

Independence Day sports

Sports Reporter

Different sports federations celebrated the Independence Day with various programmes and exhibition matches on Sunday.

National youth hockey team beat Bangladesh 'A' team by 4-1 in one of the two exhibition hockey matches played at the Moulana Bhasani Stadium on Sunday. In the other match held between two selections of former players, Blue team beat Green team 3-2.

In a volleyball match held at the court adjacent to the Bangabandhu National Stadium, former players beat coaches eleven by 3-2 sets.

Our Brahmanbaria Correspondent adds that Uchhalapara Boys Club defeated Nua Hati Cricket Club by four-wickets in an exhibition cricket match at the Sarail football play ground.

Siraganj cricket

Agradut clobber Masimpur

From Our Correspondent SIRAGANJ, Mar 27: Agradut Ekadash beat Masimpur Kira Chakra by 86 runs in the opening game of the First Division cricket league at the Shaheed Shamsuddin Stadium here today.

Opting to bat, Agradut piled up a huge 206 in the stipulated 40 overs for the loss of eight wickets.

In reply, Masimpur were bundled out for 120. Earlier on Friday, Home and Telecommunication Minister Mohammad Nasim inaugurated the 17-team competition.

I-Day chess

Reefat clinches crown

International Master Rifatin-Satter of Bangladesh Biman emerged as champion of the Independence Day Active Chess Competition securing 6.5 points at the federation hall room on Sunday, reports UNB.

Biman's other International Master Ziaur Rahman became runner-up bagging six points while Ruhul Kabir Shiplu of Titash Club placed in the third position with 5.5 points.

A total of 48 players took part in the day long competition organised by Professor Abdur Razzak Chess Club.

Independence Day b'ball

Bangladesh Navy earned a facile 140-53 victory over Bangladesh Police in the Independence Cup Basketball tournament at the Dharmadhi Basketball gymnasium yesterday, reports UNB.

They led the first half 66-37. Rashed caged 31, Fazal 24, Goswami 23 for the winners while Khair contributed 19 and Asad 10 for the losers.

In the day's other match, Eagles Club beat Josephites Club 57-49 after dominating the first session 30-23.

Abrar scored 11, Azad 10 for the Eagles while Mujib made 14, Fazle 14 and Bony 10 for the Josephites.

Earlier on Sunday, Bangladesh Rifles defeated Dharmadhi Club by 78-44 points while Bangladesh Air Force beat Josephites Club 73-67.

Barisal cricket

From Staff Correspondent BARISAL, Mar 27: SBMC Students Union defeated Uddihaman Ekadash by three wickets while Young Stars Club outplayed Yuva Samriti Sangha by 20 runs in the First Division Cricket League at the Abdur Rab Serniabat Stadium here today.

Batting first Uddihaman Ekadash were all out for 176 in 36 overs.

In reply SBMC scored 177 for seven in 31.3 overs.

In the other match Young Stars reached 283 all out in 40 overs.

Suva SS were shot out for 73 in 21.5 overs.

Shahjada Cup cricket

From Our Correspondent BRAHMANBARIA, Mar 27: Titash Cricket Club defeated Progoti Boys' Club by 10 runs in the Shahjada Cup tournament here at the Shahjada Paschimpara School ground today.

Electing to bat, Titash Club scored 130 in the allotted 30 overs.

Rose blooms

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SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close of play on the third day of the second Test and last between West Indies and Zimbabwe at Sabina Park on Sunday:

ZIMBABWE: First Innings 308 (M. Goodwin 113; R. King 51)

WEST INDIES: First Innings (overnight 106 for four)

Griffith b Johnson 6
Campbell c Campbell b Murphy 48
Gayle c A. Flower b Olonga 13
C. Paul c A. Flower b Strang 12
Adams not out 37
Hinds c Campbell b Murphy 14
Jacobs c A. Flower b Olonga 27
Ambrose c Carlisle b Johnson 7
Rose not out 53
Extras (b-2, lb-15, nb-11) 28
Total (For 7 wickets in 147 overs) 235

To bat: R. King, C. Walsh
Fall of wickets: 1-37, 2-69, 3-85, 4-85, 5-122, 6-167, 7-171

Bowler

Olonga 29 8 58 2
Strang 30 15 36 1
Johnson 29 11 56 2
Murphy 26 11 99 2
G. Flower 17 8 14 0
Gripper 6 2 15 0



Leicester's Darren Eadie (R) and Lucas Radebe of Leeds United fight for possession during their Premiership clash at Leicester on March 26. —AFP photo

Premiership

Guppy spoils Leeds' plan



LONDON, March 27: Leicester's Steve Guppy struck a second-half winner as the League Cup winners condemned Premiership challengers Leeds United to a surprise 2-1 defeat at Filbert Street on Sunday.

