

SPORTS LETTERS

WATCH THIS PAGE FRIDAYS

U-16 booters drub visitors

Sporting United FC of the United Kingdom suffered a 0-4 thrashing against Bangladesh under-16 team in their first friendly match at the Mirpur Stadium yesterday, reports UNB.

The national under-16 team dominated the first half and led 1-0 over the London-based team of resident Bangladeshis.

Hanif, Eco, Dipu and Azad scored one goal each for the local side.

Hanif opened the under-16 account in the ninth minute with a placing shot after dodging past opponent custodian Helal.

Eco doubled the margin in the 59th minute. A brilliant solo effort by Dipu in the 63rd minute saw his team go three up. He received the ball in the midfield and dodged past two opponent defenders before slotting home.

Azad completed the rout just three minutes before the final whistle scoring from a goal-mouth melee.

Sureth Mia of the visiting team got marching orders in the 56th minute after receiving second yellow card for rough tackling.

Referee: Montirul Haq Sporting United takes on the Bangladesh under-19 team in their second friendly match at the same venue today at 5 pm.

Portuguese football

LISBON, Apr 12 (AP): Results from the 29th round of the Portuguese First Division soccer league (home teams listed first): Friday's Games

- Campomaiorense 3, Sporting 5
Saturday's Games
Belenenses 2, Academica 0
Setubal 1, Rio Ave 0
Leca 0, Braga 0
Amadora 2, Farense 1
FC Porto 3, Chaves 1
Varzim 1, Guimaraes 2
Maritimo 1, Boavista 0
Salgueiros 0, Benfica 2
Sunday, April 18
Sporting vs Setubal
Boavista vs Varzim
Guimaraes vs FC Porto
Rio Ave vs Academica
Braga vs Campomaiorense
Farense vs Leca
Chaves vs Amadora
Benfica vs Maritimo
Salgueiros vs Belenenses



REJUVENATED: AC Milan's George Weah (shaven headed) leaps above the rest to head in one of his three goals during a Serie A match against Atlanta at the San Siro Stadium in Milan on Apr 11. Weah's hat-trick saw the local giants win 3-0. — AP/UNB photo

Barca just a whisker away

MADRID, Apr 12: Barcelona are only a win away from becoming the Spanish champions after a 2-1 victory at Merida on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Nearest rivals Real Madrid went down 2-1 at Celta Vigo to continue their dismal streak of not having won away from home this year.

Barcelona have 70 points from 33 matches while Real are a distant second with 56 points. The 14-point advantage means Barcelona can clinch their 15th Spanish league title if they win at home next Saturday against Real Zaragoza.

"It would be fitting if we could win it in front of our own fans," Barcelona captain Luis Figo said. The Catalan club were always the better side and had more than two-thirds of the possession during the first half.

They were, however, effectively smothered by the Merida defence. But the tide turned in their favour early in the second half. After 62 minutes Brazilian

striker Rivaldo unleashed a rasping free kick from outside the penalty area which beat the Merida wall and goalkeeper Carlos Montoya only to bounce of the post. Four minutes later Barcelona got the breakthrough.

Sonny Anderson crossed from the right and Portuguese international Figo was on hand to stab the ball into the net from close range.

Figo was also instrumental in Barcelona's second goal after 71 minutes. His intended cross after a solo effort down the left wing was meant for Anderson but the Brazilian was bundled to the floor before he could get to the ball.

However the ball had enough momentum to find the feet of Luis Enrique Martinez and the Spanish international midfielder slotted it home for his 18th goal of the season. Merida closed the gap 10 minutes from time after a lapse of concentration by Barcelona defender Albert Ferrer let through second half substitute Leo Biagini.

Biagini played a neat one-two with Juan Sabas and finished it off with a shot past the outstretched arms of Barcelona goalkeeper Ruud Hesp. Despite the victory, Barcelona coach Louis Van Gall may still have some harsh words for his team over their slack defending and the number of second half chances squandered including an astonishing miss in injury time by Rivaldo.

Figo found him unmarked but he blasted the ball over the bar from only a few metres. Ironically Figo, the outstanding player against Merida, will miss next Saturday's game after he collected his fifth yellow card on Tuesday at Real Betis.

They were quickly off the mark due to brilliant individual effort from Jose Mari Romero after two minutes. Their second goal was credited to the luckless Deportivo defender Paco Jemez who turned a Kiko Narvaez cross into his own net after 21 minutes.

Atletico went further ahead a minute from the break when Kiko was brought down in the penalty box by Armando Alvarez.

Santil Denia was successful from the spot but they failed to add to their 3-0 halftime tally in a disappointing second half.

Lens in French Cup final

PARIS, Apr 12: Lens took another step towards a domestic trophy on Saturday when they beat Lyon 2-0 to qualify for their first French Cup final in over 20 years, reports Reuters.

