

Nat'l booters' success in Malaysia

Bangladesh national football team, now visiting Malaysia, defeated Negeri Sembilan State team by 3-0 goals in their first exhibition match on Thursday, reports UNB.

Bangladesh led the first half 1-0 over the star-studded Negeri Sembilan team containing two Malaysian national booters and two Czech players, according to a message received by Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday.

Satyajit Das Rupu put Bangladesh ahead in the 20th minute with a goal from a corner kick taken by Rumi. Jewel doubled the margin in the 43rd minute from header, from a Rupu corner kick.

The brilliant national striker, Rumi Rizvi Karim completed the tally in the 38th minute of the last half (3-0).

The visiting Bangladesh will take on the Malacca State team on November 22 (Monday), play the Negeri Sembilan State team on November 24 (Wednesday) and either face the Selangor State team or the Malaysian national junior team on November 26 (Friday).

Bangladesh in the first exhibition match: Saidur, Alamgir, Jewel (Sohel), Moon, Masud Rana, Rumi, Munna, Rupu, Arman (Swapan), Naquib and Rakib (Gaus).

The national booters are expected to return home on November 29.

Boelsen, Cohen ITF men's doubles champions

RAJSHAHI, Nov 20: Boelsen Matthias of Germany and Cohen of USA became champions in men's doubles of the third-leg Gold Leaf ITF Thailand-Bangladesh Satellite Circuit tennis tournament played at Rajshahi Tennis Complex today, reports BSS.

Boelsen and Cohen defeated Luciano of Brazil and Furusho of Japan in a keenly contested match lasting over two and a half hours 3-6, 7-6, (7-5) and 6-4.

Meanwhile, Cowan of Britain and Belgraver of the Netherlands moved to men's singles final to be played tomorrow. In the semifinals played today, Cowan beat Boelsen Matthias of Germany in straight sets 6-3, 6-0 in other singles, Belgraver was declared the winner against Henderson of Britain as the latter retired from the match due to sickness.

Richard of Australia was eligible to play in the masters-leg to be played at Dhaka as he beat Emil of Germany 6-1, 6-1 in the play-off for 24th position.

FIFA rankings

ZURICH, Nov 20: Italy moved up from third place last month to supplant Brazil at the top of the FIFA world rankings released on Friday, reports Reuters.

The Italians, who qualified for next year's World Cup finals by beating Portugal 1-0 on Wednesday, held a narrow lead over the Netherlands, who also reached the US finals this week. Brazil dropped back to fourth place behind Germany with Norway falling from second to fifth.

Denmark and England, two nations who disappointed their fans by failing to make it to the World Cup finals, remained in the top 10, Denmark in sixth place and England in eighth.

Top 50 rankings (last month's position in brackets):

1. (3) Italy	59.76
2. (4) Netherlands	59.40
3. (4) Germany	58.89
4. (1) Brazil	58.50
5. (2) Norway	57.89
6. (5) Denmark	57.16
7. (7) Spain	57.13
8. (10) England	56.38
9. Equal (9) Argentina	55.18
10. Equal (13) Switzerland	55.18
11. (8) Sweden	54.81
12. (15) Romania	54.73
13. (11) Ireland	54.37
14. (11) Russia	52.14
15. (14) France	52.10
16. (16) Nigeria	51.75
17. (18) Mexico	51.37
18. (17) Uruguay	51.14
19. (21) Czechoslovakia	49.95
20. (20) Portugal	49.12
21. (19) Colombia	48.72
22. (24) Belgium	47.09
23. (32) Bulgaria	46.27
24. (22) Cameroon	45.79
25. (29) Scotland	45.46
26. (23) Poland	45.37
27. (26) United States	45.08
28. (28) Wales	44.49
29. (25) Zambia	44.35
30. (30) Morocco	43.67
31. (27) Egypt	43.12
32. (36) Greece	42.23
33. (31) Algeria	42.03
34. (33) Ivory Coast	40.65
35. (34) Austria	40.60
36. (35) Tunisia	39.58
37. (38) Costa Rica	38.82
38. (46) Saudi Arabia	38.17
39. (37) South Korea	37.95
40. (39) Honduras	37.90
41. (40) Ghana	37.35
42. (42) Northern Ireland	37.27
43. (44) Japan	36.47
44. (45) Finland	36.28
45. (50) Iceland	36.17
46. (43) Zimbabwe	36.01
47. (41) Ecuador	35.77
48. (47) Canada	35.61
49. (41) Australia	35.11
50. (49) Hungary	34.65

