

Division I Chess
Leonine now clear leaders

Sports Reporter
Leonine Chess Club maintained their lead in the First Division chess league with a 4-0 whitewash of Mahakkhal Prodeep Sangha in the 10th round held at the NSC chess room yesterday.

Leonine's Latvian Grand Master Ivars Raissis, who earlier in the 9th round tasted his first draw in the league with Brothers Union's Moniruzzaman on Wednesday, came back to his winning way with an easy victory over Monideep in the first board. Belarus Grandmaster Yuri Suleman continued with his superb form with his tenth successive win defeating Badrul in the second board.

Titus Club are still in third place with 28 points after defeating Kamalapur Samaj O' Krira Sangha in the tenth round.

Sheetal h'ball final today

Jatrabari Krira Chakra will take an Arambagh Krira Sangstha today in the final of the Sheetal First Division women handball league at the Dhakadondi Sultana Kamal Women's Complex at 3:30 pm, reports UNB.

President of the Bangladesh Olympic Association Mahbubur Rahman will witness the final as chief guest and distribute the prizes.

Jatrabari Krira Chakra moved into the final defeating Azad SC by 25-11 goals in the semi-final. The winners dominated the first half 16-4 goals.

Rozina netted 9 and Akherul 8 for the winners while Afruza scored 4 for the losers.

In the day's second semi-finals, Arambagh Krira Sangstha outplayed Vigarunnesa Noon School & College 22-11 after leading the first half 12-3.

Rebeka and Sarma scored 8 goals for the winners while Haslatia netted 7 goals for the losers.

The third place-decider between Azad SC and Vigarunnesa Noon School & College will also be held today at the same venue at 1:45 pm.

Sanath wants divorce

COLOMBO, Dec 17: Sri Lanka's star batsman Sanath Jayasuriya has moved a court here seeking divorce with Sumukhu Karunanayake on the grounds of malicious desertion barely six months after wedding reports PTI.

In his law suit filed last week, Jayasuriya accused Sumukhu, a former air-cranker air hostess, of cruel behaviour and said the continuation of the marital relationship was detrimental to his cricketing career.

The news of Jayasuriya's legal action for divorce was confirmed yesterday by sources in his family setting at rest weeks of speculation about the problems.

Ricky's belated realisation

MELBOURNE, Dec 17: Australian Test cricketer Ricky Ponting admitted today he made an error in not telling the Australian Cricket Board sooner about being offered money by a bookmaker in Sydney last year, reports AFP.

The bookmaker approached Ponting at a greyhound meeting and offered him a four-figure sum for information about team selections and pitch conditions. Ponting turned the offer down.

Ponting has been struggling in the Test series against England and is in danger of losing his place for the Boxing Day Test but denied his lack of form was connected to the betting scandal.

"I don't think so, it hasn't been playing on my mind at the crease and hopefully it won't affect me from here on," Ponting said.

"It's just been a concentration thing," Ponting said he told his manager about the approach and then decided to let the matter rest, believing it was not a serious issue.

But he informed ACB chief executive Malcolm Speed before the start last week of the Adelaide Test.

Speed said Ponting had offered the information just before it was revealed that fellow Test stars Shane Warne and Mark Waugh had accepted 11,000 dollars (6,600 US) from a bookmaker in Sri Lanka four years ago to provide similar information.

Two other former Test players, Australian Greg Matthews and New Zealander Danny Morrison have also said they were approached by bookmakers.

The ACB launches an inquiry next week into player conduct amid controversy over the bookmaker scandal which continues to ripple through the cricket world.

Windies on winning way

DURBAN, South Africa, Dec 17 (Reuters/Internet) - The West Indies recorded the first victory of their South African tour when they beat a Natal XI by eight wickets in a one-day game on Wednesday.

After dismissing the home side for a modest 120, the tourists knocked out 123 for two in just 25.3 overs.

