

Column One SPORTS TALK



Luis Van Gaal
(Barcelona's temperamental coach)
"He is a free spirit. He destroys the opposition."
On Barcelona's Brazilian superstar Rivaldo.

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- Who was the man-of-the-series in the Australia-Pakistan Test?
Langer Ponting Inzamam
- Who was the highest wicket-taker in the Australia-Pakistan Test series?
Akram Fleming McGrath
- How many Test hundreds has Mark Waugh scored to date?
15 16 17
- Who became champions in the Keya Premier soccer?
Muktijodha Mohammedan Arambagh
- Who lifted the Expatriates' Open chess title?
Rezaat Zia Tanveer

Name

Class Roll No.

School Address

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ICC loud in Asia's praise

KARACHI, Jan 17: A senior official of the International Cricket Council said Monday cricket in Asia is growing faster than in European nations where a lack of television coverage remains a big problem, reports AFP.

The following of the game is enormous in Asia as compared to in Europe and the ICC likes to help the Asian countries come up in its effort to globalise the game," said Nigel Loughton, the ICC's development officer for Europe.

Loughton was in Karachi as a special observer for a development course to train coaches from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

"It's a sort of beginning but Asian countries like Malaysia, Nepal and Singapore are developing by leaps and bounds," he said.

"It's a good sign for the game which has tough competition with games like rugby and soccer," he said.

"Asia has the advantage of television but in Europe we have no television coverage which is a big problem," he said.

Loughton said cricket is gaining popularity in France, Germany, Italy and Sweden but it will take them another five years to join the international fray.

Scotland and Holland are next in line to gain one-day international status," he said.

Besides the nine Test playing countries, Bangladesh and Kenya have one-day international status.

Rajshahi cricket

From Our Correspondent
RAJSHAH, Jan 17: Seroll Colony Sporting Club beat Birshreshtha Jahangir Smriti (Green) by 28 runs in the fifth Birshreshtha Captain Mohuddin Jahangir Smriti tournament at local Railway ground today.

Seroll Colony batted first and scored 113 for all in stipulated 23 overs. Sijer (32) was the top scorer for the winners.

In reply, Birshreshtha were bundled out for 85 in 18.2 overs.

Rani Nagar Primary Cricket Training Centre beat Bandhan Krira Chakra by 26 runs in another match of the day.

Winning the toss Bandhan invited Rani Nagar to bat. Rani Nagar made 120 for nine in stipulated 23 overs.

Mozon (31) was the top scorer for the winners.

In reply, Bandhan were out for 94 in 17.5 overs. Dolla (28) was the top scorer.

Cricket in quagmire

Sports Reporter

A mixed up Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), till last evening, failed to name the team which is scheduled to play a four-day match against the visiting MCC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today as the cricketers, under the banner of Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) finally decided to boycott the match.

The decision was formally made by the CWAB officials in a snap meeting at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. CWAB president Minhazul Abedin, national captain Aminul Islam, vice-captain Khaled Mahmud and CWAB secretary Faruque Ahmed were present during the announcement.

The CWAB said that they were forced into taking such a step following the mysterious and controversial decision by the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM) to defer the date for the inter-club cricketers transfer for the Premier League.

Cricketers Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM) after an emergency meeting on Sunday night, shifted the date of the transfers to February 5, 6 and 7. The CCDM took the decision after being pressurised by the Dhaka Mahanagari Cricket Club Samiti (MCCS) who want to hold the transfers after a probe committee submits its report on seven cricketers for making objectionable remarks

against top club officials during the CWAB's November demonstrations.

The CWAB added that they were also not very clear about the announcement by board president Saber Hossain Chowdhury regarding lifting of the ban on seven cricketers on Sunday night. Saber was a much sought after figure yesterday following the disorganised state of affairs but the BCB supreme it seemed had vanished without trace. He also decided to skip a dinner organised by the sponsors of the MCC's tour Standard Bank at Hotel Purbani yesterday evening.

The announcement would have been welcomed had the transfers started as scheduled today. Since that hasn't happened, the BCB boss' declaration doesn't hold any importance to us now. Besides, they have also kept the probe committee and extended its date for the submitting the reports. This makes us more apprehensive about the real intentions of the BCB," said CWAB president Minhazul Abedin while talking to a large number of local reporters yesterday.

"Early transfers was the main issue of our movement in November. But the officials have been repeatedly delaying the programme," he added.

The BCB meanwhile was feeling the first effects of the CWAB's decision. None of the primarily selected 39 cricketers, who were scheduled to

play three matches against MCC, reported to the board yesterday.

Although, chairman of the selection committee and BCB vice-president Tanveer Haider informed in the afternoon that five cricketers—Ashfaq Ali, MR Mahfuz, Shaheen Ahmed, Mohammad Lal and Salauddin—had reported to the BCB office, two of them, when contacted later, vehemently denied Tanveer's claim.

