

Column One

SPORTS TALK



Sanath Jayasuriya (Sri Lankan explosive opener) 'I don't think of records while batting. When you play cricket internationally, you never know what will happen. The day you are playing well everything goes nicely for you. I am never conscious about the records. In fact all those achievements recently were told to me by my fellow players after I got back to the dressing room. I just play my normal game and I don't bother about scores and records.'

Sports WHIZZ KID

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Tick the Correct Answers

Competition closes: 8 pm Jan 3, '97

- 1. Who won the Danish Premier Division football league title this season?
2. Which team won the Bilyon Dibash Cup hockey title?
3. Which country won the Champions Trophy hockey title recently?
4. Who is the top-scorer in this season's Premier Division football league?
5. Former Italian national soccer coach Arrigo Sacchi now coaches...

Name

Class Roll No.

School Address

Phone: (if any)

Slovak stuns Woodforde

ADELAIDE, Jan 2: Karol Kucera of Slovakia scored a straight sets victory over No. 2 seed Mark Woodforde on Thursday, wrecking the Australian's hopes of winning the Australian Hardcourt tennis championships for the third time, reports AP.

Two of Woodforde's four career singles titles have come at the Memorial Drive arena in his hometown, but Kucera was in peerless form in brushing aside the veteran left-hander 6-3, 6-4 in their second-round match.

Kucera coped better with the searing hot temperatures than Woodforde, who often struggles when the mercury climbs.

Woodforde tried to attack, but became increasingly frustrated by his lack of success.

American qualifier Jeff Tarango surprised Prinosil 6-2, 6-4 to set up a quarterfinal meeting with Sweden's Jonas Bjorkman, who beat Jonathan Stark of the United States 6-3, 6-4.

Eight-seeded Bohdan Ulihrach of the Czech Republic faces Australian wild card Scott Draper in the remaining second-round match later Thursday.

The 32-draw ATP Tour event, which is being played on the same Rebound Ace courts used for the Australian Open, continues through Jan. 5.

The Australian Open starts Jan. 13 at the National Tennis Centre in Melbourne.

Sampras, Steffi world champs

LONDON, Jan 2: USA's Pete Sampras and Germany's Steffi Graf were officially named as the 1996 world champions by the International Tennis Federation (ITF) here on Wednesday, reports AFP.

The honours will be awarded to Sampras, who won the US Open, and Graf, who won Wimbledon, the US and French Opens, in Paris at a dinner during the French Open next year.

Mukti, Cosmos split points

Muktijoddha Sangsad Krira Chakra began their Bangabandhu Cup football tournament campaign with a draw when they held highly-rated Cosmos Club of Moscow in their opening Group D engagement at the floodlit Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

In a quite boring affair at the big bowl last night, the third force of local soccer, who survived a penalty midway through the first half, played positively from the word go to snatch away a point from the visitors who enjoyed a physical advantage but failed to capitalise on it.

The tall Russians, who kept their possession over the ball either in the air or on the ground at the beginning of the match, gave the impression they were heading for a big margin victory. But as the match gradually getting older, the East Europeans could do nothing with their physical edge to outplay locals. Their marksmanship came to a test when they earned a penalty in the 23rd minute following a raw tackle by defender Moon who was in sheer desperation to stymie a menacingly poised Cosmos striker Shagarov using his hands.

But midfielder Gavrilinis over-confident shot went ultimately went miles above the cross piece leaving his teammates in complete disbelief. Inspired by the miss, Mukti, who finished third in the local Premier league this season, were gradually getting into groove to play their normal game.

In the 38th minute, they had the chance to take a lead with hired striker Tutul sending a brilliant floater from the right flank to Nakib. But the national striker, who became the leading goalscorer in the Premier league for the second successive season this year, failed to negotiate the ball in the air before the tall Cosmos custodian who cleared the ball.

After the breather, both teams tried their best to break the deadlock, but none could succeed because the two teams concentrated more on manning their forts.

