



The goal that proved to be the match decider. An airborne Mamun Joardar (3rd from R) spectacularly heads in a Rakib (not in picture) cross to score the second goal for Bangladesh during their SAF Games Group B soccer clash against defending champions Nepal at the Nehru Stadium yesterday. Bangladesh won 2-1. — TV photo

AFF floated

BANGKOK, Dec 23: Football associations from the seven ASEAN countries on Friday formed their own group to increase their soccer profile, reports AFP.

The setting up of the ASEAN Football Federation (AFF) was described as "a historic moment for any football fan in Southeast Asia," by veteran Indonesian soccer official Nobon Noor.

"With the creation of this new body we can increase the number of football competitions in the region and so help improve standards," he said.

Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, the Philippines and Vietnam — all members of the association of Southeast Asian nations — have set up the AFF. Burma, Laos and Cambodia are associate members as they are in the political group.

ASEAN has some of the world's most dynamic economies, but its football standards are more modest — with Malaysia and Singapore, better known abroad for their match-fixing.

The new body will have no standing within the international football hierarchy but it has immediate plans to hold a Southeast Asian Football Championships.

Singapore will host the first tournament next September with the top eight teams from the soccer tournament at the recent Southeast Asian Games in Thailand. The hosts won the winners. Cambodia and Brunei will not take part.

The AFF also wants to launch its own development programme in Indochina, which has fallen behind because of years of war and political isolation.

"We hope to have at least one coaching and referees clinic in each of the ASEAN countries every year," said Noor, a vice-president of the Asian Football Confederation, the governing body for Asia.

Worawee Makudi of Thailand was appointed the first general secretary of the AFF.

Ctg soccer

CHITTAGONG, Dec 23: Chittagong Mohammedan Sporting Club lost two valuable points when they drew goalless with Sea Customs Club in the CJKP First Division football super league at the local stadium here today, reports BSS.

Mohammedans missed a good number of scoring chances including a penalty in the 32nd minute. Striker Liton failed to convert from the spot.

Mohammedans collected four points from two matches while Sea Customs got one point from as many as encounters.

Samson defends WBF crown

BANGKOK, Dec 23: Samson Gym of Thailand successfully defended his World Boxing Federation junior bantamweight title Friday with a ninth-round technical knockout of Thembinkosi Ntynkala of South Africa, reports AP.

The scheduled 12-round bout, held in the northeastern province of Sakhon Nakhon, was stopped at 1 minute, 35 seconds of the round.

The eighth successful defence of the 23-year-old Thai's title improved his record to 12-0 with 11 knockouts.

Ntynkala, 23, fell to 16-5 with four draws.

Xmas cheers for Kiwis



AUCKLAND, Dec 23: All-Rounder Nathan Astle helped New Zealand to a 32-run victory over Pakistan today which squared their four-match one-day cricket series at 2-2, report agencies.

Astle contributed a useful unbeaten 20 from 14 balls — including three fours from Waqar Younis in the final over — as New Zealand set up a challenging total of 244 for eight from 45 overs in a rain-reduced match.

Craig Spearman top-scored with a powerful 48, with Adam Parore making 42 and Roger Twose a dashing 41.

When Pakistan batted, Astle chipped in with three wickets and two run-outs to set up a comfortable win.

Aamir Sohail and Ramiz Raja set Pakistan off to a strong start, but the visitors collapsed from 109 for two to 146 for seven as five wickets fell in 63 balls.

Veteran Salim Malik kept Pakistan's hopes alive with an entertaining 58 off 52 balls, including three sixes, before being ninth out, leg before to Astle.

Saleem Elahi and Basit Ali both fell run-out victims to brilliant direct hits from Astle in the field — though television replays suggested Elahi was unlucky because Gavin Larsen at the bowlers' end dislodged a ball with his hand before the throw hit the stumps.

New Zealand struggled early on against the new-ball attack of Wasim Akram and Aaqub Javed, who drew extra swing from the heavy, humid conditions.

