

Div II cricket  
Sports Reporter

Amorjoti Club and Tejgaon Cricket Association won their respective Acme Second Division cricket league matches at different city venues yesterday.

At the Dhanmondi Club ground, Amorjoti Club thrashed Nabin Sangha by a huge margin of 146 runs while Tejgaon posted a 112-run victory over Young Pegasus at the Mirpur Outer Stadium.

Nat'l kabadi  
Sports Reporter

Bogra, Sathkha, Noakhali, Rajshahi and Fire Service moved into the next round of the 22nd national kabadi championship which began at the court near Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

Bogra beat Comilla by 74-57 points, Sathkha outplayed Pirozpur by 58-8 points, Noakhali defeated Narayanganj 73-25, Rajshahi tamed Dhaka by 76-38 points while Fire Service recorded a 82-24 points victory over Sylhet.

Age-group tennis  
Sports Reporter

Yasin Huda Sakib and Taswar of Rajshahi Tennis Complex clinched the boys' under-18 doubles title of the 22nd National age-group tennis circuit at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

In the final, the Rajshahi duo defeated Muammar Hossain Khan and Ashfaqur Rahman of Dhaka 6-2, 6-3.

Ishrat Jahan Eti and Tania Farzana of Meherpur lifted the girls' under-18 doubles crown with an easy 6-1, 6-4 victory over Shefat Nusrat Baishakhi and her partner Dyuti Sanchaeta of Dhaka.

Besides, Rajshahi's Mustafizur Rahman and Dhaka Officers' Club's Babu Lal bagged the boys' under-14 doubles title with a 6-3, 6-7, 6-3 win over Kabir and Alamgir of Dhaka.

All the four singles finals will be held at the same venue today which will start with the boys under-14 at 1:30 pm.

Zia Smriti  
cricket

From Our Correspondent  
RAJSHAH, Dec 26: Brothers Union and Bandhan Krira Chakra recorded victories in the Shaheed Zia Smriti cricket tournament at the Rajshahi Government College ground today.

Brothers defeated Micro Sporting Club by eight wickets. Micro Sporting batted first and scored 72 in 18 overs. In reply, Brothers reached 75 for two in 13.3 overs.

Bandhan KC trounced Kazihata Ekadash by five wickets. Kazihata Ekadash made 120 for six in the stipulated 25 overs. Bandhan KC finished on 124 for five and with an over for spare.

WC warm-up  
match

BELGRADE, Dec 26: Yugoslav Football Association president Branko Bulatovic said on Thursday that Yugoslavia will face fellow qualifiers Nigeria in a World Cup warm-up match in May, reports Xinhua.

No date has been finalised for the match.

Yugoslavia also are involved in discussions about a possible warm-up match against Italy in April.

Collymore  
in trouble

LONDON, Dec 26: England international striker Stan Collymore has been charged with assault after an incident on Christmas eve. SKY news reported, reports AFP.

The 26-year-old Aston Villa player was arrested at Cannock in the English Midlands but was freed on bail.

Collymore is due to play for Aston Villa against Tottenham this afternoon.

Steve solidifies Australia

MELBOURNE, Dec 26 (AP/Reuters): Steve Waugh rose to the challenge of a difficult MCG pitch with a high first day of the first cricket Test against South Africa today.

Waugh and Ricky Ponting, 56 n.o. out took home team to 206 for four at stumps.

The pair has added an invaluable 129 runs for the fifth wicket after Australia had slumped to 77 for four mid way after lunch.

After Mark Taylor had decided to bat first, the batsmen struggled to come to terms on a sparsely grassed two-paced pitch.

The batsmen seldom drove on the front foot and only Steve managed a boundary driving medium paceman Brian McMillan on the front foot for one of his eight hits across the fence.

A heavy outfield was also a contributing factor to a painstakingly slow day's cricket watched by a crowd of 73,812, the third largest for a Boxing Day.

In fact it was the best first day crowd in 22 years in Melbourne, since 85,661 spectators watched Australia take on Clive Lloyd's West Indies in 1975.

Australia progressed to 44 for three at lunch and then to 92 for four at tea before Waugh and Ponting took charge.

Their alliance went from strength to strength with the arrival of the second new ball.

The 10 overs with the second new ball contributed 49 runs to the total.

Ponting in particular made things happen with his hair raising running between the wicket and with the use of his feet against off-spinner Pat Symcox.

Ponting, who had batted for 150 minutes had a narrow shave on 17. He drove Symcox and took off for a single as Jacques Kallis threw down the stumps at the bowler's end.

