

Column One

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- Who is the new England cricket coach?
Fletcher Hussain Marsh
- Brazilian footballer Ronaldo plays for
Lazio Barcelona Arsenal
- Who is the captain of Argentina soccer team?
Simone Batistuta Ayala
- How many Grand Slam titles has Steffi Graf won till now?
22 23 24
- Who is ATP's top ranked player right now?
Sampras Moya Agassi

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SPORTS TALK



Tiger Woods
(American golf superstar)
"The Scots are the most intelligent fans in the game."

Rafter becomes number one

PARIS, July 26: Nine years after joining the ATP Tour at No. 444, Pat Rafter became the world's number one men's tennis player when the latest Top rankings were released here on Monday, reports AFP.

Rafter became only the 17th player since the volatile Ilie Nastase in August 1973 and the first Australian since current Davis Cup coach John Newcombe to hold the ATP's top ranking.

The 26-year-old shot to the top on 3673 points, overtaking French Open champion Andre Agassi, now in third on 3467, with America's Pete Sampras in second place on 3594.

However, the coveted spot could be prised back by Sampras before the end of the week, Rafter's Australian manager George Minis warned.

Rafter is likely to lose the No. 1 spot to Sampras this week after deciding to give the US summer hardcourt season-opening Los Angeles Open a miss this week.

He is preparing in his tax-haven home of Bermuda for his upcoming North American hardcourt campaign, starting with the defence of his Canadian Open title from August 2.

Winning in Montreal and Cincinnati and successfully defending his US Open crown last year is a major reason Rafter takes over the No. 1 ranking Monday.

ATP'S TOP 20

Player	Points
Rafter	3673
Sampras	3594
Agassi	3467
Kafelnikov	3212
Henman	2690
Kuerten	2451
Krajicek	2431
Corretja	2345
Martin	2332
Rusedski	2307
Philippoussis	2295
Moya	2257
Rios	2071
Kucera	2071
Haas	2005
Mantilla	1841
Kiefer	1673
Enqvist	1607
Hrbaty	1579
Lapentti	1460



A midfield tussle during yesterday's Keya Premier Division football league encounter between Mohammedan Sporting and Mirpur Chalanika at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. — Star photo

Brothers survive Badda scare MSC take the lead



Mohammedan Sporting Club leapfrogged holders Sangsad Krira Chakra to attain the solo lead in the Keya Premier Football League when the last year's runners-up recorded a 2-0 victory over Mirpur Chalanika at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Central defender Faisal put Mohammedans ahead in the 31st minute converting a penalty before Askar Babu sealed off the one-sided affair shooting home a rebounder 11 minutes from the final whistle.

The win, their seventh from eight outings, enabled Mohammedans to lead the race with 22 points, three points clear from Muktiyoddha, who conceded a lone goal defeat at the hands of Abahani on Sunday. With this win Mohammedans appear to be placed at a comfortable position in the three-way heady battle for the league title. The popular Motiheel outfit, however, needs a tough task to accomplish in their bid to consolidate the top position when they face Muktiyoddha in the last match of the first phase on August 1.

But ahead of that big clash against Muktiyoddha it was not by any standard a perfect warm-up for the black and whites against the promotes in the Premier League this year.

Playing in the second match of the day, Mohammedans survived an early scare when Chalanika's Kakon tested Faisal with a sudden, thunderous shot, which the former national custodian could only manage to parry off partially. But Sohagh failed shot the inviting ball home from a hand-shaking distance with a shaky Ponir beaten fair and square.

After surviving the close shave, Mohammedans created a couple of easy chances in quick succession. But Sohagh spoiled the first opportunity in the 21st minute when the diminutive midfielder volleyed the ball wide off the near post.

Alfaz, who was sidelined for about two weeks with injury and had only appeared in the last match against Abahani briefly, almost celebrated his return in the top flight with a beauty of a free-kick in the next minute. But his left-footer from about 25 yards rebounded off the cross piece, much to the disbelief of a few thousand loyal Mohammedan supporters.

Mohammedans, however, had to wait for another nine minutes before Sheikh Badruddin, the man in uniform, pointed at the dreaded spot after a rather innocuous Sohagh's cross from the left-hand side of the box struck Tariq on his hand. Chalanika players protested the ruling in vein.

Faisal stepped forward to convert the spot-kick with aplomb. But Mohammedans' hopes of a goal-fest against the relegation-threatened Chalanika, who conceded most goals in the League, never looked a reality due to poor marksmanship.

