SAF Games soccer fixtures finalised

Sports Reporter

Defending champions Pakistan will take on Shri Lanka in the first match of the sixth South Asian Federation (SAF) Games football tournament on the opening day of the seven-day spectacle at the Dhaka Stadium.

Pakistan, who have already the soccer gold twice so far, have been placed in Group A along with India, aiming to repeat their gold-winning performance back in 1985 when Dhaka hosted the second Games, and the Lankans.

Hosts Bangladesh, who will surely be gunning for the gold in front of the partisan crowd to efface the bitter memory of losing the chance eight years back, have Nepal and Maldives to best in the Group B.

The national squad, currently on a preparatory tour of Malaysia, begin its campaign also on the opening day after the first match at the same venue.

Bangladesh play their second match against Nepal on December 22 at six in the evening after India's tournament opener against Shri Lanka, which is scheduled for a 4:00 p.m. start.

The match between India and Pakistan will feature the end of the Group A fixtures on December 24 while the same day would also mark the end of the Group B matches when Nepal go up against Maldives, runners-up in the previous games, at four in the afternoon.

The final and the third place deciding play off have been billed for December 26, the penultimate day of the seven-day games.

Meanwhile, concerned officials will sit again today to review the final fixture of the SAF Games football to consider whether it can be maintained without any alteration in grouping.

The meeting has been arranged on the assumption that the present fixture, sent yesterday by the general secretary of the Bangladesh Football Federation to the BOA Secretary General, might create confusion among the sports fans due to inclusion of two matches after the opening ceremony.

Paddlers leave for India today

A five-member Bangladesh women's table tennis squad, now preparing for the sixth SAF Games, leaves the capital today for India for further preparations, reports UNB.

During their 17-day tour, the Bangladeshi paddlers will have practice sessions with the Indian national side at the Jawharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium, New Delhi.

The members of the team are: Hafizur Rahman (manager), Zobera Rahman Linu, Zulekha Akhter, Shamima Tarmin Dorithy and Tania Tarmin Rin.

The team will return home on December 5.

Chhetri in city

Secretary General of the Olympic Association of Bhutan D K Chhetri arrived in the capital yesterday on a three-day visit to Bangladesh, reports UNB.

D K Chhetri, the former Bhutanese Ambassador to Bangladesh, will visit the construction sites of the new national indoor stadium and swimming pool, both at Mirpur.

A three-member Shri Lankan television team will arrive today for making arrangements with the BTV officials to telecast some sports events of the Games.

Dull draws

Sports Reporter

All the three matches of the Progoti Insurance Third Division football league ended in draws yesterday.

Purbachal Parishad split points with Dhaka Sporting Club in a one-all tie at the Outer Stadium.

Sulaiman put Dhaka SC into the lead in the 20th minute but Reaz Hassan scored the equalizer in the 40th minute.

Later at the same venue, Chalantika Krira Chakra and Fire Service and CDSC failed to score in the 90-minute affair.

The other match at the Mahakhali T & T ground, Rahmatgonj Sporting Club also ended the match against East End Club in a one-all draw.

East End went one up through Mozaffar in the 41st minute while Rezaul Karim ensured a point for Rahmatgonj.

Biman golf tomorrow

The first Biman golf tournament '93 will be held on at Kurmitola Golf Course tomorrow, reports UNB.

Chief of Army Staff and Kurmitola Golf Club president Lt General M Noor Uddin Khan will inaugurate the one-day tournament sponsored by Biman Bangladesh Airlines.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan will distribute the trophies among the winners as chief guest in the afternoon.

A day of scare for big teams

Sports Reporter

Champions Abahani Krira Chakra survived a dramatic batting collapse and first real scare of the season to beat Surja Tarun by three wickets while Biman overcame Dhanmondi by virtue of having lost fewer wickets in an absorbing day of Navana Premier Division cricket league at different city venues yesterday.

