

Sport

Rani on a roll

Sports Reporter

Holder Rani Hamid crossed a major hurdle in her defence of the national chess championship title defeating fellow-aspirant Tanima Parvin in the second round of the 18th version of the meet at the chess room of the National Sports Council yesterday.

Rani, the lone International Women's Master of the country, playing with black pieces adopted the Apaline variation of the Sicilian defence which eventually proved to tough to penetrate for Tanima, who surrendered after 38 moves.

It was Rani's second successive win in the nine round Swiss League meet. She is now sharing the top spot with Afroza Khanom Babli, who also posted her second win at the cost of Masuda Begum.

Former champion Shabana Parveen Nipa, who recorded her first win yesterday defeating Farzana Khan Ava after only 26 moves, is closely following the table leaders with one and a half points.

Meanwhile, the remaining engagements of the day were still in progress till filing of this report.

Eves' handball league April 6

Sports Reporter

The Wings Cup First Division women's handball league will be held at the Dhanmendi Women's Complex from April 6. Twelve teams including five from outside the capital will take part in the meet, disclosed the chairman of the league committee Sayed Bazlul Karim at a press briefing held at the conference room of the National Sports Council yesterday.

The briefing was also attended by M A Hamid, the president of the Bangladesh Handball Federation and the finance director of the sponsors Wings Air Cargo Limited M Anwarul Karim.

Alex, Glenn consensus

LONDON, Mar 23: England manager Glenn Hoddle and Manchester United's boss Alex Ferguson — at odds over the make-up of the England side for next Saturday's friendly with Mexico — reached an agreement Sunday, reports AP.

On Saturday, Ferguson withdrew three of his top players — Gary Pallister, David Beckham and Gary Neville — from Hoddle's team for Mexico game at Wembley Stadium.

Pallister and Beckham sustained injuries in Manchester United's 2-0 Premier League win Saturday at Everton — and Neville missed the game with an ankle injury.

Ferguson said he couldn't afford to risk the three with the European Champions Cup Semifinal coming up next month with Borussia Dortmund.

But, the two spoke Sunday with Ferguson agreeing to make Neville available.

"Alex and myself have spoken about the injury situation following the game at Everton, which I was at," Hoddle said.

"Of the United players originally selected for the England squad Gary Neville ... will be joining up with us tomorrow," he added.

Stich sent tumbling

ST PETERSBURG, Russia, Mar 23: Top seed Michael Stich was overwhelmed 6-2, 6-1 by Sweden's Thomas Johansson in the semifinals of the 300,000 St Petersburg Open on Saturday, reports Reuter.

Stich looked out of sorts throughout the match and, with eight double faults and only 40 per cent success on first serve, could never get his main weapon working.

The German complained to the referee during the match and again afterwards about movement of the crowd which he claimed affected his concentration.

"Johansson played better and his mood was better," said Stich. "I am not very happy."