Leeds had 60 points, seven less than United, with just eight games remaining.

Stan Collymore's fourth goal in five games set City on their way to victory and all Leeds could manage was a solitary reply from Australian Harry Kewell, his sixth goal in six matches putting him within one of equalling the club record of scoring in seven consecutive matches set by Scottish striking legend Peter Lorimer in the 70s.

Arsenal scored three second-half goals through Frenchmen Thierry Henry and Gilles Grimandi with Nigerian international Nwankwo Kanu grabbing the third in a 3-0 win over Coventry at Highbury.

Victory takes Arsenal up into fourth on 54 points, two behind Liverpool in third as the competition for a Champions League place next season heats up.

In the London derby at Upton Park West Ham beat relegation strugglers Wimbledon 2-1 with Italian Paolo Di Canio and on-loan French striker Frederic Kanoute netting for the Hammers with Michael Hughes replying for the Dons.

For Leeds it may have been a case of one game too far after their gruelling programme which culminated in Thursday's UEFA Cup semi-final, second leg against Sparta Prague, as they seldom produced their best form.

Leicester looked as if they had finally awoken from the hangover evident in their performance against Wimbledon and Manchester United since the transfer of Emile Heskey to Liverpool for 11 million pounds (£17.5 million dollars).

The impressive Collymore was a constant threat up front and playing on Sundays at Filbert Street clearly appeals to him after his hat-trick on his home debut against Sunderland exactly three weeks ago.

Leeds lacked much of the flair that has been the trademark of their performances this season.

They only spasmodically flickered into life - chiefly through Kewell who hit the target in clinical fashion for his 16th of the season.

Leicester, bidding for their first victory since selling Heskey, began brightly and came close to taking the lead after only three minutes.

Leeds skipper Lucas Radebe brought down Darren Eadie on the edge of the area and Muzzy Izet played a short free-kick into the path of Collymore.

His rising shot was too powerful for Nigel Martyn to hold out but Eadie put the rebound wide.

But Collymore was not to be denied and in the 14th minute he gave Leicester the lead. Izet latched onto a pass from Robbie Savage and then slipped the ball into the path of Collymore.

The former Aston Villa striker needed no second invitation as he hammered a rising shot past Martyn.

Leeds retaliated and Tim Flowers needed two attempts to hold onto a 35-yard free-kick from Ian Harte.

Kewell was unlucky to see his low shot beat Flowers and cannon back off a post to safety after he cut inside Gerry Taggart.

Leeds now held the initiative and it came as no surprise when they drew level in the 38th minute.

Kewell brought down a pass from Harte on his chest, held off the challenge of Taggart before driving a low shot across Flowers into the corner of the net.

Collymore shot into the side-netting after more good play by Izet and in the 48th minute City regained the lead.

A free-kick from Stefan Oakes flicked off the head of a Leeds defender into the path of

Guppy at the far post. The England wing-back drilled a low shot across Martyn into the corner of the net for his first goal since returning to action from a knee injury in mid-January.

Neil Lennon became the first player to be booked in the 58th minute for a late challenge on Haaland, before Flowers scrambled across his line to hold onto a deflected shot from Kewell.

But Leeds posed less of a threat in the initial stages of the second period.

Eadie seemed less than happy when replaced by Tony Cottee after 66 minutes but the veteran striker's first touch almost produced a goal and it needed Radebe to get a vital block on his close range shot.

Leicester looked the more likely to score again with Izet inches over the top with an overhead kick, but they held on for a victory which has put the Premiership title on a plate for Manchester United.

French goal ace Henry broke Coventry's stubborn resistance in the 49th minute to set up a comfortable win for the Arsenal.

Henry took his tally for the season to 18 - including seven in the last eight matches - when he collected Patrick Vieira's inch perfect pass before slotting a measured side foot shot into the corner of Steve Ogrizovic's goal from 18 yards.