Bryan Young was caught behind for 15, but Craig Spearman pushed the score along with some powerful hitting, including successive boundaries off Mushtaq Ahmed.

Spearman went on to top-score with 48, while Stephen Fleming made 38 and Adam Parore contributed 42 as most of the New Zealand batsmen found form.

Roger Twose held together the later part of the innings with 41 from just 33 balls, including three boundaries in one Salim Malik over.

New Zealand were strongly placed at 207 for four in 39th over.

"Super" Arab soccer fiasco

RIYADH, S Arabia, Dec 23: A soccer match of the "Super" Arab Championship between club sides from Egypt and Saudi Arabia played here Wednesday night will long be remembered for its ugly scenes of violence and dissent, reports AP.

For most of the second half, players exchanged karate kicks, punches and elbow blows, and consistently argued with the referee over his decisions.

The embattled referee, Morocco's Abdurrahim al-Agoun, appeared so threatened by the Egyptian players of al-Ahli club that he had to be escorted out by police after the final whistle.

So many rough and sometime brutal tackles were made that play often stopped and the match steadily looked more like a running battle than a sports event.

Tempers flared when al-Shabab's al-Mohallil al-Saria headed home a Fouad Anwar cross to win the match 2-1 in favour of the Saudis in the 72nd minute.

However, four wickets fell in the space of 23 balls, including three in 11 balls for an otherwise out-of-sorts, Waqar Younis.



NATHAN ASTLE ... m-o-m

Younis finished with three for 70 from his nine overs, while left-arm spinner Aamir Sohail picked up two for 42, with Wasim Akram, Aaqub Javed and Mushtaq Ahmed each collecting one wicket.

While New Zealand have a three-match one-day series against Zimbabwe next month to complete their World Cup buildup, this match concluded Pakistan's preparations for the tournament it is jointly hosting with India and Sri Lanka from mid-February.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the fourth



Salim Malik of Pakistan pulls his one during his top scoring knock of 58 against New Zealand in yesterday's final one-day international at Eden Park, Auckland. — APP/UNB photo

and final one-day international between New Zealand and Pakistan at Eden Park on Saturday:

NEW ZEALAND

Spearman c Basit b Mushtaq	48
Young c Latif b Aaqub	15
Fleming c Akram b Sohail	38
Parore b Waqar	42
Cairns c Akram b Sohail	11
Twose b Waqar	41
Astle not out	20
Germon b Akram	5
Patel lbw b Younis	1
Larsen not out	3
Extras: (lb-11, w-6, nb-3)	20
Total (for 8 wks, 45 overs)	244
Fall of wickets: 1-28; 2-88; 3-132; 4-148; 5-207; 6-214; 7-222; 8-223	

Bowling

O	M	R	W	
Akram	9	0	27	1
Aaqub	6	0	28	1
Waqar	9	0	70	3
Mushtaq	7	0	39	1
Sohail	9	0	42	2
Malik	5	0	27	0

PAKISTAN

Sohail c Patel b Cairns	37
Ramiz c Cairns b Astle	46
Flabi run out	7
Inazmamul Haq c sub (Loveridge) b Astle	17
Malik lbw b Astle	58
Basit run out	0
Akram c Astle b Morrison	4
Latif b Larsen	1
Mushtaq b Larsen	16
Waqar c Young b Twose	5
Aaqub not out	12
Extras: (lb-5, w-2)	7
Total (all out in 41.4 overs)	212
Fall of wickets: 1-56; 2-89; 3-109; 4-117; 5-118; 6-125; 7-146; 8-188; 9-196	

Bowling

O	M	R	W	
Morrison	6	0	22	1
Patel	4	0	26	0
Cairns	7	0	38	1
Larsen	9	0	42	2
Twose	7.4	0	37	1
Astle	8	0	42	3

Result: New Zealand won by 32 runs.
Series drawn 2-2.
Man-of-the-match: Nathan Astle (New Zealand)
Match reduced to 45 overs a side due to rain.