An apparently perplexed Tanveer inadvertently revealed the chaotic nature of the whole situation when he said that a team would be announced as soon as he gets eleven cricketers to report to him.

It was very clear last night that the BCB was determined to field a team even if they had to call upon players from the lower divisions.

"We have no choice other than holding the match. We have to somehow manufacture a team by tonight," said acting BCB general secretary Mahmud UL Haq Manu.

"We are trying our best because it is a matter of our country's prestige," said Manu adding that they, if needed, will wait till the very last minutes before the scheduled start of the match to declare the team.

The board was yet to announce the names of the umpires and match referee for today's match till yesterday night. The match is scheduled to start at 9:30 pm.

ANZ Grindlays cricket league in Sylhet on

The ANZ Grindlays First Division cricket league in Sylhet began at the local stadium on January 15, says a press release.

Sylhet District Sports Association is organising the event. A press conference was held in this regard at the stadium on January 14. Dildar Hossain Selim, general secretary of the association. Supriyo Chakravarty, chairman of cricket committee of the association, M A Sattar, vice-president of the association, and N Shafkat Choudhury, senior marketing manager of ANZ Grindlays Bank were present during the briefing.

ANZ Grindlays revealed that in addition to sponsoring the First Division league in Sylhet, it intended to sponsor the National School Cricket and other cricketing events in different parts of the country.



ANZ Grindlays Bank's senior marketing manager N Shafkat Choudhury (R) and Dildar Hossain Selim, general secretary of Sylhet DSA, shake hands during a press conference held at the Sylhet Stadium on January 14.

BCB in sticky stew

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) bosses made a fool of themselves as the players paid no heed to its team selection yesterday.

Without taking any initiative to diffuse the brewing crisis between the players and the Dhaka clubs, the game's ruling body on Sunday hastily called up 39 cricketers to play three matches against the visiting MCC, to be held in Dhaka, Chittagang and Jessore.

None of them came to report to the BCB, which was supposed to pick a team for today's four-day match against the tourists.

Players have unanimously decided to uphold the decision of the Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh to boycott all the matches until the Board comes up with a reasonable solution to the stalemate.

"Anyhow we will make a team for tomorrow's match. We don't bother if the task take us to 3 in the morning," vowed the BCB acting general secretary when contacted late in the night.

The Board brought itself into disrepute as it eventually sided with the powerful Cricket Committee of the Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM), the organiser of the Dhaka fiesta who have been playing Gods with the cricketers since their demand

of an early inter-club players' transfer.

In an apparent bid to please the CCDM people, the Board tactfully excluded seven leading cricketers, against whom the clubs opened an ugly war, from the list. Names of national skipper Aminul Islam, vice-captain Khaled Mahmud and all-rounder Enamul Hoque, in-form Minhazul Abedin, Faruque Ahmed, Mohammad Rafique and Mahbubur Rahman were seen missing out on the list.

When asked about the omission of these stalwarts, Tanveer Haider, the selection committee chairman, said yesterday that 'they have been dropped as part of BCB's policy to give exposure to the youngsters.'

But when asked whether cricketers like Harunur Rashid, Anisur Rahman and Saiful Islam were young or not, Tanveer failed to give any answer.

Meanwhile, in another development, the CCDM post-

poned First Division cricket league, which was scheduled to resume today after the Eid vacation.

New date would be announced in due course, a BCB press release read yesterday.

Following is the list of 39 cricketers: Shahriar Hossain, Habibul Bashar, Naimur Rahman, Khaled Masood, Shafiuddin Ahmed, Hasibul Hossain, Mehrez Hossain, Azam Iqbal, Parvez Ahmed, Asadullah Khan, Mizanur Rahman, Mohammad Lal, Rashedul Haque, Saiful Islam, Aminul Islam (jr), Rezaul Hasan, Zahiruddin, Jashimuddin, Khairuzzaman, Ziaur Rashid, Javed Omar, Akram Khan, Mushfiqur Rahman, Fahim Muntasir, Shaheen Ahmed, Al-Shahriar, Monjurul Islam, Sajid Hasan, Sanwar Hossain, Nasirul Alam, Ahmed Kamal, Selim Shahed, Harunur Rashid, Anisur Rahman, MR Mahfuz, Salauddin, Jamaluddin, Ashfaq Ali and Hasanuzzaman.

Moya pulls out

MELBOURNE, Jan 17: Former world No. 1 Carlos Moya withdrew Monday from the Australian Open due to a recurrence of the back injury which forced him to retire from last year's US Open, reports AP.

The 1998 French Open title said he didn't want to risk further damage to playing in the best-of-five set Grand Slam format without adequate practice.

