

Sport

Nat'l youth cricket
Final round
from today

Sports Reporter
The Gazi Tanks 17th national youth cricket championships roll into the final round today with two teams locking horns at different venues in the city.

Forty-five teams, penciled into six zones, participated in the qualifying round of the tourney. Defending champions Narayanjanj and runners-up Khulna, the automatic qualifiers, will feature in the knockout round along with the six zonal champions — Chittagong, Comilla, Rajshahi Education Board (REB) in the day's other match at the City Club ground in Mirpur.

The winners of today's matches will face each other in the first semifinal at the same venue on March 22.

Four others teams will begin their campaign tomorrow with Khulna facing Mymensingh at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium while Sylhet meeting Rajshahi at the City Club ground.

Women chess
qualifiers end

Sports Reporter
Masuda Begum, Zakia Sultanah, Jahan Ara Haque Runu, Nazrana Khan Eva, Rukhsana Gulshan Nikon and Farzana Khan Ava moved into the final round of the 18th national chess championship following the qualifying round at the NSC chess room yesterday.

At the end of the five-round Swiss league format, Masuda, Zakia and Runu had equal progressive scores of 12 points each with two wins while Eva, Nikon and Ava earned 11, 10 and 8.5 points respectively as progressive scores.

The six qualifiers will join defending champion IWM Rani Hamid, runner-up Tanima Parveen and two international rated players Syeda Shabana Parveen Nipa and Afroza Khanum Bably in the final round scheduled to start at the same venue from tomorrow.

Nat'l tennis circuit
Sathi emerges
1st leg champ

RANGPUR, Mar 19: Sathi Sarkar of Dhaka emerged women's singles champion in the first leg of Sadharan Bima Corporation national tennis circuit beating Ishrat Jahan Eui of Meherpur 6-0, 6-1 in the final at Rangpur, reports UNB.

In men's singles, Salahuddin of Dhaka and Sakib of Rajshahi reached the final eliminating their rivals in the semis today. They will play the final tomorrow (Thursday) afternoon at 3 pm.

In the men's doubles semis, Salahuddin and Laxman of Dhaka beat Kabir and Babu Lal pair, also from Dhaka, 4-6, 6-3, 7-5 while Kibria and J. Mostafi of Naogaon defeated Sakib and Collins of Rajshahi 6-3, 7-6 (7-5) to reach the final.

The men's doubles final will be held tomorrow morning at 9 am.

Shooters given
reception

Sports Reporter
The Bangladesh Olympic Association accorded a reception last night to the Bangladeshi shooters, who returned home on March 17 following their triumphs in the second South Asian Shooting Championship in New Delhi.

The Bangladeshi shooters took part in eleven events and clinched a record one gold, eight silver and six bronze medals in the week-long regional meet. This is so far the highest medal haul by Bangladeshis in any level of international meet. Upcoming shooter Sabrina Shultana wrested four gold while her illustrious teammate Saiful Islam Rinki of Chittagong grabbed three gold.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Obaidul Quader was the chief guest on the occasion and handed over BOA crests among the shooters who had done national proud by clinching 26 medals. Among others, BOA president Lt Gen Mahubur Rahman, Bangladesh Shooting Federation boss Maj Gen (ret'd) Abdus Salam MP and Bangladesh team manager Nuruzzaman Munna were also present on the occasion.

Khulna cricket

KHULNA, Mar 19: Kashem Smriti Sangsad defeated Abahani Kirira Chakra by 42 runs in the Europa First Division cricket league at the local stadium here today, reports BSS.

