

Winning start for Abahani

Sports Reporter

Abahani made a good start in the All India Sports Journalists Federation invitational football tournament defeating IFA Eleven by 2-1 at the East Bengal Club ground in Calcutta yesterday.

Abahani who had hardly any preparation before setting off for Calcutta on Thursday to participate in the fund raising tournament for distressed journalists, displayed a better brand of soccer in their first round robin league tie.

Two borrowed booters — Mizan and Mintu scored once each for the winners while Aloke pulled one for IFA XI.

Mizanur Rahman, who played for Brothers Union last year opened the Abahani account in the 22nd minute while substitute Mintu, the Sadharan Bima's regular player last year consolidated the victory with a 40th minute strike.

Aloke reduced the margin for IFA XI in the 86th minute of the play.

Abahani will play their second match against Calcutta Mohammedan on Sunday.

Dhaka Mohammedan Sporting Club who are placed in the other group of the tournament will appear against Titeniam on the same day.

Eight teams including two Dhaka football giants are taking part in the meet.

Meanwhile PTI adds, strong contenders Calcutta Mohammedan opened their campaign in style thrashing Mahindra and Mahindra of Bombay 3-0.

Tausif Jamal struck twice in quick succession late in the opening session for the city giants while Ohidul Islam completed the rout in the injury time in a rather one-sided contest.

Mohammedan dominated the proceedings from the word go and shot into the lead ten minutes before the interval when Tausif Jamal dribbled past a defender and placed the ball in following a pass from Ohidul Islam.

Five minutes later, Tausif consolidated the position for his team with another neat placement after the hard-working Rehmatullah broke in from the left flank and did all the spadework. Ohidul Islam then headed home a corner kick from substitute Sanjay Ghosh Roy to seal the fate of their opponents.

ABAHANI, KC: Mohsin, Alamgir, Rehan, Munna, Masud Rana, Zakir, Rumi, Swapan, Gaus (Miftu), Mizan and Mamun Joarder (Alfaz).

Vital, exciting win for Orient

Sports Reporter

Orient Sporting Club defeated Amorjyoti Club by five runs in the super league play-off match of the Second Division cricket super league at the Mirpur Pallabi ground yesterday.

Guided by an opening stand of 113 runs in 26.4 overs by Shahriar (64) and Rito (45), Orient piled up 210 runs for six in the allotted 40 overs.

Besides, Shahriar and Rito, Bipul scored 29 off 25 deliveries.

Extras contributed 47 runs to the Orient innings.

Tariqzaman and Raju claimed two wickets apiece for Amorjyoti giving away 49 and 17 runs respectively.

Chasing 211 to win, Amorjyoti fell six short of their goal as the scoreboard showed 205 for nine at the completion of 40 overs.

Ahmed made 56 while Rashed, Sumi and Cezanne chipped in with 34, 30 and 21 respectively.

Rashed's stormy 34 came off 20 balls with the help of three sixes and a couple of fours.

Amorjyoti seemed to be heading to the right direction at one stage when their batsmen took 20 valuable runs from the penultimate over. But with 11 runs required from the final over, Orient bowler Bipul bowled tightly to concede four runs only to thwart Amorjyoti's ambition.

Tuhin and Mintu were the two successful bowlers for the winners with figures of three for 25 and three for 56 respectively.

Jadukar Samad soccer Reporter

Wasim notched a hat-trick as Little Friends Club moved into the quarterfinals of the Jadukar Samad Smriti juvenile football tournament eliminating Sheikh Russell Smriti Sangsad by 4-1 in day's first match at the Outer Stadium yesterday.

Little Friends slammed three goals in the second half after the first half ended in a 1-1 draw.

Wasim scored three goals and Alamgir netted the other for the winners while Hasan pulled one back for the losers.

In the other match of the day played at the same venue, Gulzarbagh SC shared points with Chalmari in a goalless draw.

SA squander initiative



JOHANNESBURG — Mar 4: A resolute 69 by Jonty Rhodes rescued South Africa from a mid-order collapse but Australia still held the upper hand after the opening day of the first Test at the Wanderers today, reports Reuter.

After South Africa were dismissed for 251, Australia reached 34 without loss by the close and their decision to include two spinners already looked vindicated.