Openers Clayton Lambert and Junior Murray did the bulk of the damage with an opening stand of 100 before Lambert was bowled by Desigan Reddy for 58 which came off 63 deliveries and included five fours and four sixes.

Murray finished with 46 not out as Shivnarine Chanderpaul hit Reddy for six over long-off to win the match.

The pace pacer Reddy, who went for 18 in his first over, finished with two for 34 off 3.3 overs.

Franklyn Rose put the West Indies on track for victory when he took three for 21 in an unbroken spell of 10 overs after overnight rain delayed the start of play for 50 minutes.

Rose's new ball partner Nixon McLean gave him solid support, taking three for 25.

The tourists failed to win any of their first seven matches and lost both Test matches, neither of which have featured Rose.

Rose dismissed opener Keith Forde, Jonny Rhodes and Mehmod Badat in an impressive performance that will impress selectors ahead of the third Test, which starts in Durban on December 26.

Former Test opener Andrew Hudson was the only home player to make any runs with a polished 38 off 50 balls.

WEST INDIES
C Lambert b Reddy 58
J Murray not out 46
D Ganga lbw b Reddy 3
S Chanderpaul not out 10
Extras (lb-4, w-5, nb-1) 123
Total (For two in 25.3 overs) 123

Did not bat: C Hooper, B Lara (captain), F Reifer, R Lewis, F Rose, N McLean, M Dillion, 113.

Bowler O M R W
McLean 7 1 25 3
Rose 10 1 35 1
Dillion 9 4 29 2
Lewis 8 0 29 2
Hooper 5 0 8 0

WEST INDIES
C Lambert b Reddy 58
J Murray not out 46
D Ganga lbw b Reddy 3
S Chanderpaul not out 10
Extras (lb-4, w-5, nb-1) 123
Total (For two in 25.3 overs) 123

Did not bat: C Hooper, B Lara (captain), F Reifer, R Lewis, F Rose, N McLean, M Dillion, 113.

Bowler O M R W
McLean 7 1 25 3
Rose 10 1 35 1
Dillion 9 4 29 2
Lewis 8 0 29 2
Hooper 5 0 8 0

WEST INDIES
C Lambert b Reddy 58
J Murray not out 46
D Ganga lbw b Reddy 3
S Chanderpaul not out 10
Extras (lb-4, w-5, nb-1) 123
Total (For two in 25.3 overs) 123

Did not bat: C Hooper, B Lara (captain), F Reifer, R Lewis, F Rose, N McLean, M Dillion, 113.

Bowler O M R W
McLean 7 1 25 3
Rose 10 1 35 1
Dillion 9 4 29 2
Lewis 8 0 29 2
Hooper 5 0 8 0

WEST INDIES
C Lambert b Reddy 58
J Murray not out 46
D Ganga lbw b Reddy 3
S Chanderpaul not out 10
Extras (lb-4, w-5, nb-1) 123
Total (For two in 25.3 overs) 123

Did not bat: C Hooper, B Lara (captain), F Reifer, R Lewis, F Rose, N McLean, M Dillion, 113.

Bowler O M R W
McLean 7 1 25 3
Rose 10 1 35 1
Dillion 9 4 29 2
Lewis 8 0 29 2
Hooper 5 0 8 0

WEST INDIES
C Lambert b Reddy 58
J Murray not out 46
D Ganga lbw b Reddy 3
S Chanderpaul not out 10
Extras (lb-4, w-5, nb-1) 123
Total (For two in 25.3 overs) 123

Did not bat: C Hooper, B Lara (captain), F Reifer, R Lewis, F Rose, N McLean, M Dillion, 113.

Bowler O M R W
McLean 7 1 25 3
Rose 10 1 35 1
Dillion 9 4 29 2
Lewis 8 0 29 2
Hooper 5 0 8 0

WEST INDIES
C Lambert b Reddy 58
J Murray not out 46
D Ganga lbw b Reddy 3
S Chanderpaul not out 10
Extras (lb-4, w-5, nb-1) 123
Total (For two in 25.3 overs) 123

Did not bat: C Hooper, B Lara (captain), F Reifer, R Lewis, F Rose, N McLean, M Dillion, 113.