At the Dhaka Stadium, five wickets tumbled for 17 runs as star-studded Abahani, cruising along at 145 for three in 27 overs, suddenly discovered themselves in a soup with scoreboard showing 162 for seven in the 36th over. Memories of Shri Lankan spinner Ranjit Madurasinghe's mesmerising act for Tarun against Abahani few years back visited cricket fans' minds because the latest casualty in a longish list of baffled batsmen in the Abahani rank was none other then Minhazul Abedin Nannu, the former national skipper regarded by many as the best local batsman at the moment.

Few in the stands could foresee the turnaround of fortunes late in the afternoon as Indian G P Singh and Harun-ur-Rashid Liton leading Abahani's victory chase threatened to run away with the match at the cost of the inexperienced but highly enthusiastic Tarun bowlers.

It is to the discredit of this glorious game that statistics do not always reflect the real picture. Like those who were not present at the ground would remain in the dark about a class ten student named Sajal Chowdhury. Perhaps, the fastest local bowler playing in the league, this young man was thrashed for 29 runs in five overs but underlined his promise as a prospective partner for Saiful in the national team. For a lad of barely 5'6" height he worked up hot pace on a dead-wicket but ploughed in the sands for the want of proper guidance and handling. But then age is on his side and he is likely to hone his skills to the optimum level, in due time.

He had a couple of real snorters whizzing past Abahani's dashing opener Liton who otherwise had a great time with the bat yesterday. Liton smashed 56 off 57 balls as Abahani riding high on a rapid-fire 30-ball 25 from G P Singh, the other opener raced to 65 in nine overs.

Then Indian Test-discard Sanjeev Sharma stepped in to stanch the flow of runs with his impeccable yorkers and occasional straight ones that created confusion in the Abahani ranks. He rearranged the stumps of three Abahani batsmen — G P Singh, Faruque and Akram, to cap a brief but graceful batting display marred earlier by a dubious decision by umpire Aziz and a show of temper by the player himself on his way back to the pavilion.

Despite Sharma's commendable efforts backed by some belated bite from spinner Nafees and Sohel, Abahani collected the necessary 183 runs for seven wickets with apparent comfort thanks to some reesty rearguard action by Khaled Mahmud Sujan an Saiful Islam, both of whom remained unbeaten in the 38.2 over old innings.

Saiful and Sujan were forced into the rescue act as three Abahani batsmen — skipper Gazi Ashraf Lipu, Nannu and Englishman Richard Illingworth, who had a miserable day, failed to get into the double figures. Faruque and Akram who made 32 and 15 respectively left in quick succession to trigger off an inexplicable collapse.

Sharma who heralded it all finished with richly rewarding figures of three for 33 while Sohel who found a perfect line

RAJINDER SINGH ... 69

and length albeit belatedly was the Indian's ideal backer with figures of two for 20.

Earlier, in the morning Rajinder Singh, Tarun's Indian skipper combined with Sanjeev Sharma to give an exhilarating batting display. They added 79 runs in 69 balls to stimulate Tarun who were tottering at 75 for four in 27:3 overs.

Adorned in a black 'patka', the traditional turban for Sikhs, Rajinder took on the might of Abahani spin attack that featured English Test player Richard Illinworth. The top-scorer of the match who made 69 from 87 balls was particularly harsh on left arm spinner Illingworth whom he delightfully despatched for a sixer over extra cover, a gem of a stroke executed in line with one of the basics of the game — hitting with spin.

No less adherent to this principle was Sanjeev Sharma who caressed and cajoled the ball to 30 from 40 balls before an attempted cut off a widish delivery by Saiful resulted in a caught behind decision by umpire Aziz Shikdar. Sharma, whose bat seemed to have been a long way from the ball, was not obviously amused. He waited a long while and felled one of the boundary flags with a frustrating swipe of the bat on his way back to the pavilion.

The unsavoury incident was compensated by some timely slogging by the young pair of Sajal and Munna with the former once hitting Sujan over long on for a big sixer. Sajal remained unbeaten on 15 as Tarun closed at 182 for seven from their share of 45 overs.