Mohammedans denied by the metal-work for the second time in the match when Askar Babu's right-footer from a goal mouth scramble ricocheted off the bar.

Mohammedans lived dangerously with the slender lead and had not Chalanika's lone striker Sohagh muffed up the easiest chance in the 68th minute; it might have been a different story. Chalanika's hopes of an upset were well and truly over when Askar Babu slotted the ball into an empty net in the 79th minute.

It was Chalanika's seventh defeat from eight games. The Mirpur outfit got their only point from a one-all drawn encounter against Rahmatganj in their previous match.

Sohagh of Chalanika was cautioned with the yellow card.

TEAMS

Mohammedan SC: Ponir Nizam, Ruhul Amin, Faisal, Jahangir, Monwar Munnas, Saim, Rakib, Shoab (Shahajada), Shamim (Rezau), Askar Babu and Alfaz.

Mirpur Chalanika: Amzad, Dulal, Munna, Shariful, Zakir (Uzzal), Tariq, Kakon, Pappu, Mamun (Rabi), Liton and Sohagh (Babu Das).

Referee: Sheikh Badruddin.

Meanwhile, in the first match of the day, Brothers Union came from behind to beat Badda Jagorani by the odd goal in three.

Fateh gave Badda a 36th minute lead before Brother's Nigerian recruit Abdullah Shereki pulled off the equaliser at the stroke of the short whistle. Polish then stepped up to convert a penalty awarded in the 62nd minute after Lajuk pulled down Sereki in the forbidden zone.

With this win Brothers rekindled their hopes for a place in the next round. On the other hand, the defeat served a severe blow in Badda's chances to fill the remaining slot of the 'super four' behind Mohammedan, Muktiyoddha and Abahani, ahead of both Brothers and Farashganj.

With this win Brothers improved their tally to 10 points from eight match while Badda,

who will take on Abahani in the last match of the first phase, remained glued to their previous collections of 11 points. But among the three contestants for one slot, Farashganj appeared to be in a comfortable position with nine points from seven matches. The old town outfit, who had relatively weak opponents, will take on Arambagh today.

TODAY'S MATCHES
Fakirerpool YMC vs Rahmatganj MFS (3.30 pm)
Farashganj SC vs Arambagh KS (5.30 pm)

Coca Cola TT in August

The 23rd National Coca Cola Table Tennis Championship, organised by the Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation (BTTF), will be held in the capital from August 2 to 7. This was revealed by BTTF general secretary Ishiaque Ahmed yesterday.

Around 300 paddlers including women, boys and girls, are expected to take part in the six-day long meet.

Bangabandhu Cup lures 12 countries



Sports Reporter

The Executive Committee of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) will meet this evening to discuss various aspects of the forthcoming 2nd Bangabandhu Cup scheduled to be held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium from August 25 to September 7. The 1st Bangabandhu Cup was held at the same venue in December and January 1996-97.

BFF president and Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation, Mohammad Hanif, will preside over the meeting while State Minister for Youth and Sports, Obedul Quader, is also expected to attend the meeting.

Twelve countries—Brazil, Hungary, Ghana, Japan, South Korea, Kuwait, Indonesia, Uzbekistan, Thailand, Malaysia, Nepal and India, have already agreed to take part in the tournament while Iraq have also shown interest. Bangladesh will be another team.

According to BFF general secretary Harun ur Rashid MP, India, Nepal and Indonesia will send full-strength squads while Japan and Uzbekistan are likely to send their youth teams. The other countries will be fielding their best possible outfits.

Harun also said that Home Minister, Mohammed Nasim, is likely to be named Chairman of the Organising Committee after today's meeting.

"Everything is at the primary level now. It officially starts from tomorrow," he said.

Regarding the tournament budget, the BFF general secretary said that they have not yet made any estimate.

"This is the biggest football tournament of the country and whatever expenditure is required, we will spend that," said Harun.

Women's h'ball

Shamsunnahar Hall of Dhaka University, Viquearunnessa Noon School and College, Mirpur Girls Ideal Laboratory Institute and Ishpani Girls School and College qualified for the semifinals as group champions of the fifth Delta Life Inter-college-hall women's handball tournament at the Sultana Kamal Women Sports Complex yesterday, reports BSS.

