



Bangladesh Cricket Control Board (BCCB) president and Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman addressing a press conference at a local hotel yesterday to announce the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between BCCB and Pepsi Cola to promote the game in the country. Chairman of Bangladesh Beverage Company M Amanullah Miah, BCCB vice president Raisuddin Ahmed, general secretary Aminul Haq Moni are also seen. — Star photo

Pepsi to provide booster

Sports Reporter
as coaches for the promising cricketers.

To start with, Pepsi, according to the BCCB president will pour in 150,000 US dollars every year during their initial contract spanning three years.

Soleman Dawood, the finance director of Pepsi for South Asia who was one of the representatives of the sponsors, apart from Amanullah Miah, the chairman of Bangladesh Beverage, the local bottlers of the popular drink, said, "Pepsi plays a vital role in the development of cricket in Pakistan. Cricketers like Imran Khan, Wasim Akram, Basit Ali and Waqar Younis are sponsored by Pepsi. They go round different cricket clinics in Pakistan and their presence, inspiration immensely help bloom the budding cricketers."

Quite a useful cricketer in his youth Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman attached

A win can seal it for M United

LONDON, Dec 31: Alex Ferguson will be well on his way to a second consecutive Premier League title if Manchester United can beat Leeds at Old Trafford on Saturday, reports AFP.

Ferguson's men crushed Oldham 5-2 on Wednesday night to open up a 14-point lead at the top, with stars Ryan Giggs and Eric Cantona both getting on the scoresheet.

Victory on Saturday against Leeds, who needed a late equaliser to salvage a point at home to Queen's Park Rangers in midweek, will almost certainly seal the title.

United have so far only lost once in their 23 Premier League games and would need a disastrous run of defeats to be caught by one of their three nearest rivals — Newcastle, Leeds and Arsenal.

Wednesday's dropped point left Leeds 15 points adrift of United and they know they have to win their two clashes with the champions to stand any chance of catching them.

"You can't blame people for thinking the title race is over," left back Tony Doris admitted. "The gap is a big one to make up, so we badly need to beat them to keep our hopes alive."

Leeds are hoping Welsh midfielder-cum-winger Gary Speed will be able to return after missing four games with a knee ligament injury.

With leading scorer Rod Wallace ruled out by a pulled hamstring, speed may be rushed back by manager Howard Wilkinson.

At the other end of the scale, Tottenham manager Ossie Ardiles is looking forward to a new era as well as a new year — and his sentiments are

Masur has high hopes

PERTH, Dec 31: Wally Masur, recovered from the bitter disappointment of being dropped from Australia's Davis Cup final team, has set his sights on a top 10 ranking during 1994, reports AP.

Masur, the top-ranked Australian at No. 21, was omitted from the Australian team beaten 4-1 by Germany in the Davis Cup final in Düsseldorf in early December.

It was a discouraging end to a year that had seen the 30-year-old rise to a career-high ranking of 15 and a semifinal finish at the US Open.



The twenty member Bangladesh cricket team to play a series of one day matches in Pakistan as part of their preparation for the forthcoming ICC trophy in Kenya next February-March. The squad, skippered by Faruque Ahmed, leaves today. — Star photo

Yobbo trio in Lankan squad

COLOMBO, Dec 31: Sri Lankan selectors included three promising youngsters in a 16-member squad that was picked for a five-week tour of India for the new year, it was announced here today, reports AFP.

The team, led by Arjuna Ranatunga, will play three Tests and three one-day internationals during the Indian tour from January 13 to February 20.

19-year-old fast bowler Ravindra Pushpakumara, wicket-keeper Nisal Fernando and batsman Anura Gunawardena make their entry into the national squad after fine performances in domestic tournaments.

Pushpakumara and Fernando have played in warm-up matches against visiting sides while Gunawardena toured South Africa with Sri Lanka's under-24 team earlier in the year.

The selectors have left out wicket-keeper Ramesh Kaluwithana, who played in the recent series against the West Indies, veteran batsman Asanka Gurusinha due to injury and fast bowler Ramesh Ratnayake.