Then the floodgates opened late in the game. Grimandi headed in the second in the 79th minute, his fourth of the season, before Kanu demonstrated his trademark fancy footwork a minute later to fool Ogrizovic and roll in the third.

Kanoute was the toast of East London with a goal on his West Ham debut - but Di Canio outshone the Frenchman with one of the goals of the season.

The fiery Italian scored with an exquisite scissors-kick volley after eight minutes.

Former Hammers favourite Hughes pulled one back with 15 minutes remaining, but it was not enough to save struggling Wimbledon from another defeat.

European weekend roundup



PARIS, March 27: Monaco beat Nantes 2-0 on Sunday to virtually assure themselves of being crowned French champions next week when a win over relegation-threatened Marseille will suffice to give them their sixth title, reports AFP.

Elsewhere the other major championships still have plenty of life left in them particularly in Italy where what looked a formality for Juventus has been reinvigorated after their lead over Lazio was cut to six points when Juve lost 2-0 to AC Milan on Friday and Lazio overcame city rivals AS Roma 2-1.

The two meet in what should be the deciding test Saturday, as Juventus lose Lazio would almost be in pole position as the leaders still have to face unpredictable Inter Milan before the campaign is finished.

The big two in Germany Bayern Munich and Bayer Leverkusen gained no advantage over one another on Saturday as they both fought out draws, though Bayer will rue just getting a point off in-trouble SC Freiburg, and remain locked on the same number of points, 54, with Bayern having the edge on goal difference.

The big two in Spain Real Madrid and Barcelona were tied on 54 points, with Real having the edge on goal difference.

Real Madrid's win over Espanyol puts them 13 points clear, and with only another five games left that means the game is all but over.

Lyon, who ran out 2-0 winners over fifth-placed Sedan, moved into second while Paris St Germain, who beat Le Havre 2-1 on Saturday, are third a point in arrears.

However, the win was marred by an injury to Marchegiani after a clash with Montella. The goalkeeper had

to leave the field and was replaced by Marco Ballotta. Juventus had been undone on Friday night by two goals from AC Milan's Ukrainian hitman Andriy Shevchenko, who tightened his grip as leading goalscorer.

BUNDESLIGA

With leading pair Bayern Munich and Bayer Leverkusen level pegging at the top of the Bundesliga the tension showed on Saturday as both dropped home points.

Bayern were held 2-2 as they ran into an energetic Kaiserlautern, who pinched the title off them two seasons ago and whose coach Otto Rehhagel loves to put one over the Bavarians, who sacked him after less than a season in charge in 1996.

Leverkusen were left aghast after they allowed relegation candidates SC Freiburg to escape with a 1-1 draw.

Leverkusen, who last week fired Ulm 9-0 away, were light years from that form as they struggled to get back on terms after Georgia international Levan Kobiashvili had scored on three minutes for Freiburg.

Brazilian Emerson finally saved their bacon eight minutes after the break but coach Christoph Daum was unimpressed.

We made enough chances but our opponents made full use of their only one. It was one-way football all the way through but it wasn't successful," said Daum.

Werder Bremen piled on the agony for crisis-ridden 1997 European Cup champions Borussia Dortmund beating them 3-2 to extend their winless streak to 10 matches, exactly the term since Bernd Krauss took over as coach.

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Primera Liga Makkay keeps Deportivo ahead

MADRID, March 27: Deportivo La Coruna went back to the top of the Primera Liga on Sunday as they ran out 3-1 winners over relegation-threatened Real Oviedo - Dutch striker Roy Makkay grabbing his first goals in three matches as he scored two of them, reports AFP.

Deportivo, who made a speciality of choking in the 90s with the league title theirs for the taking on a couple of occasions, lead Catalan giants Barcelona, who had gone top on Saturday after a hard fought 2-1 win over Malaga, by two points.

Makkay sent Deportivo, who were missing four of their Brazilian contingent, in to the halftime break with a comfortable 2-0 lead after he had headed a home take.

Although Oviedo's French central defender Fredric Danjou prodded home past keeper Jacques Song'o to reduce the deficit in the 67th minute the oldest man on the pitch 37-year-old Brazilian midfielder Donato wrapped up the three points for Coruna six minutes later as he rose unmarked to head their third.

Defending champions Barcelona had to come from behind in Malaga.

It took a late, late show from the Nou Camp outfit to see off unfashionable Malaga after a first-half goal from Henrique Catanha had given the minnows an early lead.

