

Div I soccer

Agrani Bank Club recorded their first victory in the Keya Metropolitan First Division Football League...

TODAY'S MATCH

Victoria SC vs Dhaka Wanderers Club 4 pm Mirpur Stadium.

Eleven athletic officials resign

Eleven elected members of Bangladesh Amateur Athletics Federation resigned yesterday...

Three vice-presidents and eight executive committee members of the federation in a press release...

Earlier, general secretary of the federation Golam Rasul Mollah was relieved of his post following a scandal with a female athlete.

Ousted Bari still hopeful

KARACHI, July 18 (Reuters/Internet): Pakistan's ousted chief selector Wasim Bari believes his country's cricket future is still bright...

Bari, who lost his position when Pakistan President Rafiq Tarar abruptly suspended the PCB on Friday...

"We have six youngsters in the team. It is the most talented team, if I may say, in the world," said Bari...

Pakistan were all out for 132 and Australia knocked off the runs in 20.1 overs in the most one-sided final...

Bari, speaking after an award ceremony for vice-captain Moin Khan, said the accusations were unfair...

They achieved Test victories over India and Sri Lanka and won a triangular limited overs tournament in Sharjah...

"I really don't want to comment on that. My job was to select the team," he said.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Moin also declined to comment. The suspension of the country's cricket board is the second in this decade...

Senamuang sent back

BANGKOK, July 18: Thai football star Kiatsak Senamuang flew into Bangkok Sunday vowing to fight on for a professional career...

"I am not disappointed -- I'm not very sorry, but it is a pity," he said as he returned home after a two-week trial.

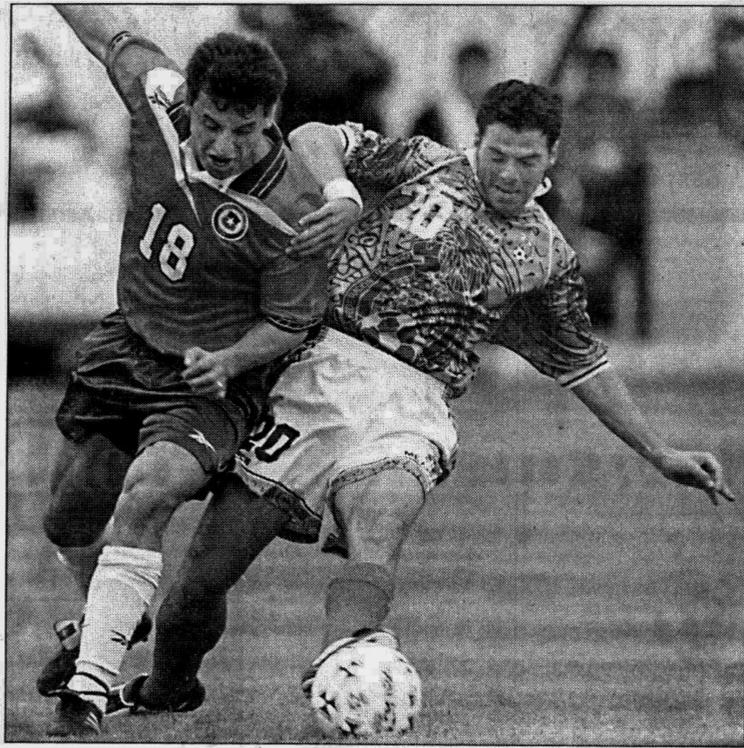
"It is my dream to play professional. I will make it one day."

Middlesbrough assistant manager Viv Anderson said the club felt the 26-year-old striker was "not quite right for the Premiership."

Kiatsak's trial with the northern English club was hampered by a mixup over registration papers which ruled him out of a practice match.

But he said his spell in a training camp alongside stars like Paul Gascoigne and Middlesbrough manager Bryan Robson would boost his career and the fortunes of the Thai national team.

Kiatsak, nicknamed "Zico" after the great Brazilian, captured Thai hearts when he led the national team to the gold medal at the Southeast Asian Games in Singapore six years ago.



Mexico's Rafael Garcia(R) clearing the ball from Chilean striker Pedro Gonzalez during their third place decider of the Copa America at Asuncion on July 17.

Arjuna aims at politics

COLOMBO, July 18 (AFP): Sri Lanka's sacked skipper Arjuna Ranatunga has said he is currently studying politics and will follow in the footsteps of his deputy minister father when he retires from cricket.

