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Tushar's ton steers Khulna

GREEN DELTA NAT'L CRICKET LEAGUE
Khulna v Dhaka Metro

Tushar Imran's unbeaten century guided hosts Khulna to a comfortable three-wicket win over Dhaka Metro in their Green Delta National Cricket League one-day match at the Jessore Stadium yesterday.

The middle-order batsman scored 106 not out as the home side, chasing a commanding Dhaka Metro total of 202 in 50 overs, reached home in the 47th over.

After Khulna lost their top four batsmen with the score on 44, Imran featured in two important partnerships. He began by putting on 71 runs for the fifth wicket with Rashedul (17) and then shared in a sixth wicket stand worth 69 runs with lower-order Niaz Morshed who made 21.

Khulna's hero hit a six and eight boundaries during his 122-ball knock.

Dhaka Metro skipper Khaled Mahmud raised some hopes for a win when he claimed three early wickets for only 28 runs. He eventually ended up with five for 41.

Earlier, the visitors, batting first, built their total around Pakistani middle-order Zahoor Elahi who hammered 38. Besides, Khaled Mahmud added 32 while Mozilul Islam and Sajad Ahmed scored 29 runs each respectively.

Khulna spinner Niaz Morshed captured four wickets for 33 runs while left-arm seamer

KCA emerge V-Day cricket champs

Sports Reporter

Kalabagan Cricket Academy (KCA) won the first Inter Sports-WECCA Victory Day under-13 cricket tournament with a nine-wicket thrashing of Discovery in the final at the Kalabagan Krira Chakra ground yesterday.

The tiny tots of Kalabagan made a mockery of the contest when they, chasing a modest Discovery total of 91 for eight, rattled up 93 for the loss of only one wicket.

Babu was adjudged man-of-the-final.

KCA advanced into the final defeating their B team by six wickets in the first semifinal. Discovery on the other hand defeated Dhaka Metro by 21-runs.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, president of the Bangladesh Cricket Board, witnessed the final and gave away prizes.



Babu of Kalabagan Cricket Academy gears up for a shot during the Inter Sports-WECCA Victory Day under-13 cricket final match against Discovery at the Kalabagan Krira Chakra ground yesterday. - Star photo



Romario

(Brazilian soccer superstar)

"I'm older and better, like wine, no I don't smoke, I don't drink and I hit as much as I have to on the field of play. That's why I've scored so many goals this season at the age of 34."

Lean looking Lankans

DURBAN, South Africa, Dec 24: Sri Lanka got into the first of three Tests against South Africa at Kingsmead Tuesday with several of their key players lacking form, reports AFP.

Only Mahela Jayawardene of the touring team's batsmen has been a consistent scorer and the tourists will face a searching examination from South Africa's fast bowlers on a pitch which usually offers plenty of pace and bounce.

South Africa, though, will be without star fast bowler Allan Donald, who has not recovered from a stomach muscle injury.

Sri Lanka won the first match of the tour against Eastern Province inside two days but since then their bowlers have seldom been threatening.

Sri Lanka will put a lot of faith in their world-class off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan, who has been lightly used on the tour.

Muralitharan and left-arm opening bowler Chaminda Vaas were both rested when Sri Lanka played their final warm-up match, a rain-hit drawn game against KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg.

Nuwari Zoysa, another left-arm fast bowler, was struggling with a right knee injury during the KwaZulu-Natal match.

Muralitharan and South African captain Shaun Pollock are on the verge of significant bowling milestones. Muralitharan has taken 288 wickets in 57 Tests and is set to become the second-fastest man in Test history to take 300 wickets.

Dennis Lillee of Australia reached the landmark in 56 matches but the next best, Richard Hadlee of New Zealand and Malcolm Marshall of West Indies, needed 81 matches.

Muralitharan has been particularly effective against South Africa, taking 58 wickets in eight matches against them.

Pollock, who will be captaining South Africa for the first time in a Test match in his home town, has taken 198 Test

Anand pockets world crown

TEHRAN, Dec 24: Indian Grand Master Viswanathan Anand captured the FIDE world chess title here Sunday with a decisive win over his Russian-born Spanish rival Alexei Shirov, reports AFP.

The Spaniard resigned on



VISHWANATHAN ANAND

the 41st move to give Anand, playing white, an insurmountable 3.5 to 0.5 points lead and the 660,000-dollar prize. He will be formally awarded the crown on Wednesday.