The squad: A Ranatunga (capt), PA De Silva, RS Mahanama, D Samaraweera, HP Tillekeratne, ST Jayasuriya, RS Kalpage, PB Dassanayake, M Muralidharan, GP Wickramasinghe, DK Liyanage, SD Anurasi, A Gunawardena, R Pushpakumara, N Fernando, M Atapattu.

Div II cricket Sports Reporter

Nirman Schools XI recorded a thrilling one wicket victory over East End Club in the Second Division cricket league at the Dhanmondi Cricket Ground yesterday.

Batting first, East End piled 192 runs for the loss of eight wickets from their stipulated quota of 40 overs.

Rais topscored for East End with 70. Titu and Shipu scored 30 and 19 runs respectively, to feature in as the other notable scorers.

Nirman's Liton and Asad claimed two wickets each.

Two splendid half-centuries by Asad and Sumon formed the core of Nirman's victory charge. Asad top-scored with 59, followed by Sumon who made 57.

The eventual winners suffered a slump that almost undid the two fifty plus knock but Dipu with a useful 20 pulled the chestnuts out of fire for Nirman with just one wicket and three balls to spare.

East End's Rais who scored a valiant but vain 70, bagged three wickets for 19. His teammate Noman took two for 35.

In day's other match, another exciting tie, held at the eastern portion of the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, United Heroes beat Azad Sporting Club by 12 runs.

Batting first, United Heroes were all out for 178 runs in 39 overs.

The main contributors for Heroes were Farhan, Intiaz and Shamik who made 35, 31 and 30 respectively.

Pinku of Azad managed two wickets for 23.

In reply Azad SC made 166 runs in 36.5 overs. Manoj batted well to compile 53. Md Ali made 34, and Milon chipped in with 25 but failed to revert their fate as they fell short of Heroes' total by 12 runs.

Towhid captured four wickets for 21 while Sayeed took another three for 32 runs to pave the path for Heroes' win.

In another tie of the day, Ruman's unbeaten knock of 59 runs helped Western Cricket Club defeat Lalbagh Union Sporting Club by three wickets at the Jagannath Hall Ground.

Lalbagh scored 179 runs for the loss of eight wickets in the allotted 40 overs.

Sumon, Salim and Babu were the main run-getters with 41, 39 and 32 respectively.

Rashed with two for 36 and Raja with two for 35 were the main wicket-takers amongst Western CC bowlers.

Western CC achieved their target as they scored 180 runs losing seven wickets in 39.1 overs.

Ruman who scored 59 runs was co-operated by Nasir making 37 and Anzar 16.

Among the Lalbagh bowlers Kamal and Matlur prove more successful taking two wickets each.

Stich calls Becker 'stupid'

DOHA, Dec 31: Boris Becker's claims that tennis players had tested positive for drugs were dismissed as "stupid" by world number two Michael Stich on Thursday, reports Reuter.

On his arrival in Doha for the Qatar Open, Stich said he did not know where Becker got his ideas or why he said such things.

"It was a stupid thing to say about drugs. He is old enough now to know what he is saying," Becker, who is taking a three-month break from the game to be with his wife Barbara for the birth of their first child in January, claimed last week that some players had tested positive for cocaine, amphetamines and marijuana.

Warne, Wessels' waxing worry

SYDNEY, Dec 31: South African cricket captain Kepler Wessels, to bat through the pain barrier with a chronic right knee injury in second Test against Australia starting on Sunday, is more fearful of facing spin than pace, reports Reuter.

He struck an unbeaten 63 this week, coping well with pacemen Craig McDermott and Paul Reffel in the rain-hit draw in Melbourne, the first Test against Australia in 23 years.

Wessels is hoping the mangled knee, already subjected to several operations, will stand the strain of the second Test in Sydney, after which he will consider further surgery.

"I want to play in Sydney and get through the game," said 36-year-old Wessels.

Running between the wickets and fielding are problems enough but it is young superstar leg-spinner Shane Warne that weighs most on the mind of Wessels.

Wessels said Warne, whom he faced for the first time in Melbourne, was as good as any bowler he had faced in a 20-year first class career.

"In my career, most of my challenges have been fast bowlers up around my ears," said Wessels. "This (Warne) is a different problem but every bit as taxing."

Despite Wessels' caution about and fellow spinner Tim May, there is a resurgence of optimism in the South African camp he may not turn out to be as troublesome as feared.