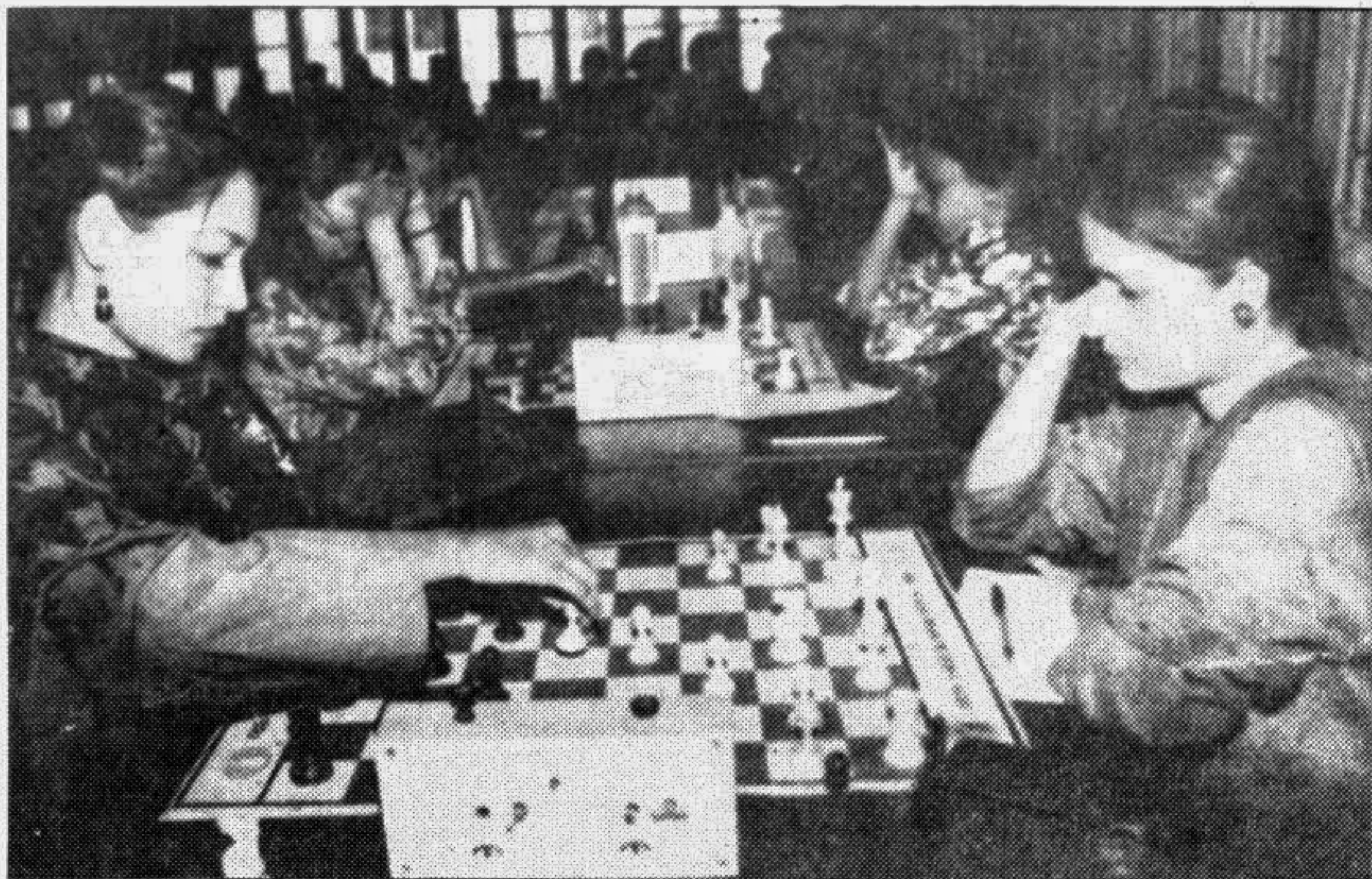
Opting to bat, Kashem Smriti scored 168 before they were all out in stipulated 45 overs. Alauddin scalped three wickets for 20 for Abahani.

In reply, the losers were bundled out for 120.

In another match of the day, National Welfare Club beat Central Club by four wickets at the Circuit House ground.

TODAY'S MATCHES

Second Division Football League
(Venue: Mirpur Stadium)
Mirpur Jansang Club vs Gandaria Farn SC (2:30 p.m.)
Prantik KC vs East End Boys Club (4:30 p.m.)
(Venue: Outer Stadium)
Little Friends Club vs Avijatrik Malibagh (4 p.m.)



A glimpse of the cerebral warfare on the concluding day of the qualifying phase for the forthcoming national women's chess championship at NSC chess room yesterday. —Star photo

Nobody near Number One



KEY BISCAIYNE, Florida, Mar 19: World number one Pete Sampras has dominated the ATP Tour so completely that he is having trouble finding someone to challenge him, reports AFP.

"I'm at a point in my career," Sampras said, "where having a rivalry is something I want."

Michael Chang would like nothing more than to give his fellow American exactly what he desires. But even he admits that will be tough.