Although paceman Merv Hughes ended with the best figures of three for 59, it was the spin of Tim May that caused the mid-afternoon collapse as South Africa, who won the toss, slumped to 126 for six.

May took two wickets in the space of three balls, bowling veteran Peter Kirsten through the gap and then having Brian McMillan caught at short-leg by David Boon.

A seventh-wicket partnership of 68 between Rhodes and wicket-keeper Dave Richardson enabled South Africa to stage a recovery but then leg-spinner Shane Warne trapped Richardson leg before for 31.

With the pitch already taking spin, it was an ominous sign for South Africa who had

opted to play four pacemen. South Africa scored quickly in the opening session, reaching 103 by lunch but losing three wickets in the process.

Andrew Hudson (17) was the first to depart, caught behind off a lifter from Craig McDermott and Hansie Cronje (21) edged Steve Waugh to slip.

Opener Gary Kirsten hit eight boundaries in an enterprising 47 from only 75 deliveries but he was then bowled by Hughes shortly before lunch.

The same bowling dismissed captain Kepler Wessels for 18 after the interval to a fine, diving catch by Matthew Hayden, playing his first Test in place of Mark Taylor who was ruled out because of flu.

May and Warne then broke through the middle order and only a ninth-wicket partnership of 46 between Rhodes and Fanie de Villiers (16) enabled South Africa to produce something of a respectable total.

Michael Slater (26 not out) and Matthew Hayden (six not out) then made the most of some wayward South African bowling to score 34 in just seven overs before the close.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard on the first day of the first cricket Test be-

tween South Africa and Australia at the Wanderers on Friday:

SOUTH AFRICA: First Innings
Hudson c Healy b McDermott 17
G Kirsten b Hughes 47
Cronje c Border b S Waugh 21
Wessels c Hayden b Hughes 18
P Kirsten b May 12
Rhodes c M Waugh b McDermott 69
McMillan c Boon b May 0
Richardson lbw b Warne 31
Matthews c Boon b Hughes 6
De Villiers b McDermott 16
Donald not out 0
Extras: (1-b 10-lb 3-nb) 14
Total (80.2 overs) 251
Fall of wickets: 1-21; 2-70; 3-103; 4-116; 5-126; 6-126; 7-194; 8-203; 9-249; 10-251.

Bowling:
McDermott 15.2 3 63 3
Hughes 20 6 59 3
May 22 5 62 2
S Waugh 9 2 14 1
Warne 14 4 42 1

AUSTRALIA: First Innings
Slater not out 26
Hayden not out 6
Extras: (1-b, 1-lb) 2
Total: 34

To bat: David Boon, Mark Waugh, Steve Waugh, Allan Border, Ian Healy, Merv Hughes, Shane Warne, Tim May, Craig McDermott.

Bowling:
Donald 4 0 20 0
De Villiers 3 1 12 0

A draw will do for hosts



LUCKNOW, Mar 4: Hosts India snatched a dramatic last-gasp equaliser against South Africa Friday to virtually retain the Indira Gandhi men's hockey title here, reports AFP.

Sandeep Simesh scored from a goal-mouth melee a minute before the final whistle to draw level in a crucial encounter after Shaun Cooke had given South Africa the lead five minutes earlier.

The exciting draw took India's tally to seven points from four matches in the six-nation league, and left them needing only a draw in their final game against lowly South Korea on Saturday to retain the title.

South Africa and continental rivals Egypt are in second spot with five points each from four matches, but virtually out of contention unless the win-

less South Koreans pull off an improbable victory against India.

The South Africans, who needed to defeat India to keep their hopes alive, shrugged off Wednesday's shock defeat by Egypt to play their best match in the tournament so far.

They kept the Indian forwards at bay for most part of the match, but slipped up at the last moment when victory was within their grasp.

Egypt, the African Cup runners-up, kept themselves in line for second place with a hard-fought 3-2 win over a rejuvenated Japan.

Japanese skipper Manabu Yamanaoka twice helped his team draw level with superb penalty corner conversions, before Ahmed Sharkawy scored the match-winner for Egypt in the 42nd minute.

Egypt play Kenya in their final match while Japan, who are lying at the bottom of the

table with a solitary point, take on South Africa.

In the day's third match, Kenya routed South Korea 3-0 to maintain the fourth spot with four points from as many matches.

