

Div I cricket

UNB, Dhaka
Young Pegasus beat Gopibagh Friends Association by three wickets in the First Division Cricket League at the City Club ground yesterday.

Sent in to bat first, Gopibagh scored 187 runs for all in 31.3 overs with one down Babel making 62 off 68 balls and opener Kotan 49 off 60 balls.

Johnny bagged four wickets for 26 while Majid captured three wickets for 25 runs.

In reply, Young Pegasus reached the target making 191 runs for seven wickets in 32.1 overs with opener Humayun making highest 67 runs off 80 balls. Russel added 34 off 27 balls and Majid made run-a-ball 32.

Sohag and Dalim took two wickets each for Gopibagh.

Sheffield Shield final Queensland rule Day One

AFP, Brisbane

Young paceman Ashley Noffke upstaged his senior Queensland fast bowlers when he wrecked Victoria on the opening day of the Sheffield Shield cricket final at the Gabba Friday.

Noffke only just missed out being named 12th man for the season decider. But he went on to record his best day in cricket with figures of 5-41 as Queensland took the first day honours in the five-day final.

Queensland dismissed Victoria for 176 and then went to stumps at 35 for one, with Noffke chipping in with an unbeaten 40 as night-watchman.

The 23-year-old did not figure in pre-match discussions but he became the man most talked about on a great day's cricket for Queensland.

Queensland has relied on pace trio Andrew Bichel, Adam Dale and Joe Dawes for most of the season and that continued early Friday when Bichel (3-42) left the visitors dangling at 16 for two after they decided to bat.

But Noffke took over after lunch, crunching through the flowering partnership of Brad Hodge (47) and Jason Armerger (63) in a spell of 3-0 which floored Victoria.

Victoria crashed to 89 for five and only resistance from former Test fast bowler Paul Reiffel (23) and Armerger helped Victoria past 150.

Noffke was delighted at his career-best haul after battling injury throughout the season but he still had to beat off-spinner Scott O'Leary to the last place in the Queensland team.

(The figures) mean a hell of a lot to me. You don't dream about days like this but we have to settle for another four days of cricket.

Russia names Davis Cup squad

AFP, Moscow

Russia's squad for the Davis Cup World Group quarterfinal tie against Sweden in Malmo on April 6-8 was announced by squad manager Kirill Kostyrko on Thursday.

The squad is: Marat Safin, Yevgeny Kafelnikov, Mikhail Yuzhny and Andrei Stoliarov.

"I just shut down my shop so that I could watch the end. Anyway, no one was stirring out for those crucial two hours," said Alok Garg, a grocery store owner in New Delhi's Saket Suburb.

"I told the children, now pray for Bhajji. Pray to win," said his wife, Suniti, who helps out at the store.

Cricketer columnist Saad Bin Jung said Australian skipper Steve Waugh "must be wondering what has hit his best Australian side ever."

Australia won a world record 15 consecutive Tests and was overwhelming favourite to win the series against India after extending their winning sequence to 16 with a 10-wicket victory in the series opener at Bombay.

India fought back to grab an against-the-odds win in the second test last week in Calcutta to send the series into a decider.

Tour match

Pakistan in trouble

Cricket

AP, Wellington

Pakistan will have to bat out most of Saturday to avoid their second cricket tour match loss in three weeks on the final day against Wellington at the Basin Reserve.

The tourists, resting six of their frontline players, were 49 for one in their second innings at stumps, still trailing by 119 runs.

Wellington claimed a first-innings lead of 168 Friday when they declared on 343 for eight in reply to Pakistan's 175.

Pakistan leads 1-0 in the three-Test series against New Zealand with the final Test starting in Hamilton on Tuesday. Pakistan earlier lost by an innings and 54 runs to New Zealand A in the Test series lead-up.

Wellington took command from the first session, adding 96 runs to take the first-innings advantage over the tourists.

Shane Warne had struggled in India because his size made him sweat too much and he could not grip the ball. Australian leg-spin guru Peter Philpott said Friday.

"I just wonder whether sheer sweat came into it," Philpott said when asked why Warne had struggled against the Indians, who secured a famous 2-1 Test series victory in Madras on Thursday.

"In those conditions, sometimes you sweat so much it's very difficult to hold the ball. And for a leg-spinner, if you are having difficulty gripping the ball, it makes it very difficult to bowl."

"Anybody sweats in those conditions and the bigger man you are, the more you're likely to sweat."

But Philpott, a former Test spinner who has coached Warne's rival for a Test berth, New South Wales tweeker Stuart MacGill, said the selectors had made the right decision in naming Warne once they had decided to name just one leg-spinner in the tour squad.

The Warne-MacGill debate generated much comment when the tour squad was named after MacGill's successful series against the West Indies and Warne's lack of first class action following surgery on his spinning finger.

Hoeful Hooper

Cricket

Reuters, Port of Spain

West Indies have lost nine of their last 11 Tests with Wednesday's defeat to South Africa but captain Carl Hooper is still optimistic about the rest of the series.