Saiful was the pick of the Abahani bowlers with figures of one for 26 from nine overs. Sujan bagged two for 30 from eight overs while Illingworth took some stick to finish with the figures of two for 53, off eight overs.

BIMAN'S ROMAN CANDLE

On a day of close shaves for the big teams Biman won day's other Navana Premier league encounter against Dhanmondi by virtue of having lost fewer wickets.

Sent in to bat first Biman guided by 57 from Shahnawaz Shahid Shanu collected 180 for seven from 45 overs.

Vishal, Vinay an Billu bagged two wickets apiece among the Dhanmondi bowlers.

An unbeaten 20 by Indian Vinay followed by solid knocks of 53 by Billu and 35 by Emdu helped Dhanmondi to tie up with the Biman score at the end of the stipulated quota of 45 overs.

But they lost eight wickets one more than Biman's seven in the process and had the mortification of ending up as losers despite finishing at par.

Biman's skipper Enamul Huq Moni took four wickets for 31 runs.

TODAY'S MATCHES

Mohammedans Vs Udity (Dhaka Stadium)

Gulshan Youth Vs GMCC (DCS).

Sarfraz faces a bouncer

LONDON, Nov 17: Former Pakistan Test star Sarfraz Nawaz's vaunted bowling "technique" of reverse swing was "complete nonsense", England batsman Allan Lamb's counsel told the High Court here on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Mr David Eady QC was opening the 39-year-old Northants captain's defence to a libel action brought by the 44-year-old medium pace bowler over an article that appeared in the Daily Mirror in August last year.

Mr Nawaz says Mr Lamb was lying for money when he claimed that the Pakistani showed him 12 years ago when they were county teammates how to make an old ball swing by gouging it with his nails and smearing the surface with sweat to fool the umpire.

He says the Englishman accused him of being a cheat who passed on his "trick" to the controversial 1992 Pakistani touring side. Mr Eady said it was no part of Mr Lamb's case that Mr Nawaz was anything other than a very distinguished cricketer and he never saw him gouge the ball during his playing days in the 1970s and 80s.

But he dismissed as "complete nonsense" Mr Nawaz's evidence that his "technique" of polishing just one side of an old ball with sweat would achieve the dramatic results achieved by the Pakistanis during last year's Tests.

"Sweat and polishing are commonplace techniques for swing bowlers through the generations. They can't possibly account for reverse swing — the very powerful weapon of the Pakistanis in recent years.

"What's new is now thing only — gouging the side of the ball to speed up the roughening process and affect its aero-dynamics. Something that would happen naturally in Pakistan over a few overs, takes much longer in England because of the greener wickets."

Mr Eady said Mr Lamb, who has led Northants since 1989 and been vice-captain and captain of England, would not countenance cheating in any side of which he was a member.

He accepted that Waqar Younis and Wasim Akram, the Pakistani bowlers at the centre of last summer's controversy, were among the best bowlers in the world.

"One of the sad things is they are perfectly capable of turning in match-winning performances without resorting to breaking the rules," said Mr Eady.

Lamb was not a bad loser and did not suggest the 1992 Test results would have been any different even if the ball had not been tampered with.

England players had complained regularly about ball tampering but nothing was done.

They kept their mouths firmly shut in public as they were bound to do under the Test and County Cricket Board rules.

Money can't buy everything

POZNAN, Poland, Nov 17: Polish soccer officials have rejected a 10,000- pound (14,900 US dollar) bounty offered by a British tabloid newspaper to each Polish player if they beat the Netherlands in their World Cup qualifier oh Wednesday, reports Reuter.

The Daily Mirror offered the reward because a Polish win would give England a chance of reaching the finals. It also promised the English team 10,000 pounds for each of the seven goals needed to beat San Marino if the Dutch lose 1-0.

Coach Leslaw Cmikiewicz said he had turned down the offer during an interview with the Daily Mirror.

