

Real test for Bangladesh

Sports Reporter

Cricket lovers with the penchant for the basics of the game will have their work cut out from today as the visiting England A team take on Bangladesh in a three-day exhibition match at the Dhaka Stadium.

Not a regular item in the recent history of international matches here with the last three-day match involving Bangladesh and a foreign team being held some four years ago, the match is scheduled to commence at 9:30 am every day with a stipulation of 90 overs to be bowled by the fielding side each day.

England A who came here after their all conquering tour of India pocketed the unofficial one-day series earlier beating

Bangladesh in both the 50-overs-a-side engagements. Although apprehensions were rife with the arrival of the England team that Bangladesh having been so long disused to the longer version of the game will simply be swept off their feet by the visitors who routed the strong Indians 3-0 on their home-soil in an unofficial Test series.

Bangladesh's performance in the first one dayer only enhanced the fear of the cricket bulls as the local boys surrendered tamely, losing the first of the two fifty overs match by 15 runs.

But an adrenalin pumping display in the second match which Bangladesh lost by 20 runs after England 'A' had set them a victory target of 236

restored the confidence level that shot up of late due to a success streak that reached its pinnacle in Bangladesh's one-run victory over India 'A' in an unofficial one-day tournament only months back.

Bangladesh Television and Radio Bangladesh will cover the match live.

Meanwhile the Bangladesh Cricket Control Board (BCCB) has already announced the rate of tickets for the three-day engagement scheduled to end on February 26.

Season Tickets: VIP Gate No 1: Taka 500, Gate No 2: Taka 150, Gate No 3: Taka 300, Special Enclosure Taka 150.

Daily tickets for the western and eastern galleries have been fixed at Taka 25 and 15 respectively.

Sampras toils, Agassi surfs

PHILADELPHIA, Feb 23: Top-ranked Pete Sampras complained of a slow court after squeaking out a three-set, first-round win over Marcelo Filippini Wednesday at the Comcast US indoor tournament, reports AP.

But No 2 Andre Agassi had no problems against fellow American Jeff Tarango, ripping powerful forehands and two-handed backhands one after the other in a 6-3, 6-4 victory to reach the quarterfinals.

"This is the slowest court I've ever played on," said Sampras, a 4-6, 6-4, 7-5 winner against Filippini. "I really had to struggle out there. A couple of points here and there were the difference. Fortunately for me, I got them."

Ranked 56th in the world, Filippini fought off one match point in the 10th game and argued a call in the final game to go down long - 40. After he smashed a ball into the stands, Sampras passed him with a cross-court forehand to close out the victory.

Filippini won the first set after Sampras ended a long rally by sailing a forehand long. Sampras, who won this tour-

namment in 1990 and 1992, moves into the second round against Paul Haarhuis, a 3-6, 6-4, 7-5 winner earlier in the evening over Mali'Vali Washington.

"He was a little down for this match," Filippini said. "I think maybe he was surprised at how good I was playing."

Agassi's win over Tarango was no surprise. Agassi needed just 59 minutes to win for the 36th time in his last 38 matches. The reigning Australian and US Open champion trails Sampras in the ATP Tour rankings by 694 points.

"This is a slow court and I think it favours me. I'm confident on this surface. I can take a ball early, when it's rising," Agassi said. "I was ready for a dogfight tonight. Players like him sometimes play at a higher level. You can't overlook anybody."

Earlier, Washington blew leads of 4-3 in the second set and 5-3 in the third. Haarhuis fought off the match points in the 10th game, broke his opponent's serve in the next game and won it when Washington's forehand return of an overhead smash landed beyond the baseline.

"I have played pretty well here in the past, but I would have liked to see a more favourable draw," said Haarhuis, a finalist here in 1994. "I won't be able to fall behind and still win against Pete like I did today."