Rain gets in Windies way

BRISBANE, Dec 23: The West Indies lost valuable match practice here today when the second day of their three-day cricket match against an Australian XI was abandoned by rain without a ball bowled, reports AFP.

Umpires called it a day mid-way through the afternoon amid incessant rain.

The West Indies, who have lost all their three World Series Cup one-day internationals in the triangular tournament with Australia and Sri Lanka, were 37 without loss overnight in their first innings in reply to the Australian XI's 323 for seven declared.

Phil Simmons was on 17 and Stuart Williams 16.

The tourists were believed to have been keen for a one-day match in place of Sunday's scheduled final day in preparation for the remainder of the WSC competition, but they later abandoned those plans.

The forecast was for fine weather on Sunday.

The Australian XI had a setback with news that outstanding young South Australian pacer Mark Hartery had suffered stress fractures in his spine and would be out of cricket for up to three months.

The fractures were discovered by the team physiotherapist after Hartery, a member of the Australian Cricket Academy, had complained of pain while bowling five overs late on Friday.

The Australian XI will be without a pace bowler for Sunday's final day.

ACOG changes torch's route

PRAGUE, Oklahoma, Dec 23: The committee staging the Olympic torch run next year agreed Friday to change the route in Oklahoma to pass through Jim Thorpe's birthplace, reports AP.

Prague officials and Thorpe's relatives had been fighting to get the route changed after learning that the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games mistakenly listed Yale as Thorpe's birthplace and left out Prague.

"From the beginning, our desire has been to find a way to properly recognize and honor the tremendous contributions of Jim Thorpe to the Olympic movement," Ginger Watkins, ACOG managing director of Corporate Services, said. "With all that has transpired, we find ourselves even more committed to this goal."

Everybody in Prague got an early Christmas present, Corrine Long, chairwoman of special events for the Prague Chamber of Commerce, said. "Everybody is elated. We didn't expect it this soon."

The torch run will pass through the Sac and Fox Nation, Prague and Thorpe's birthplace, his daughter Grace said.

Thorpe was born in 1888 in Keokuk Falls, an Indian town that no longer exists but was on the outskirts of what is now Prague. He was raised on the Sac and Fox reservation a few miles up the road.

Thorpe lived in Yale for a time, but spent most of his time on the road playing professional sports.

Thorpe won the pentathlon and the decathlon at the 1912 Games in Stockholm, leading King Gustav V of Sweden to proclaim him "the greatest athlete in the world."

ACOG sent a formal apology to Prague this month, and Lori Stone, an advance manager of the torch relay, met last week with officials to discuss a solution.

Grace Thorpe said Stone called her from a plane as she headed home for vacation Friday to tell her of the change.

"Is that ever exciting news," Grace Thorpe said. "I'm so delighted."

Romanians rewarded

BUCHAREST, Dec 23: The Romanian soccer federation has awarded the national squad a two million dollars Christmas bonus for qualifying for next year's European Championship finals, it was announced on Friday, reports Reuter.

"Each player who was in more than 60 per cent of Romania's qualifying group games pocketed 82,000 dollars," federation president Mircea Sandu said.

The players playing less received different amounts proportional with the time on the field.

Apart from the players, technicians and national team staff were also rewarded.

After Romania reached the quarter-finals of the 1994 World Cup, each player received a 125,000 dollars bonus.

Brothers cross big hurdle

BRIEF SCORES

BROTHERS UNION: 218 for 8 in 50 overs (Abid Hanif 66, Halim Shah 39, Shovon 29 not out, Shipon 28; Marchant 2/33, Babul 2/37)

GMCC: 187 all out in 48.3 overs (Golla 38, Zakaria 31; Sajal 3/41, Iqbal 2/32, Billu 2/36)



Brothers Union began their Premier Division cricket league campaign on a winning note beating Greater Mymensingh Cricket Club (GMCC) by 31 runs in the only match of the day at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday, reports UNB.

