

SAFF tourney BFF picks 20

Bangladesh Football Federation yesterday announced a 20-member national football squad for the SAFF Championship which will begin April 22 in the Indian tourist town of Goa, reports UNB.

Independence Cup golf

The Independence Cup golf tournament was held at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday, says a press release.

A record number of participants took part. Vice-president of the club Major General Hasan Mashud Chowdhury inaugurated the event in the morning, gave away prizes later in the evening.

WINNERS' LIST

- Best score in par 3 holes: I T Kim
Best score in par 5 holes: Imran Ahmed
Longest drive: Imran Ahmed
Nearest to pin: Mrs Jin Sook Yoon

Lusty Lance foils NZ

NAPIER, New Zealand, Mar 27: Lance Klusener smashed the last ball of the innings for six to give South Africa victory over New Zealand in their fourth one-day international here Friday and level the six-match series, reports AFP.

South Africa's bowlers set up the win by bowling out New Zealand for 191 in 38.5 overs, in a game cut to 40 overs each by overnight rain.

South Africa seemed to be cruising to victory after Herschelle Bibbs hit 52 and Darryl Cullinan got 61. But New Zealand fought back to a winning position with some brilliant fielding, including an out-of-this-world catch by Nathan Astle.

With wickets tumbling South Africa needed 32 from the last three overs, 19 off the last two and 11 off the last.

SCOREBOARD

Table with columns for Bowler, O, M, R, W. Includes stats for Pollock, Donald, Elworthy, Kallis, Klusener, Benkenstein, Cronje.

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Hackett's superb show

BRISBANE, Mar 27: Australian Grant Hackett became the second-fastest 1500-metre freestyle swimmer in history while doubling Olympian Kieren Perkins was left shattered at the Australian Championships Saturday, reports AP.



Action from yesterday's Green Delta Insurance Premier Division hockey league match between Mohammedan Sporting Club and Usha Krira Chakra at the Moulana Bhasani Stadium yesterday. —Star photo

Keegan's moment of truth

LONDON, Mar 27: With a part-time, short-term coach at the helm for the first time, England face up to their biggest game since the World Cup knowing that a defeat against Poland at Wembley on Saturday will plunge the nation's soccer team into crisis, reports AP.

If Kevin Keegan's team loses, England will be five points behind both Poland and Sweden in the Euro 2000 qualifying group with little chance of making it to the finals.

Keegan, who is doing the job for only four games while he also runs Division Two Fulham, has impressed the players with his exuberance and positive thoughts on the game.

With Sweden expected to beat Luxembourg on Friday on Saturday, the two pacesetters could wind up with a maximum nine points from three games with England languishing far behind on four from four. The Poles and Swedes play their makeup game on Wednesday and a point apiece would mean England would be six behind both.

Only the group winners and best runner-up are guaranteed a place in the final with the other eight second-place finishers going into playoffs. Defeat on Saturday and England's qualifying chances are remote.

Keegan has downplayed the importance of Saturday's game, which is followed in June by group matches against Sweden and Bulgaria. After that, the terms of his short-term appointment will have ended.

Keegan has been distracted by injury problems which have robbed him of Liverpool strikers Michael Owen and Robbie Fowler, Tottenham winger Darren Anderton, Blackburn striker Chris Sutton, Leeds midfielder David Batty, Everton defender Andy Hinchcliffe and Arsenal defender Tony Adams.

It means that Keegan is virtually forced to play a strike-force of Alan Shearer and Andy Cole which looks a match-win-

ning duo and gives England a Newcastle past-and-present look. Keegan, who sold Cole to Manchester United and replaced him with Shearer for what was a then world record transfer fee of 15 million pounds (25 million dollars), is very enthusiastic about the partnership now it has been formed for the first time.

Alan and Andy have two things in common — character and wanting to win. It's a case of light the touchpaper and see what happens," Keegan said. "They get their goals in to tally different ways. Either the goalkeeper makes a good save or the net bulges."

Although this is Cole's fourth appearance for England — all under different coaches —



KEVIN KEEGAN

It is his first start and he's excited that Keegan is in charge. "He makes me feel 10 feet tall," said the Manchester United striker who has hit 20 goals for his club this season. "The circumstances of me leaving Newcastle was a bit strange and I was disappointed."

When Kevin sold me he said you're going to become a better player at Manchester United." Arsenal's Ray Parlour and Tottenham's Tim Sherwood could make their first appearances with Manchester United's David Beckham operating on the right and Liverpool's Real Madrid-bound Steve McManaman on the left.