Two fine moves from playmaker Stephane Ziani in the 24th and 90th minutes boosted their chances of the league and cup double, two honors they have never won. The league leaders were far too consistent for Lyon, who faded away after a good start.

Ziani opened the scoring with a close-range shot from a pass by Czech striker Valdimir Smicer four minutes after Yugoslav Anto Drobnyak had hit the post.

Lyon pushed hard to equalize and had numerous opportunities before the break but Lens, who have not conceded a goal at their Felix Bollaert stadium in the last three months, got several fine saves from their goalkeeper, Guillaume Warmuz.

Ziani finished the job with his second goal in injury time putting Lens into their fourth cup final and their first since 1975.

Four times winner Paris St Germain host last year's finalist En Avant Guingamp in the other semifinal at the Parc Des Princes today. The final is at the Stade de France on May 2.

ICM'G H C J G J A Z W P A W C I J
J Z D "B Z D, H Z M!" G C
P Z A B C G B P W ?
Yesterday's Cryptiquip: THE FED-UP STILL-LIFE PAINTER WAS NOW SURE IT WAS TIME TO DRAW THE LIME.

Today's Cryptiquip clue: A equals C
The Cryptiquip 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.

UCBSA invites 2 cricketers for coaching

Sports Reporter
Two young cricketers Ehsanul Haq and Manjurul Islam will take part in a nearly two-month long coaching stint at Plascom Cricket Academy in South Africa.

Ehsan, a talented right-hand batsman and a useful off-spinner, and left-arm seamer Manjurul will train at the famous academy, considered as the oldest cricket coaching centre in the world which is run by the United Cricket Board of South Africa (UCBSA).

The course will begin in the first week of May and continue till September. But according to a faxed message received here at the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) office, the selected duo will be attending the Plascom Academy from May 5 to the last week of June.

Rajshahi cricket

From Our Correspondent
RAJSHAHI, Apr 12: Diganta Prosari Sangha and Upashahar Cricket Club won their respective matches in the Rajshahi First Division cricket super league today.

Diganta Prosari defeated Willow Krira Chakra by 24 runs at the Rajshahi Government College playground. In the second match, Upashahar Cricket Club beat Mukti Sangha by 40 runs at the Shaheed Qamruzzaman Stadium.

BRIEFSCORES
DIGANTA PRASARI: 233 all out in 43.4 overs (Tomal 14, Saad 60, Labbu 10, Dola 15, Sanwar 76, Saeb 22, Extras 16).

WILLOW KC: 209 all out in 41.5 overs (Sohrab Hossain Opi 52, Prince 12, Tarek 21, Shanu 46, Apollo 28, Azad 15, Tore 11, Extras 19).

Result: Diganta Prasari Sangha won by 24 runs. UPASHAHAR CRICKET CLUB: 203 all out in 41.4 overs (Tony 54, Berl 49, Rozel 27, Rana 23, Suman 16, Extras 23).

MUKTI SANGHA: 163 all out in 38.2 overs (Ripon 23, Moti 13, Babu 28, Topon 19, Tony 54, Rana 13, Extras 10). Result: Upashahar Cricket Club won by 40 runs.

Aslam killing condemned

Sports Reporter
Different sports organisations have condemned the murder of Aslam Sarder yesterday. Aslam, a joint-secretary of Brothers Union Club, was killed by hoodlums at the club premises in broad day-light on Saturday. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has expressed shock at the death of Aslam and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.

A former member of the BCB, Aslam has also represented the Gopibagh outfit in the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan this season.

Surjo Tarun and Arambagh Club also expressed outrage at the tragic death of Aslam, a former football player, whose namaz-e-janaza was held at the Brothers Union Club after Zohr prayers yesterday. Later, he was buried at the Azimpur graveyard.

Bundesliga roundup

MUNICH, Apr 12: Mehmet Scholl, Carsten Jancker and Lothar Matthaus tallied goals for Bayern Munich in the 3-1 win Saturday over cross-town rivals 1860 Munich, reports AP. The three teammates scored in the 39th, 43rd and 47th minutes, respectively, in Bundesliga action. Abderrahim Ouakil knocked one in for 1860 Munich in the 73rd to keep his team from leaving scoreless.

In Gelsenkirchen, VfB Stuttgart beat Schalke 4-3, despite Schalke's early 2-0 lead through goals in the first ten minutes from Marc Wilmots and Michael Goossens.

Jonathan Akpoborie and Gerhard Porchner tied it up for Stuttgart with goals in the 15th and 45th, respectively. Marco van Hoogdalein brought Schalke ahead again in the 46th, with Akpoborie tying it up again in the 69th. Frank Verlaat scored the game-winner off a corner kick in the 90th.