Kenya's three goals came in a nine-minute blitz towards the close of a scrappy encounter through Jaswinder Singh, Patrick Ogara and Inderjit Singh Matharu.

It was the second defeat for the South Korean team, comprising mainly high school students.

STANDINGS				
League standings Friday (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):				
India	4	3	1	0 13 7
South Africa	4	2	1	1 13 4 5
Egypt	4	2	1	8 9 5
Kenya	4	2	0	2 5 8 4
South Korea	4	0	2	3 12 2
Japan	4	0	1	3 3 1 1

Van Basten to miss World Cup?



DEURNE, Belgium, Mar 4: AC Milan's Dutch striker Marco van Basten said on Thursday his injured ankle was healing slowly but that he would definitely miss this year's World Cup finals, reports Reuter.

"What can I say... I'll have to listen to the doctors," Van Basten said. "But it's a positive surprise that there is some improvement," he told a news conference.

The three-times European footballer-of-the-year refused to set a new deadline for his return to competition.

"I used to set myself new goals but I could never reach them. Now I can also forget about the World Cup and see when I can come back," he said.

Van Basten, who was speaking after an examination by Belgian specialist Marc Martens, had an initial operation on the ankle in December 1992.

Demand for WC tickets outgrows supply

NEW YORK, Mar 4: The demand for tickets for World Cup USA 1994 has surpassed supply all over the world, according to the World Cup Organising Committee, reports Xinhua.

While answering a phone call from Xinhua today, the committee said that tickets in the United States for all the 52 games he long been sold out.

The World Cup, the first time to be played in the United States, will be kicked off starting on June 17 in nine major cities in the states Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York/New Jersey, Orlando, San Francisco and Washington DC.

The World Cup Organising Committee said that in Canada, requests for 34,099 individual tickets were received for all 52 games. The Canadian Soccer Association noted that the individual ticket request had a monetary worth of more than two million US dollars. In comparison, the association's total ticket order was 165,000 dollars.

In Ireland, the football association of the country has received more than 20,000 requests for tickets and expected no more than 7,000 to 8,000 tickets as their allotment from the International Football Federation (FIFA).

He came back for three matches, including the 1993 European Cup final last May, and then had a second operation.

"Perhaps I'm too stubborn to accept that it could be over for me," Van Basten said. "But now the picture has showed there is a small glimmer of hope," he said.

Martens said a scan of the ankle had revealed a "clear improvement."

"But it's a very slow process. It hasn't recovered enough to start talking about resuming training," he said.

"We have to realise that he cannot make it for the World Cup. We don't want to take a risk by forcing things."

Martens, who will see Van Basten again in three months, said he was unable to say how long the healing process might last.

Martens, who has also operated on the knee of former AC Milan player and Dutch international Ruud Gullit, said Van Basten could carry on training individually and gradually step up his efforts.

Van Basten, the 1992 world footballer-of-the-year, said his training programme mainly consisted of some cycling, swimming and fitness.

"Sitting still doesn't serve any purpose. You just get fatter and bad-tempered," he said.

Van Basten said he had also

visited other specialists in Spain, the United States and the Netherlands, with the approval of Martens and AC Milan team doctor Roberto Tavana.

"We always reached the same conclusions," he said.

Van Basten's lethal skills were crucial when the Netherlands won the 1988 European championship and his prolific scoring led AC Milan to a series of domestic and international soccer trophies.

His reputation made him the target of tough tackling and he has a history of ankle injuries. In his first season with AC Milan in 1987-88 he was sidelined for several months after damage to his left ankle.

Van Basten was the top scorer in the Italian First Division in 1990 and 1992, playing alongside his compatriots Ruud Gullit and Frank Rijkaard.

The Netherlands qualified for the World Cup without Van Basten and relied on the skills of striker Dennis Bergkamp of Inter Milan to edge out England.

Still, the Dutch team had hoped to have Van Basten in the lineup for the World Cup finals, which start June 17.

The Netherlands are in a first-round group with Belgium, Morocco and Saudi Arabia.

Rajshahi closer to BEXIMCO final

Sports Reporter

Rajshahi recorded their third consecutive victory eliminating Satkhira by six wickets in the 14th BEXIMCO national youth cricket championship at the Dhanmendi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Rajshahi, who will play their vital last round robin league encounter against BKSP on Sunday, booked the under dog Satkhira for 151 in 45 overs.