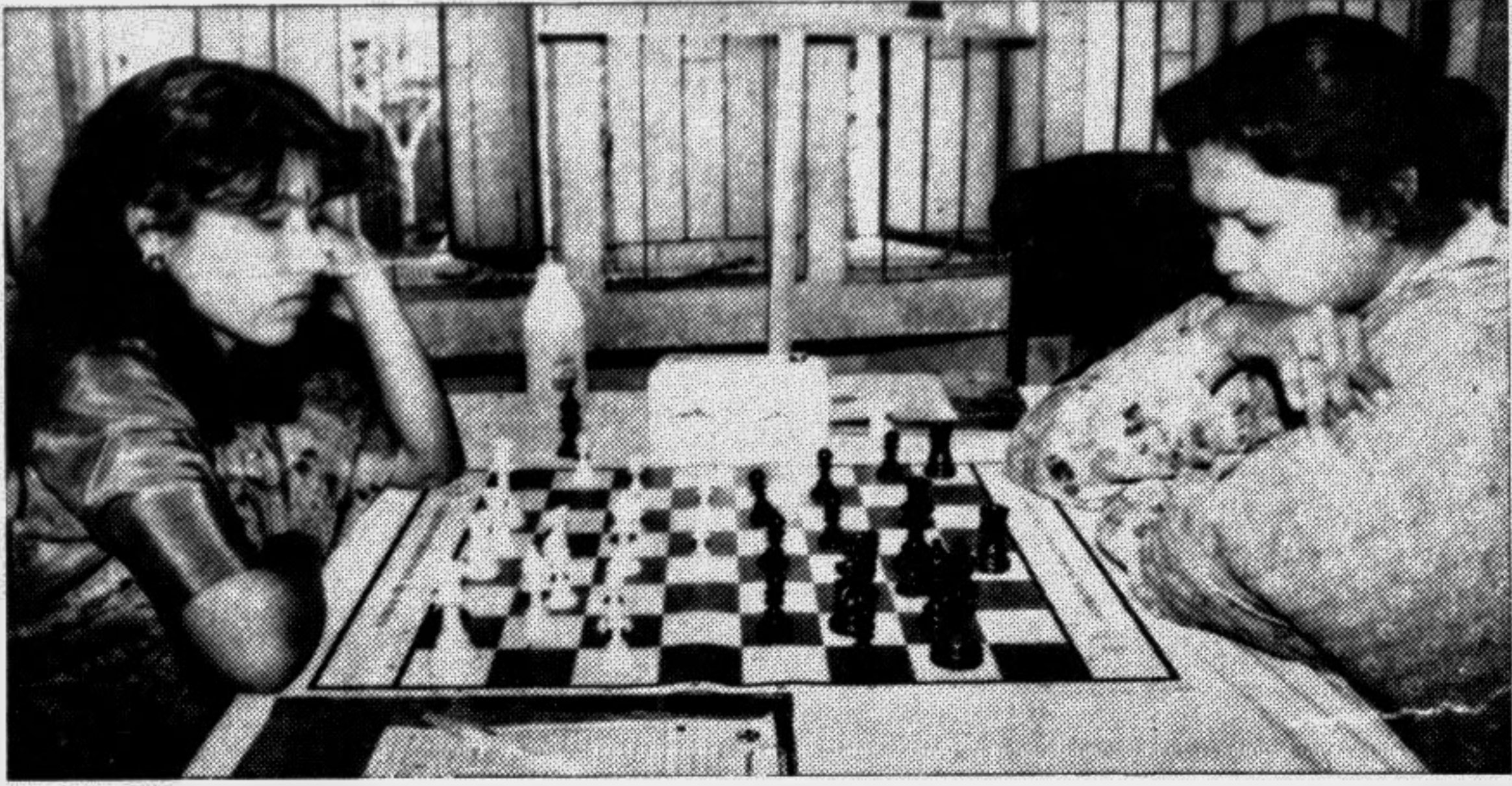
Fifth seed Johansson, who said he was satisfied with his performance, meets Italian Renzo Furlan in Sunday's final.

Brawlers to be punished

LISBON, Portugal, Mar 23: Romanian Nica Panduru left a Benfica training session with a broken nose and a black eye after being punched out by Brazilian Janmir Gomes, news reports said Sunday, reports AP.

The two players clashed during a training session Saturday at Benfica's Estadio da Luz in Lisbon, and both players face tough sanctions by the club, the Daily A Bola reported.

Both players will be left out of the side that plays at Amadora in the first division game Monday. The club is also mulling "tough, exemplary disciplinary measures," said Benfica President Manuel Damasio.



Scene from yesterday's 18th national women's chess championship second round engagement between Zakia Sultana (R) and Nazrana Khan Eva at the NSC. — Star photo

S Africa strike early

PRETORIA, Mar 23: South Africa struck twice before tea Sunday to remove openers Mark Taylor and Matthew Hayden and take the upper hand in the third and final cricket Test against Australia at Centurion Park, reports agencies.

After skipper Hansie Cronje had smashed a crackerjack 79 to give South Africa a 157-run lead, Australia crashed to 10 for

and later hit McGrath inside-out over cover point for his second.

Gillespie picked up 3-75 while leg spinner Shane Warne went wicketless for the first time since Sri Lanka's first innings in the third Test in Adelaide in January 1996.

McGrath claimed his first three wickets before lunch in the space of 218 balls, including overnight batsman Adam Bacher for 96.

Bacher added just two runs in 84 minutes off 53 balls before McGrath trapped him leg before wicket.