Despite going down by 69 runs in the second Test of the five-match rubber, Hooper observed that at least West Indies were once again looking like a serious cricket team.

"At least, whereas in previous Test matches we were losing in three of four days, now we are getting games finished," he said.

"We played four days of good cricket and just fell down on the last day. But we can take a lot of heart by the fact that we were competitive. There was just not enough application in the batting."

Rajshahi cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Friends Ideal Ekadosh and Bijoy Ekadosh on their respective matches of the 4th Hasan Imam and Ali Imam Pintu Smriti Sangha cricket tournament yesterday at Rajshahi College Hostel playground.

In the first match, Ideal defeated Lufor Smriti Sangha by 110 runs.

Winning the toss, Ideal scored 160 for eight wickets in allotted 22 overs.

In reply, Lufor Smriti were shot out for 50 in 10 overs.

In the other match of the day, Bijoy Ekadosh beat Mars Kriha Chakra by four wickets.

Opener Selwyn Blackmore led the home side, batting 232 minutes for 74 including six fours and three sixes. He and No. 3 Grant Donaldson put on 121 in 146 minutes for the second wicket before Donaldson was run out just before lunch for 60.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard after the second day of the three-day tour match between Pakistan and Wellington on Friday.

Table with columns: Team, Score, Overs, Runs, Wickets. Includes Pakistan and Wellington scores for first and second innings.

Table with columns: Team, Runs, Wickets. Lists individual player scores for Pakistan and Wellington.

Extras: (b-5, lb-4, nb-13) 22
Total: (8 wickets dec in 101.3 overs) 343
Did not bat: O'Brien, Patel.

Sweat subdued Shane?

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

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Good Luck Bat all signed up

SPORTS REPORTER

A public signature campaign to inspire the Zimbabwe-bound national cricket team rounded off on Friday afternoon in front of Raj-Laxmi Shopping Complex at Uttara Model Town in the capital.

A giant "Good Luck Bat", sponsored by Coca-Cola Far East Ltd, travelled throughout Dhaka on top of a pick-up van from March 20 onwards stopping at different important city points to collect signatures from cricket fans.

The four day journey of the specially decorated vehicle started from Mirpur Stadium on Tuesday morning and drove through areas including Dhanmondi, Nilkhet crossing and Dhaka University.

A large group of enthusiastic fans, both young and old, gathered at the final stoppage of the campaign to pen down their names. A similar three-day programme was also arranged at Chittagong from March 16 to 18.

On March 27, the "Good Luck Bat" will be handed over to the Bangladesh team at the Bangladesh National Stadium. It would then be flown along with the Bangladesh cricketers to Zimbabwe where they are scheduled to play their maiden overseas Tests, two in total and three ODIs.

"I don't know if that was true in the past but it certainly isn't true now."

"On the other hand, we don't run a military camp, we do not have sentries patrolling the halls of the hotels, we do not intervene or delve deeply into the private lives of our players, which the foreign media tried hard to do on our last two tours."

Hooper said he was convinced Brian Lara, who scored 12 and 10 in the second Test to the frustration of his fellow Trinidadians in the crowd, would eventually produce the goods.

"Brian is a class batsman, he is looking good in the nets and I expect him to get a big score somewhere along the line."

"The important thing is that the young players experience the highs and lows of Test cricket. I never give up hope. I expect us to get better."

Emirates Cup golf held

SPORTS REPORTER

The fourth Emirates Cup golf tournament was held at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

About 300 golfers and a good number of ladies took part in the amateur event.

The tournament was sponsored by Emirates Airlines. Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen Harun-Ar-Rashid and president of KGC inaugurated the prestigious meet and later distributed prizes among the winners.

Following are the results: Mrs S N Lee - Winner of Hole-in-one at Hole No. 10; Winner: Maj Gen M Kamal Uddin; Ladies Winner: Mrs S W Lee; Senior Winner: Cdre M Mujibur Rahman; Junior Winner: Imran Chowdhury; Best Gross: Sadiq Qudus; Runner-up: Faisal Khan; Ladies Runner-up: MS Farzana Islam; Front Nine Winner: Brig Najeb Hassan; Back Nine Winner: Hissam Ahmed; Nearest to Pin: Mrs S N Lee; Longest Drive: Raiyan Rab.

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Biman Cup U-14 soccer

UNB, Dhaka

Hosts Rangpur, BKSP, Laxmipur, Narail, Pirojpur and Narayanganj emerged zonal champions to reach the final round of the Biman Cup Under-14 National Football championship eliminating their respective rivals in the finals yesterday.

At Rangpur, hosts beat Gai-bantha 4-0 riding on a hatrick by Sumanta Kumar.

At BKSP, the hosts crushed Tangail 10-0 to lift the zonal title.

At Narail, the hosts beat Jessore by a solitary goal to reach the final round.

At Narayanganj, Mahub scored a hatrick for the locals to earn a 3-0 victory over Dhaka.

At Pirojpur, the home side moved into the final round beating Khulna by 2-0.

At Laxmipur, the hosts booked their seat in the final round beating Chittagong by a solitary goal.