An inconclusive television replay forced third umpire Bill Sheahan to give Ponting the benefit of the doubt.

Ponting reached his half century with a pulled boundary off Shaun Pollock and followed it up with another, punching it to the cover boundary on the back foot. He has hit seven boundaries.

Waugh blunted the seven bowlers used by Hansie Cronje throughout his 244-minute grind and reached his 36th half century in a 99-match Test career.

It also helped him come out a poor run of form in the tri-nation one-day series where he captained the side.

He managed the scores of 1, 7, 0 and 0 against South Africa and New Zealand. He also score 2 for New South Wales against South Australia in a first-class fixture.

The only blemish of his 173-ball innings was when he was dropped on 86 by Gary Kirsten at point in the last over off the

Donald.

Fast bowler Donald could have won the first psychological battle for South Africa in the first over of a series that would decide the unofficial Test champions.

Donald started with a no-ball, but with his fourth 'legal' delivery squared Matthew Elliott with an outswinger. But Kallis at third slip grassed a sitter.

South Africa did remove Elliott soon. Elliott had managed six runs off 33 balls before he top edged a catch to keeper Dave Richardson.

The catch helped Richardson move ahead of Johnny Waite's South African career record of 141 dismissals.

Taylor displayed impeccable judgment for 98 minutes after before cutting a Brian McMillan longshot to Kirsten at point.

Mark was dismissed for rough when he slashed at a Donald delivery and was caught behind.

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**SCOREBOARD**

scoreboard on the first day of the first Test between Australia and South Africa at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Friday:

**AUSTRALIA:** First innings  
Elliott c Richardson b Klusener 6  
Taylor c Kirsten b McMillan 20  
Blewett st Richardson b Symcox 26  
M Waugh c Richardson b Donald 0  
S Waugh not out 87  
Ponting not out 56  
Extras (nb-5, lb-5, b-1) 11  
Total: (for four wkts) 206  
Fall of wkts: 1-18; 3-42; 3-44; 4-77.

**South Africa:** First innings  
Reifel, Shane Warne, Michael Kasprovic, Glenn McGrath.  
**Bowling** O M R W  
Donald 17 5 35 1  
Pollock 21 5 56 0  
Klusener 15 3 28 1  
McMillan 10 3 10 1  
Kallis 4 2 5 0  
Symcox 19 3 46 1  
Cronje 4 2 11 0



STEVE WAUGH..... 87 n.o. today bowled by Pollock. Three runs earlier he was caught off Allan Richardson by Pollock.

Indore farce  
to be probed

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: Indian officials today ordered an investigation into the abandonment of the second one-day international between India and Sri Lanka after the pitch was declared too dangerous for play, reports AFP.

Sri Lanka had reached 17 for one from three overs Thursday at Indore when the decision was taken. The ball had been breaking through the pitch's dusty top surface from the very first delivery.

Local officials said the pitch could have proved dangerous for players and suggested the match be called off.

The Board of Cricket for Control in India said in Bombay that a seven-member team of former Indian cricketers led by Kapil Dev would 'probe into the fiasco.'

The investigation would study the suitability of various cricket grounds in India for international fixtures.

The announcement came after Jagmohan Dalmiya, President of the International Cricket Council, deplored the move to call off the game at Indore.

The matter will not be allowed to be swept under the carpet, Dalmiya said in Calcutta. The abandonment of the match due to unfit condition anywhere in the world is deplorable.

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A record five African nations will also be competing. Although few expect an African team to go all the way to the title, one or two shock results against the more established Europeans and Latin Americans are possible.

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Leboeuf likes  
Gullit to stay

LONDON, Dec 26: Chelsea's French international defender Frank Leboeuf is confident manager Ruud Gullit will resist the lure of a foreign coaching job and stay with the English Premiership club, reports AFP.

Gullit has not signed a long-term contract at Chelsea, leading to speculation that he could leave in the summer.

But Leboeuf, writing in the Times, said: "Ruud is his own man and will make the decision that suits him and his family best."

"I am confident, though, that when the time comes for him to make up his mind, he will see that Chelsea is where his future happiness lies."

Gullit has repeatedly said he is happy at the club, but the fact that he has not committed himself to a long-term deal has inevitably led to rumours linking him with jobs abroad.

But Leboeuf said: "It would be so very, very sad if Ruud decided to leave Chelsea because he is a man and manager you cannot help but respect — a football legend."

"Things are going very well for us all at Stamford Bridge, but hopefully there is much more to come. I am confident Ruud will be there when it happens."

