

A win that came too late

Sports Reporter



The Dhaka Eleven, representing Bangladesh in the Moin-ul-Dowla Gold Cup cricket tournament in India, ensured their premature farewell on a winning note when they registered a comfortable 68-run victory over hosts Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) at the railway ground yesterday.

The Bangladeshi team, which confirmed an early elimination Sunday when they lost to group champions Indian Bank in their tournament opener by six wickets, found their similar capital more than enough for a change of taste in result.

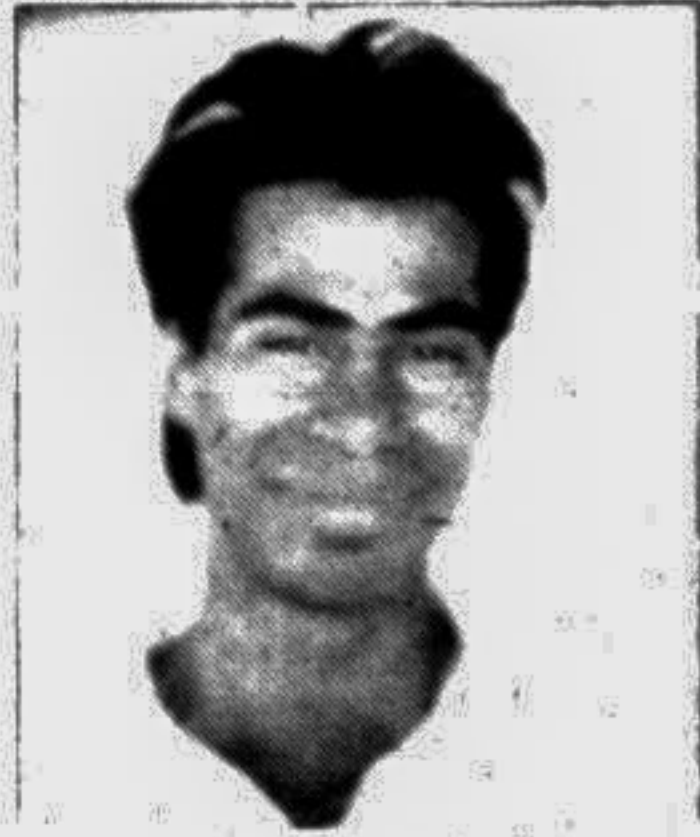
Battling first on a reportedly green top, they collected 157 for six wickets from the quota of 50 overs and then with all the medium pacers getting their act right, they booked the Hyderabad team for 89 in 38.3 overs.

The Dhaka Eleven, comprising four national cricketers besides a host of young cricketers, were in deep trouble at the beginning of their innings as the openers — Jahangir Alam and Javed Omar Belim Golla, the bloke who top-scored with 71 in the match against Indian Bank — were out cheaply.

From seven for two, the scoreboard crawled to 49 when Mostafizur Rahman became one of the two victims of Test cricketer Venkatapathy Raju for 17.

Raju, the left-arm spinner who is an on and off member

of the Indian team, picked up his second wicket when he sent back Zakaria for 33, made with the help of one boundary. Enamul Haq Monty batted sensibly for a well-made 36 featuring two boundaries. The southpaw, a regular national cricketer, enjoyed a vital 70-run partnership for the fifth wicket with Aminul Islam Bulbul, another ace all-rounder who was run out ultimately for the top score of 39 containing two hits to the fence.



MONI... useful show

Skipper Akkipper Akram Khan and Naimur Rahman Durjoy remained unbeaten as the Dhaka Eleven totalled 157 for six wickets from 50 overs.

Raju, the skipper of HCA, was expectedly the best bowler of his team claiming two for 23 from nine overs.

Opening bowler Vishnu also bowled with commendable control to finish with figures of one for 28.

There was one wicket for his partner Habib Khan whose

seven overs cost 19. Hasibul Hassan Shanto, who replaced left-arm paceman Morshed Ali Khan to make his debut yesterday, put the Bangladeshi outfit on victory path with an early strike as the HCA openers went out to collect 158 for a victory at a reasonably easy asking rate of just over three.

He had Srikanth (not the Test cricketer) caught behind for one and with the total on 23, Sajal, his new ball partner, struck removing Swaroop, the other opener, courtesy of a catch by Javed, who helped Rakib Hassan Bapji to manage one of his three scalps, to reduce the HCA score to 24 for four with two wickets falling at the same score.

With Rakib, Shanto and Sajal in full cry, HCA had seven wickets down for 49 and the poor consolation for the tourists was ensured.

Hasibul Hassan Shanto had the best analysis with three for 28 from ten overs.

