

Rajshahi sports

From Our Correspondent RAJSHAH, Jan 11: Malishabari Bluthu Eleven defeated Padma Kishore Sangha by 72 runs in the Muktiuddi Shaheed Fazlul Huque Jinnah Gold Cup Cricket tournament today at Godagari Women's Degree College Ground.

Volleyball Saragdhur Club defeated Goud Das Club 87-79 in the Godagari Volleyball tournament played today at Godagari Degree College Ground.

ICC under-17 Saudis, Thais to give it a miss Sports Reporter Saudi Arabia and Thailand have pulled out of the second ICC under-17 Asian Cricket Championship, to be held in Bangladesh from February 15.

Bangladesh Cricket Board joint-secretary and event manager of the championship Mahmud Ul Haq Manu revealed this yesterday.

The tournament will now be held with ten teams—India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Malaysia, UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Singapore and hosts Bangladesh—will now take part in the championship which will end on February 25. The fixture will be disclosed with in next couple of days.

Manu also informed that the Asian Cricket Council has appointed Singapore Cricket Association official Anil Kalavar as the tournament director.

Ngam may miss

WINDNESBURG, Jan 11 (Internet report) Mfuneke Ngam could miss South Africa's tour to the West Indies after tests revealed the fiery paceman has suffered a stress fracture, his third in three years.

The 21-year-old from Alice in the Eastern Cape sustained the injury on his right femur, to go with stress fractures to his spine and foot.

According to South African team physiotherapist Craig Smith, Ngam could be out of action for anything from six weeks to three months, the worst-case scenario ruling him out of the West Indies series which starts in March.

Smith hypothesised that Ngam might be prone to stress fractures due to a metabolic problem and that the bowler's bones could be weak, either due to genetic factors or a deficiency of minerals and vitamins.

"We are still deciding what the next step for Mfuneke will be," Smith told on Thursday. "But the plan is for him to see the UCB's orthopaedic specialist in Johannesburg sometime next week."

While the loss of Ngam is a minor blow to South Africa, Smith said that Roger Telemachus—who was ruled out of Tuesday's ODI against Sri Lanka with a sore neck, was 90 per cent fit. He bowled without any hindrance on Wednesday and is sure to return to action at Newlands on Thursday.

Unchanged From page 13 gamootoo (three) to plunge West Indies to 139 for seven.

Symonds upstaged leg-spinning champion Shane Warne—in his return match—by taking 4-35 to complete a fine all-round performance.

Warne, who had been sidelined for two months with a broken finger, conceded 21 runs in his first four overs but bowled better in his second spell, although remaining wicketless.

SCOREBOARD Scoreboard of the opening Carlton tri-nation limited-overs match between Australia and the West Indies at the Melbourne Cricket Ground Thursday.

Table with columns: AUSTRALIA, M Waugh c Hands b Williams 51, Gilechrist c McLean b Cuffy 7, Ponting c Powell b Cuffy 73, Bevan c Lara b Williams 17, S Waugh c Nagamootoo b Samuels 29, Marjyn run out 42, Symonds not out 38, Extras (lb-6, w-4) 10, Total: (For 6 wickets in 50 overs) 267, Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-118, 3-144, 4-174, 5-193, 6-267.

Table with columns: WEST INDIES, Campbell c Bevan b Bracken 4, Hinds c Ponting b McGrath 1, Lara c Gilechrist b Harvey 28, Samuels c a and b Symonds 57, Powell c S Waugh b Symonds 12, Jacobs c a and b Symonds 24, Nagamootoo lbw Symonds 3, Adams not out 25, Williams not out 26, Extras (lb-9, w-4) 163, Total: (For 7 wickets in 50 overs) 103, Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-9, 3-57, 4-84, 5-132, 6-139, 7-139.

Result: Australia won by 74 runs. Man-of-the-match: Ricky Ponting.