Allrounder Brian McMillan summer up the mood.

He is set to return to the side after spending last month recovering from surgery on his left knee, injured in a match against Victoria in Melbourne in early December.

McMillan said the first Test effort against Warne had felt the side a huge lift and he felt too many people had made the mistake of thinking Warne would win the series.

"I thought our performance in the Melbourne Test was pretty good," McMillan said.

South Africa's first Test score of 258 for three in reply to 342 from seven declared was better than expected.

Andrew Hudson hit 64 and Hansie Cronje 71. Ace fieldsmen Jonty Rhodes struck an unbeaten 35, all coped well with Warne and May.

"A lot of people had written us off on the evidence of a couple of warm-up games. It was just a matter of time until our batters came right and now they've had a good bat, it's going to be pretty interesting."

These two (Warne and May) are good spinners but they have to prove their worth against us. Shane Warne is obviously a top bowler and we have to watch him, but that applies to any bowler at international level," said McMillan.

Both teams played gold on Friday and will settle on final live-ups after training on Saturday.

McMillan, who bowled in the nets this week, said on Friday he was a strong chance to regain his Test place if the knee came through a big workout on Saturday.

"The leg is strong and it's in my favour to play. I don't think

I can do any damage structurally and it's just a matter of whether there is any swelling," he said.

A glut of injuries in December threatened South Africa's hopes of winning the series against Australia.

Fast bowler Brett Schultz was ruled out of the tour with knee problems, there is Wessels' knee problem and top fields man Jonty Rhodes is playing with a broken hand.

McMillan is also the side's best slip fielder. Daryll Cullinan dropped four catches at second slip in Melbourne.

But Australian skipper Allan Border has adopted a tough stance towards Wessels, lynch pin of his side despite the bad knee, and in Sydney will abandon the traditional agreement that permits substitutes and runners for disabled players.

Under law 2.1 of the game, a substitute can be disallowed for any player who enters a match with a known injury.

Border said he wanted to see Wessels initially in the field or his team left with 10 men.

"It's not the way I like to play. He can stand at slip can't he?"

"We know what the situation is with his knee and we'll wait and see if it happens again," said Border.

Australia has made no chance to the first Test 12-man squad:

Allan Border (captain), Mark Taylor, Michael Slater, David Boon, Ian Healy, Mark Waugh, Craig McDermott, Shane Warne, Tim May, Glenn McGrath, Paul Reffel, Damien Martyn.

South Africa has yet to announce its squad.

Anand, likely title challenger

Dual ascension in PCA meet

AMSTERDAM, Dec 31: India's Viswanathan Anand and British Grandmaster Michael Adams shared first place on Thursday in the Professional Chess Association tournament in Groningen, each winning 35,000 dollar prize money, reports Reuter.

They, together with Russians Vladimir Kramnik and Sergei Tiviakov, American-domiciled Grandmasters Gata Kamsky and Boris Gulko and Ukrainian Oleg Romanishin, will go forward to the next stage of the PCA world chess title.

The competition will culminate in a match against PCA world champion Garry Kasparov, who last year broke away from the World Chess Federation (FIDE) to form the rebel PCA organisation.

Within a few minutes of the start of the final round Anand, 24, agreed a draw with Kramnik and Adams, 22, drew with Kamsky, giving the two leaders an unbeatable 7-1/2 points from 11.

Experts said two such short draws were probably no coincidence, since it was fairly common for Grandmasters to agree to play for safety when avoiding a loss is crucial.

"This sort of thing has happened plenty of times before," one of the organisers told Reuters.

Having completed their own games in less than a dozen moves Anand and Adams had to wait for hours to discover if they would be joined on the vic-

tory podium by any chess players. But in the end all but one of the leading players' games were drawn.

American Joel Benjamin defaulted after a fierce struggle with Romanishin by failing to complete 40 moves in the time stipulated. The Ukrainian squeezed through to the next stage of the PCA World Championship.

"Romanishin comprehensively outplayed Benjamin in the trouble," one of the organisers said.

Anand, ranked world number three and the world's fastest and arguably most exciting attacking player, is the favourite to emerge from the PCA selection process to challenge Kasparov.