In another first-round match, Richey Reneberg upset fourth-seeded Jacco Eltingh 6-4, 6-3 for his sixth win in as many tries against the Dutchman. Reneberg set up match point with crisp passing shots and won it when Eltingh, ranked 23rd in the world, returned a soft, cross-court drop shot into the net.

Sweden's Thomas Enqvist served seven aces and cruised through a second-round match with Luiz Mattar of Brazil 6-3, 6-1 in just one hour.

Also advancing to the quarterfinals Wednesday were New Zealand's Brett Steven and Canadian Sebastien Lareau.

Steven, ranked 64th in the world, broke the serve of seventh-seeded Mark Woodforde five times en route to a 6-1, 6-4 upset of the Australian. Lareau moved on as Italy's Renzo Furlan withdrew because of flu symptoms. He faces Agassi on Friday.

Gunners under no illusion

LONDON, Feb 23: Troubled Arsenal are out to prove that their first home victory in nearly four months was more than just a one-match honeymoon for caretaker manager Stewart Houston, reports AP.

Picking up the pieces after the firing of George Graham, Arsenal's players responded with a 1-0 victory over Nottingham Forest Tuesday night with Houston, Graham's former assistant, in charge. It was the club's first victory at Highbury since Oct. 23.

Graham, the most successful manager in Arsenal history, was dismissed in connection with allegations that he received under-the-table payments as part of transfer deals.

Now Houston has been given the go-ahead to manage the club for the rest of the season. Given the controversy surrounding the dismissal of Graham Houston's first task will be to get his players focused on this Saturday's game at Crystal Palace.

"I'm happy, delighted and can't wait to get on with the job," Houston said.

But a period of mourning is inevitable, especially for Dutch winger Glenn Helder, who never got a chance to play for the manager who recruited him.

Helder was Graham's last signing, coming from Vitesse Arnhem for two million pounds (dfls 3.2 million). His Arsenal debut against Forest came just hours after Graham was fired.

"Everybody knows I like George very much," Helder said. "He took me in. But the club also bought me, not only George Graham. I am very sad he's gone, especially the way in which he's gone. But I want to play for Arsenal. Arsenal is a very good club."

Arsenal have good reason to be optimistic. Although the club was enduring their worst season in Graham's 8 1/2 years

tenure, their position is one that most other teams would envy.

The Gunners are in 10th place in the Premier League, and fears they might fall into the relegation zone were eased considerably after Tuesday's victory. Although the league and FA Cup titles are out of reach, Arsenal are still alive in the quarterfinals in the defence of their European Cup Winners' Cup crown.

Ian Wright, despite his disciplinary problems this season, is still one of the most feared strikers in the league, and Tony Adams is one of the best defenders in England.

In addition to Helder, who looked impressive on Tuesday, Graham's last batch of signings included potential stars John Hartson from Luton and Chris Kiwomya from Ipswich. Kiwomya's first goal with the club was the game-winners Tuesday night.

And more big names could be on the way to Highbury. In his programme notes for the Forest game, Graham had written: "I haven't finished spending. I'm still rebuilding and I have cash available for more signings."



WBO heavyweight champion Herbie Hide poses outside his London home before leaving for Las Vegas on Feb 22. Hide puts his title on the line against American Riddick Bowe at the MGM Grand Hotel on March 11. — AFP photo

Hide has no fear

LONDON, Feb 23: World Boxing Organisation heavyweight champion Herbie Hide said on Wednesday he would "beat the living daylight" out of American Riddick Bowe in next month's title fight in Las Vegas, reports Reuters.

"I'm not a pussy cat. I'll beat the living daylight out of him," said Hide before flying to Las Vegas for the bout against the former World Boxing Association and International Boxing Federation title holder on March 11.

"There's nothing I see in Bowe which worries me. It seems as if people think it's going to be easy for Bowe."