The Poles bring a team based on the squad that won the Olympic silver medal squad in 1992 and so far has maximum points from two Euro 2000 games against Bulgaria and Luxembourg.

"This is a very, very big match for both sides and we would very much like to win it," said Polish FA vice-president Andrzej Fawelec. "If we can get a result it will be a big step towards qualification for Euro 2000."

But the Poles have never won a Wembley and their best result was a famous 1-1 tie in 1973 when they prevented England qualifying for the 1974 World Cup.

Coach Janusz Wojcik aims to go one better. Poland have not lost in nine games since he took over last year and a victory at Wembley will make him a big name, especially if the team qualifies for Euro 2000 championships.

But the Poles face the English without key striker Sylwester Czereszewski of Warsaw Legia who underwent minor knee surgery on Monday and also misses the game against the Swedes.

TEAMS

ENGLAND: David Seaman; Gary Neville, Tony Adams, Col Campbell, Graeme Le Saux; David Beckham, Ray Parlour, Tim Sherwood, Steve McManaman; Alan Shearer.

POLAND: Adam Matyszek; Tomasz Waldoch, Jacek Zieliński, Tomasz Lapinski, Krzysztof Ratajczyk; Tomasz Iwan, Jerzy Brzezczek, Piotr Swierczewski, Dariusz Adamczuk; Andrzej Juszkowiak, Wojciech Kowalczyk.

Yugoslav booters threaten boycott

LONDON, Mar 27(Reuters/Internet): NATO airstrikes on Yugoslavia threatened to trigger a boycott by Yugoslav soccer players on Friday as Real Madrid striker Predrag Mijatovic said he would not play for the European champions if the bombing continued.

The former national captain denied launching an organized political protest against the attacks but found immediate backing from colleagues playing for clubs across the continent.

Atletico Madrid midfielder Vladimir Jugovic and Real Sociedad striker Darko Kovacevic expressed their concern over NATO's action and Sasa Curcic, of England's Crystal Palace, picketed the gates of 10 Downing Street, home of British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

"If this continues then I won't play against Alaves (Real Madrid's next opponents). Nor will any Yugoslav play for their teams, as a matter of protest," Mijatovic told the SER radio station on Friday.

"I don't know if I can play football thinking that my family and countrymen are suffering. I don't know if I'm capable of playing football in those conditions."

Kovacevic said: "At the moment it's very difficult to play football. At the national team training camp we were talking about politics. We were all very worried."

"But we should get together again and talk about this." There was, however, criticism from one quarter, Radomir Antic, the Yugoslav who returned to Spanish football this week as Atletico Madrid coach, rejected Mijatovic's position.

"I think the best thing Yugoslavs can do to show their pride to the world is to play, despite the fact that we've all been affected by this and we don't understand it," said Antic.

Club soccer in Europe restarts late next week after two rounds of qualifiers for the 2000 European championship.

In Britain, Curcic expressed his concern for his family after his Downing Street protest on Thursday.

"Why should English and American airmen be killing our people and putting lives in danger? The nearest targets were 20 miles from my parents but missiles can go astray. I am very concerned for them. I am very concerned for everyone," Curcic was quoted as saying by the Daily Mail newspaper.

Girondins Bordeaux defender Nisa Saveljic has returned to Yugoslavia to look for his wife and two children after he discovered they had fled their home in Montenegro.

Defender Sinisa Mihajlovic, who plays for Italian Serie A leaders Lazio, said he was still considering the call for a boycott.

Mihajlovic's Lazio team mate Dajan Stankovic said: "I'm aware of the proposal but to be honest all my thoughts at the moment are with my mum and dad who are in Belgrade."

Lazio owner Sergio Cragnotti expressed sympathy. "We're ready to play even if we don't have Mihajlovic and Stankovic. It's important for the players to maintain their dignity and to follow their consciences," he said.

Mijatovic also received some support Dusan Ivkovic, the Serbian coach of Greek basketball team Olympiakos.

"I'm sorry about NATO's aggression against my country," he said. "It looks to me like a pathetic show with little kids dropping bombs like in a video game."

'Milo Signature Campaign' on

A 10-day signature campaign was launched yesterday to encourage the World Cup cricket team of the country, reports UNB.

The four-yearly cricket extravaganza begins in England from May 14 and Bangladesh will take part as ICC Trophy champions.