In the 71st minute the Russians got yet another good chance to score when winger Rybine sent an accurate missile from the left, to an unguarded Shagarov whose grounder was brilliantly taken by Muktijoddha goalkeeper Aminul.

On the other hand, Mukti had their best opportunity in the 80th minute with substitute Palash sending a long cross to Nakib from the right. But Nakib mistimed this time as his

Sports Reporter



header went far above the cross bar.

With the draw, both teams remained evenly in the chase for a semifinal berth from Group C. However, things will



FEELINGS: A player of the visiting Cosmos Club of Russia is caught in tearful contemplation over his side's goalless draw with Muktijoddha Sangsad in yesterday's Bangabandhu Cup football tournament engagement at the Dhaka Stadium. —Star photo

be finalised after both side complete their next match against Malaysia Red, the other team of the group. The team who are to win with maximum margin against Malaysia, will move to the semifinals.

Yellow card: Gavrilin (Cosmos).

TEAMS
MUKTIJODDHA SANGSAD
KC: Aminul Prodeep, Moon, Kingshuk, Shahjada, Masood Rana, Tito, Rupu, Gaus (Palash) and Nakib.
COSMOC CLUB: Yastrebkov, platonov, Volkov, Gusev, Gavrilin, Dvofelasov (Kosobokov), Serguei (Krysanov), Shagarov, Vororin, Rybine and Zverev.
Referee: Khairul Agil (Indonesia).

Bangabandhu Cup Revised fixture

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) revised the fixture and grouping of the Bangabandhu Cup Silver Jubilee of Independence football tournament Wednesday night following the last moment pull-out of India's Mahun Bagan Club, reports BSS.

Ujung Pandang of Indonesia have been placed in Group C in place of Mahun Bagan and Group D was comprised of Cosmos Club of Russia, Muktijoddha Sangsad (Bangladesh) and Malaysia Red. All the matches will now be played at the Dhaka Stadium.

According to revised fixture, Ujung Pandang (Indonesia) will take on Bargh Shiraz (Iran) at 4 pm, while Bangladesh's Mohammedan Sporting Club will play against Friends Club of Nepal at 6 pm today.

The schedule of remaining matches are:

- Jan 4: Cosmos Club (Russia) vs Malaysia Red 4 pm.
Jan 5: Ujung Pandang (Indonesia) vs Eastern All Star (Thailand) 4 pm.
Abahani Ltd (Bangladesh) vs Mohammedan SC (India) 6 pm.
Jan 6: Muktijoddha Sangsad (Bangladesh) vs Malaysia Red 4 pm.
Mohammedan SC (Bangladesh) vs East Bengal (India) 6 pm.

Agrani saunter, GMCC canter

Sports Reporter

BRIEF SCORES

VICTORIA SC: 170 all out in 50 overs (Ekramul Islam 46, Sohel 24; Shahi Mehboob 3/32 Shahid Iqbal 2/44).
AGRANI BANK: 171 for four in 43.2 overs (Ishtiaq 70 n.o., Shahid Iqbal 50 n.o.)

GMCC: 127 all out in 49.3 overs (Fayaz Ferdousi 32, Zaidi 21; Zafar Ali 5/24).
SURJO TARUN: 91 all out in 26.2 overs (Shamsul Huda 27, Shamsul Arefin 23; Al-Amin 6/28, Nayan 2/3).

Agrani Bank celebrated their third win on a trot at the cost of Victoria Sporting Club while GMCC recorded an impressive 36-run victory over Surjo Tarun in one of the two Premier cricket league matches held at different city venues yesterday.

At the BKSP in Savar, Pakistani Shahid Iqbal lived up both with the bat and ball to help Agrani Bank to a resounding six-wicket win over Victoria.

Iqbal, who along with his more illustrious compatriot Shahid Mehboob restricted Surjo Tarun to a modest total sharing five wickets among them, hammered a cracking unbeaten half-century to steer his side to victory with more than six overs to spare in the 50-over-a-side match.

The tall Pakistani right-arm seamer captured two wickets for 44 in his share of ten overs while Shahid Mehboob, who ripped through the lower-order, finished with three for 32 in his 10 nippy overs.

