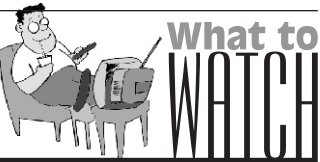




Did U Know?

The national anthem of Greece is played at every closing ceremony of Olympic Games.



ESPN

Sportscentre Hindi
Sport News
6:30 am
English Premier Football League
Highlights at 12:00 pm
&
Leeds United vs Southampton
6:30 pm
Sportscentre Hindi
Sport News
Live at 8:30 pm
English Premier Football League
Bolton Wanderers vs Liverpool
Live at 8:50 pm
&
Arsenal vs Leicester City
Live at 11:30 pm
&
West Ham United vs Leeds United
Live at 1:50 am (Wednesday)

STAR Sports

Harsha Online
Cricket Talk Show
8:30 am
Gillette World Sports Special
Int'l Sports News
12:30 pm
English Premier Football League
Leeds United vs Southampton
1:00 pm
Harsha Online
Cricket Talk Show
3:00 pm
Asia Sport Show
Int'l Sport News
5:30 pm
Sportsline Tonight
Sport News
Live at 8:00 pm
Champions Trophy Sharjah
Final Highlights at 11:00 pm



Arjuna Ranatunga
(Former Sri Lanka cricket captain)
"I am not an expert in politics so I don't yet know. I know that I am loved by the people but give me a little time to figure the rest out."

Star WHIZZ KID COMPETITION 163

Tick the Correct Answers Post to
The Daily Star
Win attractive prizes
Competition closes at 8 pm
Jan 4, 2002 and draw shortly afterwards

1. Who became FIFA's World Player of the Year?	Beckham	Figo	Raul
2. Which team scored the lowest one-day international total?	Bangladesh	Zimbabwe	West Indies
3. How many wickets did Chaminda Vaas take in a one-day match to set a new world record?	Seven	Eight	Nine
4. In how many Test did Anil Kumble take 300 wickets?	88	66	76
Name			
Class	Roll No.		
School Address			
Phone: (If any)			

Goodbye 2001, hello 2002

A cocktail of shame, sorrow and sweetness

LENNI GANI

While the rest of the world was engulfed in the events of September 11, in Bangladesh, however, the show managed to roll on. The notable casualties being the postponement of the



ZIAUR RAHMAN ... king of the sixty-four squares

Ninth South Asian Games scheduled to begin in October in Pakistan and India's reluctance not to let Dhaka host the Asian Test Championship final.

Ironically, after all of New Delhi's commotion over the trivial issue they themselves did bar the national team from taking part in the second edition of the regional meet.

So, as another year draws to a close it is time to take stock of those achievements, failures, the highs and lows in our sports calendar. Along the way have emerged some characters or events that took precedence over others.

More than anything the past 12 months served to remind us how reflective and eventful it really was.

HECTIC CRICKET

The year 2001 was a pretty busy time for our national team. They spent most of the time abroad. During that period Bangladesh visited Zimbabwe, took part in the Asian Test Championship and have just completed a tour of New Zealand.

In April under a new skipper Naimur Rahman, Bangladesh played two Tests and three one-day internationals. But after the visitors were whitewashed in the Tests at Harare and Bulawayo and the one-dayers also ended in the home side's favour, there were plenty raised eyebrows at the lacklustre performance.

Ironically, couple of months later an out-of-form Naimur was stripped of the captaincy mid-way through the Southern African nation's return visit. He was not even allowed to continue as player.

Zimbabwe were themselves going through a lean spell so they attached a great deal of importance to their November tour. Except for a rain-affected drawn Test at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, the Zimbabweans comfortably won the second Test at the country's newest Test venue the MA Aziz Stadium. The ICC approved it as cricket's 82nd Test arena. And the people of the bustling port city were

treated to a high-class exhibition of cricket.

Despite the defeats a new fast bowler Mashrafe-bin-Mortuza Kowshik announced his arrival on the international scene.

Unfortunately, America based production company WorldTel did not show the whole spectacle. It pulled the plug at the last minute due to a dispute with its Indian satellite broadcaster Sony Entertainment Television.

Thankfully, a joint collaboration by state-run Bangladesh Television and private network Ekushey Television made it up for the viewers.