Akram stars in Abahani's win

Sports Reporter



Neil Fairbrother's debut in local league cricket paled into insignificance as reigning champions Abahani Krira Chakra, boosted by a batting blitzkrieg from Akram Khan posted their sixth successive win in this year's Navana Premier Division cricket league.

Yesterday at the Dhaka Stadium, Akram, the burly Chittagonian hit a whirlwind unbeaten 94 off just 68 balls as Abahani amassed 240 for four wickets only from their stipulated quota of 45 overs. They then restricted the lowly Utdy to 91 winning day's one of the two Navana matches by 149 runs.

Inspired by the presence of two Englishmen in their ranks Abahani skipper Gazi Ashraf Lipu, a former captain of the Bangladesh national team, won the toss and opted to bat first.

Indian GP Singh who opened Abahani's batting and bowling in the previous matches was dropped to make way for Fairbrother and Lipu himself opened with Harun-ur-Rashid Liton.

Utdy bowlers had enough reasons to congratulate themselves when the fourth Abahani wicket — that of Fairbrother fell with the total on 88 in the 25th over. The mouse-eyed left hander from Lancashire could make 25 from 48 balls before spooning a catch to Nahid off Titu.

The anticlimactic acquaintance of Fairbrother with the Dhaka Stadium was compensated by a superb fifth-wicket stand between Akram and Minhazul Abedin Nannu, another former national skipper.

The two put 152 runs in 20.3 overs with Akram weighing in with 94 including three massive sixes and three fours.

Nannu played second fiddle to his fellow Chittagonian only in hefty hitting. He did the job of gleaming after Akram's brutal mowing and remained unbeaten on 51 made off 61 balls. The leading batsman of the country sent the ball to the fence thrice.

Titu and Nahid were the only two Utdy bowlers to meet with success, having claimed one

wicket each.

Utdy tottered to 91 for seven wickets in their turn with Lipu using as many as ten bowlers to force on outright win.

Titu, who got a wicket earlier, was Utdy's topscorer, grafting 30 from 92 balls. Chapal with 17 was the only other batsman to make it to the double figures.

Illingworth, the other English Test player in Abahani apart from Fairbrother had the best bowling analysis claiming

two for 13 from nine overs with his left arm spin.

Saiful, Babu, Fairbrother, Lipu and Liton got a wicket apiece.

The other match between Gulshan Youth and Dhanmudi at the Mirpur Pallabi Ground fell through because unplayable wet condition of the pitch.

TODAY'S MATCHES

Biman vs GMCC (Dhaka Stadium)
Surjo Tarun vs Wari (DCS)



UNCONQUERED CONQUERORS: Akram Khan (R) and Minhazul Abedin Nannu are all smiles on their way to the pavilion at the completion of Abahani's huge innings of 240 for four against Utdy in the Navana Premier cricket league yesterday at the Dhaka Stadium. Akram and Nannu remained unbeaten on 94 and 51 respectively as the fifth wicket stand between the two Chittagonians realised 152 runs. — Star photo

Pak-Zimbabwe first Test Dec 1

ISLAMABAD, Nov 20: The Zimbabwean cricket team is to arrive here next week to play a three-Test series on their maiden tour of Pakistan. Board of Cricket for Control in Pakistan (BCCP) announced, reports AFP.