Put in to bat first, the youthful Gopibagh outfit made a competitive 218 for 8 in the allotted 50 overs with their in-form Pakistani opener Aabed Hanif top scoring with 66, in 114 balls inclusive of three boundaries.

Wicketkeeper-cup-opener Aabed shared the best Brothers' stand of 77 runs for the third wicket in 12.5 overs with middle-order Halim Shah (39 off 75 balls).

Earlier, Aabed lost his partner at the other end, promising Shahriar Hossain Bidyut (14 off 28 balls), with Brothers on 30 in 10 overs.

One-down Sarwar Hossain (1) was gone three overs later with the addition of seven runs to the total as Brothers faced a mini-collapse.

However Aabed, who went on to complete his maiden half-century of the league, took Brothers out of the woods before becoming GMCC pacer Morshed Alam's lone victim in the 41st over. Brothers total read 141 for 5.

Middle order Sajjad Ahmed Shipon contributed a useful 28 off 30 balls to set up Brothers with a fighting total.

Coming in at No 8, skipper Ziauddin Shovon remained unbeaten on 29 in 21 balls that included two hits to the fence.

Tail-ender Sajal Chowdhury chipped in with a quickfire 14 off 6 balls containing a four and a sixer.

Rashed Hanif, the younger brother of Aabed, scored a run-a-ball 13.

GMCC skipper Mizanur Rahman Babul, an opening bowler, clean bowled Shipon in the 42nd over to deny Brothers a big total, and finished with two wickets for 37 runs in 10 overs, including five maidens.

Veteran Pakistani Kamal Merchant also picked up two wickets giving away 35 runs in 10 overs.

In reply, GMCC were all out for 187 in 48.3 overs.

National opener Javed Omar Belim Golla made 38, but did not get any support from the other opener, Rafiqul Alam (1) and one down Sadek Amin Ujjal (3), both of whom fell to national pacer Sajal Chowdhury in successive overs.

Beginning his second spell in the 41st over, promising pacer Sajal claimed the vital wicket of burly Zakaria Imtiaz (31), caught at point by Billu with GMCC in control scoring 137 for five.

GMCC still had two veteran Pakistani middle orders — Rais Ahmed at the crease and Kamal Merchant to bat, but both failed to live up to their reputation.

Rais Ahmed (26 off 26 balls) went the imtiaz way caught by Bidyut at deep mid-wicket off spinner Billu in the 42nd over without adding to the total. He hit two fours and a huge sixer.

Merchant, who gave a glimmer of hope to the GMCC tent as he hit seamer Iqbal Hossain over the deep square-leg fence in the 45th over. But he was gone as Iqbal uprooted his off-stick in the next delivery tilting the match back Brothers' favour. Sajal gave away 41 runs for his three scalps while Iqbal and Billu took two wickets each.



Brothers' Pakistani opening batsman Abed Hanif launches himself into a cover drive during yesterday's Premier Division cricket league encounter against GMCC at the Dhaka Stadium. Abed topscored with 66. — Star photo

Lankans out for justice



COLOMBO, Dec 23: The lawyers, a forensic expert and a former cricketer test umpire reckon Sri Lanka could get 25 million dollars in damages if it sued for defamation over a recent ball-tampering affair, reports Reuter.

The four die hard cricket fans said on Saturday legal action would be a last resort in clearing Sri Lanka's name after the cricket team was accused of ball tampering during the first Test against Australia in Perth this month.

"However if the other parties concerned prove beyond any doubt that they are themselves unsporting by being silent, we will have no option but to take the matter to court," former First-class umpire Ajith Perera said in a statement.

"Since it is a matter involving not one individual but a whole nation, the legal experts have accounted for the claim for damages to be for 25 million US dollars.

One of the lawyers lobbied successfully on behalf of star Sri Lankan athlete Susanthika Jayasinghe who last week was cleared by the International Amateur Athletic Federation of a charge of taking a banned performance-enhancing drug.

