

## Senior Div leagues from July 28

# In search of novelty

This year's Star Premier Division football league, which is scheduled to begin July 28, conjures up signs of a real three-way battle after several years with Muktiyoddha Sangsad emerging as a new soccer power of the domestic circuit. Pundits may argue that it has always been for quite some time, suggesting that Brothers Union staking pretence at the theoretical third force status in the race for soccer supremacy at the club level.

However, as it has been evident in the previous leagues that the Gopibagh outfit somehow managed to defeat their own causes some how or the other, leaving Mohammedan Sporting Club and Abahani Krira Chakra with the onus of pulling the crowd to the Dhaka Stadium till the end of the league.

But scenario is likely to change this year with Muktiyoddha, who hit the headlines of every news daily at the very onset of the current soccer season when they latched on to the openings created by an unprecedented players' revolt, roping in ten footballists with exposure to international level, making a sudden but superb impact when they knocked out both Mohammedans and Abahani en route to their first ever major title in the annals of the club hitherto been rated middlings. If their upset victory over the black and whites in the Federation Cup semifinals is to be taken as a mark of their clear intentions, then the victory over Abahani in the final should be treated as the confirmation that they have come to stay at the top flight for a few more years to come.

Unlike their superior opponents, who possess enough fi-

nanial strength to employ as many as eleven foreign players for their club campaign, Muktiyoddha made the most of the local resources. Thanks to Kazi Salahuddin, possibly the lone superstar the country has ever produced, Muktiyoddha made it all the way.

Salahuddin, who had been rather ignominiously discarded by Abahani, the side he served sincerely for most of his glittering career, succeeded in trans-forming a collection of pricey individuals into a cohesive unit, that more than made amends for a rather faltering start in the DMFA Cup.

Salahuddin's galvanising touch did go a long way in realising the side's potential but for lack of popular support Muktiyoddha somehow found themselves subject to inept, if not shamelessly biased, refereeing. For reasons best known to them, the men in the middle somehow worked out a way to make their rulings against Muktiyoddha.

Fortunately for the newly-crowned Federation Cup champions, they may not have to experience those nightmares in this league as the organisers, the Dhaka Metropolitan Football Association (DMFA) has figured out a way to mitigate what seems to be an endless griping over refereeing decision by hiring four FIFA officials to supervise some of the crucial league encounters. Though not a novel concept as the league has, in the past, seen some foreign referees in the midst of things, this time the referees will be employed full time, getting into the act from the very start of the league. DMFA has promised to make necessary arrangements to import four referees from a Southeast Asian country.

The all too familiar sponsors of the league, the Bangladesh

Tobacco Company Limited, also mark a new dimension to the disciplinary stance of the organisers as they made a new resolution to punish the teams involved in arranged matches with a fine of Taka 25,000 each.

Defending champions Mohammedan Sporting Club, who will surely be driven by the urge to reassert their superiority after a string of dismal showing on the way to this year's league, meet new kids on the block, Bangladesh Boys in the inaugural match at the Dhaka Stadium. Mohammedans, seemingly in a dilemma regarding what to do with their Russian recruits, badly need a major shake-up in their camp and they will have to do with their present resources since they cannot do otherwise with their quota of four foreign footballists already exhausted.

Arch-rivals Abahani face somewhat a similar situation although statistics would suggest that they are faring a lot better than their traditional foes. With the DMFA Cup already under their belt, the Dhanmondi side displayed in the recently-concluded Federation Cup final they need to improve a lot if they really plan to thwart the Muktiyoddha onslaught. Abahani play promotees Fakirerpool Youngmen's Club in their league opener on July 29.

Muktiyoddha, Brothers Union, Arambagh Krira Sangstha, Agrani Bank and Wari Club are the other members of the Ivy league.

Simultaneously, the ten-team tier involving the lesser stars, the Star First Division league, begins the same day with the matches scheduled to be held at the Mirpur Stadium.

## Hagi joins Barcelona

LONDON, July 25: Romanian striker Gheorghe Hagi, one of the stars of this summer's World Cup, has signed a two-year contract with FC Barcelona, club vice president Joan Gaspart announced Monday, reports AP.