Abahani's third

Sports Reporter

Defending champions Abahani Krira Chakra recorded their third successive win in the Green Delta Insurance First Division hockey super league when they beat lowly Sonali Bank 2-0 in one of the two matches billed for the Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Day's other billing between league leaders Mohammedan Sporting Club and Ajax Sporting Club fell through due to unplayable ground conditions caused by a heavy shower in the morning.

Abahani, who lost their super league opener against arch-rivals Mohammedan Sporting Club, took the lead in the 49th minute through their Pakistani recruit Salman Wahab before Alamgir Alam added another eight minutes later with a field goal.

The outcome of yesterday's match now left the Dhanmondi outfit at the top slot, jointly with Mohammedans, who have played one match less in the six-team super league.

For Sonali Bank, it was their fourth straight defeat following a 9-1 whitewash by Mohammedan SC on Tuesday.

Mohammedans, the only unbeaten team in the fray with an all-win record will take on Ajax SC in their fourth league engagement today at 2 pm while the other match between Usha KC and Dhaka Mariner Youngs' Club, earlier scheduled for a 3 pm start, will now be held at 3.30 pm.

BFF's bizarre move

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) triggered off yet another round of controversy when the highest governing body of country's football dropped three players including ace winger Golam Gaus and recalled former national captain Arif Hossain (Moon) with the final selection for the forth-coming SAARC football tourney in Sri Lanka barely a week away.

Notorious for its mind-boggling chopping and changing, the BFF excluded Golam Gaus, midfielder Zakir and defender Parvez, reportedly on the instruction of the South Korean coach Man Young Kang, who replaced his Swiss predecessor Oldric Svab after Bangladesh's dismal performance in the sixth SAF Games two years ago in Dhaka where the hosts finished sixth among six participants.

The newly appointed South Korean coach, who has been conducting a residential camp at the Bangladesh Krira Shiksha Protisthan (BKSP) since November 1, reportedly confirmed the exclusion of the three players during a practice session on February 20 in a manner that can be best described as autocratic.

But the hyper active Man Young Kang, seemed to know little about the inclusion of Arif Hossain, the Brothers Union defender, who maintained constant contact with the BFF.

Arif, who failed to attend the camp due to an injury after the BFF had called 32 players in the national camp on October 28, surprisingly got the nod of the organisers on February 2 instead of a more deserving claimant like Ataur Rahman who had a fantastic season last year.

Football lovers were flabbergasted at the BFF's latest decision to include a new player so late when the final selection of 18 booters will be made on March 1.

Sher-e-Bangla Cup soccer

Sports Reporter

Joypurhat became the first host outfit to earn a berth in the final leg of the 19th Sher-e-Bangla Cup national football championship eliminating Rajshahi 4-3 in the tie-breaker at the local stadium yesterday. Joypurhat, the hosts of Zone-7, who were without any goal through the 90-minute regulation time and looked 2-2 in the first five spot-kicks, finally prevailed over Rajshahi when Rana struck the match decider from the second shot in sudden death situation.

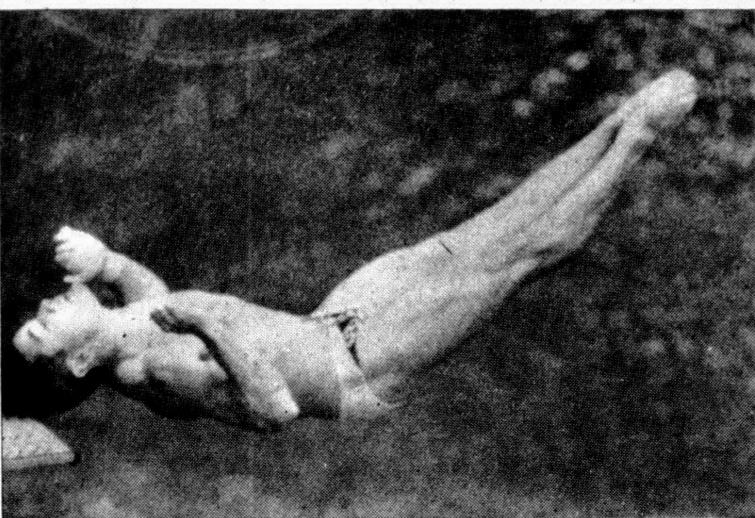
Joypurhat now join three other qualifiers — Bhol, Nilphamari and Kushthia — in the 12-team final round to be held in Naogaon next month.