US computer chip maker Intel will sponsor four PCA 16-player rapid tournaments next year in Moscow, Paris, London and New York, each with a prize fund of 160,000 US dollars.

The first is likely to be played inside the Kremlin. PCA officials say. Six more such events are planned for 1995.

Intel will also sponsor the entire PCA World Championship cycle, spending 400,000 US dollars on the knockout matches in 1994 and up to 3 million US dollar on the actual world title match.

In the absence of Kasparov in the FIDE listings, Anand is also favourite to challenge Russian Anatoly Karpov for the official World Championships.

Among notable performances in this tough tournament were joint eighth placings by Julio Granda Zuniga of Peru and by seventeen-year-old Judit Polgar of Hungary.

Judit is the youngest and most powerful of the three Polgar sisters, and is now ranked 18th strongest player — male or female — in the world.

Final standings after 11 rounds:

1-Anand (India), Adams (Britain) 7-1/2 points.
3-Gulko (USA), Kramnik (Russia), Kamsky (USA), Tiviakov (Russia), Romanishin (Ukraine) 7 points.
8-Alexei Shirov (Latvia), Jeroen Polak (Netherlands), Sergey Dimitov (Russia), Eric Lobron (Germany), Ivan Sokolov (Bosnia), Robert Hubner (Germany), Granda Zuniga (Peru), Rafael Vaganian (Armenia), Predrag Nikolic (Bosnia), Judit Polgar (Hungary), Lembit Oll (Estonia), Jaan Ehivest (Estonia) 6-1/2 points.



V ANAND

Medvedev, Ukraine ousted

PERTH, Dec 31: Alex Antonitsch upset an ailing Andrei Medvedev Friday to give Austria a surprise victory over sixth-seeded Ukraine in the first round of the Hopman Cup tennis championship, reports AP.

Antonitsch, ranked 74th in the world, downed French Open semifinalist Medvedev 4-6, 6-2, 6-1. Medvedev, ranked a career-high sixth, was troubled by a painful right knee injury and his movement was hampered over the final two sets.

Medvedev, who said he feared the inflammation of muscles in his right knee may keep him out of the Australian Open, sought treatment after the defeat and Ukraine conceded the mixed doubles to give the Austrians a 3-0 sweep.

Medvedev said he had undergone treatment for the injury while training in Florida over the Christmas holiday, but it had flared-up midway through the second set.

"The pain was getting worse and worse," he said. "There was no way I could run. If I could have I would have."

"My only chance to win was to hit aces and return of service winners — and I didn't do that."

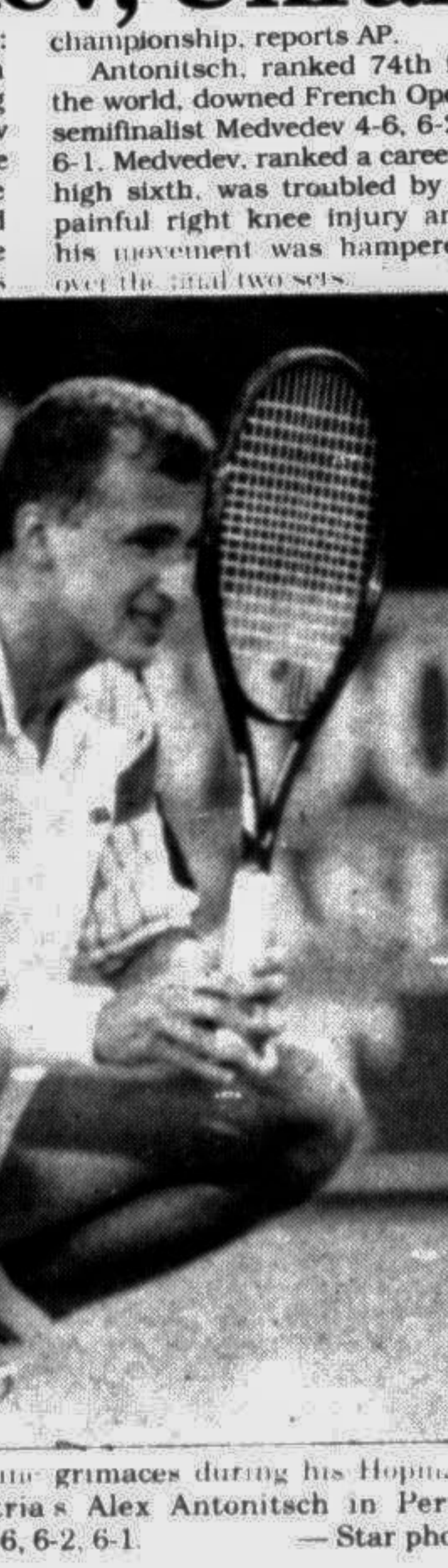
Medvedev said he would seek medical treatment before deciding on his immediate future. He is scheduled to play in the New South Wales Open in Sydney from Jan 10-16 before the Australian Open.