Rakib, who was equally impressive after coming as a first change bowler, had an identical analysis.

Sajal, regarded by many as the quickest bowler in Bangladesh now, finished with two for 16.

Left-arm spinner Mostafizur had one and so had Naimur Rahman Durjoy, the man-of-the-tournament of the Malaysian safari.

According to a ECCB source, the tourists would try to play a few friendly matches before returning home.

Senior Division football leagues resume today

Sports Reporter

The Star Premier and First Division football leagues resume today after a three-day recess owing to unplayable ground conditions at the Dhaka Stadium.

Earlier on Saturday, the Dhaka Metropolitan Football Association (DMFA), the tournament organisers, decided to suspend the leagues for three days after heavy downpour left the Dhaka Stadium pitch inundated with knee-high water.

Two matches are billed for today with Eskaton Sanjib Sangha taking on Shantinagar Club in First Division encounter in the first match.

The second match, scheduled for a 6-30 start, involves two Premier Division teams — Arambagh Kirta Sangha and Fakirpool YMC.

Romario ready to pay fine if necessary

RIO DE JANEIRO, Aug 15: Brazilian striker Romario said he was willing to pay a fine for defying orders to return to his Spanish club Barcelona and added he was merely exercising a right to have one month's holiday, reports Reuters.

Romario, who inspired Brazil's World Cup triumph in the United States last month, has been at loggerheads with the Spanish champions over when he should return.

"I'm simply exercising my right to have a holiday," he said on Monday. "The World Cup finished on the 17th (of July). We returned to Brazil on the 20th. I will have my 30 days. I've told Barcelona this but they won't accept it."



There will probably be a fine when I get back but I don't know how much it will be. The boss has the right to fine me. But I won't accept being forced to sit on the bench for the whole championships.

"On the other hand, if he puts me on the bench to start with, that's okay. The others have been training for three weeks. I can't just turn up there and demand to walk into the team."

Romario has split his time in Brazil between playing football on the beach and a number of public appearances, which have usually drawn crowds of hysterical admirers.

"This is not an act of rebellion. I have a clear conscience. Regardless of the result of the World Cup, I would have stayed here," he said, adding: "I can guarantee that 80 per cent of the things that have been reported from there (Barcelona) are lies."

Romario said he would only consider cutting short his contract with Barcelona if he received an offer from a club in his native Rio de Janeiro.

"I have two more years of my contract with Barcelona to go and there's a clause implying a payment of 10 million dollars to them if I leave before."

"But if a Rio de Janeiro club offers to pay that for me, then I will happily come back. I will only leave Barcelona to come back here. I have already turned down offers from Japan and the United States."



Slovenian Britta Bilac soars over the bar to win the women's high jump event on the last day of the European Athletics Championships in Helsinki on August 14. Bilac cleared 2.00 metres. — AFP photo

Curtain falls on Helsinki European Championships

Three cheers for predictability



HELSINKI, Aug 15: A memorable 5,000 metres win by Olympic champion Dieter Baumann and an historic clean sweep by Spain in the men's marathon provided the final highlights of the 16th European Athletics Championships which ended on Sunday, reports Reuters.

After eight days of often predictable, sometimes exciting but rarely spectacular competition, the best was saved till the very last event with Germany's Baumann adding the European title to his Olympic crown.

Seven men were in contention for gold on the final bend as absorbing tactical race reached a thrilling climax. But then Baumann, who secured the Olympic title with a devastating 25-second kick in the last 200 metres, went into overdrive again to win in 13 minutes 36.93 seconds.

Rob Denmark of Britain came storming through for the silver in 13:37.50 and Spain's Able Anton, who won the 10,000 metres title last Sunday, took the bronze in 13:38.04 a stride ahead of Moroccan-born Frenchman Abdellah Behar.

"What a race!" Baumann exclaimed. "With 200 meters to go I thought it was all or nothing and kicked and surprised myself by getting five metres ahead of the others to win."

The victory was a great morale-booster for Baumann who missed the whole of last season, including the World Championships in Stuttgart, because of an ankle injury.

Anton's bronze was Spain's fifth medal of the day — one more than they had won during the previous seven days of competition.

Three of Spain's final-day medals came in the men's marathon in which Martin Fiz, Diego Garcia and Alberto Juzdado became the first men in modern athletics history to perform a clean sweep in the event.

There were also golds on Sunday for Italy's Andrea Benvenuti in the men's 800 metres, Olympic silver medalist Lyudmila Rogachova of Russia in the women's 1,500 metres and the French women and the British men in their respective 4x400 metres relay finals.