Hagi, who has played for Brescia since the fall of 1992, will join the club August 1 when Spain's top team presents their players for the 1994-95 season, Gaspart said.

Barcelona's Dutch coach Johan Cruyff "wanted Hagi, and now we've got him," Gaspart told reporters.

A misunderstanding about tax payments in Hagi's contract, reported to be about \$100 million a year, forced the collapse of several days of negotiations when Hagi arrived in Barcelona on Friday for an exam by team doctors, said a spokesman for Gaspart who asked not to be named.

This prompted reports that English club Tottenham were to renew their two million



GHEORGHE HAGI

pound (\$10 million) bid for the Romanian ace.

But Hagi relented in the wee hours of Saturday morning, the spokesman said.

"The player understood his payment was tax-free, and Barcelona kept that position, and Hagi changed his," the spokesman said.

**Pak-SL XI match drawn**  
MATARA, Sri Lanka, July 25: Pakistan's three-day tour game against a Sri Lanka Board President's XI, shortened by rain, ended in a tame draw on Monday, reports Reuters.

Pakistan declared their first innings at tea on 250 for six with Saeed Anwar (95) and captain Salim Malik (77) not out contributing contrasting half centuries.

Sri Lanka replied with 46 for three before the match was called off after the two mandatory overs.

Malik brought the bowling action of Jayananda Warnawera to the notice of the umpires after he was hit in the stomach by a ball which kicked up viciously off a good length.

"In my opinion and from the team's point of view, he is throwing. We are making an official complaint to the Sri Lanka Cricket Board," Malik told reporters after the game.

"We told Malik that we are watching his (Warnawera's) action," umpire M M Mendis said.

**Korean soccer coach due Aug 5**  
Man Young Kang, a South Korean football coach is likely to arrive here on August 5 to train the budding footballers of the country, officials of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) said in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS.

The Daily Mail said "Captain clean" had with his fine paid a small price "for the deceit that has sullied the honour of the England captaincy."

It wrote: "In a different, less cynical, era it would have meant certain dismissal (for Atherton)."

A British Member of Parliament in Monday called on the selectors to sack Atherton. "To show they are people who still believe in the spirit of the game."

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England were involved in a row over allegations of ball tampering made against the Pakistan Test side in 1992 when their fast bowlers Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis frequently destroyed the England batting.

Atherton's dreadful weekend was not helped with his early dismissal in England's second innings when his side were bowled out for 99 runs, their worst total at Lord's this century.

"Inept England return to the dark ages," ran a banner headline in the Times.



Silvia Costa from Cuba soars over the bar at 195 cm to win the women's high jump final of the Goodwill Games track and field competition in St Petersburg on July 24. — AFP photo

## Popov proves unstoppable

ST PETERSBURG, July 25: Three gold medals for star swimmer Alexander Popov helped Russia tie with the United States on six gold medals apiece from the 20-event Goodwill Games swimming programme on Sunday, reports Reuters.

But just as impressive were the five gold medals which relatively unknown Chinese took in 10 women's events to reinforce their pre-eminence in women's swimming.

However, the mediocre times recorded throughout the programme once more added fuel to a row over the pool water.

Organisers failed to filter the cloudy water properly in time for the competition, obscuring the swimmers' events to be held on one day rather than two.

Double Olympic champion Popov took gold in the 50 and 100 metres freestyle and 4x100 metres medley relay.

But far from breaking records, he won the 100 metres in a mere 50.58 seconds, more than two seconds outside his own world record of 48.21 set last month.

"I'm not a record-breaking machine," he said.

Significantly, for both his own huge potential and the

relatively low status which the Goodwill Games have for many athletes, he added: "We have only just started preparing for the World Championships (in Rome in September)."

His three-medal haul was matched by China's Ren Xing, who took the 100 and 200 metres breaststroke and helped China win the 4x100 metres medley relay.

Hong Shu won the women's 100 metres butterfly and Bai Xiaoyu took the 100 metres backstroke.

China's success, with what coach Wen Xinlong called a third-string team, has reinforced their meteoric rise and brought a resurgence of suspicions of drug use, which they dismiss.