Officially, Sri Lanka is seeking an apology after pleading innocent to the ball tampering charge.

Thilanga Sumathipala, vice-president of the Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka, said his players had been wrongly found to have altered the condition of the ball during their Test defeat.

"This has done irreparable damage to Sri Lankan cricket," Sumathipala told reporters last week. "We know 100 per cent that the players did not do this."

Sumathipala criticised International Cricket Council (ICC) match referee Graham Dowling over his handling of the incident.

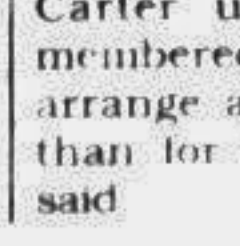
Dowling issued a brief four-paragraph statement after close of play saying Sri Lankan captain Arjuna Ranatunga had been told by the Test umpires that ball had been tampered with.

"Ranatunga was notified that the condition of the ball had clearly been altered by a member of members of his team," Dowling's statement said.

But the ball was not removed after the incident and could not be judged by the ICC because it sustained further wear and tear during the innings.

Sri Lanka's tour management and Ranatunga have declined to comment in line with ICC regulations prohibiting public discussion of disciplinary matters.

Carter's Olympic vision



ATLANTA, Dec 23: Fifteen years ago, he was reviled by many for keeping US athletes away from the Summer Olympics in Moscow. With the 1996 Games in his home state, former President Jimmy Carter now is trying to make sure no country stays home, reports AP.

Almost all of history has endless ironies, and this is an Olympic irony," said John Lucas, an Olympic historian at Penn State who was a vigorous critic of the 1980 Carter-led boycott.

Practicing the kind of unofficial diplomacy he has used to mediate disputes in various global hot spots, Carter is urging North Korea to send a team to the Olympics in Atlanta. North Korea is the only one of 197 nations that has not accepted an invitation to the Games.

This week, Carter said the North Korean leaders had told him they were rethinking whether to come to the Games. Carter led a peace mission to North Korea in 1994.

If he can persuade North Korea to attend the Games, Carter ultimately may remember more for helping arrange a historic gathering than for the boycott. Lucas said.

Something absolutely extraordinary will have taken place," Lucas said.

Carter's correspondence with North Korea is happening independently of the International Olympic Committee, which issues Olympic invitations, and the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games.

ACOG bid not know of Carter's intentions to contact North Korea, spokesman Bill Marx said.

"He has no official role with the Olympics," Carter spokeswoman Carrie Hamon said.

Yet the IOC, which was angered and insulted by the Carter boycott, applauds his current effort.

"Anything which can contribute to bring all nations to the Games has to be encouraged," IOC Director General Francois Carrard said Wednesday. "If anybody can deliver, we would only be pleased."

Carter launched the boycott — and proposed an alternate Games for boycotting countries — to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

"He was the one who prevented 600 young American men and women from going to Moscow because of his own personal ideological standards," Lucas said. "It was counterproductive."

In recent years, relations between Carter and the Olympics apparently have thawed.

Anita De Frantz, an IOC member from Los Angeles, who missed a probable medal in rowing because of the Moscow boycott, said she doesn't detect much lingering resentment toward Carter.

"Even closer to the time, it was more a sort of sadness for him to be so uninformed about the Games — this man just doesn't know what the Olympic Games are about," she said. "He seems to be more interested in sports than he used to be."

Billy Payne, the president of ACOG, arranged a fence-mending meeting in 1993, between Carter and IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch in Atlanta, after which Samaranch said the issue was over.

And Carter has close ties to some top officials at ACOG: AD Frazier, the committee's No. 2 executive, organized Carter's 1977 inauguration, and Andrew Young, ACOG's co-chairman, was United Nations ambassador in the Carter administration.

As one of Georgia's most prominent citizens, Carter will attend the Games and will be very much in public view next summer, Payne said.