"It's the same problem I had at the US Open — the difference now is that I'm feeling a lot better," he said. "The main problem is that I did not practice too much."

"If this tournament was best-of-three sets, maybe I will try to play. But after hitting half an hour — the longest practice I had lately — and suddenly start playing best of five sets with such a hot day would be really difficult for me. I didn't want to take such a risk."



Dhaka Mahanagari Cricket Club Samiti secretary Ahmed Pervez Shamsuddin (L) making some 'vague' comments in front of the reporters to defend their stand on deferring the date of the much-debatable inter-club cricketers' transfers at a conference at a city hotel yesterday.



IT'S TIME TO ACT: Cricketers' Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) secretary Faruque Ahmed (standing) addressing a gathering of fellow players at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Asian Chess Reefat beat Kidambi

Sports Reporter

Reefat Bin Sattar defeated S Kidambi of India on Sunday in the Second Asian Men's Chess Championship, being held in Udaypur, Rajasthan.

The Bangladesh International Master, playing with black pieces, earned the resignation of his opponent on the 30th move. His fellow IM Ziaur Rahman meanwhile drew with Uzbek Grand Master Udahev Saidali after 78th move.

On completion of the seventh round, both Zia and Reefat collected 4 points to occupy the third position.

Three Grand Masters from China—Peng Ziaomin, Xang Xang and Zu Xan—are sharing the crowded first place along the Dao Dien, the Grand Master of Vietnam. GM Wang Zili of China remains in the second spot.

In the eighth Asian Women's Championship, International Women's Master Rani Hamid went down to Zu Yang Yang of China while Tanima Parvin defeated Siti Zulekha of Malaysia yesterday. At the end of seventh round both Rani and Tanima have collected three points each.

Fourth day called off as well

CENTURION, South Africa, Jan 17: Play in the rain-hit fifth and final Test between South Africa and England was abandoned without a ball bowled for the third successive day Monday, reports AFP.

England captain Nasser Hussain offered to play a one-day match Tuesday if conditions improved but officials said this would not be possible.

Match referee Barry Jarman of Australia said a wet bowlers' run-up area on the southern side of the pitch made conditions dangerous for bowlers. Heavy rain fell over the Gauteng area from Friday to Sunday after South Africa had reached 155 for six on the first day Friday. South Africa lead the series 2-0.

Umpires Darrell Hair and Rudi Koertzen made several inspections before calling off play at 1:00 pm. Hair said although there had been no further rain Monday, the saturated ground was dry at such a slow rate in overcast conditions that the best that could be hoped for was a prompt start Tuesday.

Jarman and Ali Bacher, managing director of the United Cricket Board of South Africa, told journalists that although there was a provision in International Cricket Council playing conditions for play to be extended by one day in Test matches, this was only possible when it was part of playing conditions for a tour. This was not the case.

Bacher said a one-day match Tuesday was not possible because of broadcasting and sponsorship contracts. Umpire Hair said that once a Test had started it had to be played out and could not be changed into a different form of game.

Celta after Vivas

LONDON, Jan 17: Spanish side Celta Vigo are trying to sign Arsenal's Nelson Vivas on a loan deal, the Press Association (PA) said Monday, reports AFP.

The Argentinian international, signed for 1.6 million pounds (2.6 million dollars) from Swiss side Lugano in the summer of 1998, has started just one Premiership game for the Gunners this term.

Now manager Arsene Wenger is poised to loan the 30-year-old full-back to the Spanish title-chasers for the rest of the season.

Lindsay raises money issue again Aussie Open underway

MELBOURNE, Jan 17: Lindsay Davenport kicked off the sunbaked Australian Open with a straight-sets victory, then quickly jabbed the tournament for its chauvinist prize money policy, reports AP.

Playing the first match Monday in Rod Laver Arena, the renamed Centre Court Stadium, the second-seeded Davenport had little problem swatting winners past Frenchwoman Sarah Pitkowski, 6-3, 6-1.

More troubling to Davenport, and to all the women, is the insistence by the Australian Open to pay higher prizes to the men. The men's champion will receive 755,000 Australian dollars (US 490,750), the women's champion 717,000 Aus-

tralian dollars. Davenport, who is widely regarded as more popular.

It was very disappointing a few years ago when they took (equal prize money) away from us," Davenport said. "For a couple of years there weren't maybe as popular as we are now. They said that's the reason why they took it away, and if we generated more interest they would give it back to us. Yet, it kind of seems like we've done it now and they've turned their head and are not budging from giving us back equal prize money."

The US Open is the only one of the four Grand Slam events that pays equal prize money.

"The powers that be, made up mostly of men, need to recognise the importance of equality as more than just a gesture but as the right thing to do," Pam

4-6-4. Jennifer Capriati continued to show she can be a threat again, opening with a 6-1, 7-6 victory over Austrian Barbara Schwartz.