"I try not to think about it," said 16-year-old American Annemiek McReynolds after taking a 200-metre silver behind Ren.

"There's been a lot of talk about them doping and I just try to put it out of my mind and do without it."

The Americans had some success of their own to dwell on.

Angel Martino won the women's 30 and 100 metres to pull off a double — she won the same titles at the inaugural 1986 Goodwill Games in Moscow.

And Mel Stewart took the

men's 200 metres to become the first person to win three successive Goodwill Games titles.

The Olympic and world champion said he had been feeling the effects of tonsillitis. But he also said he had been forced to slow down before his turns because he could not see the wall early enough through the cloudy water.

The men's 100 metres butterfly produced easily the most thrilling race of the day as Russia's European silver medalist Denis Pankratov hit the turn in fifth place but pulled out an electrifying final 50 metres to pip Germany's Christian Keller.

Defending champion and 1988 Olympic gold medalist Anthony Nesty of Surinam had to be content with fifth place.

In the women's 200 metres butterfly, American Michelle Grigione deprived Hong of yet another morning-afternoon double, winning by just one-hundredth of a second in 2:14.25.

In the men's 100 metres backstroke, Spain's Martin Zubero added another title to his morning win in the 200 metres.

And Costa Rica's Claudia Poll pulled off a convincing victory over US Olympic champion Nicole Haislett in the women's 200 metres freestyle.

## Richardson to miss Indian tour

LONDON, July 25: Captain Richie Richardson will miss the West Indies tour of India later this year and could be out of cricket for up to a year because of poor health caused by fatigue, reports Reuters.

His English county, Yorkshire, have cancelled his contract by mutual consent and he played his last match for them on Sunday, hitting 38 in a three-wicket defeat by Gloucestershire at Cheltenham.

"I have been extremely tired due to the pressures of continuous cricket, particularly as I have not had a good break for many years," said Richardson.

"At times I have felt very fatigued and generally unwell. I have been conscious of my responsibilities to Yorkshire and my teammates and now I feel it is in the best interest of all concerned for me to have a complete break."

Yorkshire president Sir Lawrence Byford said: "Richie has been a great influence in the dressing room and it is sad that he has been plagued with fitness problems."

"I readily accept that it is in the best interest of all parties that Richie should cease playing immediately in order to regain full fitness and his undoubted prowess as a world class batsman."

The West Indies Board of Control and Yorkshire have been concerned with the player's general well-being for some time.

Richardson was referred to a London specialist who reported that he was suffering from "acute fatigue syndrome."

West Indies chief executive Steve Camacho said: "We are naturally worried about the situation with Richie so his return to full fitness and health is our paramount concern."

## Azhar clicks, Lara limps

LONDON, July 25: Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin blasted a superb unbeaten 111 off just 81 balls to steer Derbyshire to victory at Northampton as Brian Lara flopped again in the Sunday cricket league, reports Reuters.

It was Azharuddin's first century in the competition and he achieved it in style — his assault including eight sixes. He raced from 50 to 100 in only 21 balls and shared in a stand of 142 in 19 overs with Adrian Rollings, who made just 35.

Derbyshire reached 233 for four and finally won a faster scoring rate after a thunderstorm ended the Northants reply at 140 for five with ten overs remaining.

Warwickshire got only 13 runs from the prolific Lara, who was trapped lbw by England Test discard Peter Such, but they still scored a three-wicket victory over Essex at Edgbaston.

Already winners of the Benson and Hedges Cup, they stayed on course for a Grand Slam of all four English competitions as they opened a six-point lead in the league.

Kent's West Indian all-rounder Carl Hooper hit 60 in 71 balls to steer his side to an eight-run victory over defending champions Glamorgan at Ebbw Vale in a match reduced to 28 overs a side because of rain.

West Indies captain Richie Richardson scored a rapid 38 for Yorkshire against Gloucestershire at Cheltenham but was well caught by his West Indies vice-captain Courtney Walsh at mid-wicket.

Then an unbeaten 102 by Mark Alleyne saw Gloucestershire reach a formidable victory target of 261 with three wickets and 10 balls to spare.