The right-handed opener who took 46 minutes and 30 ball to score his first run of the morning, batted 444 minutes for his highest Test score, which included a six and 13 boundaries off 323 balls.

On Saturday a patiently constructed 94 from opener Adam Bacher helped South Africa to 240 for three at the end of the second day.

Bacher's craftmanlike contribution gave the home side a first innings lead of 13 with seven wickets still standing and nightwatchman Pat Symcox there with Bacher on 5.

In Bacher, the side looks to have rediscovered the grit needed to take on the Australians.

He shared partnerships of 102 with Brian McMillan and 101 with Daryll Cullinan in a day of back-breaking effort from the Australian attack.

After being all out for 227 on the first day, the second started well for the tourists when Glenn McGrath forced opener Gary Kirsten to follow a swinging delivery.

The edge left the home side at 26 for one and, in the process, handed Australian wicket-keeper Ian Healy his 300th Test victim.

But that was the only breakthrough of the session and it was only shortly before tea that Mark Waugh, brought on to rest the tiring first line of attack, had McMillan trapped for 55 from a sharp bat-pad chance snapped up by Matthew Hayden.

Having broken that partnership, the Australians again had to labour hard to split Bacher and Cullinan.

They had to wait for another 100 runs to be added before McGrath again made the breakthrough.

Cullinan got an inside edge to a delivery which held its line and he departed for 47 with the South African total on 229.

Opener Ajay Jadeja, who did not play in the first two Test matches against the West Indies, provided the only real bright note for the touring Indians, scoring 50 before being caught by Stanton Proverbs off Otis Gibson. Jadeja's innings lasted 223 minutes in which he faced 154 balls and struck 10 fours.

Jadeja and Vangipurappu Laxman put on 88 for the first wicket before Laxman was caught for 36 by Hendy Bryan at mid-off from Marshall's bowling immediately after lunch.

Fast bowler Bryan removed Rahul Dravid (19) who edged a lifting delivery to wicketkeeper

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Bacher survived the final overs — taking a superb rising McGrath delivery which followed him on the upper arm — with the aplomb of a veteran.

There is still a long way to go for the South Africans and memories of the first innings led they held over Mark Taylor's side in Port Elizabeth before tamedly surrendered, will haunt them overnight.

But with Bacher in form and on the way to his maiden Test

Century and the bulk of the batting still to come, things look good for Hansie Cronje's team for the first time in the three-Test series.

Scoreboard on the third day of the third and final Test between South Africa and Australia at Centurion Park today:

**AUSTRALIA:** First innings 227 (S Waugh 67; B Schultz 4-52)

**SOUTH AFRICA:** First innings (overnight 240-3): Kirsten c Healy b McGrath 46; Bacher lb McGrath 96; McMillan c Hayden b M Waugh 55; Cullinan b McGrath 47; Symcox c Blewett b Gillespie 16; Kallis c S Waugh b McGrath 2; Cronje not out 79; Richardson b McGrath 0; Klusener b Gillespie 30; Donald c Healy b Gillespie 8; Schultz c Healy b McGrath 2; Extras (b-11, lb-16, w-1, nb-5) 33; Total 384

Full of wickets: 1-26; 2-128; 3-229; 4-252; 5-255; 6-262; 7-262; 8-330; 9-367.

**Bowling:** O M R W  
McGrath 40.4 15 86 6  
Gillespie 31 13 75 3  
Blewett 5 0 19 0  
Warne 36 11 89 0  
Bevan 15 3 54 0  
M Waugh 7 1 34 1  
(incomplete)

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Nirman cricket

N'ganj Govt first in last four

Sports Reporter

Narayanganj Govt School were the first to make it to the last four of the 15th Nirman schools cricket championship when the riverine port city outfit posted an exciting five-run win over Jalakathi Govt School at the Dhanmendi Club ground yesterday.

In the truncated 20-over-a-side match which was held in the afternoon due to unavoidable circumstances, the Narayanganj boys scored 111 all out with one over to spare with Shilpi notching highest 52.

In reply, Jalakathi School could muster 106 for six before they exhausted their quota of overs. Yaad scored 26 followed by Manna, who contributed 22 runs in the vanquished total.

Meanwhile, in the other three billings of the day at different city venues, Scholastica, Satirpara KK School and Comilla Govt School moved into the quarterfinals eliminating their respective opponents.

