and order situation it looks like

the authorities will find it difficult to complete league unless they come up with some exemplary punishments for the culprits of yesterday's match.

Abahani Krira Chakra have collected full 20 points from ten matches while Usha, who underlined their emergence as the new forces in the domestic hockey by winning Independence Cup tournament earlier this year, have 16 points from nine matches.

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Gavaskar accepts MCC membership

LONDON, July 7: Indian batting legend Sunil Gavaskar has done an about turn and accepted an honorary life membership of the Marylebone Cricket Club, reports AFP.

Three years ago the second highest run scorer in Test history snubbed the honour because of a row with a Lord's gatekeeper, who refused him entry to the ground.

However, the former Indian captain has now changed his mind, much to the delight of MCC secretary Colonel John Stephenson.

Stephenson said: "It was an unfortunate incident, but obviously he now wants to forget about it and we're delighted he's accepted this second invitation. He was such a great player and we felt we should ask him again."

Gavaskar is one of nine new life members. The others are former teammate Dilip Vengsarkar, ex-West Indies batsmen Gordon Greenidge and Steven Camacho, former New Zealand batsman John Wright, South Africans Ali Bacher and Geoff Dakin, and Zimbabweans David Ellman Brown Alwyn Pichanick.

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