Defender Fernandez Antuna Abelardo squared the match for Barca after 80 minutes before Dutchman Patrick Kluijver converted a penalty three minutes from time.

It was not all good news for Barca who saw their Brazilian FIFA World Player of the Year Rivaldo leave the field with an injured back that rules him out of his country's opening World Cup 2002 qualifier in Colombia next week.

Another casualty was Dutchman Ronald De Boer who hurt his knee in a clash with Malaga's Uruguayan star Dario Silva and is sidelined for five weeks. That must put into question his Euro 2000 prospects.

The only other title contenders to have a good day Saturday were Real Zaragoza whose 2-0 win in Vitoria against Alaves lifted them to third.

Real Madrid also saw their fading title hopes further hit by a 0-0 draw at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium with Madrid neighbours Rayo Vallecano.

Major League Soccer

Lothar off on wrong foot



FORT LAUDERDALE, Florida, March 27: As far as first games go, this one is better forgotten as quickly as possible, reports AFP.

The American soccer debut of German international Lothar Matthaeus turned out to be less than memorable as the Miami Fusion handed his New York/New Jersey MetroStars a 3-1 Major League Soccer defeat on Sunday night.

As impressive as his international soccer pedigree and resume is, the crowd of 10,482 at Lockhart Stadium was reminded that he was only one man, a 39-year-old man at that.

"I am not very happy with this game," Matthaeus said. "This was not a good start for me or the MetroStars."

The team looked shaky, particularly when it was pressured on defense. Matthaeus, who was forced to move from sweeper into the midfield after the MetroStars fell behind, looked average at best, and it appeared his teammates weren't ready for his many long passes.

"I was not nervous," Matthaeus said. "It was an important game for me, but I have played in many important games in my career."

MetroStars coach Octavio Zambrano felt there was much room for improvement for Matthaeus, who only joined the team from Bundesliga champions Bayern Munich a little more than two weeks ago.

"He still has to find his way with the team," he said. "You have to realize that he has really played only one match with this team and that was

against an amateur team. So, in essence, it was his first match with the guys. From that standpoint, we obviously are going to see much better (from Lothar)."

Matthaeus, however, will have to wait at least a week before he finds his way as he left on a plane late Sunday night to join the German National Team for an international friendly in Croatia on Wednesday. He will return on Friday for Saturday's home opener against defending champions DC United.

Asked how he expected Matthaeus to assimilate with the team if he was going to train with it, Zambrano replied, "That's a great question, which I don't have an answer. That is the reality of the game. There are important national team matches he has to play."

The reality was the Fusion was the better side. Behind forwards Roy Lassiter, Eric Wynalda and Diego Serna, the Fusion pressured the MetroStars early and often, forcing Matthaeus to work overtime clearing a couple of dangerous balls away from Lassiter in front of the goal. That gave a good indication of what was to come.

"We made a lot of easy mistakes," Matthaeus said. "This was a problem."

The MetroStars finally paid for one of their mistakes in the 16th minute as Serna beat defender Mohammad Khakpour for a through ball. Serna passed to Lassiter, who slotted it home between the legs of goalkeeper Mike Ammann.

"I can only speculate that the first half we were too nervous," Zambrano said. "After all of this notoriety and commotion leading up to this game, rather than having a positive impact on our team had a different impact on our team. I was hoping we would settle in the second half."

Alex Comas equalized on a six-yard shot in the 27th minute before the MetroStars cracked again in the second half. First, Wynalda headed home a Martin Machon corner kick in the 51st minute -- a shot that Matthaeus claimed was handled by Serna.

Serna connected for an insurance goal off a breakaway in the 65th minute, which the MetroStars claimed was offside.

"I told the referee Serna was five yards offside, not one yard offside," Matthaeus said. "The game was over after the third goal."

Latin qualifiers kick off today



2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA JAPAN

MONTEVIDEO, March 27: Latin American hopefuls start off on the long and winding road to the 2002 World Cup this week with four-times world champions Brazil facing a tricky away test in Colombia on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Brazil are unlikely to have much difficulty in maintaining their 100 percent qualifying record as four of the ten teams in the South American group will go through to the finals and the side finishing fifth will go into a play-off against a team from Oceania.

The samba stars open their programme without Inter Milan striker Ronaldo, still recovering from knee surgery. But history is on the side of the 'auriverde' as, even if the match will be played at 2,600 metres altitude, Brazil won a previous qualifier here in 1969 and drew in 1977.