"To be honest, Pete is in his own category right now," Chang said.

Third-ranked Chang and world number two Thomas Muster lead challengers to the reign of top seed Sampras when the Lipton Championships begin here Thursday.

The 4.5 million dollar event has 96-player men's and women's fields, making it the largest even outside the Grand Slams. Sampras opens with a second round match against Romania's Adrian Panu.

Argentina's Mariano Zabaleta. Sampras began the year 17-0, winning the Australian Open and Wimbledon titles. The streak ended with an upset opening-match loss to Czech Bohdan-Ulrich last week at the Champions Cup.

Sampras, seeking his 48th career crown, could match Roy Emerson's record 12 Grand Slam triumphs by completing the sweep with French and US Open and Wimbledon titles.

No man has done it since Rod Laver in 1969 and Sampras has never conquered the red clay of Paris. But at 25, he figures time is on his side.

"Maybe when I am 29 or 30 I will be consumed," he said. "I feel like I have five, six, seven good chances to get lucky and win there one year."

Chang, 17-2 this year, lost in the Australian Open semifinals but has won 10 matches in a row, including last week's Champions Cup title and a crown last month in Memphis.

Chang has won a four-set 54 US hardcourt matches since reaching the 1996 Australian Open final. But made little progress on his ultimate goal of overtaking Sampras.

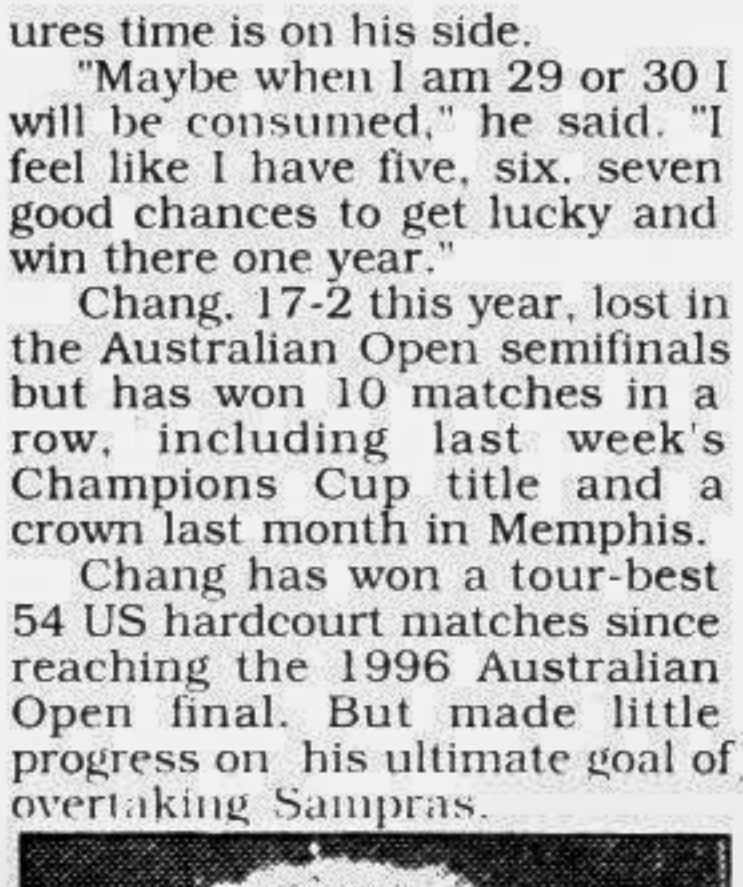
The same is true for another former number one, Germany's Boris Becker, who came here angry after German tax agents raided his Munich home and reports he was moving permanently to the United States.

Becker, who has not spoken publicly since his arrival, opens after a bye against either compatriot Henrik Dreekmann or Uruguay's Marcelo Filippini and could face Champions Cup runner-up Ulrich in the third round.

Clay-court master Muster is 15-3 this year with an all-hardcourt schedule and could be tougher than usual here. He opens after a bye against either Grant Stafford of South Africa or India's Leander Paes.

Muster won his first hardcourt crown since 1990 in Adelaide earlier this year in Dubai, taking the final over Goran Ivanisevic, who is seeded fourth here and still seeking his first North American title.

World number four Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia is out with an injured finger and a 14th-ranked Todd Martin is absent with a sore elbow.