Shamsunnahar Hall will take on Ishpani Girls School and College in the first semifinal on July 28 while Viquearunnessa Noon School and College will play against Mirpur Girls Ideal Laboratory Institute in the second semifinal on July 29. Both the semifinals will start at 4 pm.

In the last group matches yesterday, Mirpur Ideal overwhelmed Kaliganj Sramik College (Gazipur) 10-2; Ishpani Girls School and College beat Holycross College 1-0; Viquearunnessa routed Dhaka Women's College (Uttara) 18-0 and BCIC College defeated Lalmaia Mohila College 3-2.

Windies demand US \$ 200K

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh Cricket Board is yet to confirm the proposed tour of West Indies, previously scheduled from September 25 to October 10.

Although the board announced the itinerary of the tour late last month, it was learnt yesterday that the board was yet to finalise the appearance fee with the Caribbean team.

According to a source in the BCB, the West Indies cricket team have demanded two hundred thousand US dollars for their 15-day visit, excluding their travel and boarding expenses.

A senior BCB member said that the amount is too much for Bangladesh. He also informed that the BCB general secretary, Syed Ashrafur Huq, who is now in England on a private tour, is negotiating the matter on behalf of the board.

However, neither Ashrafur nor his president Saheb Hossain Chowdhury, who is on an official visit to Nepal, were available for immediate comments.

BFF hunting foreign refs

Sports Reporter

Foreign referees will conduct matches of the ongoing Keya Premier Division Football League from the "Super-four" phase. This was disclosed by the Dhaka Mahanagari Football League Committee (DMFLC) chairman Abdur Rahim yesterday.

Although I personally do not like the idea, but since a few big clubs are demanding foreign referees, the DMFLC have decided to respect their appeal," said Rahim.

"We have already asked the Bangladesh Football Federation to arrange foreign referees for the league and they have agreed with us," said Rahim.

When contacted, BFF general secretary Harun ur Rashid MP said that the BFF have already sent messages to the Indian and the Nepalese Football Federations regarding their requirement. BFF expects a positive reply soon. "If they fail to provide, we will ask Thailand and Malaysia," said Harun.

Bacher's promise

JOHANNESBURG, July 26:

South African cricket chief Dr Ali Bacher pledged today to include black players in the national team whenever possible after criticism of its racial makeup, reports Reuters.

He said fringe players would be included in the squad at every opportunity.

"The policy remains that the national team should be a team of colour," Bacher said. "Whenever an opportunity arises we will bring the peripheral players, both black and white, on to the field of play."

Bacher explained that in the case of a one-day series, in which South Africa had already qualified for the final, any remaining round-robin games should be used to blood new talent.

The make-up of the team that trounced West Indies earlier this year was heavily criticised by politicians for its virtually all-white make-up.

Bacher also revealed that former national coach Bob Woolmer will not be lost to South African cricket after his contract expired at the end of this year's World Cup.

Woolmer will be used to coach players on the fringe of the national squad, talent-spotting and assist provincial coaches.

Bacher added that a conference involving South Africa's contracted players, selectors, council members and members of the United Cricket Board's transition monitoring committee will discuss the future of the sport at a conference before October.

A chairman to replace Peter Pollock in the selectors committee will be interviewed over the next three weeks.

I'm shocked: Wasim



KARACHI, July 26: Wasim Akram on Sunday admitted to The News that the developments of the last 24 hours in Pakistan cricket had come as a "great shock" to him.

He told the leading Pakistani newspaper from London that he was yet to recover from the shock of hearing that the Ehtesaab Bureau had framed match-fixing charges against him and then the ad-hoc committee chairman announcing that he would not be considered for selection in the coming season until the charges against him were dealt with.

"I don't know what to say or how to react. This is all so sudden and shocking because I still want to play for the country. I just want to know how they can take all these decisions without even listening to my side of the story."

Wasim pointed out that interim report of the PCB probe committee, on the basis of which the decisions had been taken, did not even include his version. "I did not even record my statement before the probe committee so how can it be given so much importance. It remains one-sided."

He maintained he would speak to Mujeibur Rehman and clarify things with him and explain his point of view. "Only then can I really make any concrete comments. Until then nothing is clear."



Pakistan's suspended cricket captain Wasim Akram takes a break from his broadcasting duties during the fourth day's play of the second Test between England and New Zealand at Lord's on July 25. — AFP photo

Suspension overdue?



KARACHI, July 26 (Internet reports): Pakistan cricket supremo Mujeibur Rehman insists the suspension of three of the country's leading players should have happened long ago.