Among the Victoria batsmen, one-down Ekramul, who shared 54 runs for the second wicket with opener Sohel, topped scored with a patient 46 off 80 balls. Ekramul chipped in with 24.

In reply, Agrani Bank were off to a disastrous start losing both their openers for only 19 runs. But a return with an unbeaten 70 off 109 balls and Shahid Iqbal, who came into bat at number six with the bankers limping on 95/4, guided their side to victory on 76 runs from the undefeated fifth wicket.

Iqbal, the more aggressive of the two, clubbed half a dozen fours in his breezy 55-ball knock.

Meanwhile, in the other match of the day on the eastern strip at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium Al-Amin with a six-wicket haul bowled GMCC to a facile 34-run win over Surjo Tarun.

The young right-arm seamer, who ran havoc in the Surjo Tarun line-up with the new-ball, returned with a mouthful figure of 9.2-3-28-6.

In a low-scoring affair, GMCC, after winning the toss and electing to bat first, were bundled out for a paltry 127 in 49.3 overs. Pakistani Zafar Ali, responsible for the GMCC collapse, finished with five for 25 in his 10 miserly overs.

Opener Fayaz with 32 and Zaidi who chipped in with 21, were the only twenty-plus scorers for GMCC.

Agrani Bank V-Day badminton

The Agrani Bank Victory Day badminton tournament begins at the Wooden Floor Gymnasium today, reports BSS. 24 players including eight girls would take part in the men's and women's sections.

Two more events of boys and girls under-16 will also take place.

TODAY'S MATCHES

Bangabandhu Cup Silver Jubilee of Independence football tournament: (Venue: Dhaka Stadium) Ujung Pandang (Indonesia) vs Bargh Shiraz (Iran) 4 pm. Mohammedan SC (Dhaka) vs Friends Club (Nepal) 6 pm.

Premier Division cricket league: Kalabagan KC vs Gulshan Youth Club (Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium)



Boosters of Malaysia Blue and Mohammedan Sporting Club of India fight for the ball during their Bangabandhu Cup Group A encounter at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday. —Star photo

Malaysia Blue bounce back

Sports Reporter

Malaysia Blue ended their phase campaign of the Bangabandhu Cup invitational tournament on an inspiring note with a 4-1 thrashing on Calcutta Mohammedan Sporting Club at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

The spirited Malaysian side, who outplayed the Calcutta giants in every department of the game, took an unassailable 3-0 lead at the breather. Striker Nagarajan opened the winners' account as early in the fifth minute shooting home a rebounder before medio Azrin Shah doubled the margin in the 23rd minute.

Although the second goal, scored from an apparent off-side position, cast a gloomy shadow over an up and down encounter, but the Malaysian were smart enough to prove their ability when Hoe Guan added the third in the 34th minute.

Things would have been sweeter for Malaysia Blue had not a cracking left-footer from Gaddafi rebounded off the woodwork in the 27th minute.

On the other hand, the beleaguered Mohammedans, after a dismal first 45 minutes, showed signs of a resilience in the later half with some enterprising moves. They pulled one

goal back in 53rd minute when opponent defender Amali Amir in a bid to thwart a low-freekick from the left-hand corner of the box, shot the ball into his own net. Eight minutes later it would have been a double delight for Mohammedans when Kiran Kongasia beat the otherwise flamboyant Malaysia cus-

tomian Arman Omar with a spectacular header, but only to be saved by defender Rezaul Mustafa from the goal line with a counter header.

The Malaysian, after surviving those close calls, then put the fate of the match beyond doubt with Azrin Shah celebrating his second goal in the match 13 minutes from the final whistle. With this flattering margin victory the Malaysian,

who had earlier lost their Group A opener against Abahani 1-2, rekindled an outside chance of a semi-final berth alive in the 12-team meet.

They will now have to wait for the outcome of Abahani and Mohammedan match on Sunday to know their fate. For Abahani a draw against Mohammedan will enable them to earn the right in the last four.