Bowler O M R W
McLean 7 1 25 3
Rose 10 1 35 1
Dillion 9 4 29 2
Lewis 8 0 29 2
Hooper 5 0 8 0

WEST INDIES
C Lambert b Reddy 58
J Murray not out 46
D Ganga lbw b Reddy 3
S Chanderpaul not out 10
Extras (lb-4, w-5, nb-1) 123
Total (For two in 25.3 overs) 123

Did not bat: C Hooper, B Lara (captain), F Reifer, R Lewis, F Rose, N McLean, M Dillion, 113.

England's next fixture is a four-day match against an Australian XI in Hobart starting on Saturday.

Meanwhile, back home English cricket was castigated on Wednesday as negative, timid and hopelessly inadequate after Australia clinched the Ashes for the sixth successive series.

Few England fans were surprised by Australia's success but the abject manner of England's surrender was widely condemned.

Former England captain Bob Willis and Wisden editor Matthew Engel both questioned the work ethic preached by manager Graham Gooch and captain Alec Stewart.

"Maybe there has been too much hard labour," Willis wrote in the Daily Mail. "I cannot say I am a huge admirer of the extreme work ethic most associated with Gooch."

"It worked well for such a single-minded individual as him but it worries me that it might not be appropriate for everyone on what is still a long and gruelling tour."

Engel, commenting in The Guardian, said England seemed too terrified of failure to have a chance of success.

"Maybe it would help if England lightened up and discovered a little enjoyment and a little of their own cricketing individuality and self-expression," Engel said.

Simon Barnes, a columnist with the Times, said the culture of English cricket had gone badly wrong.

"In an awful way, an on-going collapse takes the blame away from personal failure," he wrote.

"I failed; but then so did everybody else, right? Right. So that's all right then."

Ian Botham, who played in the last England side to win a series against Australia in 1986/87, said England had been wrong to drop paceman Alex Tudor after his success in the second Test in Perth.

"We've got to stop being so bloody conservative and unadventurous in our selection," he wrote in the Mirror.

Writing in the Independent under the headline "Laughing stock of the world," Henry Blofeld said it had been embarrassing watching England struggle to compete.

"On this last day at the Adelaide Oval, I found myself wondering if I would ever again see England win back the Ashes," he said.

Comment in the tabloids was predictably harsh. The Express announced the death of English cricket and John Etheridge in the Sun said the explanation for England's failure was "withering simple."

"They ain't good enough," he said.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard in the limited over match between an Australian Prime Minister's XI and England on Thursday:

ENGLAND
Boucher c Richards b Harry 4
Stewart c Campbell b Creevey 34
Holloake c Campbell b Nicholson 0
Hick c Katich b Nicholson 6
Crawley c Campbell b Harry 0
Hussain c Creevey b Marsh 41
Hegg b Creevey 47
Cork c Katich b Harry 22
Croft not out 19
Fraser not out 23
Extras (fb-12, w-15, nb-2) 29
Total (For eight wickets in 50 overs) 225

Fall of wickets: 1-5: 2-8: 3-21: 4-26: 5-75: 6-107: 7-160: 8-196: 9-216: 10-209

Did not bat: A Mullally

Bowler O M R W
Harry 10 0 46 3
Nicholson 9 0 37 2
Creevey 9 0 32 2
Hansen 6 0 27 0
Marsh 10 0 33 1
Symonds 5 0 22 0
Taylor 1 0 16 0

PRIME MINISTER'S XI
Richards c Croft b Fraser 28
Campbell c Boucher b Mullally 0
Katich b Mullally 18
Symonds c Stewart b Fraser 10
Hodge b Holloake 12
Taylor c Boucher b Hick 25
Marsh c Boucher b Hick 7
Creevey c Hegg b Croft 74
Nicholson c Boucher b Hick 13
Hansen not out 1
Harry b Hick 14
Extras (b-4, lb-10, w-1, nb-2) 17
Total (All out in 48.4 overs) 209

Fall of wickets: 1-2: 2-2: 3-48: 4-52: 5-70: 6-105: 7-122: 8-185: 9-185: 10-209

Bowler O M R W
Fraser 10 2 40 2
Mullally 10 2 28 2
Cork 10 1 25 1
Holloake 6 0 41 1
Croft 10 0 49 0
Hick 2 4 12 3

Result: England won by 16 runs.