Elsewhere in the Bundesliga, visiting Werder Bremen beat Hertha Berlin in the capital 2-0. SV Hamburg downed Arminia Bielefeld, also by a 2-0 tally, at home.

FRANCE '98 SIDELINES

UNDATED, Apr 12 (AP): The Argentine national soccer team coach said Wednesday he wants his team to achieve at the France '98 World Cup a similar performance to the Atlanta Olympics.

We played really well in Atlanta," coach Daniel Passarella told reporters at a press conference. Argentina won the silver medal, losing the final to upstarts Nigeria.

Passarella said he will apply in France the same tactics as in the Olympics, with four defenders, three midfielders, an offensive midfielder and two strikers.

TROUSSIER, TOO TOUGH

New South African national soccer coach Philippe Troussier won't win any popularity contests. Marks Maponyane, a former player and now columnist for Johannesburg's Saturday Star, attended a training session and said Troussier bullied players and was generally disagreeable.

"His conduct has bordered on being downright rude," wrote Maponyane in Saturday's paper. Maponyane said Troussier's behaviour included screaming at the players and accusing them of making him look bad in the press.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

Pay us, or we won't play. Not to worry, Nigerian soccer officials say they'll soon pay late player bonuses — an issue that has threatened to derail preparations for Nigeria's entry in this year's World Cup.

The bonus was supposed to have been paid last year, when Nigeria became the first African team to qualify for the Cup. With player complaints mounting the Nigerian Football Association decided to finally pay the bonuses later this month. Radio Lagos reported Friday.

EDGAR MENDS HIS FENCES WITH GUUS

Midfielder Edgar Davids should be rejoining the Netherlands after a two-year absence. The 25-year-old player, who recovered from a broken leg to become a key midfielder for defending league champions Juventus said Friday he had resolved misunderstandings with Netherlands' coach Guus Hiddink.

"I'm likely to rejoin the national team before the World Cup. Now I want to think of the present and win titles with Juventus," he said. Davids is expected to play with the Dutch in a friendly against Cameroon on May 27.

BATISTUTA KEEPS ALL GUESSING

Argentine international striker Gabriel Batistuta could be leaving Fiorentina. Reports in Italy say Batistuta is being pursued by First Division Parma and several other teams for next season. "Parma is not the only team courting me," Batistuta was quoted by Milan's Gazzetta dello Sport as saying.

The Argentine forward said he would decide his future after the World Cup finals. An extension of his contract with Fiorentina is also possible, he said.

VIOREL UNHAPPY WITH ENGLAND

Out of shape. Blame it on England. That's the approach of Romanian Viorel Moldovan, who plays for Coventry City. Moldovan was asked to be taken off in the 67th minute of Romania's 2-1 win Wednesday over Greece.

"It was a surprise for me when I arrived in British to see that training sessions are much too easy," Viorel Moldovan told reporters after the game. "I have to train by myself. Moldovan said adding he hoped to be back to top fitness when he worked out with the national

MILAN MAKES BA WORRIED

AC Milan's poor season — eighth in Serie A is putting at risk Ibrahim Ba's place on France's World Cup team. "The French coach (Jacquet) looks at AC Milan standings and believes I am also doing poorly," the French player said.

GINOLA'S PLAN B Tottenham's French midfielder David Ginola will be at the World Cup — though may be only in the press box. Ginola has agreed to work for French television channel TF1 and Britain's BBC during the finals.

But that's Plan B. "I still hope people are going to open their eyes and see what I'm worth," Ginola said, referring to French coach Aime Jacquet.

Ginola last played for France in their final qualifier for the 1994 World Cup — when a last-minute goal by Bulgaria knocked the French out.

AUSSIES' COMPLAINT

Now the Australians are upset about the World Cup ticket situation. Australian soccer officials say they'll lodge an official complaint with the sport's world governing body FIFA following reports that tickets for this year's World Cup are selling for up to 10 times their original value.

"I think certainly Soccer Australia will be making representations to FIFA about this," Soccer Australia chairman David Hill said.

Dutch soccer

AMSTERDAM, Apr 12 (AP): Results Saturday from the 29th round of the Dutch First Division soccer league (home team listed first): NEC Nijmegen 2, Fortuna Sittard 2
Roada JC Kerkrade 2, FC Twente 0
Ajax Amsterdam 7, SC Heerenveen 2

SIX NO TRUMPS

A K Sayeedul Huq
A FINE CONTRACT BY NORTH (Hand # 13)

Table with 4 columns: West, North, East, South (D). Contains card symbols and counts for a Six No Trumps contract.