Anand, currently third in the world rankings, was the pre-match favourite after the world's top two Grand Masters, Garry Kasparov and Vladimir Kramnik, opted to skip the FIDE tournament.

Kramnik has hinted he might take on the FIDE champion after beating Kasparov, the former undisputed world champion and his one-time mentor, in the rival Brain Games Championship in London.

Neither player is recognised by the World Chess Federation (FIDE).

National youth cricket scores

Sports Reporter

Bogra, Nilphamari and Tangail advanced into the final round of the 20th National Youth Cricket Championship when they won their respective zonal finals at different venues across the country yesterday.

At Natore, Bogra recorded a hard-fought two-wicket win against Naogaon.

In a low-scoring affair, Bogra, chasing a modest Naogaon total of 135 runs, reached 139 for the loss of eight wickets in 38.2 overs with Kutub notching a fine 55.

At Kurigram, Nilphamari defeated Rangpur by 46 runs.

Batting first after winning the toss, Nilphamari scored a fighting 183 for seven in the allotted 50 overs with Niaz making 60 and Wasim contributing 42.

Rangpur, in their chase, were all out for 137 with five overs to spare. Pappu and Sakib scored 44 and 35 runs each, but that was not enough to avoid the defeat.

Railan with three for 16 was the wrecker-in-chief among the Nilphamari bowlers.

Meanwhile, at Tangail the hosts won against their more colourful neighbours Mymensingh by 64 runs.

Sent into bat, Tangail scored 181 before being all out in 45 overs. Sultan scored highest 43 runs for the winners followed by Sumon, who clipped in with 32.

Mymensingh, in reply, were bundled out for 117 runs in 43.2 overs. Only Omar scored a decent 38.

Rakib and Sumon captured two wickets apiece for Tangail.

BRIEF SCORES

Bogra vs Naogaon
Venue: Natore
NAOGAON: 135 all out in 46.1 overs (Rashed 30, Rubait 31, Nafis 4/11)
BOGRA: 139 for 8 wickets in 38.2 overs (Kutub 55, Miraz 22, Polash 4/21)
Result: Bogra won by 2 wickets.

Nilphamari vs Rangpur
Venue: Kurigram
NILPHAMARI: 183 for 7 wickets in 50 overs (Niaz 60, Wasim 42, Mintu 3/36)
RANGPUR: 137 all out in 45 overs (Pappu 44, Sakib 35, Railan 3/16, Shajib 2/22)
Result: Nilphamari won by 46 runs.

Tangail vs Mymensingh
Venue: Tangail
TANGAIL: 181 all out in 45 overs (Sultan 43, Sumon 32, Azim 22, Arif 4/38, Sohag 2/14, Arif 2/38)
MYMENSINGH: 117 all out in 43.2 overs (Omar 38, Sumon 2/4, Rakib 2/19)
Result: Tangail won by 64 runs.

Tourists made to toil

PIETERMARITZBURG, South Africa, Dec 24: Sri Lanka's cricketers were made to toil in the field on the final day as their rain-hit three-day match against KwaZulu-Natal ended in a draw Saturday, reports AFP.

KwaZulu-Natal made 299 for five after Sri Lanka declared at their overnight total of 257 for eight. The match was effectively doomed to end in a draw after no play was possible on the first day because of rain. Bad light ended play early on the two remaining days.

A first wicket stand of 168 between Mark Bryuns and Doug Watson set the provincial side up for a significant total but there was a middle order collapse in which five wickets fell for 50.

There was scarcely any comfort for the Sri Lankans ahead of the first Test against South Africa which starts in Durban Tuesday.

Their most successful bowler was part-timer Mahela Jayawardene, the eighth man used. Jayawardene, who has been the team's only consistent batsman, bowled tidy off-spinners to take two for 27 in eight overs.

Nuwari Zoysa, expected to be one of Sri Lanka's strike bowlers in the Tests, sent down only 7.3 overs and although he stayed on the field he seemed to be struggling with a right knee injury.

With Sri Lanka resting Chaminda Vaas and Muttiah Muralitharan, two of their main Test strike bowlers, Bryuns and Watson were seldom troubled by an unimpressive attack.

The two openers, who have both played for South Africa, A scored at a good rate before Bryuns was bowled by an off-spinner from Pramodya Wickramasinghe for 89, made off 156 balls with 13 fours.

Watson skied leg-spinner Chandana to long off after making 81 off 158 balls. He hit

Black Caps on their guard

WELLINGTON, Dec 24: New Zealand must be wary of the bitten biting back in the one-off Test match against Zimbabwe starting at Wellington's Basin Reserve on Boxing Day, reports AFP.