Mariners' sports

The week-long sports meet organised on the occasion of silver jubilee of Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club concluded through a prize-giving ceremony at the club's premises yesterday, reports UNB.

Bangladesh Cricket Board president Saber Hossain Chowdhury, MP, distributed the prizes.

TODAY'S MATCHES

**Janakantha Premier Cricket League:**  
Agrani Bank vs Lalmitia Club (Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium)  
**First Division Cricket League:**  
Gulshan Youth vs Dhanmondi Club (City Club ground)  
**Acme Second Division Cricket League:**  
Uttara SC vs Shantinagar A (Dhanmondi Club ground)  
Rupali Bank vs Young Ones (TKT ground, Mahakhal)  
Khelegang vs DOHS (Uttara Friends' Club)  
Azad Boys Club vs East End Club (Mirpur Outer Stadium)

Dortmund stood apart

PARIS, Dec 26 (AFP): Germany's Borussia Dortmund became the top club of 1997 after adding the world cup to the European title they had won earlier in the year.

Dortmund beat Juventus 3-1 in the European Cup final in May before downing Brazil's South American champions Cruzeiro 2-0 in the Intercontinental Cup in December.

But Dortmund were languishing in mid-table in the Bundesliga at the end of the year as their domestic fortunes failed to match their international ones.

At the end of the 1996/97 season in May, Dortmund — who had won the Bundesliga the previous two seasons — had to be content with third spot behind champions Bayern Munich and Bayer Leverkusen.

The first big news of the year in world club football was the surprise resignation of Kevin Keegan as manager of English Premiership side Newcastle.

Keegan, who paid a then world record 15 million pounds for England striker Alan Shearer in an attempt to win the Magpies first English championship in 70 years, sensationally walked out as manager on January 8.

The former England captain gave no immediate reasons for his abrupt departure. "It was my decision and my decision alone," he said. "I offered my resignation at the end of last season but was persuaded by the board to stay."

Kenny Dalglish took over a week later.

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The UEFA jury of appeal confirmed the life suspension for Rothlisberger. "It's a scandal," fumed Rothlisberger afterwards.

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Dortmund became the first German club to take the title since Hamburg in 1983.

Portugal's Paolo Sousa also became the second player to win successive European Cups with different clubs after winning with Juve the previous year.

It was also the first time an Italian club has not won one of the three European competitions since 1992 and gave Germany their second title after Schalke 04's UEFA Cup win a week earlier.

Schalke lifted the cup after beating Italian giants Inter Milan 4-1 in a penalty shoot-out before a packed San Siro crowd after a 1-1 draw.

Barcelona lifted the Cup Winners' Cup for a record fourth time in Rotterdam as they put

an end to Paris St Germain's dreams of becoming the first club ever to retain the trophy.

In a hard-fought but ultimately uninspiring encounter, Barca triumphed with a first-half penalty converted by FIFA-world-player-of-the-year Ronaldo.

That proved enough to secure the Catalan club their eighth win in European competition, equalling the record of their eternal rivals Real Madrid.

It was a sweet moment for coach Bobby Robson, who was later pushed upstairs into a backroom role to make way for Dutch coach Louis van Gaal.

Juve were crowned Italian champions amidst scenes of utter chaos in Bergamo on May 23 when the home side drew 1-1 with Atalanta after a massive pitch invasion.

As the match drew to an end police did nothing to prevent around two hundred fans, mostly from Atalanta's end, scaling the barriers and making their way along the sidelines.

They waited there for a few minutes before suddenly invading the pitch with three minutes of regulation time still to play.

The match finally restarted after a quarter of an hour of pandemonium, but neither side had any heart left for football.

Real Raul, Fernando Hierro and Predrag Mijatovic scored in their 3-1 beating of Atletico Madrid on June 14 to earn the club's 27th Spanish title.

Real gave their supporters the double satisfaction of not just winning the league but snatching the trophy directly back from city rivals Atletico in the process.

In a summer tug-of-war between Barca and Inter for Ronaldo, the Italian club won — but had to pay heavily for his services.