"I rejected it. This matter does not interest me. For me Wednesday's match is a sporting matter and not a financial one." Cmikiewicz was quoted as saying by the Polish news agency PAP.

Polish players dismissed the bounty, news of which was splashed across sports pages of Polish newspapers on Tuesday. One newspaper, Gazeta Wyborcza, translated the sum into marks, dollars, roubles, lira, Dutch guilders and Polish zloties.

"We are playing for ourselves and 40 million compatriots," midfielder Robert Warzycha said.

"I don't count on the money. It must be a journalists' rumour," said defender Dariusz Adamczuk.

It's not cricket

JAMSHEDPUR, India, Nov 17: An Indian supporter of the West Indies, which decimated the hosts here on Tuesday in a Hero Cup match, was hacked to death by home fans who felt his loyalties were misplaced, reports AFP.

Sailesh Kumar was rushed to a hospital in this eastern city where he died of stab wounds inflicted by two home-team supporters smarting from the humiliating rout of India by West Indies pace bowlers in Tuesday's match in Ahmedabad.

Police arrested the two killers after they hacked Kumar following the match, which the West Indies won by 102 runs to record a second victory in the five-nation tournament.

Div II hockey

Sports Reporter

Farashgonj Sporting Club kept their winning record intact when they beat Tejgaon Agragami 1-0 in the Green Delta Second Division hockey at the Hockey Stadium yesterday.

A field goal by Kalim in the 20th minute sealed the match for his side.

The first match of the day, between East End Green Club and Cantonian Sporting Club, ended in a tame goalless draw.

Argentina take on Australia today

BUENOS AIRES, Nov 17: Both Argentina and Australia are expected to make two changes for their World Cup return match here at 6:15 am Bangladesh time, Thursday, reports AFP.

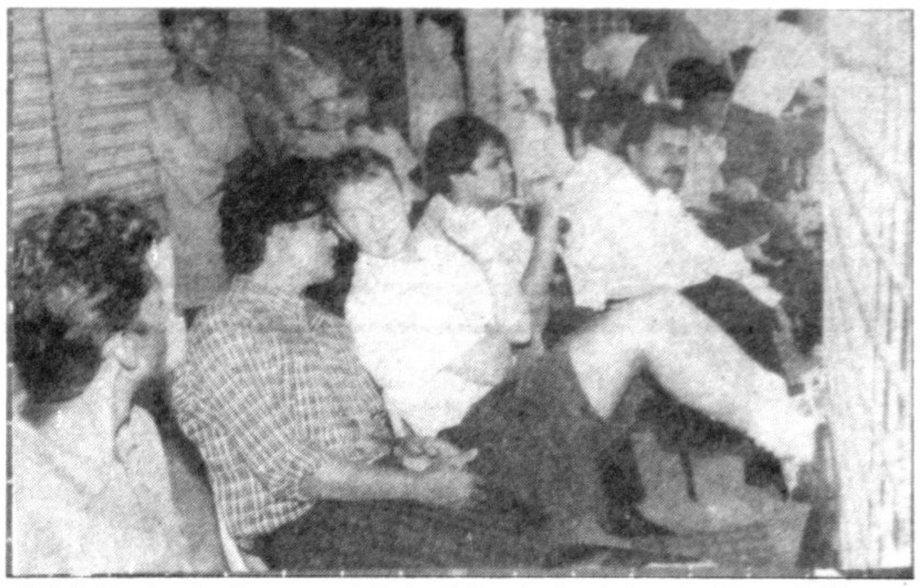
Defender Oscar Ruggeri, who plays in Mexico, and midfielder Diego Simeone, who was with Diego Maradona at Sevilla on the great man's last venture in Spain, return.

They were suspended for the first-leg in Sydney last month which finished in a 1-1 draw.

Ruggeri replaces Jorge Borelli and Simeone is in for Jose Basualdo.