The campaign, dubbed as "Milo Signature Campaign" and organised by Nestle Bangladesh Limited, also aimed at school-going young boys.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Obaidul Quader inaugurated the programme by putting his signature first in the book. Sports journalists and other distinguished guests followed him.

Nestle's group product manager Sadat Reza and director and chief operative officer of its advertising firm Unitrend Limited Zulfikar Ahmed were present.

Under the programme, 20 university students will start collecting nearly one lakh signatures from the schools of different districts including Dhaka, Chittagong, Comilla, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Khulna and Bogra. This programme will begin from April 1.

Later, the signature book will be handed over to England-bound team before their departure in mid-April.

'Sister act' turns true

KEY BISCAIYNE, Florida, Mar 27: Sisters Venus and Serena Williams scored an impressive sweep and will meet in an unprecedented family final in the Lipton Championships, reports AP.

Serena came from behind in both sets to beat the ranked Martina Hingis of Switzerland, 6-4, 7-6. Three hours later, Venus completed a 6-4, 6-2 victory over five-time Lipton champion Steffi Graf of Germany.

The all-sister women's final Sunday will be the first since the Open era began in 1968. When asked who would win, Venus said: "A Williams."

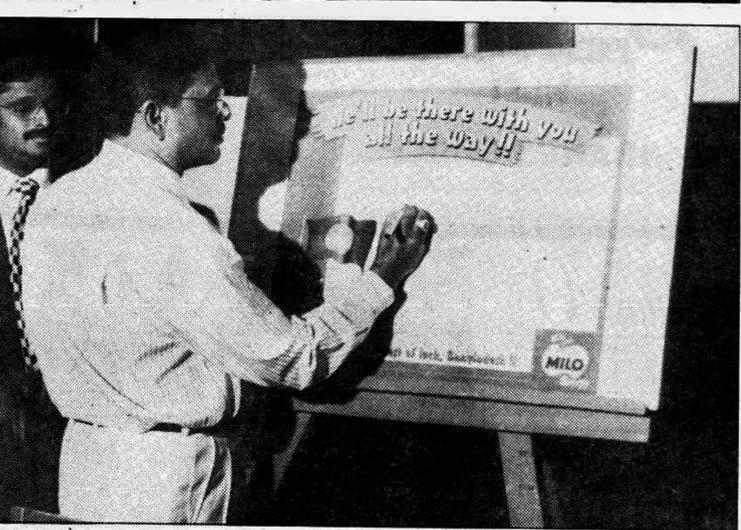
Serena rallied from a 4-0 deficit against Hingis to earn her 16th consecutive victory. She needs one more for her third tournament title in a row. "I've worked really hard all my life since I was 4 years old," said Serena, 17. "There comes a time you have to start winning. All my hard work is finally paying off."

Venus, 18, showed a new dimension in her powerful game by playing patiently and waiting for Graf to make mistakes. Williams dominated from the start, taking a 3-0 lead in each set, and broke Graf's serve six times.

Dutchman Richard Krajicek will try for his first US tournament title since 1993 when he plays unseeded Frenchman Sebastien Grosjean on Saturday.

Hingis, 2-0 previously against Serena Williams, was simply overpowered this time. Hingis' serve is the weakest part of her game, and the muscular Williams took advantage by repeatedly ripping return winners.

But Williams also was erratic. She made nine backhand errors in one game alone, an 18-point marathon. The margin was lopsided in her column for both unforced errors (49-14) and winners (48-11).



State Minister for Youth and Sports Obaidul Quader puts his signature while opening the "Milo Signature Campaign" in the city yesterday. —Star photo

Danes positive ahead of Italy clash

COPENHAGEN, Mar 27(Reuters/Internet): Denmark are confident they can overcome Italy in their do-or-die European group one qualifier on Saturday.

Even though Italy arrive with a 100 per cent record after two wins in their opening two qualifiers and Denmark have yet to win in three matches, the Danes believe they can win the game.

"We have our backs against the wall. We need to win," Denmark head coach Bo Johansson said.

And two Italian-based players, midfielders Thomas Joergensen of Udinese, are convinced Denmark can hold their own, providing they don't give the Italians too much space.

"We have to put pressure on them and we need to frustrate them," said Helveg, whose club mate Paolo Maldini will captain Italy.

Joergensen, an attacking midfielder who has inherited the retired Laudrup brothers' role as playmaker, said the key to at least a draw lay in eliminating Inter striker Roberto Baggio.