In an interview with the English language Sunday Leader, Ranatunga, 35, said although his father Reggie Ranatunga is a deputy from the ruling People's Alliance, it was too early for him to decide which party to join.

"Right now my interest is in cricket. But after my retirement I might enter the political arena. After all, my father and brother are politicians," Ranatunga said.

Ranatunga was earlier reported to have had a brush with an uncle of President Chandrika Kumaratunga who unsuccessfully contested the presidency of the Cricket Board in March.

Ranatunga, who won the World Cup for Sri Lanka by leading the national team to a seven-wicket victory against Australia in 1996, was sacked from the captaincy after the team's dismal defence at the latest tournament in England.

Like most Sri Lankan politicians, Ranatunga is also a fan of the Indian God Man Sai Baba. Ranatunga said he had been granted audiences by Sai

Baba on more than six occasions. "It is too early for me to decide the party I will join if I decide to become a politician," Ranatunga said, adding traditionally his family had supported the "Bandaranaike."

President Kumaratunga's assassinated father Solomon Bandaranaike formed the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and won for the first time in 1956.

"We had nothing to do with that and although some invitations went under the cricket board letterheads, it was a misunderstanding," Wijetilleke said. "Those letters were retracted."

"We advised (new captain) Sanath Jayasuriya not to attend that meeting and he took our advice."

Ranatunga spoke of a conspiracy led by unidentified people to undermine him as well as cricket in the country. He said he did not have sufficient evidence to back his claim but would later disclose the names of those involved.

He said he was also unsure of being picked to play under Jayasuriya because the final decision lay with the national selectors who had, however, named him in a 30-member panel eligible for selection.

Apart from Jayasuriya, two other seniors -- Roshan Mahanama and Hashan Tillekeratne -- were also conspicuous by their absence at Thursday's widely publicised panel discussion.

ARJUNA RANATUNGA In recent months, Ranatunga is reported to be having problems with several members of the ruling party despite his father being a deputy minister. His brother, Prassana Ranatunga, was also sidelined after a recent local election.

The cricket board here Friday denied involvement in Ranatunga's first public en-

gagement after his World Cup debacle and said the new captain, Sanath Jayasuriya, was advised to stay away.

The head of the Board of Control for Cricket (BCCSL), Rienze Wijetilleke, said the board had nothing to do with the Thursday night roundtable where Ranatunga and his sacked deputy Aravinda de Silva put up a defence.

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6-month ban on Lara, Chavez

ASUNCION, July 18: Mexican national team members Raul Lara and Paulo Cesar Chavez were suspended for six months for testing positive for anabolic steroids at the Copa America, the South American confederation announced Saturday, reports AP.

The punishment, considered relatively light, applies only in South America and does not necessarily prevent them from playing for their clubs in Mexico or on their national team.

However, the definitive sanctions fall to FIFA and CONCACAF, the confederation for North and Central America and the Caribbean. Those bodies are expected at least to confirm the six-month suspension and could order a harsher penalty.

Another unresolved issue was how Lara Chavez' teammates would react. On Friday, the entire Mexican team threatened to boycott the Confederations Cup, which Mexico will host starting next week, unless the two were absolved.

Lara and Chavez avoided the penalty imposed for a similar offense on Uruguay's Pablo Bengoechea, who was suspended for two years in 1989. Until now, that was the only case of doping registered in the Copa America.

At the time, a two-year ban was automatic. Today, cases are analyzed individually.

CONMEBOL general secretary Eduardo Deluca said the decision took into account "the substances of the doping, the report of the Disciplinary Committee and the doctors, and the report made by Mexico, which has shown exemplary conduct since it began competing in the Cup."

Lara and Chavez were suspended when routine tests showed traces of steroids in their urine after a first-round game with Brazil, which Mexico lost 2-1.

Lara was tested again after the next game, a 3-1 victory over Venezuela, and again the result was positive, CONMEBOL said.

The Mexican federation ordered the sanctions in California after the scandal erupted, and the results were negative. But CONMEBOL said the tests were irrelevant.

In a letter signed by the entire 22-playing members of the Mexican team on Friday, the side said Lara and Chavez were men of irreproachable character and insisted that the test results were wrong. The tournament is to start July 24 in Guadalajara.

Deluca said the doping cases would not affect future invitations for Mexico to take part in the Copa America. Mexico has taken part in the South American championship four times as a guest.

Very good Vargas

LAKE TAHOE, Nevada, July 18: Fernando Vargas kept his International Boxing Federation junior middleweight crown, and kept his knock-out streak alive here Saturday when he stopped Raul Marquez in the 11th round, reports AFP.