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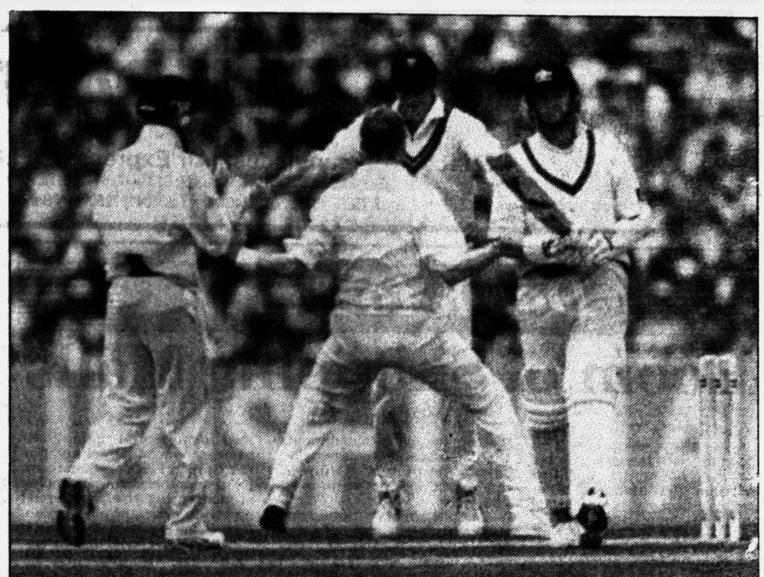
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GOT THE BIG ONE! South Africa's ace fast bowler Allan Donald (back to camera) is ecstatic after dismissing Aussie master batsman Mark Waugh (R) for a duck on the opening day of the Boxing Day Test at the MCG.

A taste of things to come

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Later, Iran were to win a play-off against Australia for the 32nd and final slot after two late goals earned them a 2-2 draw.

The two-leg play-off ended 3-3 on aggregate but Iran went through on the way goals rule, even though they were forced to defend desperately for much of the game.

Karim Bagheri and Khodadad Azizi, who scored late goals to level the match, danced with joy as the Iranian team carried out a lap of honour in front of the stunned 85,022 crowd in the giant Melbourne Cricket Ground.

The Australians, who hired former England manager Terry Venables on an expensive contract for the World Cup campaign, slumped to the ground in disbelief.

Takeshi Okada an emergency replacement who helped Japan win their first-ever ticket to the finals, was formally appointed in late November to coach the national squad through to France.

The executive board of the Japanese football association decided to sign Okada, 41, on an eight-month contract as head coach, rejecting their earlier idea of calling in a big name from Europe or South America.

The surprise strugglers into the finals were three-time champions Italy.

Coach Cesare Maldini admitted his team had to improve if they were to make any progress at the finals.

Italy ground out a 1-0 victory over Russia in their European play-off second leg match, but it was not an inspired performance and the Italian press were calling for changes the morning after.

It was a different story, however, for England who topped their qualifying group ahead of Italy.

England ushered in a new era in its footballing history on October 11 after taming Italy at the Olympic Stadium to reach the finals.

In one of their best displays since the 1990 finals, England showed the ball skills, the technique and tactical vision that their fans had long believed was the sole preserve of the continentals.

The inspired performances

from Paul Gascoigne, David Beckham and captain Paul Ince showed that ball control and possession are the new assets of the England game, and not just grit and determination.

But England will still need the striking ability of injury-limited Alan Shearer. Shearer believes he can still finish top scorers in France despite an horrendous injury which threatens to rule him out until March.

The England captain fractured his fibula, ruptured ligaments on both sides of his ankle, chipped a bone in his ankle and displaced the joint in a pre-season game in late July.

Pollution is threatening the safety of the Stade de France stadium, where defending champions Brazil will kick-off next year's event, an ecologist group was quoted in the French press.

Organisation spokesman Robin des Bois, quoted in Le Monde, claimed the 80,000-seat stadium, which raises the curtain on the Finals on June 10, has an inadequate system to protect the pitch from pollution.

The stadium is built on the site of a former gas station and needed major work to decontaminate the soil after tests revealed the extent of the pollution.

Robin des Bois believes highly toxic substances, including cyanide, are in the soil and that anti-pollution measures have been botched.

1997 also saw Diego Maradona's eighth retirement announcement.

The Argentine football great once again announced his retirement on October 30. The day of his 37th birthday.

Maradona said that his family was the most important thing in his life and that his decision was irreversible.

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It was also the first time an Italian club has not won one of the three European competitions since 1992 and gave Germany their second title after Schalke 04's UEFA Cup win a week earlier.

Schalke lifted the cup after beating Italian giants Inter Milan 4-1 in a penalty shoot-out before a packed San Siro crowd after a 1-1 draw.

Barcelona lifted the Cup Winners' Cup for a record fourth time in Rotterdam as they put

an end to Paris St Germain's dreams of becoming the first club ever to retain the trophy.