Scholastica, the lone survivor among the three schools from Dhaka, stormed into the last eight with a thumping seven-wicket win over Narail Govt School.

Batting first, the Narail boys could only muster 99 runs for the loss of six wickets in their share of 20 overs with Helal and Yousuf contributing 21 and 19 respectively.

In reply, the reputed English medium school raced to victory scoring 103 for three in 17.4 overs.

Ridwan hammered a breezy 49 while Shafiquzzaman scored 38. The winners will feature in one of the three quarterfinals billed for today.

They will meet Comilla Zila School, who in another engagement of the day at the remote Uttara Friends Club ground squeezed past Pabna Zila School by three runs.

Sent into bat Comilla scored 92 for eight in their share of 18 overs. In reply, Fabna could manage 89 for nine before running out of overs.

At the Mirpur City Club ground Satirpara KK School recorded an impressive 27-run win against Arappur Pre-Cadet School on their way to set up a quarterfinal clash with fancied BKSP at the Mirpur Sheraton ground today.

In a truncated 15-over-a-side affair Satirpara, batting first, piled up a commanding 113/7 and then went on to shoot out their opponents for 86 in 12 overs.

MSC meeting

The annual general meeting of Mohammedan Sporting will be held at the club pavilion in Motihill today.

The meeting will start at 6 pm. The executive committee members, patrons and the general members of the reputed club have been asked to attend meeting, said a press release issued yesterday.

'98 Cross Country Championships doubled?

TURIN, Italy, Mar 23: Next year's World Cross Country Championships are to be staged over two days instead of one.

Primo Nebiolo, the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) president, said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

Additional, shorter, races for senior men and women would be also introduced.

"A one-day event does not justify the expense, effort and organisation," said Nebiolo.

The first day on the new schedule will include the junior women's 4-km race and the shorter senior men's and women's races, probably over 4-km and 5-km. The second day's timetable will include the junior men's 8-km, the senior women's race, which will be extended to 8-km next year, and the senior men's 12-km race.

The news of an additional day will come as a shock to the organisers of next year's championship in Marrakesh, Morocco. Nebiolo acknowledged that they had not been told about the decision.

The change has still to be approved by the IAAF council, which will meet between May 29-31 in Athens, but that is believed to be a formality.

Nebiolo also said that he hopes the World Cross Country Championships would be staged in city centre sites like Sunday's event in Turin's Parcedo Valentino.

CCC to play in 6s cricket

Dhaka Commonwealth Cricket Club (CCC) will take part in the two upcoming six-a-side tournaments, which are to be held from 25th to 30th March and April 3 to 6 in the Thai capital of Bangkok, says a press release.

Taekwondo workshop

A special training session on Taekwondo, jointly organised by Bangladesh Association of Bangladesh and Nepal Taekwondo Association, is going on at the National Sports Council, says a press release.

Some solace for Pakistan

KARACHI, Mar 23: World champions Pakistan took third spot in the five-nation golden jubilee hockey tournament here today by beating Australia 7-4, reports AFP.

Mohammad Shahbaz and Tahir Zaman peaked at the right moment, scoring two goals each to help the hosts achieve a satisfactory finish in a tournament that was held to celebrate their country's 50-year of independence.

It was also Pakistan's first win in the tournament after having drawn all their four previous games.

The Pakistani forwards started the match with a measure of authority. Their passes were timely and accurate. Right inner Tahir Zaman initiated a move from the right side and passed the ball to Kamran Ashraf whose timely pass was slotted home by Baber Abdullah in the ninth minute.

Australia forced four penalty corners but were unable to profit from them, despite a slipshod Pakistan defence.

The pressure eventually told off a penalty stroke in the 44th minute. A minute later Baeden Choppo was lucky to get a ball that sneaked through Mansoor's pads to level the score at 3-3.

Star forward 24-year-old Mohammad Shahbaz, playing his 165th match, scored his second goal of the match in the 67th minute to make the score 6-4. This was Shahbaz's seventh goal of the tournament. Tahir Zaman hit the last nail with a 68th minute goal.

Australian coach Terry Walsh was dejected at the outcome of the match.

"It was a good fast game, full of scores but there were some questionable decisions in the match," Walsh said without detailing any particular incident.