In the other match at Habiganj, Sylhet edged past Brahmanbaria by a lone goal.

Brazil swamp Slovakia

FORTALEZA, Brazil, Feb 23: Speedy, daring and acrobatic, world champions Brazil routed Slovakia 5-0 Wednesday in an exhibition soccer game seen as a warmup for the America Cup tournament in July, reports AP.

The home team fielded seven members of the 1994 World Cup squad, though not Romario, the flamboyant attacker considered one of the world's best. But Brazil looked so quick and confident on offense, he was hardly missed.



An AFP file photo dated September 11, 1988 shows US diver Greg Louganis hitting the spring board during the 1988 Olympics in Seoul. Louganis said he has AIDS, according to the text of an interview with ABC television released on Feb 22.

Greg Louganis has AIDS

CHICAGO, Feb 23: Greg Louganis, the first man to sweep diving gold medals at consecutive Olympics, is infected with the virus that causes AIDS, the Chicago Sun-Times reported Wednesday, reports AP.

Louganis, who won four gold medals for springboard and platform diving at the Olympics in 1984 and 1988, will disclose that he is HIV positive in an interview on the ABC television news magazine "20/20" on Friday, the newspaper said.

Louganis, 35, disclosed that he was homosexual at the Gay Games in New York last year. Since retiring from diving, he has pursued an acting career and appeared in an off-Broadway play.

The Sun-Times reported that in his forthcoming Random House book, "Breaking the Surface," Louganis revealed that he knew was HIV positive when he struck his head during a dive at the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

The knowledge that his blood had spilled into the pool deeply troubled him, because he didn't know whether he had inadvertently exposed others to the virus, the Sun-Times quotes the book as saying.

Tom Perry, a spokesman for the publisher, said the Sun-Times report was "not entirely accurate," but he refused to elaborate and would not confirm other details of the book.

The only information Random House would reveal from the book was that Louganis talks about his homosexuality, dyslexia, racism he suffered because of his Samoan heritage, and abusive stepfather, teenage depression and three suicide attempts.

Other major athletes who disclosed they suffered from the virus, that causes AIDS were basketball star Magic Johnson and tennis champion Arthur Ashe. Johnson retired from the Los Angeles Lakers after first disclosing he had the AIDS virus in 1991, and Ashe died in February 1993, less than a year, after announcing he had AIDS.

Telephone calls to Louganis' attorney, Pat Benson, and spokeswoman, Maggie Meyer-Sore, were not returned.

A spokeswoman for "20/20" refused to discuss the contents of the Louganis segment of Friday night's show.

Ron O'Brien, Louganis' former coach, also refused to comment as part of his part in the book deal with Random House.

US Olympic Committee spokesman Mike Moran said

that since 1989, the USOC has instituted stringent rules for doctors, trainers and chiropractors to be followed whenever blood is spilled by an athlete in a US delegation.

Louganis won his first medal, a silver, at the 1976 Games in Montreal when he was 16 years old.

He was a member of the 1980 Olympic squad but did not get to compete because of the US boycott of the Moscow Games.

Four years later in the Los Angeles Olympics, he dominated the competition, completing the first springboard-platform sweep in 56 years.

The boycott of the 1984 Games by Soviet bloc nations kept many athletes away from Los Angeles and may have left some question about the gold medal performances by Louganis.

That convinced him to come back for the 1988 Games

in Seoul, where his attempt to repeat was nearly thwarted by the accident when he struck his head during a preliminary dive.

Louganis had jumped a bit too close to the board and caught the back of his scalp on his way down.