In a hard-fought but ultimately uninspiring encounter, Barca triumphed with a first-half penalty converted by FIFA-world-player-of-the-year Ronaldo.

That proved enough to secure the Catalan club their eighth win in European competition, equalling the record of their eternal rivals Real Madrid.

It was a sweet moment for coach Bobby Robson, who was later pushed upstairs into a backroom role to make way for Dutch coach Louis van Gaal.

Juve were crowned Italian champions amidst scenes of utter chaos in Bergamo on May 23 when the home side drew 1-1 with Atalanta after a massive pitch invasion.

As the match drew to an end police did nothing to prevent around two hundred fans, mostly from Atalanta's end, scaling the barriers and making their way along the sidelines.

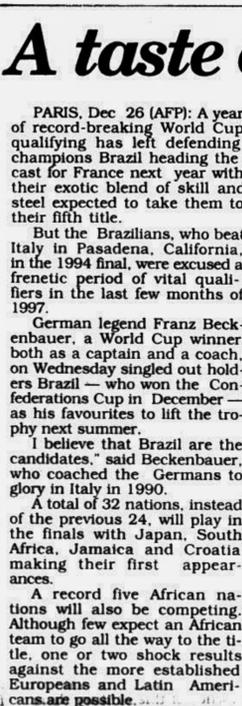
They waited there for a few minutes before suddenly invading the pitch with three minutes of regulation time still to play.

The match finally restarted after a quarter of an hour of pandemonium, but neither side had any heart left for football.

Real Raul, Fernando Hierro and Predrag Mijatovic scored in their 3-1 beating of Atletico Madrid on June 14 to earn the club's 27th Spanish title.

Real gave their supporters the double satisfaction of not just winning the league but snatching the trophy directly back from city rivals Atletico in the process.

In a summer tug-of-war between Barca and Inter for Ronaldo, the Italian club won — but had to pay heavily for his services.



FRANCE 98 COUPE DU MONDE

PARIS, Dec 26 (AFP): A year of record-breaking World Cup qualifying has left defending champions Brazil heading the cast for France next year with their exotic blend of skill and steel expected to take them to their fifth title.

But the Brazilians, who beat Italy in Pasadena, California, in the 1994 final, were excused a frenetic period of vital qualifiers in the last few months of 1997.

German legend Franz Beckenbauer, a World Cup winner both as a captain and a coach, on Wednesday singled out holders Brazil — who won the Confederations Cup in December — as his favourites to lift the trophy next summer.

I believe that Brazil are the candidates, said Beckenbauer, who coached the Germans to glory in Italy in 1990.

A total of 32 nations, instead of the previous 24, will play in the finals with Japan, South Africa, Jamaica and Croatia making their first appearances.

A record five African nations will also be competing. Although few expect an African team to go all the way to the title, one or two shock results against the more established Europeans and Latin Americans are possible.

FIFA general secretary Sepp Blatter could not have wished for a more balanced draw from Marseille's Stade Velodrome in early December.

Group D, which patches Spain, unbeaten in 38 matches since their 1994 World Cup quarter-final defeat to Italy, in against Olympic champions Nigeria, fancied Paraguay and still-potent Bulgaria is probably the toughest pool.

The prospective quarterfinal lineup could be: Brazil V Spain, Argentina V Holland, France V Italy and Germany V England.

The United States booked their ticket to France '98 in early November with a 3-0 victory in Canada, joining CONCACAF zone leaders Mexico who drew 3-3 in Costa Rica.

The Reggie Boyz of Jamaica were later to edge out El Salvador to reach their first finals.

Asian champions Saudi Arabia also earned a place in the finals from one of the three automatic spots from their continent — Japan and South Korea took the other two.

Saudi Arabia went through despite sacking coach Eduardo Vinigada halfway through the group matches, and bringing in Otto Pfister.

Later, Iran were to win a play-off against Australia for the 32nd and final slot after two late goals earned them a 2-2 draw.

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The two-leg play-off ended 3-3 on aggregate but Iran went through on the way goals rule, even though they were forced to defend desperately for much of the game.

Karim Bagheri and Khodadad Azizi, who scored late goals to level the match, danced with joy as the Iranian team carried out a lap of honour in front of the stunned 85,022 crowd in the giant Melbourne Cricket Ground.

The Australians, who hired former England manager Terry Venables on an expensive contract for the World Cup campaign, slumped to the ground in disbelief.

Takeshi Okada an emergency replacement who helped Japan win their first-ever ticket to the finals, was formally appointed in late November to coach the national squad through to France