On the other hand Calcutta Mohammedans, who with this heavy defeat virtually thrown out of the race, left with a near-impossible task of defeating the local favourites with a difference of four goals.

Yellow card: Shankar, Kok Heng, Amali Amir (Malaysian Blue), Rezaul Mustafa (Mohammedan SC India).

TEAMS

MALAYSIA BLUE: Shankar, Kok Heng, Rahim, Amir, Gaddafi (Ashrafi), Yogeswaren, Zainal, Hamid (Bakhtiar), Hoe-Guan, Nagaraja and Rizal Hassan.

MOHAMMEDAN SC (India): Ranjan Majumdar, Rezaul, Rahmatullah, Aslam Parvez, Rash Mohan, Kiran Kongsal, Gunabir Singh (Cassius), Sa-tish, Abhay Kumar, Khaleque and Najeem.

Referee: Badruddin (Bangladeshi).

Wright's 200th strike

LONDON, Jan 2: Ian Wright scored his 200th league goal on Wednesday as Arsenal recorded a 2-0 win over Middlesbrough to take them within two points of Premier-league leaders Liverpool — who lost 1-0 at Chelsea, reports AFP.

But the north London club are facing increased pressure on their squad with the sending-off in the 89th minute of John Hartson, earmarked as the replacement for Wright — suspended for three games for violent conduct.

Elsewhere, Newcastle moved into fourth on goal difference above Wimbledon who had their match called off at Southampton because of the weather, while Manchester United moved a point clear in third after a scoreless draw at home to Aston Villa.

Wright, who joined Ian Rush as the only other player still playing in the league to have scored 200 goals, has scored 111 for Arsenal and 89 for former club Crystal Palace.

Wright latched on to a ball from Paul Merson and slotted it past keeper Gary Walsh to make it 2-0.

Dutch star Dennis Bergkamp had opened the scoring with a glorious 22-yard volley on 14 minutes against a Middlesbrough side that featured their 39-year-old manager Bryan Robson making his first Premier-ship start since December

23, 1995.

Hartson came on as substitute for Bergkamp and was booked for a foul on Robson. Referee Miek Reed then showed Hartson a red card less than 30 seconds later and confirmed afterwards it was for "foul and abusive language."

Hartson will now be suspended for three games — his second ban of the season — in two weeks' time.

Manager Arsene Wenger said: "I must speak with John Hartson because it is always stupid to speak to the referee. We are having too many red and yellow cards."

"Sometimes you can understand them because they are for tackles in the game, but this one was outside the game and less understandable."

"My big worries now are losing too many players with suspensions and injuries. I

cannot condemn the behaviour of my team, but they are getting too many cards.

Middlesbrough's leading scorer Fabrizio Ravanelli missed the opportunity to reduce the deficit in the second-half shooting a penalty against the bar, after he had been brought down in the area.

Chelsea took the lead against the run of play against Liverpool as Italian star Roberto di Matteo seized on a loose ball by Michael Thomas and shot past David James.

Alan Shearer made it four goals in two games, 17 for the season, scoring with a right footed drive against Leeds United from a sixth minute corner and then rifling home a 77th minute effort after Les Ferdinand had knocked it down to him, making it three successive defeats for the struggling 1992 league champions.

Ferdinand was rewarded for his selfless display by scoring the third shooting home from just inside the penalty area in the 87th minute.

Blackburn recorded their first away win of the season in a 2-0 win over Everton, with goals from Tim Sherwood and Chris Sutton, which lifted the club out of the relegation zone.

Everton, decimated by suspensions and injuries, were booted off the pitch by their fans who were frustrated at witnessing their side's fifth home defeat of the season.

CRYPTOQUIP

X W T P X J Q I P P N F J H P N ' D Y I W C P C S Z G P N . Z J U G P U W S Q W S F H X N U X I P U P F F P N Y J T P D .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THE CLUMSY, STUPID MUSICIAN JUST GOT INJURED TRYING TO PLAY HIS EARDRUMS.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: Y equals P

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

USA in Hopman Cup final

PERTH, Australia, Jan 2: Justin Gimelstob scored the biggest win of his short tennis career Thursday night, defeating Australia's Mark Philippoussis to steer a makeshift United States team into the final of the Hopman Cup mixed teams championship, reports AP.

