

Alfaz receives Sanyo trophy

Sports Reporter

Mohammad Alfaz Ahmed, ace striker of Mohammedi Sporting Club, formally received his AFC Sanyo "footballer of the month" (August 1996) award in the capital yesterday.

Alfaz was presented the Sanyo trophy for his outstanding performance against Laos Electricity in an Asian Cup Winners' Cup first round match at the Dhaka Stadium in August. Including a magnificent hat-trick, Alfaz scored four goals — twice in each half — to help his side register a comfortable 8-0 win.

Kazuo Segawa of Sanyo Electronics, Japan and Latifur Rahman, Managing Director of Transfin Trading Company Limited — sole distributors for Sanyo products in Bangladesh — gave away the glittering trophy to Alfaz at a simple ceremony held at the Sanyo Centre in Gulshan.

Obaidur Rahman Khan, Executive Director, Transfin and Bangladesh Football Federation joint secretaries — Sirajul Islam Bachchu and Badal Roy were also present on the occasion.

It may be mentioned that Alfaz, also the leading goal scorer of the ongoing Danish Premier Division football league with eight goals, is the first Bangladeshi booter to receive such a prestigious award given by the Asian Football Confederation each month.

South Asian long haul swim meet

The six-nation first South Asian long distance swimming championship will be held on Friday in the river Buriganga, reports UNB.

The day-long first ever regional meet will begin at 8:30 am from Pagla Mary Anderson ghat of Narayanganj, and is expected to be completed by 2 pm at Munshiganj launch ghat.



Mohammedan striker Alfaz Ahmed (L) receives the AFC Sanyo Player-of-the-Month Award for August 1996 from Kazuo Segawa (R) of Sanyo and Latifur Rahman (2nd from R) of Transfin at the Sanyo Gallery yesterday. Obaidur Rahman Khan of Transfin (2nd from L) also seen in the picture.

Sport

Diego at a dead end!

Buenos Aires, Nov 12: Diego Maradona, who admits he is still addicted to cocaine, says he is "dead" as a player.

"The spring has broken, there is no way out. I'd thought of killing myself but I won't do it because I love my two daughters," the hero of Argentina's 1986 World Cup triumph told local television, reports AFP.

"As a footballer I'm dead. I don't have the strength to keep on fighting," added Maradona who had resumed training with Boca Juniors on its 36th birthday two weeks ago.

He said he had been devastated by the arrest of his boyhood friend and agent Guillermo Coppola on a drug charge.

Maradona said he would like to leave Argentina but he is prevented by an impending trial for shooting at journalists in 1994.

He dispelled rumours of his marriage breaking up by saying his wife Claudia was one hundred per cent behind him.

Maradona and three women were alleged to have left Coppola's apartment shortly before half a kilogram of cocaine was discovered by the police on October 9.

A report in September suggested Maradona could be killed by brain damage caused by his cocaine addiction.

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"During the period that I didn't play the last few weeks, I missed being able to compete," said Graf, who returns to the tennis wars this week for a tournament in Philadelphia.

Graf is looking forward to testing her incomparable skills against all comers, but admitted to being somewhat disappointed by the level of competition out there today.

"I am very surprised that with the physical problems that I've been having over the past two and a half years, with as little as I've been able to practice, to still have this kind of success," she said.

Obviously I'm thrilled to have the results... but I do have to say that the competition is not as strong as it should be and I am sometimes disappointed that there isn't a higher standard.

"I know I'm not training as much as I could. I'm not very well prepared at most tournaments and still they can't beat me, it is strange," said Graf.

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Graf, matured & motivated

NEW YORK, Nov 12 (Reuter): After all the miles and strokes and titles, and with nothing left to prove, the competitive fires still burn bright in tennis superstar Steffi Graf.

While other elite players, such as Andre Agassi and Pete Sampras, complain that the sport needs more of an off-season, a break from the globe-trotting grind, the women's world number one can't wait to get back on the tennis court.

"I love travelling, I think it's one of the things that I enjoy most," Graf said during a recent lunch with a group of reporters to promote the WTA Tour's season-ending Chase Championship at Madison Square Garden starting November 18.

"I was in Germany since the (US) Open, which is probably seven weeks now. I was getting so restless, I was so excited to be on the plane. It was such a beautiful feeling actually."

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Hingis. "I think that's very good to see, it will definitely help the sport."

Graf insisted that she thinks about records, her ranking or her place in tennis history.



STEFFI GRAF

"When I turned number one the first time (in August, 1987) it was awesome... but after that I never had the same feeling again."

But she does continue to amaze herself with her ability to win big tournaments despite injuries and the personal anguish from her father being imprisoned and on trial on tax evasion charges.

"I feel awkward talking about it because I'm still in the sport too much to look at what we've achieved already."

"But obviously with the numbers that came up this year, winning 21 Grand Slams, more than 100 titles, these are numbers that I'm astonished that I've achieved," said Graf, who won the French Open, Wimbledon and US Open, marking the fifth time she has claimed at least three of the four majors in a year.

Graf said she has never had specific goals or a sense of history, that a pure love of tennis

keeps her going. "It's just the game itself. The motivation is still really high. It's still a pleasure to play and why I am still in the sport, because it means so much to me."