Zimbabwe prepared for the Test with a dismal display in the three-day tour match against Canterbury when they were bundled out for 150 in reply to the home side's 330 for five declared after being put into bat.

Moreover, the tourists go into the Test without seasoned batsman Grant Flower, who fractured his right index finger while fielding. Also on the injured list is Dirk Viljoen, with a fractured little finger.

The tourists were hampered in the Christchurch match by having three top players ill with influenza - captain and fast bowling spearhead Heath Streak, all-rounder Campbell and Stuart Carlisle - while Andy Flower was in Zimbabwe on compassionate leave.

Zimbabwe coach Carl Rackemann said with the squad now down to 14, they had a lot of work to do to finalise their starting 11, although the "flurried" trio and Andy Flower will all play.

Batting does not pose Rackemann with as many problems as his bowling attack. Zimbabwe's recent tour of India was highlighted by some great batting from the Flower brothers, Campbell and Trevor Donald, while the Christchurch match showed the emergence of Stuart Carlisle as a definite prospect to make his debut.

"The biggest problem we face is to put out a balanced side," Rackemann said. "With Grant Flower out that poses some difficulty because he has been in fantastic form."

On the bowling front Henry Olongwa was the pick of the Zimbabwe bowlers in Christchurch and will play, according to Rackemann, while leg-spinner Brian Murphy was also a certainty.

Hadlee takes it positively

CHRISTCHURCH, Dec 24 (Reuters) - New Zealand cricket selection convenor Sir Richard Hadlee is hopeful that recent comments made by Zimbabwe captain Heath Streak are a sign of a more positive approach to be taken by the tourists in the Boxing Day Test at the Basin Reserve in Wellington on Tuesday.

Hadlee, chairman of the national selection panel for the first time in games at home, believes that from a New Zealand point of view the Test is there to be won.

He says it represents a chance to the side that went down 2-0 to South Africa earlier this month to regain some confidence and self-belief before the harder challenges of the summer.

The Test was a chance for the Black Caps to get back into some winning habits.

Hadlee said he noted comments from Streak that the Test represented the best opportunity to beat New Zealand with several key bowlers missing through injury.

"That suggests he is going to play positively, and that is to be welcomed."

"It looks like we will have a good Test on our hands," he said.

Waugh feeling great

MELBOURNE, Dec 24: Australian skipper Steve Waugh says his buttock injury has almost healed, enabling him to resume playing against the West Indies in the fourth Test starting here on Boxing Day, reports AFP.

Waugh will wait until Christmas morning to declare himself a certain starter but he was untroubled at training Sunday as the Australian squad began preparations for its 14th consecutive Test win.

The 35-year-old Waugh completed a searching workout, all but ensuring Damien Martyn will not get another chance at Test level.

Martyn will make way for Waugh's return despite his excellent performance in last week's third Test win in Adelaide.

But explosive fast bowler Brett Lee has been ruled out of the remainder of the series.

Lee will miss the Boxing Day Test and the fifth Test in Sydney from January 2 after Australian team medical officials decided against risking his lower back problem.

The 24-year-old pace bowler underwent tests after arriving with the Australian squad but he could not prove he had overcome the bone stress which forced him out of the third Test in Adelaide.

Waugh wants to test his injury at training Monday but he is almost certain he will be fit for the 15th anniversary of his Test debut.

"I haven't made a final decision, but unless anything goes radically wrong tomorrow, I'll be playing," Waugh said Sunday.

"I went through a pretty strenuous workout out there. There were no negative feelings but I want to make sure so I'm going to give it another go tomorrow morning."

"It's a bit embarrassing, I guess, talking about that part of the anatomy. It's a bit strange people taking notice of it."

"But I think it's feeling pretty good, as good as before. It gets



STEVE WAUGH

ABSORBING STATS

MELBOURNE, Dec 24 (Reuters): Statistics of total Test matches played by Australia and West Indies ahead of the fourth Test starting at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Tuesday.

Australian Test matches:

Played	Won	Lost	Drawn	Tied
610	263	168	177	2

West Indies Test matches:

Played	Won	Lost	Drawn	Tied
367	138	99	129	1

Australia v West Indies:

Played	Australia	West Indies	Drawn	Tied
93	40	31	21	1

Australia v West Indies at Melbourne Cricket Ground:

Played	Australia	West Indies	Drawn	Tied
13	9	3	1	