Lee Jin-Il of South Korea (R) crosses the finishline first to win the gold in the 800 metres of the Asian Games yesterday. — AP/UNB photo

Dhaka Club Blue retain nat'l bridge title

Dhaka Club Blue playing in the name A Samad's team have retained the national bridge championship yesterday, says a press release.

M Waliul Haque the senior most member of the team has earned the distinction of being a member of all the teams that won this championship for the last five consecutive years since 1994.

The eighteenth national bridge championship was inaugurated by Obaidul Quader, State Minister for Youth and Sports on December 10. Among others present were ASM Shahjahan, Secretary, Ministry of Sports, Samson H Chowdhury, Chairman, Square Group, Marjhar Jafri, president of the BF-FAAME & vice president of World Bridge Federation and Farooq Sobhan, President of BBF.

In all 24 teams out of which six from outside Dhaka participated. After 7 days of fighting over 475 deals, A Samad's team retained the title by defeating Kamal's team by 123 IMPs over a 96-board final. The Blue proved to be better in every aspect of the game like bidding handplay and defense. The Blue were captained by M A K Feroze Ahmed and the members were M Waliul Haque, Brig (Rtd) Azizul Haque, A T M Moazzam Hossain and Jahirul Haque.

While the runners-up were comprised of Shamshur Rahman Kamal, Moinul Islam, Rafiqul H Siddiqui Tultul & Mamun.

Samad was president of the Bangladesh Bridge Federation for 20 years and is currently sick. Let's all pray for his early recovery.

The event was sponsored by Square Group.

Walsh stabbed in the back!

LONDON, Dec 17 (Reuters/Internet): English county side Gloucestershire have withdrawn a new two-year contract offered to West Indies fast bowler Courtney Walsh.

Walsh has been at the club for the past 14 years and was leading wicket-taker in English first class cricket last season with 106.

But Gloucestershire were unhappy that he would miss part of next year playing in the World Cup.

BBC radio quoted the 36-year-old player, who this month became the third highest wicket-taker in Test cricket, as saying he had been "stabbed in the back" by the decision.

That drew an angry response from Gloucestershire chief executive Colin Sextstone.

"We don't know why he thinks that," he said. "We have been nothing but totally professional, everything has been communicated to Courtney in writing."

Gloucestershire are expected to seek an all-rounder, to be available all season, as their replacement foreign player.

Lloyd rebuts rift report

DURBAN, South Africa, Dec 17 (Reuters/Internet): West Indies team manager Clive Lloyd, faced with claims of a rift in his four party in South Africa, said on Thursday they were united in an attempt to overcome their wretched form.

The Jamaica Gleaner newspaper reported this week that some of the squad's more junior players were unhappy about a new salary scale arrived at after a pre-tour dispute over pay and conditions between the players and West Indies Cricket Board (WIBC).

It was agreed during crisis talks with the WIBC in London that players who had appeared in a certain number of Tests would be paid more than less experienced teammates.

"The problem (relating to defeats in the first two test matches against South Africa) has nothing to do with cricket," the Gleaner quoted an unnamed player as saying.

"It is the way things are going. There is no team spirit. Some of the players and the captain are hardly on speaking terms."

Other players contacted were unwilling to discuss the matter on or off the record.

However, Lloyd was adamant the squad was united in their quest to come back from their 2-0 series deficit in the remaining three Tests.