The wound took five stitches to close the wound and there was the possibility that the accident would take Louganis out of the competition.

Louganis went on to a second straight gold medal sweep, taking both the platform and springboard titles. When the Seoul Games ended, he announced his retirement at age 28.

Louganis was the only diver to score consecutive perfect 10s in an international competition. He also held three world championships, three Pan American Championships and 48 US national titles at one point.

Louganis: A profile

NEW YORK, Feb 23: In diving, there were two eras: Before Greg and After Greg.

After was definitely better.

Greg Louganis, who absorbed taunts as a kid for the tone of his skin and had to deal with dyslexia, sexual confusion and an abusive homelife, found refuge in the grace and power of his sport, and took it to heights never seen before, reports AP.

Maybe never again. His dives cut the water like a jet-propelled knife, leaving barely a ripple but touching all who watched.

"I've never seen anyone come close to what he did," said Steve McFarland, president of US Diving and one of Louganis' former coaches.

Louganis, who said in an interview with ABC's "20/20" that he has AIDS, was the only man to sweep the diving gold medals in two consecutive Olympics. But those championships in 1984 and 88 were only part of the story.

He became the first diver ever to top the 700 barrier in platform, with a 710.91 to win at the 1984, Los Angeles Olympics.

He was the only diver to score consecutive perfect 10s in an international competition. He also held three world championships, three Pan American championships and 48 national titles at one point.

Born on Jan 29, 1960, Louganis was adopted shortly after birth and raised in El Cajon, California. He was enrolled in dance, gymnastics and acrobatic classes as child

but had knees forced him to give up those activities.

At age 12, a year after scoring a perfect 10 in the AAU Junior Olympics, he began concentrating on diving. "That's when my diving career really kind of shot through the roof," he said.

Dr Sammy Lee, an Olympic gold medalist, began coaching Louganis and took him to the Montreal Olympics in 1976.

He quickly developed into the premier diver in the country winning a score of national titles first at the University of California-Irvine. He was a member of the 1980 Olympic team but missed his opportunity at more medals when the United States boycotted the Games in Moscow. By 1984, he was the best in the world.

Troubled at grade school by classmates badgering him about his Samoan skin and unable to deal with lessons because of undiagnosed dyslexia (impairment of the ability to read), Louganis battled depression and tried three times to commit suicide. In 1976, he accepted what he had long suspected — he was homosexual.

In college, Louganis majored in drama and he did some theater work after retiring from diving. He was asked to compare the two activities.

"It's the same kind of butterflies and the same kind of energy," he said. "The thing about a play is that you're supported by the other actors. Diving is solo. You work closely with your coach, but ultimately you have to do the dives."

Rain ruins NZ-SA tie

CHRISTCHURCH, Feb 23: Heavy overnight rain prevented any play Thursday in the crucial centenary series limited-overs cricket match between New Zealand and South Africa at Lancaster Park, reports AP.

The match was rescheduled for Friday, a reserve day, match referee Barry Jarman said — but the forecast is for further heavy rain.

If the match is rained off, New Zealand will advance to face Australia in the final Sunday at Eden Park in Auckland.

New Zealand have a superior run-rate from their opening two matches of the tournament, although both teams have 1-1 records after wins over India and losses to Australia.

Bribery scandal won't affect WC: Scindia

NEW DELHI, Feb 23: India does not expect next year's World Cup to be moved, despite a bribery scandal involving co-host Pakistan, a top Indian cricket official said Thursday, reports AFP.

"There is no threat to the World Cup, it will go on as scheduled," Madhavraj Scindia, chairman of the joint Pakistan-India-Lanka Organising Committee (PILCOM) told AFP.

"Allegations of bribery against some Pakistanis has no relevance to the staging of the World Cup. I don't think the International Cricket Council (ICC) is worried on that score," he said.

New Zealand and Australian officials last week said the World Cup could be shifted because of the bribery scandal.