Former World Player of the Year Ronaldo is targeting an appearance at the Olympics in Sydney in September but also expects eventually to play a leading role in the World Cup campaign.

Ronaldo says he hopes to appear in the second qualifier against Ecuador on April 25-26 in Sao Paulo.

Coach Wanderley Luxemburgo has plenty of talent in reserve, however, including the likes of Ronaldinho Gauchao, tipped to be the 'new' Ronaldo.

Luxemburgo will opt for a mixture of youth and experience for the trip to Bogota with an 18-man squad which includes 34-year-old Aldair of Roma, as well as clubmates Cafu and Antonio Carlos.

Brazil originally included seven of the squad who lost the World Cup final to France - those players being Aldair, reserve keeper Dida, Cafu, Roberto Carlos, Rivaldo, Emerson and Ze Roberto.

But Saturday night reigning world player of the year Rivaldo had to pull out after straining his back during which includes 34-year-old Aldair of Roma, as well as clubmates Cafu and Antonio Carlos.

Luxemburgo wants to play a diamond-shaped formation whereby defence can move effortlessly into attack with the

key concept fluidity of movement as players carry out a multitude of different roles - Brazil's answer to the old Dutch concept of 'total football'.

"Any winning team is built on a foundation of three, four or more players. In the current squad those are keeper Dida, Cafu, Aldair, Roberto Carlos, Emerson and Rivaldo," explained Luxemburgo as he fine-tuned preparations for the trip to Bogota and before the news of the injury to Rivaldo.

Ronaldinho, who plays for Gremio, is set to become a key player of the squad and is also in the frame for the Olympic finals.

Only three of the Olympic side - Ronaldinho, Athlison Mazolli Oliveira (Flamengo) and Alessandro de Souza (Alex) (Palmeiras) are in the senior squad and Luxemburgo will need to ensure that the trio do not suffer any burn out.

Gaucha's relative inexperience will be offset by the presence in the forward line of Bayern Munich's Claudio Lopez (Valencia), Gustavo Lopez (Celta Vigo) and emblematic Gabriel Batistuta (Fiorentina) all had to indulge in some quick continental-crossing after European Champions League and UEFA Cup action.

Other Italian-based stars such as Juan Sebastian Veron and Diego Simeone (Lazio), Roberto Ayala and Jose Chamot (AC Milan) and Javier Zanetti (Inter Milan) are also in the squad.

Real Madrid playmaker Fernando Redondo remains in international exile after falling out with previous coach Daniel Passarella's instructions to cut his hair and deciding to retire from the international game before the last World Cup.

Chile have qualified for seven finals, including France 98, but that was after an absence of 16 years.

Chile coach Nelson Acosta has criticised Lazio and Inter Milan for dragging their feet on freeing Marcelo Salas and Ivan Zamorano, his side's lethal strikeforce.

However, under FIFA regulations they can play in Italy on Saturday and then travel in compliance with the four-day availability rule recently reduced from five.

Such is the importance of the game in Chile that a member of parliament, Arturo Etcheverre, had tabled a motion asking the government to declare full international as being officially part of the 'national interest' and thus ensure they are covered by state television.

Currently, many international are only watchable on pay television as private companies hold the broadcasting rights.

Other opening fixtures see Peru host Paraguay and Ecuador take on Venezuela.

Uruguay face Bolivia, who retain FIFA permission to play home matches at altitude in La Paz at the Stadio Hernan Siles, known as 'El Nido del Condor' (the Condor's Nest).

At 3600m (1180 feet) La Paz is the highest capital city in the world.

Uruguay, coached by former Argentina World Cup winning skipper Passarella, are pinning their hopes on the form of Inter Milan star Alvaro Recoba as they look to improve a miserable recent record.

However, reports in Montevideo on Saturday indicated that Passarella was contemplating resigning over the unwillingness of European clubs to release their players.

The 'celeste' have reached the finals nine times and won the tournament in 1930 and 1950 - beating hosts Brazil in the final - but they have missed out on qualification twice in a row.

Neither Venezuela nor Ecuador have ever qualified for the final phase.

The second round of fixtures, when Brazil meet Ecuador and Argentina travel to Venezuela, take place at the end of April.

for past three finals, will be facing up to life without former Newcastle and Parma star Faust