PETE SAMPRAS

"It's more difficult to become number one than it is to win a Grand Slam," Chang said. "To be number one, you have to have consistent results over a 52-week period. Obviously it's still difficult to win a Grand Slam title. But I think it is probably even more difficult to be number one."

Chang could become the rival that Sampras has lacked since Andre Agassi battled him for the top ranking two years ago. Chang won here in 1992 while Sampras claimed the crown in 1993 and 1994.

Agassi, the two-time defending champion here, has lost his past four matches and fallen to 13th in the rankings. He is 5-8 since last year's US Open.

"I haven't anticipated it being an easy road by any means," Agassi said of his bid to return to form. "I certainly don't think it is going to get any easier. But I have got to start somewhere."

The same is true for another former number one, Germany's Boris Becker, who came here angry after German tax agents raided his Munich home and reports he was moving permanently to the United States.

Becker, who has not spoken publicly since his arrival, opens after a bye against either compatriot Henrik Dreekmann or Uruguay's Marcelo Filippini and could face Champions Cup runner-up Ulrich in the third round.

Clay-court master Muster is 15-3 this year with an all-hardcourt schedule and could be tougher than usual here. He opens after a bye against either Grant Stafford of South Africa or India's Leander Paes.

Muster won his first hardcourt crown since 1990 in Adelaide earlier this year in Dubai, taking the final over Goran Ivanisevic, who is seeded fourth here and still seeking his first North American title.

World number four Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia is out with an injured finger and a 14th-ranked Todd Martin is absent with a sore elbow.

Clay-court master Muster is 15-3 this year with an all-hardcourt schedule and could be tougher than usual here. He opens after a bye against either Grant Stafford of South Africa or India's Leander Paes.

Muster won his first hardcourt crown since 1990 in Adelaide earlier this year in Dubai, taking the final over Goran Ivanisevic, who is seeded fourth here and still seeking his first North American title.

World number four Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia is out with an injured finger and a 14th-ranked Todd Martin is absent with a sore elbow.

Clay-court master Muster is 15-3 this year with an all-hardcourt schedule and could be tougher than usual here. He opens after a bye against either Grant Stafford of South Africa or India's Leander Paes.

Muster won his first hardcourt crown since 1990 in Adelaide earlier this year in Dubai, taking the final over Goran Ivanisevic, who is seeded fourth here and still seeking his first North American title.

World number four Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia is out with an injured finger and a 14th-ranked Todd Martin is absent with a sore elbow.

Clay-court master Muster is 15-3 this year with an all-hardcourt schedule and could be tougher than usual here. He opens after a bye against either Grant Stafford of South Africa or India's Leander Paes.

Muster won his first hardcourt crown since 1990 in Adelaide earlier this year in Dubai, taking the final over Goran Ivanisevic, who is seeded fourth here and still seeking his first North American title.

World number four Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia is out with an injured finger and a 14th-ranked Todd Martin is absent with a sore elbow.

Clay-court master Muster is 15-3 this year with an all-hardcourt schedule and could be tougher than usual here. He opens after a bye against either Grant Stafford of South Africa or India's Leander Paes.

Muster won his first hardcourt crown since 1990 in Adelaide earlier this year in Dubai, taking the final over Goran Ivanisevic, who is seeded fourth here and still seeking his first North American title.

World number four Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia is out with an injured finger and a 14th-ranked Todd Martin is absent with a sore elbow.

Clay-court master Muster is 15-3 this year with an all-hardcourt schedule and could be tougher than usual here. He opens after a bye against either Grant Stafford of South Africa or India's Leander Paes.

Muster won his first hardcourt crown since 1990 in Adelaide earlier this year in Dubai, taking the final over Goran Ivanisevic, who is seeded fourth here and still seeking his first North American title.

World number four Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia is out with an injured finger and a 14th-ranked Todd Martin is absent with a sore elbow.

Clay-court master Muster is 15-3 this year with an all-hardcourt schedule and could be tougher than usual here. He opens after a bye against either Grant Stafford of South Africa or India's Leander Paes.

Muster won his first hardcourt crown since 1990 in Adelaide earlier this year in Dubai, taking the final over Goran Ivanisevic, who is seeded fourth here and still seeking his first North American title.

World number four Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia is out with an injured finger and a 14th-ranked Todd Martin is absent with a sore elbow.