With these six teams, a total of eight teams reached the 10-team final round to be played at Moulvibazar in the first week of next month.

Defending champions Joy-purhat and hosts Moulvibazar will take part in the final round directly. Earlier, Natore and Chandpur DSAs confirmed their final round berth.

Cox Sheffield Shield's best

AFP, Sydney

Tasmanian captain Jamie Cox won the Sheffield Shield player of the series award, the Australian Cricket Board announced Friday.

Cox polled 24 votes, with Western Australia's Simon Katich second on 23 votes. Victorian Brad Hodge finished third with 20.

Playing all 10 games of the Shield season, Cox scored his second-highest domestic first-class season aggregate of 1,070 runs at an average of 66.88.

The right-hander hit five centuries, including a highest score of 160 against New South Wales at the Sydney Cricket Ground in February.

The 31-year-old became the leading run-scorer for Tasmania in first-class cricket when he overtook former Australian top-order batsman David Boon (9,096 runs) during the year.

Next mission Ahsees

Cricket

AFP, Brisbane

The demanding Indian tour would be a factor when the Australian squad for the mid-year Ashes tour to England was chosen, national selector Trevor Hohns said Friday.

Hohns confirmed selectors were likely to send only 15 players to England and were not considering a reserve wicketkeeper to ease the workload for vice-captain Adam Gilchrist.



Greg Rusedski of Great Britain executing a backhand return against Nicolas Massu of Chile in the Ericsson Open Masters Series tennis tournament in Key Biscayne on Thursday.

Rusedski moves on

Tennis

AFP, Florida

Greg Rusedski's storming victory over Nicolas Massu -- including a streak of 25 unreturned points -- highlighted the second day of play at the Tennis Masters Series on Thursday.

The big-serving Briton, eager to reestablish his place among the tennis elite, overcame Massu 6-4, 6-1.

With Massu serving to even the first set at 5-5, Rusedski launched a stream of 25 straight points to take the first set and take a 5-0 lead in the second.

"I was a little bit surprised in the second set," Rusedski admitted. "He must have been frustrated. The first nine games were of really good quality. He was returning very well, hitting fantastic passing shots. He had more chances than I had."

"And then at 5-4, 40-love on his serve I just got on a roll, played five solid points and he made two unforced errors, the first of the whole match. From there on it seemed to flow my way."

"It's nice to get a win," Rusedski added. "He is a very difficult player, competes very well, is one of the quickest guys on the court. Rusedski, once ranked as high as fourth in the world now fallen to 43rd in the ATP champions race after a season battling injuries, next faces German David Prinosil, a player he has dominated in their three previous encounters."

If he gets past Prinosil, he could face Australian Open champion Andre Agassi.

"I don't mind whoever I play," Rusedski said. "If I am in the third round that means I'm playing well. I play Prinosil next, who I beat the last three times."

The two are mates from the injury rehabilitation trenches. "We spent a long time together in the rehab clinic," Rusedski said. "We had different surgeons, but the same doctor looking after us. We've had quite a laugh together."

"We're looking forward to our meeting since the rehab clinic. Whoever wins will probably give the other guy a pretty hard time afterwards."

Croatian Goran Ivanisevic, a three-time Wimbledon finalist now languishing in 115th place in the champions race, defeated Czech Jiri Novak 6-3, 6-4.

Ivanisevic next faces former French Open champion Carlos Moya of Spain.

Another former Roland Garros champion, Michael Chang, advanced to a second-round match against Australian Mark Philippoussis.

Chang beat Alberto Portas of Spain 6-2, 6-3.

The action heats up on Friday, as second round action begins and the top seeds begin to take the court. Pete Sampras, the 13-time Grand Slam champion and three-time winner of this tournament will face Germany's Nicolas Pietrangola in the night session.

Before that, reigning US Open champion Marat Safin takes on Spain's Juan Balcells. Australian Lleyton Hewitt, the seventh seed, begins his quest for a first Tennis Masters Series title against Spain's Jacobo Diaz.

For the women, Americans Lindsay Davenport, Jennifer Capriati and Serena Williams learned who they'll face in the second round. Davenport, the second seed, will take on Czech Dajka Bedanova, a 6-4, 6-4 winner over Paraguay's Rossana de los Rios.

Capriati, the Australian Open champion and a resident of Florida, is seeded fourth and will meet compatriot Jennifer Hopkins, who defeated Argentina's Gisela Dulko 6-3, 6-3.

Williams, fresh off capturing the Indian Wells title on Sunday, is the fifth seed and will face Bulgarian Pavlina Nola, 7-5, 6-0 winner over France's Sarah Pitkowski.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Grid for crossword puzzle with numbers 1-38 and corresponding clues for Across and Down.

CRYPTOQUIP

Day's Cryptiquip Clue: Z equals S. The Cryptiquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals Q, it will equal Q throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.



A tiny lot signing the Coca Cola 'Good Luck Bat' at Uttara yesterday. The giant bat is collecting good luck wishes for the Zimbabwe bound national cricket team.