But on the other side of the field a smile finally crossed the face of Pakistan manager Tariq Aziz. "I told the boys to play their usual game and I am happy that they did."

This was the first Pakistan victory in the tournament after playing four successive drawn games.

Olympic champions Holland take on Germany in the title decider later in the day.

Agassi in the doldrums

KEY BISCAYNE, Florida, Mar 23: Andre Agassi can be thankful he doesn't need money, because he's not making much playing tennis lately.

The two-time defending champion of the Lipton Championships lost his opening match Saturday to Australian Scott Draper, 7-6 (7-5), 6-1. The defeat was Agassi's fifth in a row, his worst slump, reports AP.

"Motivation may be a problem for the 26-year-old multimillionaire, but he denies it. 'I'm not tired,' he said. 'I'm not through.'"

Still, Agassi's career has become a celebrity tennis tour: one match and on to the next stop.

He has failed to win so much as a set in the past six weeks, losing to Greg Rusedski, Gustavo Kuerten, Javier Sanchez, Mark Philippoussis and Draper. His ranking has slipped from eighth at the beginning of the year to 13th, and he'll now drop out of the top 20.

In 1995, Agassi won 73 matches. This year he has won three.

"On the women's side of the draw, 16-year-old Venus Williams rallied from a 5-1 deficit in the first set to beat Jennifer Capriati 7-6 (7-5), 3-6, 6-2.

"The phenom against the phenom," Capriati termed the match.

Williams' opponent in the third round Sunday will be another 16-year-old, top ranked Martina Hingis.

"She's been around town and the world," Williams said. "She's a globetrotter. 'I'm ready to play.'"

Agassi played as if he were double-parked against Draper, a 22-year-old left-hander ranked 79th. Agassi lost his serve at love in the final game, and the lackluster performance prompted speculation that he tanked the second set.

Agassi said poor shot selection is at the root of his trouble. "I wish sometimes I believed in myself out there as much as most people believe in my capabilities," he said. "I'm second-guessing myself a lot out there. It's something I'm going to have to get through."

Because Agassi has lost his opening match in four consecutive tournaments, he has played just eight times this year, making it difficult to shake the slump.

It feels like a real vicious cycle at the moment," he said. "I need to get through some of these tough ones to start putting it together."

Agassi missed the lines by six feet against Draper and had particular trouble with his service return, normally the best in tennis. He twice mistimed returning second serves in the match.

Anna Kournikova, at 15 the youngest player in the tournament, beat No. 12 Amanda Coetzer 6-1, 3-6, 6-3.

Two other women's seeds were eliminated in their opening matches. No. 9 Karina Haboudova lost to Natasha Zvereva 6-4, 6-3, and No. 15 Brenda Schultz-McCarthy was beaten by Tatiana Panova 1-6, 7-6 (9-7), 6-4.

"I just need something to get me to expect to win," he said. "That's what it boils down to. When I'm expecting to win, I'm a different player. When I'm wondering if things are going to come together, it snowballs, on me quickly."

In other men's play, Adrian Panu of Romania warmed up to the theme from "Mission: Impossible," then lost to top-ranked Pete Sampras 6-2, 6-0.

Second-seeded Thomas Muster and No. 3 Michael Chang also advanced to the third round. Seeds eliminated included No. 6 Thomas Enqvist, No. 13 Felix Manttila, No. 14 Tim Henman, No. 15 Marc Rosset and No. 16 Alberto Berasategui.

No. 10 Boris Becker, who has been bothered by a wrist injury since last summer, withdrew before his opening match.

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Div II football

Sports Reporter

Eskaton Sabuj Sangha and Shantinagar Club posted an identical lone goal wins over their respective opponents in the Second Division football league at different city venues yesterday.

At the RAJUK ground Eskaton, aided by an early strike from Aif, prevailed over Mohakhali Eleven while Shantinagar defeated Adamjee SCC at the Mirpur Stadium.

Meanwhile, in the other billing of the day, Dhaka Wanderers shared honours with Muslim Institute in a goalless draw.



German captain Christian Blunck holds the trophy aloft after the final of the five-nation hockey tournament against Holland in Karachi yesterday. Germany won 3-1. — AFP/UNB photo

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