## Atherton pays the price

LONDON, July 25: England cricket captain Mike Atherton, at the centre of a ball tampering row, was fined 2,000 pounds (3,050 dollars) by the England management on Sunday, reports Reuters.

But Atherton, while accepting the fine, denied using any illegal substance and said he had been using dirt in his pocket to dry his finger and prevent transferring sweat to the ball.

He said he had dirt in his pocket to keep his hands dry because of the very humid weather but admitted he had not given that information to match referee Peter Burge when he was interviewed on Saturday.

Ray Illingworth, chairman of the England selectors, said he had fined Atherton, 1,000 pounds (1,525 dollars) for using the dirt and the same amount for not giving a full explanation to Burge.

Television pictures on Saturday showed Atherton rubbing his hand in his trouser pocket before rubbing his fingers on the ball.

Speaking at a press conference after England had suffered a humiliating 356-run first Test defeat, Atherton said: "I do not wish to have the label of cheat

hanging over me."

Reading from a prepared statement, he said: "It was very hot and humid out there yesterday, your hands get wet and this in turn dampens the ball when you handle it."



MIKE ATHERTON

"You all saw me reach into my pocket, dry my fingers with some dirt in order not to dampen the ball. Whilst I told Mr Burge that I put my hand in my pocket to dry my fingers, I did not tell him that I used the dirt to dry them, therefore my response to his questioning was incomplete."

In response to questions, Atherton said he accepted the television pictures looked

## British press slates TCCB

LONDON, July 25: England's cricket authorities and their team captain Mike Atherton were far from exonerated by the British press on Monday over a ball tampering scandal during the humiliating 356-run first Test defeat by South Africa, reports Reuters.

## Fraser joins injured Gough

LONDON, July 25: England pace bowler Angus Fraser joined his partner, Darren Gough on the Allan Donald inflicted injury list with a fracture in his left hand, reports AP.

An X-ray Monday revealed Fraser's left hand little finger was fractured by a Donald delivery just before England subsided to their 356-run defeat by South Africa at Lord's on Sunday.

England are hoping their opening attack, two of the few England players come out of the first Test with some credit, will be fit for Thursday week's second Test against South Africa at Headingley, Leeds.

Gough faces a second X-ray on his damaged right arm, which was hit the rising Donald delivery on the way to England's humiliating innings of 99 on Sunday.

Atherton's dirty deeds. "The soiled skipper" and "Dirt on his hands" were among the headlines on the sports pages of British papers the morning after Atherton had tried to explain his action, if not the defeat with a day to spare.

The England captain was captured on television on the third day on Saturday rubbing his hand in his trouser pocket, then rubbing his fingers on the ball.

That evening match referee Peter Burge of Australia ruled that Atherton had done "nothing untoward." But he did not explain what Atherton had done.

This Atherton attempted to do 24 hours later, insisting he was not a cheat and explaining that he had earth in his pocket, taken from a bare patch on the field, to dry the ball.

Chairman of selectors Ray Illingworth fined Atherton 2,000 pounds sterling (dollar 3,050) 1,000 (dollar 1,525) for using the dirt and the same amount for not giving a full explanation to Burge.

But England's image has been tarnished by the incident and its poor handling by the Test and County Cricket Board (TCCB), the game's ruling body in the country, papers said.

Editorials in several British dailies said the TCCB had increased the speculation of ball tampering by not taking immediate action on Saturday.

The Daily Telegraph questioned the fine for using the

dirt after the match authorities had "all accepted there was nothing illegal in Atherton's drying of his fingers on dirt."

It added: "Unfortunately, by fining him for the use dirt, the chairman seems to have signalled that he does not share the captain's view of his innocence."

The Daily Mail said "Captain clean" had with his fine paid a small price "for the deceit that has sullied the honour of the England captaincy."

It wrote: "In a different, less cynical, era it would have meant certain dismissal (for Atherton)."

A British Member of Parliament in Monday called on the selectors to sack Atherton. "To show they are people who still believe in the spirit of the game."

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South African paceman Craig Matthews does a war-dance after inducing an edge from England batsman Alec Stewart behind the stumps on the fourth day (Sunday) of the first Test at Lord's. — AFP photo