

Town Club reach Super League

From Our Correspondent RAJSHAHI, Apr 8: Town Club advanced into the Super League of the First Division cricket with a comprehensive eight-wicket win over Kazihata Sporting Club at the local Stadium here today.

Nat'l youth cricket

Khulna moved into the group final of the 19th national youth cricket championship earning an impressive 66-run victory against Tangail at the Kushtia Stadium yesterday, reports UNB.

In the group final they will play against the winners of the Sylhet-Comilla match beginning today at the same venue. Chasing Khulna's mammoth total of 383, Tangail were all out for 317 runs in 76.3 overs.

BRIEF SCORE

KHULNA: 383/10 in 77.3 overs (Haq 122, Aslam 72, Seim 52, Saiful 42; Manik 5/57, Sumon 3/55, Uttam 2/72). TANGAIL: 317/10 in 76.3 overs (Arafat 66, Rashidul 65, Sumon 49, Jamir 33; Milton 5/45, Saiful 2/47, Shaon 2/57).

Ankur in cup final

Sports Reporter Ankur moved into the Cup final of the 2nd KB Rai U-13 cricket tournament, with a 41-run victory over Kalabagan CA (Red) at the Kalabagan playground yesterday.

Sent into bat, the Ankur amassed 150 for nine in the stipulated 25 overs with opener Mustafiz notching the highest 30. In reply, the hosts were all out for 109 in 23.4 overs.

Ntini denies rape charge in court

EAST LONDON, South Africa, Apr 8 (AFP/Internet): Top South African cricketer Makhaya Ntini on Wednesday firmly denied raping a 22-year-old woman last year in evidence to the Magistrates Court in this coastal city.

The 21-year-old fast-medium bowler, the only black player included in this year's World Cup squad, told the court that he had merely given the woman a lift in his car in the rain.

Becker in last eight

HONG KONG, Apr 8: Wimbledon-bound Boris Becker showed all the zest and fire of old as he comfortably advanced into the quarterfinals of the 350,000 US-dollar Hong Kong Open here today, reports AFP.

The former world number one and three-time Wimbledon champion defeated South African Wayne Ferreira 6-4, 7-6 to set up a clash with Italy's Laurence Tielemans in the next round.

Semi-retired from the ATP Tour after a sparkling 15-year career, Becker re-affirmed his desire to hang up his racket at Wimbledon in June after defeating Ferreira. "I made up my mind last Christmas that I would play for six more months. This year's Wimbledon will be my only and last Grand Slam," said Becker.



Ghana's Rahman (C) Issah being tackled by Argentina's Daniel Montenegro (R) their World Youth during Championship match on April 7. — Internet photo

Ghana serves a stunner

LAGOS, Apr 8 (Reuters/Internet): Holders Argentina slumped to a 1-0 defeat against Ghana in soccer's world youth championship on Wednesday while host nation Nigeria overcame Germany 2-0 for their first victory.

Mexico became the first team to guarantee a second-round place by beating Australia 3-1. Croatia hammered Kazakhstan 5-1, and Ireland and Paraguay both won for the first time, beating Saudi Arabia and Costa Rica respectively.

The organisers suffered something of an off-day, with four of the six matches taking place in empty stadiums and a mammoth traffic jam forming near the stadium in Lagos after police blocked off a key flyover. A late goal by Peter Olori-Quaye gave Ghana victory in the group B game in Kaduna against the South Americans, who have won the last two world youth championships.

Paraguay then overcame Costa Rica 3-1 in an absorbing match, goals by Roque Santa Cruz, Nelson Vera and Nelson Cuevas putting them level on three points with Germany and one behind Nigeria in group A. Costa Rica have one point.

Bayern stage late rally

KIEV, Apr 8 (Reuters/Internet): Carsten Jancker hit a last-minute equaliser to give Bayern Munich a hard-fought 3-3 draw at Dynamo Kiev in their European Cup semifinal first leg on Wednesday.

The German striker fought off two defenders and slid the ball past keeper Olexander Shovkovsky to swing the tie strongly in Munich's favour. Bayern, who trailed 2-0 in the first half and 3-1 in 12 minutes remaining, were always positive and continued to go forward after Stefan Effenberg made it 3-2 in the 78th minute with a superb free kick.

"I think we deserved this result," said Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld. "I take my hat off to my players. They never gave up and, despite twice being two goals down, kept on fighting. I think now we have a very good chance of going through."

However, Ukrainian coach Valery Lobanovsky refused to concede the tie. "Hitzfeld is a great coach and I give him credit for his team's fighting spirit," he said. "But I disagree with him on our chances. I still think it's a 50/50 chance for either team."

Dynamo looked well in command for the first and for much of the second half. Andriy Shevchenko, the striker all Europe is chasing, set them on their way in the 15th minute when he broke clear and calmly slotted past Oliver Kahn.

Georgian defender Kakha Kaladze doubled Dynamo's lead, deflecting in Shevchenko's free kick in the 43rd minute. Michael Tarnat reduced the deficit on the stroke of half time with a powerful free kick but Vitaly Kosovsky restored a two-goal cushion for Kiev four minutes after the interval with a stunning volley from a right-side cross.