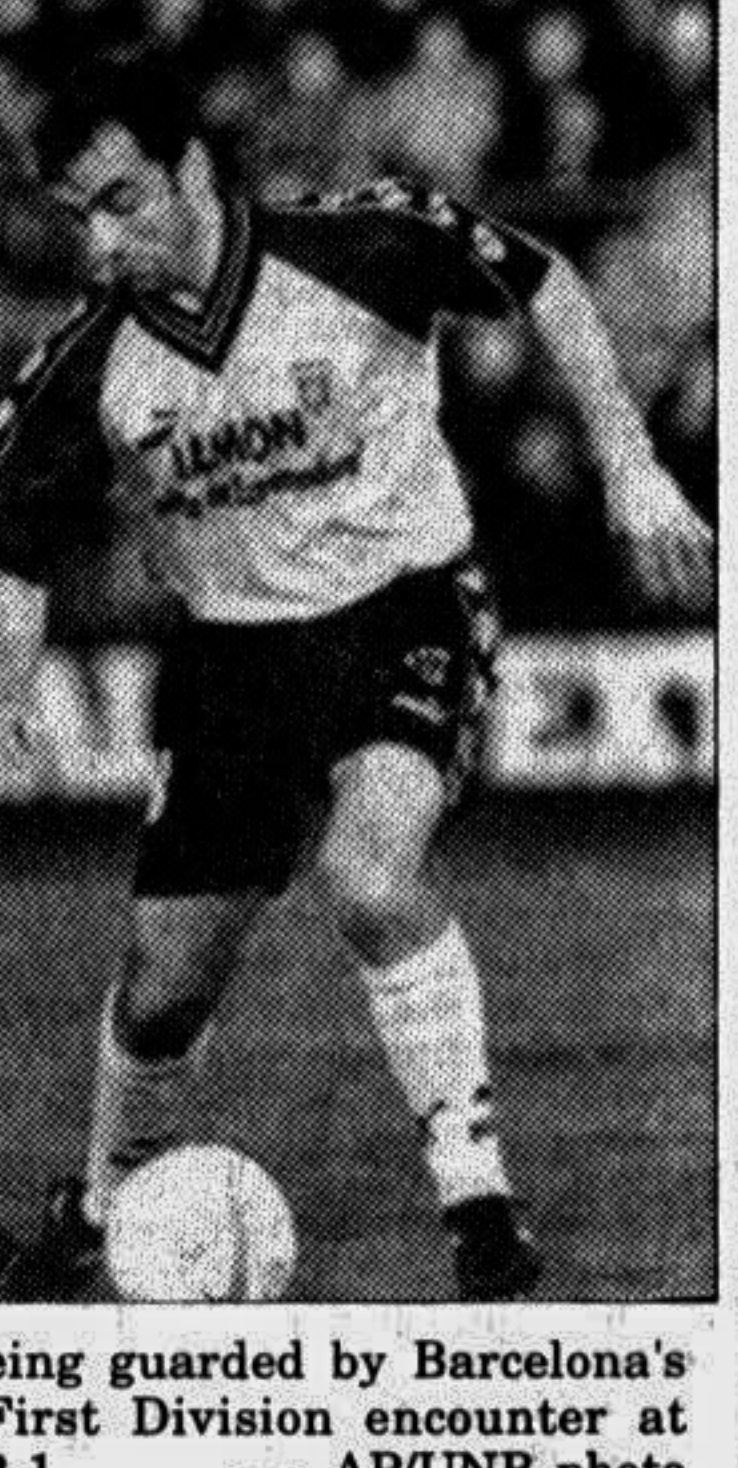
Bidding (East-West Vulnerable) table with columns for South (Saved), West (Akram), North (Mizan), East (Mazumdar) and rows for 1D*, 2C, 3C, Pass.

*Artificial
** Artificial, 7-9 HCP
South opened a minimum hand, and when North showed 7-9 points, he wanted to settle into a part game in Clubs. However, North pushed on to the game contract in No Trump on the assumption of 6 Club tricks in the South hand.
The Play
East opened a small Diamond from 5-card holding headed by Ace. The declarer took West's Q with the King and played the 10 of Clubs which was covered by East with the Queen and South took the trick with the King. He came to his hand with the Ace of Spades, and played 7 of Clubs; East played low, dummy 9 which won the trick. The rest was easy. The declarer made 6 Club, 1 Diamond, 1 Heart and 1 Spade trick for his 3NT.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptiquip puzzle with a grid and a list of letters to be substituted.



Merida's Juan Sabas (R) is being guarded by Barcelona's Roger Garcia in a Spanish First Division encounter at Merida on Apr 11. Barca won 2-1. — AP/UNB photo

Advertisement for The Daily Star World Cup Quiz '98, featuring Philips as the official supplier and Transcom Electronics Ltd. as the prize provider.

Competition Information, Prizes and Rules section for the World Cup Quiz '98.

Answers for Round One of the World Cup Quiz '98, including questions about the World Cup '98, Brazil, teams, and players.