Vargas dominated from the opening bell and stopped the former champion with a barrage of blows that had referee Joe Cortez calling a halt at 2:00 of the 11th.

The 21-year-old from Oxnard, California, took his professional record to a perfect 17-0, with all 17 wins coming inside the distance.

"I almost went 12 rounds, I hope you guys are satisfied," said Vargas, who had never been taken beyond the seventh round before.

"People always asked, 'What's Fernando going to do when he goes past seven round?' I'm always ready."

After much pre-fight jawing and some shoving at the weigh-in, the actual fight evolved into a controlled affair.

Vargas set the tone in the first round, when he patiently waited for his chances to land left hooks and the straight right that he used to devastating effect throughout the night.

Marquez barely landed a punch in that round, suffering a cut on his left eyelid that was followed in later rounds by a cut over his right eye as well.

Marquez, who lost the IBF 154-pound title when he was stopped in the eighth by Yory Boy Campus in 1997, had fought only twice since then.

His best round was the sixth, but it was marred by a low blow for which he was penalised a point, even though Vargas was holding Marquez's head down at the time.

Marquez, who fell to 30-2, said after the fight that it might have been his last.

He was supported in his preparations by Vargas' nemesis, Oscar De La Hoya, who made his training facility at Big Bear, California, available.

Marquez's friendship with De La Hoya provoked the wrath of Vargas, who never misses a chance to berate his fellow southern Californian.



Lothar Matthaeus(L), the veteran Bayern Munich libero, and Brazilian recruit Paulo Sergio hold aloft the German League Cup trophy after their Final against Werder Bremen at Leverkusen on July 17. Bayern won 2-1.

Double delight for Bayern

LEVERKUSEN, Germany, July 18 (Reuters/Internet): Bayern Munich took revenge over Werder Bremen on Saturday beating them 2-1 in the German League Cup final.

The German champions, who were beaten on penalties by Bremen in the German Cup final last month, pocketed 2.5 million marks (\$1.31 million) for their third consecutive win in the traditional pre-season tournament.

New signing Paulo Sergio, who joined Bayern this summer from AS Roma for 12 million marks, opened the scoring in the 34th minute. The Brazilian midfielder flicked the ball over Bremen keeper Frank Rost from 10 metres out.

Left-back Michael Tarnat made it 2-0 from a free kick two minutes before the break. Bremen reduced the arrears through striker Soeren Seidel in the 56th minute.

European Cup finalists Bayern were missing several key players including playmaker and new captain Stefan Effenberg and Germany goalkeeper Oliver Kahn, both injured.

Bremen, in international striker Marco Bode had to pull out of the final because of an illness which makes him a doubtful starter for the Confederations Cup tournament from July 24 to August 4 in Mexico.

Bayern start the defence of their German title against Hamburg SV on August 14.

Saqlain to stay at Surrey

LONDON, July 18 (Internet report): Surrey coach Keith Medlycott has insisted star off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq will stay with the county championship leaders for the rest of the season.

The Pakistan Test bowler claimed his third five-wicket haul in four innings, taking six for 44 as Surrey beat title challengers Hampshire by 156 runs at Guildford.

But Saqlain's availability for the rest of the season has been cast into doubt by the suspension of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) following a judicial investigation into allegations of match fixing.

Surrey's agreement to have Saqlain for the season was made with the now suspended PCB and there are worries that any deal done with the old board could now be null and void.

But Medlycott said: "We've signed an agreement with the PCB, we've got documents in writing and as far as I'm concerned Saqlain will play for Surrey for the rest of the season."

Surrey fans will certainly hope that proves to be true. Saqlain's superb bowling being a key component in the county's bid for their first championship title since 1971.

Surrey did not have everything their own way in this match, bowled out for just 171 in their first innings. But they came back superbly, a century from Graham Thorpe helping them post 482 second time around.

"There are very few occasions where you will have everything your own way in every session of the match," said Medlycott.

"But what was really striking was that to a man everyone believed we would bat much better in the second innings and it

"I think Saqlain must be the best off-spinner I've faced."

However despite the heavy defeat Smith was upbeat about Hampshire's performance.

"I thought we competed really well over the four days. But Surrey, with all their internationals in the team, are possibly the strongest side in the country and this could be their year for the championship."

"But I've been really pleased with the way our players have been performing. I know a lot of people tipped us to be in the Second Division next year but if we can play like we did in our first three matches and pick up a few more victories then I'm sure we'll avoid that."