Clay-court master Muster is 15-3 this year with an all-hardcourt schedule and could be tougher than usual here. He opens after a bye against either Grant Stafford of South Africa or India's Leander Paes.

Muster won his first hardcourt crown since 1990 in Adelaide earlier this year in Dubai, taking the final over Goran Ivanisevic, who is seeded fourth here and still seeking his first North American title.

World number four Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia is out with an injured finger and a 14th-ranked Todd Martin is absent with a sore elbow.

Clay-court master Muster is 15-3 this year with an all-hardcourt schedule and could be tougher than usual here. He opens after a bye against either Grant Stafford of South Africa or India's Leander Paes.

Muster won his first hardcourt crown since 1990 in Adelaide earlier this year in Dubai, taking the final over Goran Ivanisevic, who is seeded fourth here and still seeking his first North American title.

World number four Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia is out with an injured finger and a 14th-ranked Todd Martin is absent with a sore elbow.

Clay-court master Muster is 15-3 this year with an all-hardcourt schedule and could be tougher than usual here. He opens after a bye against either Grant Stafford of South Africa or India's Leander Paes.

Muster won his first hardcourt crown since 1990 in Adelaide earlier this year in Dubai, taking the final over Goran Ivanisevic, who is seeded fourth here and still seeking his first North American title.

World number four Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia is out with an injured finger and a 14th-ranked Todd Martin is absent with a sore elbow.

Clay-court master Muster is 15-3 this year with an all-hardcourt schedule and could be tougher than usual here. He opens after a bye against either Grant Stafford of South Africa or India's Leander Paes.

Muster won his first hardcourt crown since 1990 in Adelaide earlier this year in Dubai, taking the final over Goran Ivanisevic, who is seeded fourth here and still seeking his first North American title.

World number four Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia is out with an injured finger and a 14th-ranked Todd Martin is absent with a sore elbow.

Clay-court master Muster is 15-3 this year with an all-hardcourt schedule and could be tougher than usual here. He opens after a bye against either Grant Stafford of South Africa or India's Leander Paes.

Muster won his first hardcourt crown since 1990 in Adelaide earlier this year in Dubai, taking the final over Goran Ivanisevic, who is seeded fourth here and still seeking his first North American title.

World number four Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia is out with an injured finger and a 14th-ranked Todd Martin is absent with a sore elbow.

Clay-court master Muster is 15-3 this year with an all-hardcourt schedule and could be tougher than usual here. He opens after a bye against either Grant Stafford of South Africa or India's Leander Paes.

Nirman cricket
resumes today

Sports Reporter
The final round of the 15th Nirman schools cricket championship gets underway with the billing of six matches in different city venues today.

Twenty-eight teams, split into four groups, will feature in the week-long, knock-out phase of the competition and thereby four group champions will qualify for the semifinals.

The teams which made their passages into the final round are:

Group A: Motijheel Govt High School, Jhalakathi Govt High School, Gaibandha Uttar Kamarjani High School, Sylhet Aided School, Chapainawabganj High School, Narayanjanj High School and Gagan Memorial School of Barguna.

Group B: Maple Leaf International School, Madaripur United Islamia School, Khulna Zilla School, Jessore Govt High School, Naogaon Zilla School, Mymensingh Zilla School and Rajbari Zilla School.

Group C: BKSP, Moulvibazar Govt High School, Barisal BM High School, Narsingdi Satirpara KK School, Faridpur High School, Jhenidah Ararup Pre-cadet School and Sanit Plaoid of Chittagong.

Group D: Scholastica, Narail Zilla School, Tangail Bindubashini School, Sariapur Tulashar High School, Pabna Zilla School, Chuadanga AM Bari High School and Comilla Zilla School.

TODAY'S TIES

Jhalakathi Govt High School vs Uttar Kamarjani High School (DCG), Sylhet vs Chapainawabganj High School (Uttara)

Narayanjanj Govt School vs Gagan Memorial School, Barguna (Mirpur Sheraton)

Islamia School, Madaripur vs Khulna Zilla School (DCS)

Jessore Govt High School vs Naogaon Zilla School (T&T ground)

Mymensingh Zilla School vs Rajbari Zilla School (MOS)

Cricketphile
Guru

NEW DELHI, Mar 19: India's best-known Hindu mystic plans to celebrate his 72nd birthday in November by bringing together the world's top cricket stars for a one-day match, reports AFP.