Those victories also secured second golds of the week for Du'Aine Ladejo of Britain and Marie Jose-Perec of France, the men's and women's individual 400 metres champions.

Behind Britain in the men's 4x400 relay, France and Russia had to wait for nearly an hour after the race to know their fates.

Originally both teams were disqualified for rule infringements, with Italy and Germany promoted to second and third respectively. But after officials protests the French and Russians were re-instated to the silver and bronze medal positions.

There was special distinction for discus thrower Vladimir Dubrovich, who won Belarus's first gold in the history of the championships, and high jumper Britta Bilac, who performed the same feat for Slovenia. Bilac won the women's high jump with a personal best clearance of 2.00 metres.

The championships closed with the Olympic Stadium bathed in brilliant sunshine and Russia emerging as the most powerful athletics nation in the new Europe with a final haul of 10 golds, almost a quarter

of the 44 at stake. Britain, who with former East Germany finished joint top of the medals table with nine golds in Split in 1990, maintained their high profile with the second-highest haul of six golds.

In the first European outdoor championships since East Germany stopped competing as a separate country in 1990, the combined German team ended with a relatively modest haul of five golds.

Only once, in their first European Championships in Stockholm in 1958, did the separate East German state do worse than that, picking up just two silvers and four bronzes.

The first of the day's highlights came in the morning when Spain completed their historic sweep of the marathon medals.

It was the first time since modern marathon running began at the first modern Olympic Games in 1896 that any nation had won gold, silver and bronze in a championship marathon.

Afterwards the trio revealed that a monk-like training regime at high altitude and a great deal of cooperation during the later stages of the 42.195 km run secured their entry into the sport's history books.

Fiz, who led the three across the line, praised Garcia for doing "all the dirty work" while Juzdado said they believed their only serious threat would come from Britain's Richard Nerurkar, who won the marathon World Cup in Spain last year.

Their tactics and team work clearly worked. After the trio saw off a Portuguese challenge they drew the sting from the Briton over the last 12

kms and hugged each other in delight after crossing the finishing line. Nerurkar finished fourth.

The second memorable race was the 5,000 metres, which — although slow — had the 40,000-crowd in the stadium screaming in excitement.

Their cheers got even louder when Finn Risto Uimala briefly threatened to have a say in the final outcome but the eventually finished seventh. The first nine men all finished within six seconds of each other.

The dissolution of the old Soviet empire and the emergence of newly independent nations created the biggest-ever championships with more than 1,200 athletes taking part from 44 countries.

Twenty-five nations won medals, with 14 winning golds, but disappointingly the championship failed to produce a world or even a European record.

That had happened only three times before in the 60 year history of the championships and had not happened at all since 1966 when they were held in Budapest, the venue again in 1998.

FINAL MEDALS TABLE

Medals table after the eighth and last day of the European Athletics Championships on Sunday (tabulated — gold, silver, bronze):

Russia	10	8	7
Britain	6	5	2
Germany	5	4	5
France	4	3	2
Ukraine	3	6	3
Spain	3	2	4
Norway	3	2	1
Italy	2	3	3
Portugal	2	1	0
Bulgaria	2	0	3
Belarus	1	4	0
Finland	1	1	0
Ireland	1	0	0
Slovenia	1	0	0
Sweden	0	2	0
Belgium	0	1	2
Poland	0	1	1
Czech Republic	0	1	1
Hungary	0	1	0
Romania	0	0	3
Switzerland	0	0	2
Croatia	0	0	1
Greece	0	0	1
Latvia	0	0	1
Lithuania	0	0	1

Note: Two silver medals awarded in the men's high jump.

Svatkovsky steals the show

SHEFFIELD, England, Aug 15: Dmitry Svatskovsky of Russia swept by his startled rivals in the final cross-country run to snatch the mens' title in the modern pentathlon world championships on Sunday, reports Reuters.

He relegated Christophe Ruer of France to the silver medal, with Hungary's Janos Martinek, the 1988 Olympic champion, taking the bronze.

Defending champion Richard Phelps of Britain finished way back outside the top 20 after bad shooting and fencing.

Svatkovsky totalled 5,543 points in the one-day five sports contest. Ruer 5,518 and Martinek 5,505. Phelps was 22nd with 5,190.

Ruer led France to the team gold with 16,194 points ahead of Britain (15,793) and Belarus (15,396).

It was an astounding victory for Svatskovsky, a big 23 year old from Moscow who had not previously won a medal.

He had begun the final discipline, the cross-country run over a hilly 4,000-metre course, 29 seconds behind the leader, Laszlo Fabian of Hungary who went off first.