She was surprised and a little saddened by the sudden retirement of her contemporary and longtime rival Gabriela Sabatini, who no longer shares Graf's desire to compete.

"She's so many competitive years with that it's sad to see somebody leave before you... especially since she's younger," Graf said smiling.

"I definitely made me look back on the matches that we've had. We've played each other 30 or 40 times, something like that. We had a lot of close three-setters," recalled Graf who holds a 29-11 career record against the Argentine.

"I think she had a career that she can be proud of and if she thought it was the right time to retire, I respect her."

Graf last year called the 1995 season the most personally satisfying of her career. But after duplicating her three major titles while dealing with the emotional roller-coaster of her father's situation, Graf rated 1996 even higher.

"Obviously, I had a lot of injuries and problems last year, but I think this year probably was the limit that I could go to," she admitted.

Graf talked about coming into Wimbledon and the US Open "tense and nervous" because of lack of practice due to injury, but somehow finding a way to win.

And she enthusiastically received the roar of the crowd during the classic French Open final, which she won from Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario 10-8 in the third set.

"To be in a match like that, I've never been in a match that the people got so strongly into it."

"These are memories that I will always treasure and I think that's what makes this year so special."

Monica down in dumps



NEW YORK, Nov 12: "My confidence has been shaken," admits Monica Seles.

Shock losses the last two weeks and trouble with her serve have Seles heading into next week's season-ending Chase Championships unsure of her game from day to day.

"The way I am playing I'm taking it a match at a time at this point," Seles said on Monday about her chances at the 2 million dollars tournament next week at Madison Square Garden. She won the event three years in a row from 1990-92.

Last Sunday, Seles, who has

slipped into a co-ranking of number two in the world with Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario, was surprised by 16-year-old Swiss Martina Hingis 6-2, 6-0 in the final in Oakland. It was the first loss Seles had lost in six years.

The previous week in Chicago, Seles lost in the semifinals to Jennifer Capriati, who is in the midst of a comeback after two tumultuous years off the court including drug rehabilitation and run-ins with the law.

"I would be nice to end the year off well, but it would not compensate for the way the year went," Seles said of her early-round exits at the French Open, Wimbledon and the Olympics. "At the big ones, I would love to play my best tennis and I didn't."

So it wouldn't make that much difference the way I look back at 96 how I did next week," said Seles, the US Open runner-up to Steffi Graf.

"This is not one of the years I want to remember too much," said Seles.

WTB Tour officials announced Monday that three more players, Irina Spirlea of Romania, Karina Habsudova of Slovakia and Brenda Schultz-McCarthy of Holland, have qualified for the championships.

The final three spots in the 16 player field was to be determined at this week's tournament in Philadelphia.

"My shoulder is fine," she said. "I just started missing serves and lost some confidence. I couldn't hold my serve."

Seles, 22, is playing the championships for the first time in four years. She was out from 1993-95 after being stabbed in the back during a match early in 1993. Last year she pulled out the week before the event with knee and ankle problems.

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Graf remains top earner

ST PETERSBURG, Florida, Nov 12 (Reuter): Leading money (in dollars) winners in women's tennis as issued by the WTA Tour on Monday:

1. Graf	2,127,206
2. Sanchez Vicario	1,444,444
3. Seles	1,124,499
4. Novotna	879,847
5. Conchita	843,251
6. Hingis	833,996
7. Davenport	636,533
8. Iva Majoli	581,355
9. Anke Huber	558,685
10. Jose Fernandez	434,626
11. Helena Sukova	406,479
12. Irina Spirlea	389,009
13. Kimiko Date	384,181
14. Meredith McGrath	373,713
15. Larisa Neiland	370,500
16. Natasha Zvereva	348,175
17. Gigi Fernandez	343,144
18. Amanda Coetzer	340,532
19. Karina Habsudova	336,362
20. Chanda Rubin	327,539

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Subaru's superb double

The 555 Subaru World Rally Team are celebrating a victorious double on the Catalunya Rally in Spain, the final round of the 1996 FIA World Rally Championship. Team mates, Colin McRae and Piero Liatti, romped home in a superb first and second position and in doing so won the World Rally Championship for Manufacturers for 555 Subaru with a commanding 79 point advantage over Japanese rivals. Mitsubishi, says a press release.

Today's closing five stages have seen a two-way fight between the 555 Subaru team-mates — a mere 7 seconds literally separating Colin and

But Ranieri also highlighted the danger in losing talented players. "Watching these players leave means we are losing something from our championship," he said. "Because at the moment, I can't see any young players coming through who are capable of replacing them."

Sala said: "I what they were for Zola and I can assure you that money didn't enter into it."

Women's v'ball Brazil do it again

TOKYO, Nov 12: Atlanta Olympic bronze medalists Brazil took revenge for the second time in two months against Olympic champions Cuba in the opener of the World Super Challenge women's volleyball tournament on Tuesday, reports AFP.

"I think it's more a question of pride. It's not by chance that all of these transfers involve players whose team places had been brought into question by their respective clubs."

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