A BCCP statement published Friday said the tourists will fly into Lahore Tuesday from India where they are currently taking part in the five-nation hero Cup one-day competition.

Besides, three one-dayers, the team will play three-Test matches at Karachi, Rawalpindi and Lahore.

The first Test at Karachi will start December 1, the second, at Rawalpindi, from December 9 and the last will be played at Lahore from December 16.

Rutherford runs SA ragged

ADELAIDE, Nov 20: Replacement New Zealand captain Ken Rutherford took charge of the South Australian bowling here Saturday to put the Kiwi cricketers in a strong position after the second day of the four-day tour match, reports AFP.

Rutherford, taking over from injured skipper Martin Crowe, cruised to 76 in just over two hours, hitting nine boundaries from 108 deliveries as the tourists pushed South Australia out of the contest.

Rutherford will bat in Crowe's pivotal number four spot in the remaining two Tests against Australia and his highest score on tour carried New Zealand to 276 for six by the close in reply to the South Australian total of 158.

Crowe was forced to pull out of the rest of the tour earlier this week due to knee problems but the loss of the team's best batsman hardly fazed Rutherford on Saturday.

Opener Mark Greatbatch backed him with 65 while night-watchman Murphy Su'a frustrated the South Australians for three hours for 56 — the highest score of his first class career.

At the close, Chris Harris was on 15 while Tony Blain had scored a single to push the lead to 118 runs.

The South Australians hardly helped their cause with wasteful fielding, dropping five catches with Greatbatch being given three lives and Bryan Young two.

Greatbatch was able to play his way back into form with the assistance of lives on three, 17 and 65.

The left hander has had an interrupted tour of Australia, badly breaking a finger in the opening match against Western Australia, and struggled with 18 and nought in the first Test.

The South Australia attack was hampered by the absence of leg-spinner Peter McIntyre with a damaged right index finger suffered while batting on Friday night.

Army hockey

Bogra area trounced the Dhaka Engineers by 6-0 goals in opening match of the annual hockey tournament of Bangladesh Army at the Jessore Cantonment yesterday, reports UNB.

The winners led the first half by 4-0.

Earlier, the local area Commander Maj Gen Mohammad Mustafizur Rahman Bir Bikram inaugurated the 11-day meet.

Double crown for Dr Rashid and Mashuq

Sports Reporter

Dr Rashiduddin Ahmed and Mashuq of Dhaka Club won the sixth Nasiruddin memorial tennis doubles Open title when the pair beat Azmat Moin and Syed Waheed of Gulshan club in straight sets at the Officers' Club Tennis Complex on Friday.

The duo who had earlier won 'veterans' doubles title with a fairly easy win against Azimuddin Chowdhury and Md Nasim of the Officers' Club beat their Gulshan Club rivals 6-4, 6-2.

The singles title went to Major (ret) AMM Nasiruddin who beat Riazul Islam (Bib) 6-2, 6-2.

Begum Nasiruddin Ahmed gave away the prizes as the chief guest.



Mashuq (L) and Dr Rashiduddin Ahmed (R) became doubles champions in the final of the sixth Nasiruddin memorial tennis tournament held at the Officers' Tennis Complex on Friday. (Extreme right) Begum Nasiruddin Ahmed gave away the prizes among the winners. — Star photo.

Sampras sails into final



FRANKFURT, Nov 20: Pete Sampras overwhelmed Andrei Medvedev 6-3, 6-0 Saturday to reach the final of the ATP Tour World Championship, serving out the match with his 1,000th ace of the season, reports AP.

The semifinal lasted only 51 minutes.

Sampras was in devastating form. In his eight service games, Sampras dropped only seven

He simply rolled past Medvedev, hitting winners from all over the court.

"I was in a bit of a zone," Sampras said.

Sampras is assured of finishing the year as No. 1 in the world, even if he does not win the dlr 2.75 million tournament which pits the eight top-ranked players. He won the event in 1991.