However, coach Alfio Basile refused to confirm the team until an hour before the kick-off at 0015 GMT

Argentine soccer star Diego Maradona (C) tries to control the ball in front of teammates Jorge Borelli (L) and Diego Zapata during a selection practice session which was opened to the press prior to their World Cup qualifying match against Australia in Buenos Aires. — AFP photo



Neil Fairbrother (in shorts) one of Abahani's four foreign signings for this year's Navana Premier Division cricket league watched yesterday's Abahani-Surja Tarun match at the Dhaka Stadium as a spectator. — Star photo

Rutherford, quite relaxed

ADELAIDE, Nov 17: Newly-appointed New Zealand cricket captain Ken Rutherford sees maintaining morale as his main task during the remainder of the Kiwis' tour of Australia, reports AP.

Martin Crowe returned home after aggravating a knee injury during the drawn first Test match, which ended Tuesday in Parth.

Rutherford will lead New Zealand in the remaining two Test matches in Hobart and Brisbane and in the World Series limited-overs tournament against Australia and South Africa.

Crowe will undergo surgery later this week and will not play for two months.

Rutherford has one experience of leading New Zealand — in a one-off Test against Pakistan at Hamilton in January this year. He said it was important that the younger players were not overawed by the task ahead.

"There's a big role for the experienced players to lift in the next few days and to rally around the lesser-experienced fellows," Rutherford said Wednesday.

"Being without you best player is the most difficult thing

KEN RUTHERFORD

quite capable of performing without Martin."

"We have to look at our batting and say to everyone that we have to lift 10 per cent to score to come to grips with, but we're Martin's runs for him."

Rutherford said the draw at the WACA Ground already had lifted the spirits of the tourists.

"I think there's a vein of confidence sweeping through the team after the performance in the first Test," he said.

"Hopefully, that upward spiral will continue."

Rutherford said he had plenty of experience of captaincy at first-class level.

"I've captained my province (Otago) for the last three or four years and I've been vice-captain of New Zealand for the last couple of year," he said.

"I've been making mental notes along the way and I feel quite relaxed about it'.

Chris Harris and Richard De Groen, replacements called up from New Zealand, both are expected to play in the four-day match against South Australia, which starts Friday in Adelaide.

Willie Watson and Dipak Patel are troubled by minor injuries, while Danny Morrison needs a break after carrying the New Zealand attack for much of the Australian second innings.

Eire set priorities right

BELFAST, Northern Ireland, Nov 17: It's hard luck for the Irish soccer squad to find itself in hostile Northern Ireland territory and under police protection for Wednesday's crucial World Cup qualifier, reports AP.

Republic of Ireland manager Jack Charlton said he wasn't worried about the sectarian violence that has made his team and supporters a potential target. He's concentrating on beating Northern Ireland so his talented squad will ensure a trip next year to the United States.

"For an Irish team to go to America is a big event. Irish people throughout the world will be looking forward to this, so this is a huge event as far as they are concerned," Charlton said as he led his players into practice Tuesday night at Belfast's Windsor Park Stadium.

Security officials fear the match could prove a flashpoint for violence, which last month left 27 dead in the British-ruled province.

Irish striker Niall Quinn said the team has clear priorities: "We're not worried about coming to Northern Ireland. We're worried about playing against Northern Ireland."

The match will be played in a mainly Protestant, pro-British part of south Belfast. Most of the Irish fans will be Catholics, but organizers have tried to limit the number of tickets available to Republic supporters.

Sean Connolly, secretary of the Dublin-based Football Association of Ireland, said he wasn't worried about violence at the match itself. "But I still have my worries about the prospect of our supporters being attacked outside the grounds," he said.

Connolly protested earlier this month that the match should be moved outside Northern Ireland. But FIA, soccer's international governing body, ruled that Belfast organisers could ensure security.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary, Northern Ireland's police force, said checkpoints on roads leading to Windsor Park would turn back cars without ticket-holders, while several hundred armed police would stand guard in and around the grounds.