Gimelstob, a 19-year-old UCLA student called up as a late replacement, beat Philippoussis 7-6 (7-4), 4-6, 7-6 (7-5) to give the Americans an unbeatable lead in their match against the host nation.

Chanda Rubin earlier breezed by Nicole Bradtke 7-5, 6-0 in the women's singles, while the Australian pair won the inconsequential mixed doubles 6-3, 7-5.

The United States finished on top of Group A in the round-robin competition by virtue of their 2-1 win and will face either South Africa, Romania or Switzerland in Saturday's title match. It is the first time since 1991 the Americans have made the final and they never have won the event.

Gimelstob and Rubin were paired on the American team after Richey Reneberg withdrew because his wife was overdue with their first child.

Ranked just 155 in the world and a professional since June, the native of Livingston, New Jersey, flew direct from a vacation in Miami Beach into Australia, playing his first match just 12 hours after his arrival Down Under.

"I played well all week (in singles) and lost some close ones, so it is nice to come through and win," Gimelstob said.

"It was a big win for our team and a big win for the United States. That probably the biggest win of my career, for sure. It was a relief after playing high quality tennis and coming up short."

Gimelstob, who won two Challenger tournament late last year, pushed both GUY Forget, and world No. 4 Goran Ivanisevic to three sets earlier in the week, but lost both those matches.

He paid tribute to Rubin, who has won all three of her singles matches in Perth to keep the Americans alive.

"Chanda's been playing great and winning her singles matches, so it is nice to contribute," said the feisty teenager, who wears a Stars and Stripes baseball cap during his matches.

The Americans beat the Australians just 20 hours after a dramatic 2-1 win over defending champion Croatia that finished after midnight.

Gimelstob took 2 hours and 27 minutes to beat Philippoussis, who went down despite never dropping serve in a battle

between two big servers. Rubin breezed past Bradtke 7-5, 6-0, taking just 20 minutes to win the second set and reeling off five straight games from 5-5.

Bradtke double-faulted at set point serving at 5-5 down and her game then fell apart. She now has lost her last six Hopman Cup singles matches.

"I was happy to be able to put it away," Rubin said. "I'm feeling good about my game. I didn't know much about Justin before this week, but it has all worked out better than I could have imagined."

Defending champion Croatia got a 3-0 win over France in the other Group A match played Thursday night.

Iva Majoli downed Mary Pierce 6-3, 6-4 in the women's singles and the Croatians got walkovers in the other two contests after Forget declared himself unfit with blisters on his left hand. He has been troubled by the blisters throughout the week.

Adrian Voinea and Irina Spirlea earlier swept Romania to a 3-0 victory over two-time champion Germany in a Group B match, keeping alive their hopes of advancing to the final.

Spirlea downed Petra Bergerov 6-1, 6-3 in the women's singles and Voinea rallied to defeat Bernd Karbacher 2-6, 7-6 (7-4), 6-2 in the men's singles. The Romanians then romped through the mixed doubles 6-1, 6-1.

Karbacher squandered a superb opportunity to lift the Germans level when he led Voinea 6-2, 5-3. He failed to convert two match points on serve and Voinea then recovered impressively.

The Romanians lifted their Group B record to 1-1 and seal a place in Saturday's final if they beat South Africa by a 3-0 margin of Friday. South Africa has a 2-0 record while second-seeded Switzerland, which faces Germany in its final group match, is 1-1. The Germans are out of contention.

Prize money for the event totals US 640,000 dollars. The winning pair will collect US \$176,000.

The Hopman Cup is one of a series of lead-up events to the Australian Open, to be played in Melbourne from Jan. 13-26.



France's Mary Pierce in dejection after losing to Croatia's Franca Majoli in the Hopman Cup at the Burswood Dome, in Perth yesterday. —Reuter/UNB photo