The 22-year-old American has won eight titles this year, including Wimbledon and the



Germany's Michael Stich acknowledges the cheers from his home crowd after defeating American Jim Courier 7-5, 6-4 at the ATP tennis tournament in Frankfurt, Germany on Nov 19. — AFP photo.

points, and four were double-faults. In the second set, he lost three points — all on double-faults.

Medvedev, playing the tour-ending event for the first time, dropped his serve in the second game and it was all downhill from there for the 19-year-old rookie from Ukraine.

"He played incredibly," Medvedev said.

Apart from hitting serves at speeds reaching 207 kph (124 mph), Sampras also produced shots rarely seen in the game.

On game point in the fifth game, Sampras was caught on the wrong foot by a Medvedev shot that skimmed the net cord. He casually reached behind his back with his racket, and in an unorthodox version of a forehand half-volley, gently placed the ball across the net, just beyond Medvedev's reach.

Most of the brief match, however, Sampras did not need such acrobatic skills.

US Open, and his singles record for the season is 83-14, the best since Ivan Lendl went 84-7 in 1985.

In the second semifinal, Michael Stich plays Goran Ivanisevic.

Earlier on Friday, Goran Ivanisevic fired 20 aces and beat Stefan Edberg for the sixth time in a row to reach the semifinals.

Ivanisevic won the error-filled match 7-6 (7-3) 6-7 (5-7), 6-3 and will meet Michael Stich in Saturday's semifinals.

"Whenever he came close, I hit and ace," Ivanisevic said after reaching the semifinals for the second straight year.

Edberg, the tournament champion in 1989, served nine double-faults, had only three aces and hit 35 winners to Ivanisevic's 59. The Croatian also had 27 service winners to Edberg's 4.

Pete Sampras, the top-ranked player in the world and

the 1991 tournament champion, will face Andrei Medvedev in the second semifinal.

Stich beat Jim Courier 7-5, 6-4 and will replace the American as No. 2 in the world if he wins the tournament.

Stich had a 3-0 match record in leading his group while Courier, second in this event the last two years, dropped to 0-3.

Earlier Friday, Sampras beat Sergi Bruguera 6-3, 1-6, 6-3 in a match that had no impact on the final group standings in the round-robin portion of the tour-ending, dlr 2.75 million event.

Sampras led his group with a 3-0 record and Ivanisevic is 2-1.

The tournaments its the top eight players in the world, split into two groups. The top two from each group advance, and three semifinal berths had been decided before Friday.

In the only match that really counted, Ivanisevic again needed smelling salts early in the second set to ease his breathing, suffering from the same problem that plagued him in Thursday's win over Bruguera.

"I was breathing with difficulty and it made me dizzy, but it only lasted for a couple of games," the eighth-ranked Croatian said. "I was OK after that."

Ivanisevic was the final player to qualify for the tournament, and was helped by Sampras' semifinal victory over Cedric Piolite at Antwerp last week.

"I spent last week sweating in front of the TV and now I am in the semifinals," he said. "I lost to Boris Becker last year..."

Stich has been carrying Germany's hopes, after Becker failed to qualify for the tournament he won last year.

Ivanisevic started with an ace, setting the tone for the entire match. He broke for a 5-3 lead, and was serving for the set, only to allow Edberg to break back at love.

In the tiebreaker, an Edberg double-fault and an ace gave Ivanisevic three set points and he got the first when the Swede hit a return into the net.

A similar pattern followed in the second set. Ivanisevic broke for a 5-4 lead, served for the match and was broken instead.

In the tiebreaker, he hit a simple overhead smash into the net, giving Edberg two set points. He saved one, but Edberg evened the score with a service winner.

The key break came in the eighth game of the third set when Ivanisevic took a 5-3 lead. This time he made no mistakes, serving out the match at love, after one hour, 57 minutes.

"It was one of the best matches I've played mentally," Ivanisevic said.