Martinek, his compatriot, went by first, then Ruer who had pulled back a 41-second deficit.

Second Test now from August 19

SL undergo overhauling



COLOMBO, Aug 15: Sri Lanka on Monday axed five leading international cricketers after the humiliating 301-run defeat in the first Test against Pakistan, reports AFP.

Out went batsmen Asanka Gurusinha, Sanath Jayasuriya and bowlers Pramodya Wickremasinghe, Muttiah Muralidharan and Jayananda Warnawera for the second Test starting here Friday.

"I think it is time to infuse young blood. The seniors have failed to deliver the goods. Our batting let us down and the bowlers gave away too many runs," said Sri Lanka manager TB Kehelgamuwa.

The selectors recalled all-rounder Ruwan Kalpage and opener Dulip Samarawera to the side and Sanjeewa Ranatunga, Ravindara Pushpakumara and Chaminda Vaas will make their debuts.

Sanjeewa Ranatunga will become the third member of his family to play Test cricket for Sri Lanka after brothers Arjuna, team skipper, and former opener Dhammika.

This will be the first time that

three members of the same family would have played for Sri Lanka at Test level. Earlier the Wettimuny brothers, Mithra and Sidath had represented Sri Lanka in Test.

Left-handers Gurusinha and Jayasuriya failed miserably in the opening Test, which ended inside four days on Saturday. Muttiah Muralidharan, an off-spinner and off-cutter Jayananda Warnawera also fared poorly on a slow wicket.

Jayasuriya, however, has been named 12th man.

The biggest disappointment was fast bowler Pramodya Wickremasinghe, who finished wicketless while Pakistan pace duo Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis shared eleven wickets between them.

"The youngsters have been knocking at the door for selection for a long time. They have done well against Pakistan in the earlier matches. So they cannot be ignored," said Kehelgamuwa, who is also a selector.

The inclusion of pace bowlers Pushpakumara and Vaas, a promising left-arm, means Sri Lanka will no longer

depend merely on spin to tackle the powerful Pakistani batting line up.

Pakistan are expected to stick to the team currently basking in the glory of the first Test triumph. The team is to be announced Friday.

Meanwhile, the second Test, due to start on Tuesday, has been rescheduled for Friday because of Tuesday's parliamentary elections, cricket officials said on Monday.

The match will now be held from August 19 to 24 with August 22 being the rest day.

Officials said the third and final Test, due to start in the central town of Kandy on August 24 had also been put back.

It will now be played from August 26 to 31.

TEAM

SRI LANKA: A Ranatunga (capt), PA de Silva, RS Mahanama, D Samarawera, S Ranatunga, HP Tillakaratne, PB Dassanayake, K Dharmasena, RS Kalpage, C Vaas, R Pushpakumara. 12thman: ST Jayasuriya.

Chang brushes Edberg aside



MASON, Ohio, Aug 15: American Michael Chang beat an embarrassed Stefan Edberg 6-2, 7-6 on Sunday to win the 1.72 million dollar ATP Championship for the second year in a row, reports Reuters.

Chang, the fourth seed and ranked seventh in the world, had few challenges from the second-seeded, fourth-ranked Swede in a repeat matchup of last year's final. Edberg did not look like a player who was once the best in the world.

Edberg picked up his game a bit in the second set. But the first set was a complete disaster. He lost the first 11 points of the match and in the blink of an eye was down two service breaks at 3-0.

"You almost feel embarrassed, at least I do," said Edberg who raised his arms high into the air to a cheering crowd when he finally won the 12th point.

Chang, who earned 2,450,000 dollars for the win, could understand how Edberg was feeling.

"You have a few matches where you do feel that way," Chang said. "I've definitely been on court feeling very embarrassed. I once played an exhibition with Johan Kriek and I was playing so badly the people just walked out. It was humiliating."

Last year, Edberg pushed Chang to three sets in the final.

This year, Edberg's serve floundered, his trademark backhand slice deserted him, his forehand took a vacation and he couldn't deal with the service returns. Chang consistently dropped at his feet.

Mostly what Edberg had was unfocused error after unfocused error in the 70-minute match. Edberg made 29 blunders to Chang's five unfocused errors in the match.

"Stefan's beaten me badly so many times," said Chang, who

trails Edberg 11-6 in career meetings, but has won their last three encounters. "He shows no mercy when he goes out and plays. I figure if a guy's off one day you should take advantage of it."

Chang's victory is his fifth title of the year and marks the second time in his career he has successfully defended a title. This past January, Chang won his second successive championship in Jakarta.

Except for the fourth game of the first set where Edberg broke Chang's serve, the American, lost only seven points in nine service games.