The winners then reached the victory 152 for four wickets in 37.4 overs.

Shaheen and Rownak who added 88 runs for the third wicket after Rajshahi were reduced to 32 for two, took their team to a convincing win.

Rownak completed a half century 51 to be precise off 71 balls with the help of four boundaries and a huge sixer.

Shaheen, who made a patient 41, sent the ball to the fence, twice.

Sanchay with 15 kept Rownak company as Rajshahi won with more than seven overs to spare.

Khokon gave 23 runs to take two scalps for Satkhira, who suffered their second successive defeat.

Earlier, in the Satkhira innings Antu topscored with 40 followed by Khokon who made 34.

Azad, Liton and Litu claimed two wickets each for Rajshahi.

In the other match of the day played at the Dhaka National Stadium all-round performance by Shantoo of Sylhet proved inadequate to stop Comilla's from registering a 44-run win.

Comilla compiled 211 for nine in the stipulated 45 overs defying a fantastic spell from new-ball-bowler Shantoo and then went on to bowl Sylhet out for 167 in 44.2 overs.

Shantoo, who took five wickets for 30 runs in his nine-over spell, also dazzled with the bat.

He scored just 50 in his 61 ball innings which included two huge sixes over long-on.

Acme too good for Fisons

Sports Reporter

Former national cricketer Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu scored 59 not out to ensure a massive 10-wicket win for Acme Laboratories over Fisons Bangladesh Limited in Office cricket league at the Jagannath hall ground yesterday.

After having won the toss Acme put Fisons to bat first and bowled them to out for a paltry 81 in 28.5 overs.

Shamsul and extras were the main contributors with 28 and 26 respectively. Acme posted a hurried 85 in 15.4 overs to secure the win. Lipu's 59-run innings featured four sixes and the same number of boundaries. His partner, Nurul Abedin Nobel, a national discard remained not out on 16.

TCCB names four umpires for home series

LONDON, Mar 4: Four English International Cricket Council umpires will officiate in England's home three-Test series against New Zealand and South Africa this year, reports AFP.

The Test and County Cricket Board announced here Thursday that Dickie Bird and David Shepherd would stand in two of the six Tests, while Ken Palmer and Nigel Plews will be given one match each.

The ICC, who now allot one umpire per Test themselves, are expected to announce their identities during the next month.



An unidentified Karlsruhe SC's player slides to tackle Bolivian Sanchez (R) of Boavista Porto's midfielder during their UEFA Cup quarter-final match at the Bessa Stadium in Portugal on Wednesday. The match ended in a 1-1 draw.

Pity M United ain't there



LONDON, Mar 4: Manchester United may have been eliminated from the European Champions Cup

months ago. But even rivals here are saying Alex Ferguson's team is as good as any other in Europe, including Champions Cup favourites AC Milan, reports AP.

A 4-1 on-the-road victory at Sheffield Wednesday has put Ferguson's team into the League Cup final against Aston Villa and United stays on course for an unprecedented triple triumph in domestic competitions.

The Reds are seven points ahead of second place Blackburn Rovers in the Premier League with a game in hand and face division one Charlton at home for a quarter final place in the Football Association Cup.

United did not lose a game in the Champions Cup. They went out on the away goals rule after being held 3-3 at home by Turkish club Galatasaray and gaining only a goal less tie in Istanbul.

United went into Wednesday's League Cup game with a 1-0 advantage from the home leg. But they scored twice in the opening 10 minutes and crushed Sheffield Wednesday, whose manager, former Sampdoria striker Trevor Francis, was full of praise.

"They're as good as any team in Europe — and that includes AC Milan and Barcelona," Francis said. "We were well beaten."

They're as good as any team in Europe — and that includes AC Milan and Barcelona," Francis said. "We were well beaten."

Zaragoza ready for Coruna



MADRID, Mar 4: Zaragoza, who just last month dealt powerhouse FC Barcelona an historic defeat, have a chance to play spoiler again this weekend against Spanish soccer league leader Deportivo de La Coruna, reports AP.

In fourth place heading into the 27th round of play, Zaragoza are still a long shot for the championship. But the squad certainly has a chance to make the season finale exciting for everyone else.