Pringle calls it a day

WELLINGTON, Dec 17: New Zealand medium-pace bowler Chris Pringle on Wednesday announced his retirement from representational cricket because of a continuing ankle injury, reports Reuters.

Pringle, 30, was a one-day specialist for New Zealand, taking more than 100 wickets in internationals.

His retirement from all but club cricket came at the start of his testimonial season.

Babylon, Credit Agricole win

Babylon Group and Credit Agricole Indosuez won their respective IPL Lights Professionals' Cup matches played at different city venues on Wednesday.



A delighted Jyotirmoyee Sikdar (R) of India acknowledges the crowd's applause after winning the gold in the 800 metres of the Asian Games yesterday. — AFP photo

Jyoti: India's golden girl

DELHI, Dec 17 (India Abroad News Service): "Jyotirmoyee who?" were two oft-repeated words heard across India after the television flashed the news of the new "golden girl" of Indian athletics.

Even veteran sports writers were looking at one another in the hope of gleaming some information on the new star on the Indian firmament, Jyotirmoyee Sikdar, who won for India its first gold medal at the Bangkok Asian Games by pipping her Chinese rival to the tape in the 1500 metre race. All that changed in a matter of four minutes and 12.82 seconds on Monday.

As her more illustrious compatriots like P.T. Usha and Rosa Kutty bit the dust of Bangkok's Thammasat University Stadium in the 400 metres, Sikdar ran the race of her life to win the gold medal, India's first athletics gold at the Asian Games in a dozen years.

Most superlative performance stories on the sporting arena have had and often miserable chapters to them. Sikdar's is no different. Born into a large family — she has three sisters and two brothers — Jyotirmoyee, affectionately known as Jyoti, had a tough childhood in the sleepy West Bengal village of Debagram in Nadia District. Her father Gurudas Sikdar's schoolteaching job fetched him just enough to feed the family, so any extra nourishment, such as a part of a budding athlete, was out.

Thus it was that when the Indian Railways offered her job, Jyoti was only too glad to take it. She had made her presence felt way back in 1992 when she won her first medal in the state championship. But thereafter she was not heard of till 1995 when she won the 800-metre gold medal in the Asian Track and Field Championships in Jakarta.

The gold medal brought further glory in the form of the Arjuna Award, the highest honour for Indian sports persons given away by the country's President.

Fame brought misery too, in the form of a run-in with a West Bengal athletics official. Life got too sticky for Sikdar to carry on with her favourite sport. It was either goodbye to the track or goodbye to West Bengal. Luckily for her, and in hindsight for India too, she chose the latter.

Jyoti left West Bengal and went south to Tamil Nadu. She continued to work at her running. She was selected to the Indian squad for the Atlanta Olympics, but instead of letting her run her favourite 800 metres, the officials put her in the relay team. The result: Early disqualification. This, more than any other, has ranked her ever since.

The Asiad gold will go a long way in alleviating that sense of loss. And Jyoti is not through with it yet. She still has the 600 metres to run. All India is waiting for what could be the icing on the Bangkok cake.

BANGKOK NOTEBOOK

BANGKOK, Dec 17 (AP): Athletes and officials at the Asian Games are big drinkers.

They're expected to down 1.7 million cans and bottles of soft drinks and drinking water during the 15-day event.

Daily, the Athletes Village is also supplied with 1,200 kilograms (2,640 pounds) of ice cubes to keep drinks cool where athletes go out to train.

The athletes can also use the ice for first aid in case they suffer any sporting injuries," says Choopong Klungsiri, a manager of the village where the Games' 6,000 athletes reside.

WEATHER WATCH
Soccer fans in Bangkok are hoping for foul weather. It may be the only way they'll be able to see the Thai team play China for an Asian Games bronze medal Saturday.

The event has been scheduled for Songkhla in southern Thailand and organisers say it would be unfair to switch the venue after all the preparations and tickets sales.