Div II cricket

Telgaon CA, Nabin Sangha and Kakral Boys Club won their respective Acme Second Division cricket league encounters at different city grounds yesterday, reports APB.

Grow up or go home

FLORENCE, Italy, Apr 8 (Reuters/Internet): Fiorentina coach Giovanni Trapattoni has publicly criticised mercurial Brazilian striker Edmundo, telling him to grow up or go home.



EDMUNDO

Gazzetta dello Sport daily newspaper said on Thursday that Trapattoni vented his anger at Edmundo in front of a few hundred fans during practice on Wednesday. "Dear Edmundo, it's time to stop screwing around," Trapattoni was reported to have told Edmundo.

"If you don't want to play any more, then just talk about it with the chairman and ask to be transferred," the coach said. "We have all had to put up with you all year long. Now it's time you grew up and became responsible because, without a head on your shoulders, you won't get anywhere - despite your talent," Trapattoni said.

Edmundo has repeatedly said he wants to return to Brazil and he engaged team-mates by missing three key games to attend the Rio de Janeiro carnival in February. The 27-year-old striker has been a mixed blessing this season for Fiorentina, who are six points behind Serie A leaders Lazio. While shining early on alongside strike partner Gabriel Batistuta, he has failed to find form since returning from the February carnival. Edmundo has spoken openly about wanting to leave Italy.

He is reportedly ostracised by his team mates, who felt betrayed when he left at a key moment in the season to attend the carnival, just when Batistuta was ruled out with an injury. "I never talk to him off the pitch - what's the use?" Batistuta was quoted as telling Gazzetta last week.

Inter-district kabadi

Dinajpur and Tangail reached the semifinals of the Green Delta inter-district kabadi tournament that began yesterday at the Outer Stadium, reports UNB.

Earlier, President of Bangladesh Amateur Kabadi Federation Habibur Rahman Mollah, MP, inaugurated the three-day meet. Dinajpur, who beat Mymensingh 60-21 (first half 35-7) with four creditable lonas in the morning confirmed their semifinal berth defeating Comilla 99-35 (first half 69-9) with six lonas.

Tangail, who earned a 71-41 points victory over Joypurhar (first half 46-12) with four lonas in the inaugural match in the morning advanced to the semis beating Sathkira 66-42 (first half 34-23) with four lonas in the afternoon. In the day's other two matches, Sathkira and Comilla got walkover against Moulvibazar and Pirojpur at the same venue.

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Sachin feels no pain at all

MUMBAI, Apr 8: India's prolific run-getter, Sachin Tendulkar today said the pain in his back has completely subsided and he was feeling totally fit. Sachin, who has started practising twice a day at the Brabourne Stadium (Cricket Club of India) here, told PTI after the nets that he was completely fit and the pain in his back has vanished.

The ace batsman, who was suffering from back spasms and was treated by a specialist in England Dr. Ken Kennedy, missed two important triangular series at home and at Sharjah. Meanwhile, the cricket board president, Raj Singh Durgapur confirmed here that Sachin has recovered completely and he is looking forward to the May-June World Cup in England. "Sachin sometimes bats twice at the nets and has no problem with his back," Durgapur added.



Antonio Conte (L) about to score for Juventus while Manchester United captain Roy Keane watches helplessly during their European Champions' League semifinal first leg fixture at Old Trafford on April 7. — AFP photo

Kyoto 'keeper's distinction

TOKYO, Apr 8: J-League goalkeeper Shigetatsu Matsunaga has kicked the ball more than 90 metres (300 feet) into the records books, scoring the longest goal by a Japanese Premier league player, reports AFP.

Matsunaga of Kyoto Purple Sanga punted from the edge of his penalty area down a rain-drenched field in the 80th minute of a night match against Montedio Yamagata in Yamagata on Wednesday. The ball landed 20 metres (66 feet) from the line and bounced over the Montedio 'keeper's head and into the net. Kyoto won the Nabisco Cup first round match 5-0.

"A major coup, of course, I have never scored a goal," said the 36-year-old former international with 40 caps. "I kicked down the line simply because there was no other place to place the ball," he said. "Thinking about how the goalkeeper feels on the other side, I can't be all that happy."

Kiev fans still see hope

KIEV, Apr 8 (Reuters/Internet): Heart-broken Dynamo Kiev fans kept their hopes alive and even taciturn coach Valery Lobanovsky still rated his side's chances on Thursday despite their 3-3 draw with Bayern Munich.

With just minutes to go in Wednesday's European Cup semifinal first leg, Dynamo appeared set to cruise to a comfortable home win. But having twice led by two goals, they squandered their advantage. "We just gave it away in the last few minutes," moaned one young Kiev fan, wrapped in a blue-and-yellow Ukrainian flag, on his way out after the draw.

"It's a pity -- we let go of the match we had already won," said veteran soccer columnist Yevgeny Belozorov from the national sports weekly Komanda. "The Germans were lucky." Bayern president Franz Beckenbauer took a similar view. "We made a lot of mistakes," he said. "When you offer two goals to your opponents, you can only be lucky to get a draw."