The fact that the Republic of Ireland squad flew Tuesday from Dublin to Belfast underscored the security fears. The two cities aren't served by commercial flights because they are only 100 miles (160 kms) apart, so a special charter was arranged.

The Irish squad had been practicing just across the Irish border, about an hour's drive to Belfast, but were told their buses could be targeted by anti-Irish Protestants. Charlton complained that the circuitous route cost his team a half-day's practice.

Police warned Irish supporters not to park cars with Irish license plates on streets outside the Belfast stadium — and that they risked being attacked if they waved the green, white and orange of their flag outside Windsor Park.

"They should really keep their supporters' scarves in their pockets and not take them out until the Republic score a couple of goals," a police spokesman said.

Northern Ireland's Catholic minority generally doesn't support the Belfast-based team, even though it has several Catholi players. It's a question of setting — Windsor Park is the home field for the Linfield Blues, a team with an exclusively Protestant fan base — and of Northern Ireland's political legitimacy.

The IRA-supporting Republican News weekly complained that the Republic of Ireland-Northern Ireland match raises the "disturbing" spectacle of "two teams of Irishmen playing each other in an 'international' match."

Catholic fans have been attacked previously in Windsor Park. In 1990, supporters of Donegal Celtic were attacked by Protestant fans and police. The next year a Protestant extremist tossed a grenade at Catholic supporters of the Cliftonville team but it exploded behind the visitors' stands.

While police guard against trouble Wednesday, the Irish team guards against complacency that could creep in because of their competition. Northern Ireland have been eliminated from contention for the 1994 World Cup, and were trounced 3-0 in Dublin earlier this year.

The Republic squandered a clinching opportunity last month at home in a 3-1 loss to Spain, who are playing Denmark Wednesday night. Ireland has never won — or even scored a goal — in its only two matches in Belfast in 1979 and 1988.

"The players usually enjoy a few pints (of beer) and a relaxed buildup to the game. Not this time," said Irish winger Eddie McGoldrick, 28. "There is a fixed, serious approach because we know that this game means everything."

Rumours never let 'em be

MELBOURNE, Nov 17: Their rivals talk about it in hushed tones. There have been insinuations and rumours. But no proof.

The Chinese women's team dominates international weightlifting competition so completely that rival lifters wonder aloud whether the Chinese may be using illegal performance-enhancing drugs, reports AP.

Chinese coach Wen Xhixi has heard the talk. He just shakes his head.

"Our government and our weightlifting federation are totally against drugs," he said Monday. "I'm not angered by the talk. People are entitled to ask questions. But we do not use any illegal drugs."

All medal winners at the World championships are being tested for illegal drugs, along with other competitors selected at random.

Dr Tamas Ajan, secretary-general of the International Weightlifting Federation, says his organisation is leading the way in the fight against drugs.

Seven Russian men and three Polish men have failed drugs tests this year. But no Chinese women.

The Chinese won 26 of the 27 gold medals at the 1992 women's World Championships at Varna, Bulgaria.

This year, they have won all three of the divisions they have contested so far, outlifting their rivals by considerable margins. They are favoured in all the remaining divisions.

"All the people avoid talking about this, but I think one day the truth will come out," former world champion Maria Christoforidou of Greece said of the drug allegations.

"I don't believe that these kilos can be lifted without drugs. I have no proof, but this is what I believe and I' m not the only one who thinks this."

American Robyn Bird, a four-time World Championship silver medalist, says only that the weights the Chinese women hoist are "incredible."

None of this fazes Wen, who finds the dominance of the Chinese women logical.

"We have a large population and 10,000 women lifters," he said. "It is natural that we should produce some of the best athletes because we can choose from the best young competitors from all over the country."

Wen also said traditional Chinese herbs, including ginseng root, and honey derivatives like royal jelly help build strength and aid recovery.

"Chinese medicine is 5,000 years old and has many secrets," he said. "We have medicines that can make you strong, or stop you from feeling tired."