Wiesner earlier recovered from a slow start to beat Medvedev 7-6 (8-6), 6-3 after trailing 3-5 in the first set.

"It has been about two months since I played my last match and I felt that," said Medvedev. "She played the big points much better."

Unseeded Austria, which lost to Ukraine in the first round last year, now faces third-seeded Spain in the quarterfinals.

In other first-round match ups, fifth-seeded Australia faces Sweden, seventh-seeded Switzerland plays the Netherlands and No. 8 South Africa faces Germany.



Andrei Medvedev of Ukraine grimaces during his Hopman Cup match against Austria's Alex Antonitsch in Perth yesterday. Medvedev lost 4-6, 6-2, 6-1. — Star photo

Eskaton stun Rly Sports Reporter

Upset results marked yesterday's Milnars First Division league engagements at different city venues.

At the eastern portion of the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, league leaders Railway were handed a crushing six-wicket defeat by middlings Eskaton Sabuj Sangha.

Sent in to bat first Railway struggled although against an inspired Eskaton attack and finally finished on a poor total of 132 for seven wickets from their quota of 45 overs.

Opener Tareq topscored with 30. Tail-end batsman and Railway's main off-spinner Rubel remained unbeaten on 21. Afzal with 19 and former national cricketer and skipper Shahid with 15 were the other batsmen to reach the double figures.

Eskaton bowlers who barely gave any room to the Railway batsmen were spearheaded by Khokan (jr) and Shabbir. The latter in fact had the best bowling analysis taking two for 23. Khokan claimed two for 26. Khokan (sr) and Rajkumara bagged one wicket apiece.

Dour stonewalling by opener Biplab who made an unbeaten 37 helped Eskaton post 133 in 33 overs for the loss of four wickets.

Shri Lankan Rajkumara, however, topscored with 36 and with Kaiser chipping in with 13 and extras amounting 31. Eskaton had few problems in overhauling Railway's score.

Manna, Suman, Sajjad and Rubel took one wicket apiece, among the Railway bowlers.

Eskaton, Railway and Bima all with twelve points from eight matches head the ten-team table.

PWD WIN

PWD, the bottomers of the league table pulled off a surprisingly easy 62-run win against City Club in day's other match at the Pallabi, Mirpur cricket ground.

Choosing to make first use of the wicket PWD collected a healthy total of 190 for six wickets from 45 overs with Suman scoring a solid 63 including four hits to the fence.

Arl, Obaed and Ullash were the other notable run-getters for the worksmen with 32, 19 and 15 not out.

Among the City bowlers Bappi captured two for 27.

Al Amin, Sajal, Babar and Zahid Ali took one wicket apiece.

Boglu and skipper Kallol claimed three wickets each to decimate City for 128 in 42 overs.

City opener Babar ploughed in the sands with a gritty half-century. His 50 came off 84 balls and featured three hits to the fence.

Russel with 15 was the only other city batsman to reach the double figure with 15.

Boglu's three wickets cost him 17 runs while Kallol gave away 21 runs for his three wickets.

PWD have four points from eight matches but are still very much in danger of being relegated. City have eight points as many matches.

Papin wants to return OM

PARIS, Dec 31: Former French international striker Jean-Pierre Papin said on Friday he would like to return to Olympique Marseille when his contract with Italian club AC Milan ended in 1995, reports AFP.

Papin, quoted by French sports daily "L'Equipe", said: "I will try and see out my contract here, then I'll look for a new challenge either in France or abroad."

"I only feel comfortable at Marseille. If I don't sign a new contract at Milan, the only place I would really want to go would be there."