Camara could leave for Liverpool

MARSEILLE, France, Apr 8 (Reuters/Internet): Marseille striker Tito Camara could join Liverpool at the end of the season, club sources said. "The contacts have reached their final stage and Tito Camara could join Liverpool, as soon as the French league is over," the sources said.

Juve grab an away goal

MANCHESTER, England, Apr 8: Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson is still dreaming of a place in the final despite his side being held 1-1 by Italian side Juventus in their Champions' League semi-final first leg at Old Trafford on Wednesday, reports AFP.

United looking to reach their first European Cup final since 1968, needed a stoppage time equaliser from Ryan Giggs to prevent Juventus taking a giant step towards their fourth final in succession. The Italians pinned a vital away goal after 25 minutes through Antonio Conte and looked the better side for much of the game in front of a near 55,000 crowd.

But Ferguson, ever confident in his 47-goal strike force of Dwight Yorke and Andy Cole away from home, reckons his treble-seeking side can score in turning in the second leg in a fortnight. "I think it gives us a great chance," said the Scot, who said at half-time he would have settled for a 1-1 draw. "We can always score. They gave us a real hard time on the counter-attack in the first half -- we got caught on the break and I'm disappointed about that."

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Zidane was finding plenty of space in front of the United back four and just before the break the Frenchman crossed for Inzaghi whose shot fizzed just past the post. "United needed a positive start to the second half and got it. Substitute Ronny Johnsen headed a Beckham free-kick over and then both Cole and Paul Scholes cleared Angelo Peruzzi's bar with shots.

The Italian shot stopper pushed over another whipped Beckham delivery and Cole slashed a shot across goal as the hour mark approached with United developing some momentum. Roy Keane drilled in a low right footer which Peruzzi safely gathered but despite the home side's pressure Juventus looked comfortable at the back. United fans screamed for a penalty with 15 minutes left when Giggs's shot struck Mark Juliano's hand but Spanish referee Manuel Vega was unmoved.

At the other Zidane dragged a shot wide and Alex Ferguson hauled off top scorer Dwight Yorke, who hardly had a kick bringing on Teddy Sheringham in his place. The move appeared to have paid off after 86 minutes when Cole laid the ball back to Keane whose shot hit the bar in the past Peruzzi and in.

The United players celebrated but the linesman, belatedly, raised his flag and Juve escaped, momentarily. "The linesman flagged well after the ball was in the net," complained Ferguson afterwards. "It was very, very late."

United stormed forward regardless and Scholes should have equalised with a close range header before Beckham hooked the ball across and via two flick-ons it fell kindly for Giggs to ram high into Peruzzi's net.

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Erratic Capriati bows out

AMELIA ISLAND, Florida, Apr 8 (Reuters/Internet): Jennifer Capriati squandered opportunities to give her sagging tennis career a major boost Wednesday night against Russian Anna Kournikova at the Bausch & Lomb Championships on Wednesday.

Kournikova, the ninth seed, rallied from a break down in both sets and capitalised on the 23-year-old Floridian's unforced errors on critical points to win 6-3, 6-3 and advance to the round of 16. "I had more than my share of chances," said Capriati, ranked 81st in the world. "I was in there with her. Anna played well on a lot of balls, but I ended up making the errors. That's still from a lack of playing matches. I felt like I was rushing my own game. She wasn't doing anything."

"She has no rhythm, she plays a strange game," Kournikova said. "It's difficult to play a player like that. You never know what to expect. She could hit winners from the baseline and miss easy shots. On the important points, she missed. "Maybe she's not prepared mentally. She tried to rush a lot and I tried to be patient. That's why I won."

Kournikova, who lost to top-ranked Martina Hingis in the finals last week at Hilton Head, will face Davenport for the first time since losing 7-5 6-3 to her last year in the Bausch & Lomb quarter-finals. Davenport had the day off after winning her second-round match on Tuesday. Four of the six seeded players in action Wednesday advanced to the round of 16. Besides Kournikova, defending champion and fourth seed Mary Pierce of France cruised to a 6-0, 6-0 victory over Romania's Catalina Cristea. Fifth-seeded Amanda Coetzer of South Africa and 10th-seeded Chanda Rubin of the United States also advanced with straight-set victories. But 13th seed Lisa Raymond and 16th seed Iva Majoli of Croatia faded in the third sets of their matches.

Kournikova, who has a residence in Miami, was content to let Capriati self-destruct in their first meeting. "I had taken my time and been more relaxed, it might have been different." Kournikova, who now advances to face top-seeded Lindsay Davenport, trailed 3-2 in the first set and 2-0 in the second, but rallied both times on the clay surface to win the next four games and regain control of the match. Capriati's frustration at making too many unforced errors finally struck a nerve after she missed a backhand on the next-to-last point when she mumbled to herself: "Give her the ----- match."



JENNIFER CAPRIATI

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer. Includes crossword clues and solutions. Solution time: 23 mins. Includes a cryptogram puzzle and its solution.