Satyaj Sai Baba, the frizzy-haired mystic whose devotees include the rich and powerful from around the world, will hold the match at his sprawling hermitage near Bangalore in southern India.

A sports field at Puttappati, where the mystic resides, is being turned into an international cricket facility for the match, a spokesman for the Baba's multi-million dollar trust said.

An Indian team will clash with a select World XI for the specially-designed 85,000-dollar gold trophy, the spokesman added, and hoped the match would become an annual affair.

Former Indian stars Sunil Gavaskar, Gundappa Vishwanath and Kapal Prasad, known devotees of the mystic, are finalising the list of cricketers to be invited for the event, he said.

The mystic got the idea for the match from Sri Lanka's World Cup winning captain Arjuna Ranatunga, who visited him in January as the chief guest of the hermitage's sports day celebrations.

Ferrying the big names would not be a problem. Puttappati boasts an airfield, financed entirely by the mystic's trust and linked with the state-run Indian Airlines' network.

Australia
Bacher's
choice

JOHANNESBURG, Mar 19: Australia, on an undefeated tour of South Africa, are the best Test side in the world, South African cricket boss Alf Bacher said today, reports AFP.

"I'm not just saying that because they've beaten us," said Bacher, a former Test captain who is now managing director of the United Cricket Board here. "Their record speaks for itself—they've proved they are the best."

Bacher, who led South Africa in their 4-0 sweep of Bill Lawry's Aussies in 1969-70, also had praise for the home side, who trail 2-0 in the three-Test series.

Australia beat South Africa in the first Test at the Wanderers here by a whopping innings and 169 runs, then won a cliffhanger of a second Test at St. George's Park in Port Elizabeth by just two wickets.

"I think we have an outstanding one-day side and a good Test side," Bacher said. "The next 12 months will tell if we can develop into a great Test side."

"I feel our chaps displayed extraordinary guts and character to come back the way they did after taking a real hiding at the Wanderers," he said. "That's not easy to do."

"I was very proud at the way our players responded — I'm not disheartened," Bacher added.

The third and final Test will be played at Pretoria's Centurion Park from Friday before the two sides meet in a series of seven limited-overs games.

"We've got plenty to work on: We are going to take some more bumps over the next 12 months," he said. "We're up against two tough sides — Pakistan home and away and Australia away — but at the end of it I think we'll see a very good Test side emerging."

ENGLAND CHRONICLES

From Nizamuddin Ahmed in England
Thanks to a dismal performance by the Sri Lankans and their not-too-buoyant trip to New Zealand, England have for the first time in several months squeezed out of the last three positions in Wisden's Test championship rankings released last Monday. They are now placed sixth in the nine-team table above Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka and New Zealand.

Ray Illingworth, till last week the chairman of the English selection committee, has called for the sacking of cricket captain Mike Atherton before the clash for the Ashes begin. According to him, England should try a new captain in the one-day internationals against Australia to groom new captain before the Test matches. Illingworth even considers Nasir Hussain as the next England captain.

However, David Graveny, the new chairman, has hit out at Illingworth, only the second non-Test player chairman of the committee, has blasted Illingworth for not taking the stand when he was chairman even days ago. Graveny thinks that the matter of captain will be decided by himself, Graham Gooch and Mike Gatting, the members of the committee.

And, that it shall be done within the next few days.

Bruce Grobbelaar, the Zimbabwean goalkeeper, formerly of Liverpool and now playing for Plymouth, who is as yet not cleared from match-fixing allegations, brought the problem of racial abuse in English football back into the spotlight last Saturday.

Normally light-hearted with a good sense of humour, Bruce was dead serious when he complained to the police about abuse handed out to three black players of Shrewsbury whom his team was playing, Mickey Brown, Mark Taylor and Steve Anthrobus. He then identified one of his own club's fans as the culprit. According to Grobbelaar, the same fan even accuses black players of his own team.

Officers then arrested the Plymouth fan, and took him into custody for questioning.

The incident is the latest in a series of controversies in football, involving alleged racist comments, including the

feud between Manchester United's white goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel and Arsenal's black player Ian Wright where the latter alleges that he was victim of racial abuse. A tabloid paper claims to have video evidence that Schmeichel mouthed a racist obscenity to another black player, Rod Wallace of Leeds, six years ago. The 'News of the World' employed a lip reader to study the footage, and alleges that Schmeichel said, "F... off little blacks" — at Wallace.