Nirman cricket

Sports Reporter

St Joseph's High School moved in to the Dhaka-zone semifinal of the 13th Nirman Schools cricket championship when they beat Pallabi Majedul Islam Model High School by three wickets at a city ground yesterday.

Set to score a modest 132 runs for an outright victory, St Joseph's reached the target for the loss of seven wickets with two balls to spare in the rain interrupted 25-overs-a-side affair.

Brief scores: St Joseph's High School — 132 for seven. Ashfaq 40, Mudassar 28, R Hassan 2/19.

Pallabi MI Model School — 131 for six in 25 overs. Maruf 22, Hassan 42, Prince 13, Anwar 15, Javed 2/21, Ashfaq 2/22.

Meanwhile, the other match of the day between Scholastica and Nabakumar Institute fell through due to heavy downpour in the morning. The match will be held at the Residential Model School ground today.

Spain, Germany draw friendly

JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA, Spain, Feb 23: Spectators whistled derisively at both teams as Spain played an undermanned Germany to a 0-0 draw in an international friendly Wednesday, reports AP.

After an opening 10-minute period in which Germany, missing eight of their normal starting regulars, the two teams settled down to a game that was overcome by defensive tactics and short on offensive spark and creativity.

Neither side had a legitimate scoring chance in 92 minutes in a match designed as preparation for both sides for ongoing European Championship qualifying.

Sammer signs new deal with Dortmund

DORTMUND, Germany, Feb 23: German international libero Matthias Sammer has signed a new three-year deal with German league leaders Borussia Dortmund, keeping him at the club until 1999, reports Reuters.

Sammer has been outstanding in libero for Dortmund this season and has been rewarded by coach Ottmar Hitzfeld as the "Beckenbauer" of the 1990s.

He joined Dortmund from Internazionale Milan in 1993.

Scifo sidelined

BRUSSELS, Feb 23: Monaco's Belgian midfielder Enzo Scifo is to undergo surgery on a longstanding ankle injury next week and will not play again this season, reports Reuters.

Scifo, who has played only a handful of games this season, told Belgian television on Wednesday that fragments of bone would be removed from the ankle.

He will miss Belgium's next three European Championship qualifiers against Spain, Cyprus and Macedonia.

Injury bothers Ivanisevic

STUTTGART, Feb 23: After tennis, soccer is Goran Ivanisevic's second big passion. An old soccer injury is putting his tennis career on hold.

Ivanisevic was forced to abandon his first round match against Magnus Larsson at the Eurocard Open Wednesday and later said he would undergo surgery Thursday near Nuremberg, Germany, to repair torn cartilage in the right knee, reports AP.

"I am not a great fan of doctors and operations and tomorrow is the first surgery of my life so I am pretty scared," Ivanisevic said.

Third seeded Sergi Bruguera of Spain also was forced to withdraw when he slipped and fell and apparently twisted his knee. Bruguera lost the first set to Alexander Volkov of Russia 6-4, and was leading 3-2 in the second when he had to abandon the match.

Ivanisevic was down 4-0 in the first set when he walked toward the Swede, shook his hand and abandoned the

match. The Croat is No 5 in the world and was the second seed in this event, which with prize money of dfls 2.25 million is the richest indoor event on the ATP/IBM Tour.

Ivanisevic, 23, said he'd been bothered by the injury for nearly a year.

He was slated to play in Rotterdam next week and then

O'Sullivan misses world mark

MELBOURNE, Australia, Feb 23: Sonia O'Sullivan of Ireland own the women's 5,000 metres in impressive style Thursday night at the NEC international track and field meet, but was well outside the world record she was aiming for, reports AP.

O'Sullivan clocked 15 minutes, 4.05 seconds to win the race ahead of Australians Carolyn Schuwalow (15:31.12) and Lisa Ondieki (15:32.44).

The 24-year-old from Cobh had said before the race that she aimed to set the first world record at Olympic Park for 30 years.