Edberg, who won the Washington, DC title last month, only held his service game in the seventh game of the first set.

In the second set, Edberg was able to stay even with Chang until he served in the

Frazier's third

MANHATTAN BEACH, California, Aug 15: Tenth-seed Amy Frazier won her third career singles title, when she whipped 13th-seeded fellow American Ann Grossman 6-1, 6-3 on Sunday in a battle of surprise finalists at the 400,000 dollar Virginia Slims of Los Angeles, reports Reuters.

Frazier had shocked top-seed and recently-crowned Wimbledon champion Conchita Martinez of Spain in the quarter-finals, while Grossman had upset second-seed and defending champion Martina Navratilova in the third round of the 56-player, hard court tournament.

Frazier, who hit 23 winners compared to just six from Grossman, called the win a stepping-stone for her as she points towards the US Open beginning August 29.

"I tried all week not to think what round I was in or who I was playing," the 21-year-old American said.

11th game. That is when Edberg made four crucial errors on all four points to put Chang in a position to serve for the match.

The match point was the most frustrating of all for Edberg.

At 40-30 in the 12th game, a forehand return was called wide. Chang said he was "Not sure one way or the other" about the ball.

Edberg, who knew the umpire wouldn't overrule the final point because the shot was on the other side of the court, was certain the ball was good.

"It caught the whole line," Edberg said, shrugging. "What can you do? It was typical of the match. It would've been nice to get back to deuce and have another chance."



FABULOUS FOURSOME... (from left to right) the French gold-winning relay squad of Francine Landre, Viviane Dorsile, Evelynne Elen and Marie-Jose Perec rejoice after the women's 4x400 metres relay at the Helsinki European Championships on Sunday. Russia and Germany finished second and third respectively. — AFP photo

Vietnam awaits bright dawn

HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam, Aug 15: Vietnam, distracted and isolated by war for decades, is starting to see more international sports events now that its economy is growing and opening to the outside world, reports Reuters.

It is a development that most of the 72 million Vietnamese welcome.

"Sport has really touched the hearts of the Vietnamese people and they want to see high class, high performance athletes in action," said Ian Billingham, whose Hong Kong-based International Management Group helped find

sponsors for the recent World Cup badminton tournament staged here.

The Vietnamese are keen on sport. People hit shuttlecocks in the streets and small boys play football.

Vietnamese fans in their millions followed the World Cup soccer finals live on television for the first time this year.

But playing facilities and cash for equipment are limited in what remains one of the world's poorest countries.

Following a table tennis World Cup tournament in December 1992, the badminton event was only the second in which fans could see a sport's top players in action in Vietnam.

Both Vietnamese players in the badminton tournament, a man and a woman, were beaten in the first round. For spectator Hoang Loc, 60, it was an eye-opener which made him realise how far the Vietnamese are behind the top world players.

Loc said: "You don't need to be physically strong or have a lot of equipment to play this sport. I can't understand why the gap is so big."

Pham Van Kiet, vice-chairman of the Vietnam Olympic Committee, predicted that in seven to 10 years, with international help, Vietnam would catch up with its Asian neighbours.

Vietnamese won the under-16 World Chess Championship and three Asian chess titles last year. A Vietnamese woman won the World Championship in Wushu, an Asian martial art. Neither sport has a high profile.

Promoters see lack of stadiums and sponsorship as big difficulties but predict a good future for international events. Bruce Aitken, whose Hong

Kong-based Sports Asia Limited has helped stage nine sports events or concerts in Vietnam since 1992, says it needs more venues such as an indoor stadium to hold 10,000 people.

"That's a major problem right now and that's not an easy problem to solve. It's going to take time," he said.

There was also only a handful of companies so far prepared to sponsor sports events in Vietnam.

"The really difficult break-through we are trying to make is to broaden the number of companies that support sporting events as the way to market their products, as an alternative method to just plastering the city with signs, as you see in Ho Chi Minh City," Aitken said.

The Heineken Company, which brews locally, sponsored the badminton tournament and general manager Johan Doyer said they would back more in future.

Sports Asia has promoted three marathons in Vietnam and a world qualifying series surfing contest last year. It plans tennis and soccer events.

But it will be early next century before Vietnam is able to host a multi-venue event like the southeast Asian games, a spokesman for the Physical Culture and Sports Department said.

"Our policy is to try to hold international tournaments for one specific game, like we've just done in badminton ...," he said. Volleyball, judo and taekwondo are other sports in which international tournaments have been staged.

By seeing top players in action, the spokesman said, Tournaments also stimulated mass interest, which might produce more talent.