But the chairman of the Games' executive committee, Jurin Laksanawit, said that if storms or other weather problems surfaced it would be "reasonable for the technical committee to look for a new competition place."

ONLY THE BEST, PLEASE
Track performances may be better than ever, but fewer athletes are competing because countries want only their finest to take part in the Asian Games, says one of Asia's top sports officials.

Maurice R Nicholas, secretary-treasurer of the Asian Amateur Athletic Association, says the choice is left to national Olympic committees, which have generally opted to just bring potential winners rather than giving more athletes a chance to participate in the Games.

For the first time in the 47-year history of the Games, Singapore didn't send a single track

and field athlete to the Bangkok Games because none was deemed good enough.

NO AGE LIMIT TO STAY
The Asian Games are likely to stay with no age limit for soccer rather than conform to the Olympic Games, where only players under 23 compete. The age limit was first imposed at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, when the International Olympic Committee and the world soccer body decided it should give young players an opportunity to shine in world-class competition.

But Voravi Magudee, secretary-general of the Football Association of Thailand, says allowing players of all ages, including older World Cup participants, to compete enlivened matches at the Asian Games.

He said many teams had in fact sent younger players to the Bangkok Games. More than half of Japan's players are under 23, as are many on the Chinese and South Korean teams.

FIFA's three
ZURICH, Switzerland, Dec 17: Brazilian ace Ronaldo, Croatian star Davor Suker and French World Cup winner Zinedine Zidane were on the three contenders for the 1998 player-of-the-year award, reports AFP.

Football's international governing body said the winner would be announced at a gala evening in Barcelona on February 1.

Ronaldo has won the award — voted for by national team coaches — for the last two years. The other winners have been George Weah (Liberia, 1995), Romario (Brazil, 1994), Roberto Baggio (Italy, 1993), Marco van Basten (Holland, 1992) and Lothar Matthaus (Germany, 1991).

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer
ACROSS 41 Sulawesi co-star often
1 Joke steer O'Connor 10 Deserlike
4 Hide 43 It ain't 59 Caustic solution
9 Incessant dime DOWN 16 Bill
12 "Born in the..." 45 "Maltose Falcon" 2 Simile 20 Prejudice
13 Scout's master director center district
14 Expat 47 Indivisible 3 Xenon, e.g. 22 News, for short
15 Earl 48 Urugua-yan's year 4 TV exec Bocho 23 Ally of the Pilgrims
17 Sermon 49 Just like a man 6 Reply: abbr. 29 Sea eagle
18 "Hall" to Caesar 55 Jump for joy 7 Material for 9 Down 30 Transac-tion
19 Unimpor-tant person 56 Statute 57 Deteriorate 8 Reverses 9 Walls, 34 Singular spectacle? 37 Tenant
20 Green land 58 "Xena" Solution time: 27 min. 39 80th of a degree
21 Agile 59 Statute 57 Deteriorate 8 Reverses 9 Walls, 34 Singular spectacle? 37 Tenant
22 Green land 58 "Xena" Solution time: 27 min. 39 80th of a degree
23 Trimm'd quaff FEZ PALE CLAP
24 Trimm'd quaff AVE ODIN RAIL
25 Trimm'd quaff LES POND AIDA
31 "The Bells" — Mary's APE RAT
33 Bottom LEWIS ASH GAD
35 Needing line OVER THE MUSIC
36 Trick ARTHUR GLOAN
38 Selick or Seaver FORE MOOD INK
40 Gemet's letters AMIS ACRE FEE
WEDNESDAY'S ANSWER
53 Lamb's dam

CRYPTOQUIP
T D E X M U R , E U A M E N U J
N E M J D P A U U E U P E R L N J
G Y J G I E L G I T G Y J G I P X
Saturday's Cryptquip: HAVE YOU EVER HEARD LIGHTNING BUGS SAYING GOODBYE? *GOT TO GLOW NOW!
Today's Cryptquip clue: P equals W
The Cryptquip 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.