With 12 rounds remaining in the season, Deportivo has 38 points, four more than either No 2 Barcelona or No 3 Real Madrid. Zaragoza have only 29 points, but a Zaragoza victory in La Coruna Sunday is hardly out of the question.

On Feb 13, Zaragoza notched a 6-3 home win over Barcelona, led by a hat-trick from Argentine forward Juan Eduardo Esnaider. It was the first time a Barcelona opponent had scored six goals in more than three decades.

"I'm convinced that we'll

keep up this level of play until the end," Zaragoza coach Victor Fernandez told the sports daily Marca. "...Our offensive style of play favors us."

The last time Zaragoza finished in fourth place was in 1985-86, when it won the Spanish King's Cup.

Unfortunately for Zaragoza, one of the pillars of their aggressive style — Esnaider — might have to sit out the Deportivo match with a nagging ankle injury.

"My intention is to bear the pain and play against Deportivo," said Esnaider, who has 10 goals on the season. "The match is very important and I want to play at all costs."

Deportivo, which is trying to forget last week's 3-0 loss to host Barcelona, will be glad to get home to Riazor Stadium.

"Zaragoza are a team that I liked a lot last year and it's going through a very sweet period right now," Deportivo's Brazilian midfielder Mauro Silva told Marca. "All I know is we can't afford to lose one more point in Riazor."

Barcelona gave up a 2-0 lead

in their Champions League match against Spartak Moscow Wednesday and had to settle for a 2-2 draw. But for once, Dutch coach Johan Cruyff isn't taking his players to task for the defensive lapse.

Instead, Cruyff blamed the frigid Moscow weather — 7 degrees Celsius (19 degrees F) at game time — and the difficulty of playing on the frozen field.

"There was no lack of concentration," Cruyff told the Barcelona sports daily El Mundo Deportivo after the match. "My men's attitude was excellent, as it has been in recent games."

Barcelona visits No 13 Oviedo on Sunday, while Real Madrid plays away against No 18 Lleida.

On Saturday, Athletic de Bilbao host Valencia, and Tenerife plays Sevilla. In other games Sunday, it will be Logrones-Celta; Rayo Vallecano-Sporting de Gijon; Racing de Santander-Real Sociedad; Atletico de Madrid-Albacete; and Valladolid-Osasuna.

Mella becomes Maradona



RIO DE JANEIRO, Mar 4: South America's often stormy club Cup, the Libertadores, got off to an appropriately controversial start on Wednesday with a near repeat of the famous "hand of God" incident, reports Reuter.

Midfielder Victor Mella scored for Chilean champions Colo Colo with a goal startlingly reminiscent of Diego Maradona's effort against England in a 1986 World Cup quarter-final in Mexico.

Mella went up for a cross with his arm and his head to the net in the 14th minute of the first round, Group Four game against compatriots Union Espanola.

Union Espanola's Uruguayan goalkeeper Gerardo Rabajo furiously protested that Mella had used his hand while Mella himself commented after the

match: "It appears that the ball hit my hand but it was unintentional."

Maradona commented that his goal was scored with the "head of Diego and the hand of God."

Brazilian midfielder Toninho scored a second for Colo Colo, Libertadores champions in 1991, who went on to win 2-1.

There was more controversy in the Group Three all-Peruvian clash between Universitario and Alianza. A fight between two players developed into a brawl involving players, trainers, police and even journalists and held up play for three minutes. Nobody was sent off.

Argentine midfielder Juan Carlos Kopriwa scored in the 24th minute to give Alianza their first win and their first goal against their local rivals for the last three years.

In Group One, Olimpia,

bizarrely voted Paraguayan champions last year by directors of the country's soccer federation, beat arch-rivals Cerro Porteno 1-0 with a second half goal by Victor Hugo Avalos.

Paraguayan directors opted for a vote after the soccer championship was interrupted by a row between the federation and the government. Cerro Porteno, however, had to play off for their place.

The 1994 Libertadores got into full swing on Wednesday with matches in four of the five first round groups. The top three teams in each four-team group go through to the second round, while holders Sao Paulo of Brazil, champions for the last two years, have a bye.

Two teams from each South American nation take part. Forward Edilao in an immensely skilful striker in the traditional Brazilian mould, scored both goals.