Edberg, ranked No. 5 in the world, finished the tournament at 1-2.

Sanchez scrambles in semis



NEW YORK, Nov 20: Arantza Sanchez Vicario, nearly on the verge of elimination, rallied Friday night to defeat Jana Novotna and grab a spot in the semifinals of the Virginia Slims Championships, reports AP.

Getting stronger and more determined the longer they played, the second-seeded Spaniard toppled Novotna 6-7 (2-7), 7-6 (7-2), 6-4 in a match that took 2 hours, 57 minutes at Madison Square Garden.

Sanchez Vicario will play Mary Pierce in Saturday's second semifinal. The unseeded Pierce reached the semifinals in her first trip to this season-ending tournament by upsetting four-time winner Martina Navratilova on Thursday night.

The first semifinal has top-seeded Steffi Graf against No. 8 Anke Huber. In Friday's first match, Huber made it an all-German semifinal by defeating fourth-seeded Conchita Martinez 6-3, 6-3.

It was a rare victory over Novotna for Sanchez Vicario, who has lost eight of 12 career

meetings. But this one was sweeter, considering how far back she had to come.

Although Novotna, one of the best all-court players on the women's tour, and Sanchez Vicario battled evenly through the first two sets, that parity was only on the scoreboard. Novotna appeared to be in control while Sanchez Vicario struggled.

Appearances were deceiving. There were four service breaks in the first set and two more in the second. Each time one broke serve, the other broke right back.

Novotna controlled the first-set tiebreak, but it was Sanchez Vicario who was starting to control the match.

Novotna had to fight through five deuces to hold serve in the fifth game of the middle set. She was taken to deuce again in her next service game, but still managed to hold.

The first four points in the second-set tiebreak went against serve. That was when the Spanish right-hander took control.

She won the next five points to capture the tiebreak, then took the lead in the third set for good by breaking Novotna in the seventh game, the final point a forehand cross-court passing shot that ticked off Novotna's racket.

Huber and Martinez engaged in long baseline engagements, sending powerful groundstrokes to the outer edges of the court. If the points were long, the games were longer as the two evenly matched competitors kept battling to deuce.

Martinez had the bigger serve, a stroke that would have worked perfectly to set up a serve-and-volley game. Instead, the Spaniard retreated to her regular spot behind the baseline and worked her way into the point. Huber retaliated by slamming her grunt-assisted strokes deep into the corners, keeping Huber on the run.

The match was halted

briefly in the second set when Martinez asked for an received medical attention when her back muscles tightened up. After a brief massage, the match resumed.

The loss ended the best year for Martinez, who had victories over Gabriela Sabatini, Navratilova, Mary Joe Fernandez and Graf, the latter Sunday in the final of the Virginia Slims of Philadelphia.

"I have a lot of confidence when I play against her," said Huber, who has never lost to Martinez in four meetings. "It makes it a lot easier."

For Huber, making her first appearance in Madison Square Garden, it is the best she has done in a major tournament since reaching the semifinals of the French Open in May where she won only two games in losing to Graf.

"In the beginning I was too nervous," Huber said. "I was doing everything too fast. My serve was not good. After that, I just tried to play my game."

Sunday's winner of this dlr 3.5-million tournament will receive dlr 250,000, with dlr 120,000 going to the runner-up.

Big boost for Irish football

DUBLIN, Nov 20: The Football Association of Ireland (FAI) are hoping to benefit by around five million pounds by Eire's qualification for next year's World Cup finals, reports AFP.

That is the rough estimate put on Alan McLoughlin's equaliser against Northern Ireland in Belfast on Wednesday by FAI chief executive Sean Connolly.

"The goal could easily be worth five million pounds to us," he said. "Now that England and Wales are out of the World Cup, major British companies are considering diverting sponsorship funds to the Irish."

"It's also feasible that Irish industry and commerce could pull something like 100 million pounds from our qualifying in America."