AFP FOOTBALL BRIEFS

Jan 11 (AFP): World football briefs on Thursday:

SEAMAN ON COMEBACK TRAIN

LONDON: England goalkeeper David Seaman starts his comeback from injury in Arsenal's reserves against Wimbledon on Wednesday night, reports AFP.

The 27-year-old, anxious to improve his England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson, has been out of action since October with shoulder and ankle injuries.

He has missed 17 games in all but if he comes through tonight's match at Sutton United's Gander Green Lane ground, Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger will consider picking him for Saturday's London derby against Chelsea at Highbury.

And Seaman, who is determined to continue his international career, could also be in line for Eriksson's first squad for the friendly against Spain at Villa Park on February 28.

Seaman is also likely to decide next month whether to accept a new one-year contract to end his playing days at Highbury next season.

FERGUSON WARNS PLAYERS' AGENTS

LONDON: Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson on Wednesday warned agents that the Premiership champions would not be held to ransom in negotiations over new contracts.

Australian Open

Gustavo, Martina top guns

MELBOURNE, Jan 11: Brazilian Gustavo Kuerten and Martina Hingis of Switzerland were Thursday announced as the top seeds for the men's and women's singles at next week's Australian Open here, reports AFP.

Defending champion Andre Agassi was given his world ranking of six as his seeding for the year's first grand slam tournament, while women's champion Lindsay Davenport was named second seed.

Kuerten becomes the second South American to obtain top seeding at a grand slam since 1981 when Argentine's Guillermo Vilas was No.1 seed at the Australian Open.

Kuerten only sealed the world top ranking in the final match of last year's Masters Cup in Lisbon when he beat Agassi.

Agassi enters final

MELBOURNE, Jan 11: Andre Agassi fought his way back from the brink, to reach the final of the ongoing tennis 'chess' here Thursday, reports AFP.

The seven-odd number of all the four grand slams and six overall looked one when he trailed Frenchman Nicolas Escude 3-6, 2-5, 0-40 and needing to hold his serve to force Escude to close the match out in fierce heat.

Not only did Agassi hold on, but he turned the tide and eventually wore down Escude for a gritty 3-6, 7-5, 6-1 victory and a place in Saturday's final against either Yevgeny Kafelnikov or Juan Carlos Ferrero, who play their semi-final Friday.

It was encouraging for the defending Australian Open champion just three days before the start of the year's first grand slam tournament.

He got the break and he played well for two sets and then when I got back into the match I started making less mistakes," Agassi said. "When I was serving 3-5, 0-40 I was disgusted with myself."

Frazier fumbles

HOBART, Jan 11: Italian Rita Grande upset top seed Amy Frazier in the quarterfinals of the Tasmanian international women's tennis tournament here Thursday, reports AFP.

Grande, ranked 77th to Frazier's 20th, sliced and top spun her way to a 6-4, 6-3 victory.

The Italian, a finalist in Hobart two years ago who's coming back from a hip operation, never allowed her harder-hitting American opponent to find her rhythm.

In the semi-finals, Grande will meet sixth-seeded Romanian Ruxandra Dragomir, who beat number four Anne-Gaëlle Sidot of France 6-1 5-7 6-3 in a fluctuating match.

The left-handed Sidot, after being outplayed in the first, fought her way back with powerful ground shots and appeared heading for victory when leading 3-1 in the decider.

But Dragomir proved too steady and with Sidot becoming increasingly erratic, won five successive games.

Unseeded Jennifer Hopkins was first into the semi-finals when third seeded American compatriot Kristina Brandi had to retire with a left thigh strain after only four games.

United which will keep him at Old Trafford into his 30s. Welshman Giggs, who has 18 months left on his current deal, feels he could put pen to paper on a new agreement in the summer.

United are talking to the winger as part of their on-going plan to agree new deals with all of their top players.

"We're in talks at the moment," said Giggs, quoted in Wednesday's Manchester Evening News.