Captain Wasim Akram and batsmen Salim Malik and Ijaz Ahmed have been removed from the national team pending investigations into the match-fixing charges.

Rehman, chairman of the ad hoc committee of the Pakistan Cricket Board, said the three "will not be considered for selection until the investigations are completed."

The decision came less than 24 hours after Ehtesaab Bureau (Accountability Cell) made public a 10-month-old report of the defunct Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) probe committee headed by Justice Ijaz Yousof.

The first reaction of the ad hoc committee is that Wasim Akram, Ijaz Ahmad and Salim Malik not be available for selection until the investigations are complete," Rehman responded.

Pakistan face a back-breaking 1999-2000 season in which they are scheduled to play nine Tests (against Australia, Sri Lanka and the West Indies). In addition to this, they will be playing more than 25 one-day internationals which may be increased if India agrees to compete the Toronto series.

"We were told by the judicial commission to investigate the World Cup. The report, which will be submitted to the President, will also be delivered to Justice Malik Mohammad Qayyum," he said.

Justice heads a one-man committee, also appointed by the President, and is expected to submit his one-year long inquiry report soon.

Mujeibur Rehman, who took over as ad hoc committee chairman last Friday, said on Sunday evening, the ad hoc committee boss said his committee was still waiting for the official information about the framing of charges against Akram, Malik and Ijaz Ahmad.

"The Accountability Cell revealed the report on Saturday evening so we couldn't be informed (officially) on Sunday being a holiday. But the charges framed are enough to declare them unavailable for selection," he asserted.

According to sources in Islamabad, the charges have been framed against the three cricketers primarily on the report of Justice Ijaz Yousof. But the interesting point here is when the PCB headed by Khalid Mahmood refused to suspend the three cricketers last September.

The season begins in September.

Meanwhile, Rehman's elder brother and the chief of the Accountability Cell, Senator Saifur Rehman, told The Dawn newspaper that there was enough evidence to frame charges against the three star cricketers.

"During investigations, we have come to know that they are living a luxurious life. I mean, they are living beyond their means," he remarked.

"Their known income doesn't match with their lifestyle. I don't know if they have evaded taxes but the (tax) returns prove that they can't spend what they are spending," Saifur added.

The Accountability Cell chief disclosed that a group of four people had been assigned to monitor the activities of the Pakistan players during the World Cup in England.

"We have received a report which confirms that the players were involved in immoral and unethical activities. As soon as the document is finalised, it will be presented to President Rafique Tarrar (who is also the patron of the PCB)," Saifur Rehman stated, adding: "The people given the job were highly competent and thorough professionals."

Saifur Rehman emphasised that his committee had done the entire exercise on the instructions of the judicial commission.

Rehman said he has invited all the 15 World Cup members to Islamabad on Monday. He said he would be meeting them to discuss the future policies.

When pointed out that the players invited include Ijaz Ahmad and Salim Malik, he replied: "They will be coming and I would be asking them about whatever has been published. I will listen to their side of the story."

He warned that he had the powers to ban the players for life. "In accordance with the powers vested in me, I can ban the player for life," he said.

The News meanwhile reported that the ad hoc committee had decided to hire a foreign coach and attach a permanent manager with the senior team.

Rehman, after discussions with two members of his advisory panel — Rameez Raja and Colonel (retd) Naved Adnan — has agreed to the proposal on hiring a coach and appointing a permanent manager.

as recommended by the probe committee, why didn't the Accountability Cell get into action then?

Sources stated that the decision to suspend the three cricketers was an effort to justify the suspension of the PCB following Pakistan's defeat in the World Cup final on June 20 at Lord's.

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Interim chief wants code of conduct

ISLAMABAD, July 26: Pakistan's new cricket chief Mujeibur Rehman urged 12 members of the national squad today to follow a strict code of conduct, reports Reuters.

Rehman was appointed a week ago as chairman of the ad hoc committee of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). In a statement the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said vice-captain Moin Khan, Saeed Anwar and Shahid Afridi were among the 12.

"The meeting was part of Mujeibur's efforts to streamline the game on the right footing and to build players' confidence," the statement said.

"The players have been told to follow a strict code of conduct and disciplinary line if they want to serve the nation."

Pakistan President Rafiq Tarar suspended the PCB in the wake of Pakistan's humiliating World Cup final defeat to Australia and appointed Rehman as head of the ad hoc committee of the board. Tarar is the patron of the PCB.