SAQLAIN MUSHTAQ

Selectors stick by Stewart

LONDON, July 18 (Internet report): England selectors have stood by Alec Stewart for the second Cornhill Test match naming him in a 12-man squad to play New Zealand at Lord's on Thursday.

The squad has been reduced from the 13 named for Edgbaston with Chris Silverwood losing out to Dean Headley for the final bowling place but is otherwise unchanged.

Despite struggling to find his form following the World Cup, Stewart has won the backing of the selectors and captain Nasser Hussain, all of them confident the former England captain still has plenty of runs left in him.

Chairman of selectors David Graveney said, "Nasser and I made supportive comments after Edgbaston because it was not long ago that he was the last century maker for England in Tests or that he scored the most

runs in Tests in a calendar year. "It was obviously difficult for him to play his first game not as captain and it was not easy for anyone to bat at Edgbaston."

"We have decided to stand by him. He is a class player. He has had a struggle this year but we back his ability. As for what happens if he does not perform at Lord's, I am not going to put any more pressure on him by defining the situation. I have chatted to him and I just want him to relax and play his natural game."

With Darren Gough still recuperating from his injury, selectors were forced to make a decision between Silverwood or Headley for the final bowling place.

"It was a hard call," said Graveney. "We had 13 in the last Test squad because of fitness doubts. But we have a good relationship with the counties, and if we did not need 13, there was no reason

to have 13. Dean got the nod over Chris Silverwood because of his performances in Australia."

"I saw Darren bowl at Edgbaston. He was back after being out for a month. He is fit enough to play but we felt he needs another four day match to be match fit. He played in the World Cup and so there was no chance of his playing in first class competition."

"He was obviously close to being fit and is our number one bowler. But given his past injury record and the fact that he missed the West Indies tour, we have to take these things into consideration."

Between now and the start of the third Test match, Gough could fit in eight days of cricket including a championship match to convince selectors that he is a risk free prospect for the Old Trafford Test.

England's record at Lord's is famously poor giving weight to the theory that the ground is jinxed for the home side but Graveney said the management would be working hard in the run up to overcome any spoils.

"We must overcome the gremlins. Tourists do not play at Lord's very often and refer to it as the home of cricket. It is special to us too but we play there more often. Our job as managers is to get players fired up because if we can win here, we are in complete control of the series."

"We understand the need to give the players given our past performances at Lord's. New Zealand are 1-0 down and they will come back hard. They look to have changed the emphasis slightly as well by playing an extra batsman and one less bowler. It should be a good pitch because the groundsman Mick Hunt has had a long lead in time."

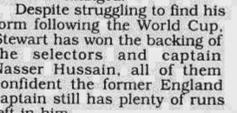
With many speculating on the return of former England captain Mike Atherton to the squad after his mammoth 268 not out for Lancashire at Blackpool this week, Graveney said it was still too early to risk a recall.

"He came back against Surrey and broke down again. I saw him at Edgbaston but he was having another injection in a different area and it seems he will come back hard. They look to have changed the emphasis slightly as well by playing an extra batsman and one less bowler. It should be a good pitch because the groundsman Mick Hunt has had a long lead in time."

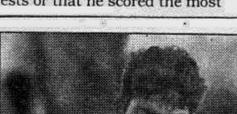
SQUAD Nasser Hussain (captain), Mark Butcher, Alec Stewart, Graham Thorpe, Mark Ramprakash, Aftab Habib, Chris Read, Andy Caddick, Alan Mullally, Phil Tufnell, Alex Tudor, Dean Headley.



SAQLAIN MUSHTAQ



Sutee Suksomkit (R) of Thailand under pressure from an Indian defender during their Olympic qualifying match at Suphanburi on July 17. Thailand on 2-0.



STRONGEST MAN IN THE WORLD ? South African Gerit Badenhorst picking up a 135 kg stone during the 'Rock press' category of the International strongest man competition at Keszthely, Hungary on July 17. Badenhorst won the event.



THAILAND beat India SUPHANBURI, Thailand, July 18: Thailand defeated India 2-0 Saturday in the first leg of the pre-Olympic Asia Zone Group 9 football competition, reports AFP.

Bamruang Boonprom scored in the 47th minute and Nirut Surasiang in the 76th. Thailand will meet India again on July 24 in Calcutta. The combined results of the two matches will decide the group winner.

Originally there were five teams in Group 9 but Laos, Brunei and Singapore pulled out.