"My agent has met with the club, and we're waiting for them to come back to us now. "As far as I'm concerned, I think it's all looking good."

"I have never had any problems in the past with contracts and I don't foresee any problems this time. "I don't want to go and I don't think the club want me to, so I can only see it going smoothly."

"I wouldn't be surprised if it went through in the summer, but there's no hurry. "United will certainly want to get it sorted before next season starts because I would only have a year left after this one. They wouldn't want to get into the Roy Keane scenario again where he could have talked to foreign clubs after Christmas and there was all that speculation about his future."

Giggs, 27, has just clocked up 10 years in United's first team - and his representatives are also organising a testimonial season next term with his benefit match likely to be in September.

GIGGS LOOKING FOR NEW MU DEAL

LONDON: Ryan Giggs is confident he can agree a new contract with Manchester

Nat'l sub-jr chess

Sagar stays ahead

Mohammedul Min Ahmed Sagar of Andhra Chess School was maintaining a solo lead after the seventh round matches in the 21 National Sub-Junior Championship held at the NSC chess room yesterday, reports UNB.

Sagar secured full points beating his teammate Nagir Saleheen in the day's round.

Naveem Arshi Ratul and Mokseshul Monir followed the leader with six points while Nagir Saleheen, Abul Kashem Md Sadi and Maitul Islam have five points each.

Ratul beat Zehri, Monir beat Sadi, Moniruzzaman beat Alam Mia, Maitul beat Obaidul and Shaunsudhoo beat Sabbar.

The eighth and final round matches will begin today at 3 pm at the same venue.

Meanwhile, the selection phase of the 22 National Women's Championship will begin on January 15 at 3:00 pm instead of January 14.

The meet is open to all and requires no entry fee.

Interested players have been requested to submit their names by January 14 at the Bangladesh Chess Federation office.

The Federation will provide free food and accommodation to the participants coming from outside Dhaka.

M'singh cricket

MYMENSINGH, Jan 11: Mohammedan Sporting Club defeated Renaissance Club by 37 runs in the First Division cricket league at the local Circuit House ground today, reports UNB.

Mohammedan batted first and scored 200 runs in the stipulated 40 overs.

In reply, Renaissance were all out for 163 in 37.2 overs.

BRIEF SCORES

Mohammedan SC: 200 (40 overs), Abir 50, Rabbi 41, Dulal 30, Supta 15, Kamrul 13, 34, Shiban 2/29, Raju 2/51.

Renaissance: 163 (37.2 overs), Shiban 31, Khokon, 21, Arafin 18 n.o., Nasir 4/25, Mou 2/25, Supta 2/27, Swapan 2/28.

Meanwhile, hosts Mymensingh and Faridpur regions reached the final of CAG Cup divisional volleyball competition here today.

In today's matches, Faridpur beat Tangail 2-0 and Mymensingh beat Tangail 2-0 to confirm their final berth.

Mymensingh will face Faridpur in the final at 10 am tomorrow (Friday) at the Zilla School hostel ground.

ICC turns down Pak proposal

LAHORE, Jan 11: International Cricket Council (ICC) has rejected Pakistan's proposal of appointing neutral umpires in a Test match, said Lt Gen Tauqeer Zia, chairman of Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) while talking to newsmen at the Gaddafi Stadium here, on Wednesday, reports PPI.

He said that Pakistan would raise the same issue in the forthcoming ICC meeting to be held on February 12 at Melbourne (Australia).

"Pakistan will insist for both the umpires to be neutral, if not accepted we will be insisting to take more and more advantages of the third umpire," he added.

Don recovering from pneumonia

SYDNEY, Jan 11 (Internet report): Reclusive Australian great Sir Donald Bradman is resting at his Adelaide home after recovering from a bout of pneumonia which forced him into hospital before Christmas.

Australian media had speculated this week about the health of the 92-year-old Bradman, hailed by Prime Minister John Howard as the greatest living Australian.