Jelena Dokic, a quarterfinalist at Wimbledon and Australia's best hope in this tournament, fell to Hungarian Rita Kutl Kis 6-1, 2-6, 6-3.

Andre Agassi, the men's top seed, raced through a 6-2, 6-2, 6-3 triumph over Argentina's Mariano Puerta. Agassi showed off his full repertoire, mixing up his usual array of sizzling groundstrokes with crafty topspin lobs from both sides.

The Australian Open was Agassi's biggest disappointment among the Grand Slam events last year. On the comeback trail after sinking to No 141 in 1997, he lost in the fourth round to Vincent Spadea before going on to capture the French Open, reach the final at Wimbledon, and win the US Open.

"It was a difficult time last year. Now I am out on the court feeling like I am going to make somebody beat me from start to finish. It's always a good feeling when you are out there focused on making it a miserable day for your opponent. It's possible to look horrific out there, especially when you get down to the second week of the tournament."

"I am not sure if I believe in my game quite as much as I do now. Now I am out on the court feeling like I am going to make somebody beat me from start to finish. It's always a good feeling when you are out there focused on making it a miserable day for your opponent. It's possible to look horrific out there, especially when you get down to the second week of the tournament."

In other men's play, two-time champion Jim Courier lost in the first round for the first time in 10 appearances here, falling 6-7, 6-3, 7-5, 6-1 to Frenchman Nicolas Escude. No 9 Richard Krajicek won his opener, 6-1, 6-2, 7-5, against another Frenchman, Fabrice Santoro. No 11 Tim Henman edged France's Jerome Golmard 6-7, 6-3, 7-6, 7-6; and No 16 Mark Philippoussis survived 6-4, 6-2, 2-6, 3-6, 6-2 against Israeli Noam Okun.

Thailand's Paradorn Srichaphan, a 20-year-old player in only his second major tournament, upset No 14 Karol Kucera of Slovakia 6-2, 6-4, 3-6, 6-3. Srichaphan finished 1999 ranked No 106, higher than any Thai player in ATP history.

Unseeded Carlos Moya, the runner-up in 1997 but a second-round and first-round loser the next two years, pulled out with a recurrence of a back injury.

AUSSIE OPEN NOTEBOOK

MELBOURNE, Jan 17 (AP): The leader in the race to be the men's No 1 tennis player in 2000 is not Andre Agassi or Pete Sampras, but 18-year-old Australian Lleyton Hewitt.

Under the ATP's new ranking system, all players started the year at zero rather than carrying over points from the past 52 weeks.

Hewitt won his first two tournaments of the year, gaining a total of 70 points, and came into the Australian Open on a 10-match winning streak.

Meanwhile, the top four players from 1999's year-end rankings — Agassi, Yevgeny Kafelnikov, Sampras and Thomas Enqvist — were playing in an exhibition tournament that awarded no points.

But Hewitt will have to finish at least second in the open to keep his lead.

Victory in a Grand Slam tournament is worth 200 points. The runner-up receives 140.

The previous ranking system was considered too difficult

for the fans to understand. Among other things, the new system dispenses with the awarding of bonus points for beating players with high rankings.

IRONMEN
Wayne Ferreira and Mark Woodforde are playing in their 37th consecutive Grand Slam tournaments in this Australian Open, but are far behind the record of 54 set by retired Swedish player Stefan Edberg.

Both have achieved their best Grand Slam results in Australia — the 28-year-old Ferreira reached the semifinals in 1992, and Woodforde went equally far in 1996.

Ferreira's highest singles ranking was 6th in 1995, and Woodforde's was 19th in 1996.

The 34-year-old Woodforde is best known for his doubles triumphs with fellow Australian Todd Woodbridge. With two tournament victories to start the year, the pair now have 55 doubles victories, two behind the teams tied for the all-time lead — Peter Fleming and John McEnroe, and Bob Hewitt and Frew McMillan.

The Woodies won five consecutive Wimbledon doubles titles in 1993-97.

TENNIS ON SKATES
French Open finalist Andre Medvedev has likened the Rebound Ace surface at Melbourne Park to ice fields and says Australian Open organizers have erred by making the courts too fast.

The Rebound Ace courts were recently repainted with the new Top Coat 2000 surface, which has increased the speed of the courts.

But the Ukrainian said the pace of the various courts was uneven and "99.9 per cent of the players are complaining," although most weren't prepared to voice their dissatisfaction.

"Center court is different to court one. Court 20 is different to Court five. Court 20 is a joke — it's like playing on ice fields," he said.

Medvedev said during a practice session he managed "no more than four shots in a rally."

"These courts are faster than indoors. The balls don't fluff up and after three games they are like ping pong balls."