"He is the only one who can produce something completely unexpected," Joergensen said. Johansson is also taking heart from his team's 1-0 win over Croatia in a friendly earlier this year and is also pleased with the recent scoring form displayed by young Ajax Amsterdam striker Jasper Groenkaer and Brondby's Ebbe Sand.

Uncapped Groenkaer, 21, has found the net five times in his past four matches with Ajax. Sand scored the winner against Croatia and has also

scored three goals in Brondby's two latest matches. Tottenham midfielder Allan Nielsen is another player on a personal high after heading the last minute winner that gave

Wilkins joins Chelsea as Rix is jailed

LONDON, Mar 27(Reuters/Internet): Ray Wilkins was appointed temporary coach of premier league Chelsea on Friday after Graham Rix was sentenced to 12 months in jail for sex offences involving a 15-year-old girl.

The club said they were keeping Rix's job open but the former Chelsea and England captain would act as Italian Gianluca Vialli's assistant in the meantime.

Rix's sentence came as a blow to Chelsea and player-manager Vialli as they prepare for their forthcoming European Cup Winner's Cup semifinal.

Wilkins, who has had generally unsuccessful managerial jobs with Queen's Park Rangers, Crystal Palace and Fulham, is a close friend and former international colleague of Rix and is a familiar face to the Chelsea players.

He is also a friend of Vialli, from his time in Italian soccer in the 1980s with AC Milan. "It's very pleasant to be back here. Under different circumstances, I'd have loved it," he told Chelsea club official. "I've known Graham for many a year, we've been buddies for a long, long time."

Spurs a 1-0 win over Leicester City in the English League Cup Final last Sunday.

Chelsea's Bjarnar Goldback as well as Duisburg's Stig Toefling have also hit top form for their clubs this spring.

"Denmark have a good team. I have no doubt that it will be difficult for us," Italian coach Dino Zoff said.

"I have my ideas about how to make it hard for them. Our intention is definitely to go for a draw," he said, adding that Manchester United's Danish goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel was a formidable opponent.

Schmeichel was a key figure when Manchester United thwarted Inter Milan 3-1 on aggregate in the quarter-finals of the European Champions' League earlier this month. Baggio is the only Inter player on the Italian national team.

Zoff's task is not made easier by the absence of Lazio striker Christian Vieri with a broken toe. Regular first-choice goalkeeper Angelo Peruzzi is also injured.

Zoff will be keen to avoid new sick-list entries on Saturday as Italy face Belarus at home at Ancona in their next qualifier next Wednesday.

Chile's new Olympic boss

SANTIAGO, Mar 27: Former senator Ricardo Navarrete was elected president of Chile's Olympic Committee Friday, reports AFP.

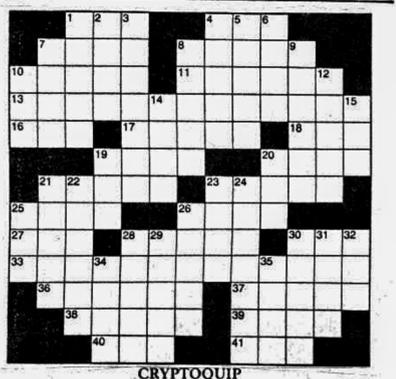
He replaces disgraced Sergio Santander Fantiini — one of the six IOC members expelled from the organisation earlier this month for their role in the Salt Lake City corruption scandal.



Indian batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar standing next to a mega-size replica of a gold medalion during its launching ceremony in Mumbai on March 26. The medalion, priced at 106 dollars, has been launched to commemorate this year's World Cup. —AFP photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS: 1 Pas partners; 4 Norm; 7 Mongolian desert; 8 Secretive types; 10 Sheik's retreat; 11 Mexican entree; 13 TV soap; 16 Some movie ratings; 17 Light unit; 18 Compete; 19 Gets stuck; 20 Tennis star; 21 Frighien; 23 Market-place of yore; 25 Garbage barge; 26 Strong as; 27 Hoff's; 28 Vemicelli, e.g.



CRYPTOQUIP: N W D - S U S P N O M G L A O L - A G J G R O P W M U J S N U X - A U X X U J R V W D ? N O - P L G V P W L S W D J - Yesterday's Cryptogram: THE GLEEFUL CONDUCTOR WOULD OFTEN CALL THE DINING CAR A CHEW-CHEW TRAIN. Today's Cryptogram clue: R equals G. The Cryptogram 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.