"Prior to Christmas he was in hospital with pneumonia," Bradman's son John said in a statement issued from southern Adelaide on Thursday.

"He was very pleased to return home and is now there resting under medical supervision."

Five Indians in for tax trouble

NEW DELHI, Jan 11: Five Indian cricketers, including ex-skipper Kapil Dev, have huge amounts of undeclared income and could face stiff penal action, the Indian Express daily said Thursday, reports AFP.

The daily, quoting income tax sources, said the players had been sent notices about two weeks ago to declare their earnings over the past 10 years.

It said cricket legend Kapil Dev, whose name cropped up in a match-fixing probe, had more than 25 million rupees (532,000 dollars) in undeclared earnings.

Kapil was cleared in an official probe last month. Players Ajay Sharma, Ajay Jadhav and Manoj Prabhakar, who were declared guilty by federal investigators of conspiring with bookies, were also found to have concealed their incomes.

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Hingis withstands Williams



SYDNEY, Jan 11: Martina Hingis pumped for joy Thursday after coming through a titanic scrap with Serena Williams at the Sydney International, reports AFP.

The clash was a replay of the memorable match in the semi-finals of the 1999 US Open which Williams won and Hingis made clear from the outset she wanted revenge.

Victory by the Swiss star brought an abrupt halt to Serena's ambitions plan to take

a 6-4, 7-5 winner. "I feel very good about it. For the confidence it's great that I won today even when I wasn't at my best," she said.

"The more you play them (the Williams' sisters) the less intimidated you get and the less problems you have. "Every win against them is a good one to have in your pocket."

She now plays fourth seeded Conchita Martinez in the semi-finals after the Spainard hammered American Corina Morarri 6-4, 6-0.



World No 1 Martina Hingis of Switzerland jubilates after beating American Serena Williams in the quarterfinal of the Sydney International yesterday.

the game to a new level like Martina Navratilova did" and the moment was treasured. The holder of five-time Grand Slams now leads their head-to-heads 5-4 after fighting back from 3-0 down in a see-sawing second set to walk away

Hingis' triumph though didn't come cheaply. After the match she pulled out of the doubles complaining of a severe blister on the right big toe. Williams also had an injury scare, citing a twinge in the left ankle after running for a back-

Injuries bother Pierce



CANTBERRA, Jan 11: World number seven Mary Pierce has added an ankle problem to the mounting number of niggling injuries dogging her just days before the Australian Open, reports AFP.

The French star Thursday played only her second match since pulling out of the US Open in September with a shoulder injury, beating South

African Joannette Kruger 6-3, 6-0 in the quarterfinals of the Canberra International.

But the reigning French Open champion struggled more than she should have, and made several unforced errors which let her opponent remain in contention early on.

Pierce had a foot massage immediately after she left the court, and later blamed her shaky form on a sore ankle.

"Today I was not able to



LETTING GO: Former German tennis icon Steffi Graf relieves the tension while watching her boyfriend Andre Agassi in action yesterday in Melbourne.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues: ACROSS 1 Corsetiere's wares, 5 Prior to Louis landmark, 12 In the middle nowhere, 13 Suitable, 14 Evoke, 15 Cupid's, 16 High-quality, 18 Jungle expedition, 20 Period of glaciation, 21 Potentially poisonous, 23 Picnic intruder, 24 Van's game, 28 Late, 31 Columbus sch., 32 For "sake!", 34 Rowboat accessory, 35 Standard.

Cryptogram puzzle grid with letters: JCS KSPSKSS IYR RQ, JCVKRJX JCYJCS, BSPVMVJSTX MBSBSBJQ, ISJ CVR ICVRJST, SATURDAY'S CRYPTOQUIP: FARMERS OFTEN LIKE TO MILK THE SYSTEM.

Today's Cryptogram Clue: C equals H

The Cryptogram is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.