After 38-year-old Mary Slaney (formerly Decker) finished second in the World Indoor Championship 15 metres in Paris last week, Zola Pieterse (formerly Budd) is planning to make a comeback next Sunday at Turin in the World cross-country Championships. Zola claims she (and others) did not know the existence of Nelson Mandela when she was a student of politics at university. It wasn't until the day before he was released that I saw my first photograph of him in a South African newspaper," said Zola. Hard to believe, coming from a student of politics.

The Netherlands drew first blood from their first penalty corner. Bram Lomans scooped the ball up into the net with searing precision.

Stung Pakistan quickly replied, scoring from their own first set-piece.

Mohammad Shahbaz found the target when the Dutch defence were wrong footed.

Typical of the no-quarter match, the Dutch came straight back and only two superb saves by Pakistani keeper Mansoor Ahmed saved his side.

While unable to find a gap in the Pakistan defence, the Dutch left holes in theirs which left flank Baber Abdullah profited from forcing Dutch goalkeeper into an error.

Taher Zaman made no mistake with the penalty stroke and Pakistan were 2-1 up at the half.

The break clearly had the necessary effect on the Dutch who rampaged back to equalise in just six minutes, again from a Lomans penalty corner.

But again it was Pakistan who redoubled the efforts, buoyed by the return of half-back Imran Tariq after nearly 32 minutes.

Finding the gaps Kamran Ashraf dodged past two Dutch defenders and his goal-scoring pass needed Mohammad Shahbaz to just deflect the ball into the net.

Their rejoicing was premature, however, with Stephen Veen pushing in a poorly cleared ball from a penalty corner to square the honours.

Pakistan had wanted revenge for the three significant Dutch victories last year, in the world champions, in the NCM tournament in Holland and

Holland hold Pakistan



KARACHI, Mar 19: Pakistan failed to achieve a revenge win over the Netherlands today as their incident-filled match ended in a 3-3 draw in the five-nation hockey tournament here, reports AFP.

That it was a grudge match was evident right from the outset as both teams set out to subdue each other, Pakistan adopting aggressive tactics, both in play and attitude.

Tariq Imran and Mohammad Khalid (senior) were both shown yellow cards by umpire Christian Siebrechet of Germany and Pakistan played with 10 men in the last 25 minutes and with nine in the last five of the first period.

Pakistan team manager Tariq Aziz was furious over the umpiring.

"It was a biased umpiring all through the match. I am disappointed that the umpire sent two of our players out with yellow cards. We did miss chances but I think it was just because of the umpiring. You can't protest," Aziz said.

Pakistani forwards showed good skills and kept possession of the ball, a failure which led to their missed chances in a 1-1 draw against England in the first match.

Swadhin Bangla
booters to be
honoured

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has decided to issue special identity cards for players and officials of the Swadhin Bangla football team on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of Independence, reports UNB.

The identity card, effective from March 26 this year, will be treated as courtesy entry pass to all football grounds and venues across the country.

BFF has requested all members of the Swadhin Bangla football team to collect the cards from the federation office after depositing two stamp size colour photographs.

Juergen to
quit Bayern

MUNICH, Germany, Mar 19: Germany captain Juergen Klinsmann's famous wanderlust seems sure to spark another mad scramble for his services after the 32-year-old striker announced on Tuesday that he would be leaving Bayern Munich at the end of the season, reports AFP.

"The decision took form over the last few weeks," the much-travelled striker, who may be linked with a return to the lucrative English Premiership, told a news conference.

"We will go our separate ways at the end of the season and obviously I shall be going abroad — when you leave Bayern, you don't go to another Bundesliga club, you go abroad."

Klinsmann, a member of Germany's 1990 World Cup winning side and the captain of last year's triumphant Euro '96 team, joined Bayern after a highly successful season with English Premier side Tottenham in 1995.

A special clause allows him to leave Bayern before his contract ends on 30 June 1998. In the same way he left Tottenham after only one season.

Premiership clubs West Ham and Nottingham Forest have already expressed interest in signing the striker, though with both threatened by relegation Klinsmann may wish to look elsewhere.

"It shows loyalty on his part that he has informed us so early," Hoenes said. "In this profession, it's a fact of life that players change clubs."