While participation in the ATC matches in Pakistan and Sri Lanka turned out to be nothing more than a learning exercise for the fledgling Test team, Bangladesh managed to discover a teenage batting sensation by the name of Mohammad Ashraf.

The 17-year-old put his senior teammates to shame when he defied Muttiah Muralitharan and Chaminda Vaas to surpass Pakistan's Mushtaq Mohammad's long-standing record as the youngest centurion on debut.

We should not lose hope of one day winning a Test match if younger players like Kowshik and Ashraf come to the fore to entertain the grand arena.

SAME FOOTBALL SONG

Bangladesh missed out on reaching the second stage of the World Cup qualifying campaign. Nothing unusual about that considering the fact none of foreign national coaches have been able to improve the quality or quantity of players.

Domestically, Abahani regained the championship title, but the Premier League is still dogged by a spate of fixed matches regardless the innovative measures the organisers try to implement before each season.

True that successes of the local club's have been so few and far. Yet we come to accept that some things never change.

When a Korean side in an Asian Club Cup match trounced Federation Cup champions Muktiyodha the result was so embarrassing that a leading club official tried his very best to conceal the final score.

Similarly, the BFF got into hot water by allowing over-aged players in an Asian age-group competition and as a result it was heavily fined by the AFC.

But all that pales in comparison with the prospect of being banned by FIFA early next month if it does not reinstate BFF's sacked executive committee.

ACHESS MASTER IS BORN

Hail Ziaur Rahman. Finally he made the nation very proud by



MOHAMMAD 'PROMISE-FUL' ASHRAFUL

becoming the country's second Grand Master since Niaz Murshed in the mid-80s.

The country's number one player reached the pinnacle during a tournament in Paris in early November.

Zia, 27, fought his way through 13 top-ranked GMs to earn the elusive third norm.

Earlier his road to the top began with victories at the 1999 British Open and this year's Goodriek tournament in Kolkata.

We hope that he does not rest on his laurels. He must be allowed to flourish himself further so that he does not lose his way in the wilderness like Niaz. The BCF (Bangladesh Chess Federation) and sponsors must use the Zia's success as a catalyst for others to take up cerebral warfare.

HOCKEY'S SCOTTISH NIGHTMARE

What should have been the stick-wielders' finest year turned out to be an outright disaster! We refer to the World Cup qualifiers held in Scotland in July where Bangladesh under German coach York Schumacher lost all eight matches, conceded 37 goals and scored just six to ultimately collect the wooden spoon in 16-nation competition.

The days when Bangladesh's hockey had great promise are a far cry.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Kowshik deserves special praise from the time he was tipped for greatness by none other than former West Indian bowler Andy Roberts.

The teenager from Narail was plucky from virtual obscurity. His pace has instantly troubled world-class batsmen like the Flower brothers Andy and Grant during their visit here in November.

Where there is a hero then there must be villains too. Who

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BFF stays stubborn



Football

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is sticking to its guns despite the threat of an imminent FIFA ban.

The AFC general secretary Peter Velappan in a stern letter addressed to BFF executive secretary Shankar Shikder on December 27 gave an ultimatum to reinstate Harun-ur Rashid's committee by January 5 or the consequences.

With the deadline approaching, BFF is seemingly on collision course with the game's ruling body after the government dissolved the elected executive body on December 20 and replaced it with a 31-member ad-hoc committee with SA Sultan as president.

The move was clearly a violation of FIFA and AFC statutes and Velappan expressed his disapproval after being informed by Shankar.

Sultan, who is now in the thick of things, has now to make a choice whether to comply with AFC wishes or face an embarrassing situation.

The government remains determined not to revoke its decision and the State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman categorically stated that he would go

back on his word.

"We will not allow the old committee to sit," said Fazlur Rahman to the Bengali daily Prothom Alo on Sunday.

The BFF president on the other hand thinks that a certain group is trying to discredit the local football body by providing conflicting information to the Kuala Lumpur-based AFC.

"We will from an inquiry committee to identify the persons responsible," declared Sultan while talking to journalists at his Bangabandhu Stadium office yesterday.

He also said that they would scrutinise the audit report of the past five years and if any irregularities were found necessary action would be taken against the culprits.

Meanwhile, the general secretary of the ousted committee Harun termed the happenings regrettable.

"I never wanted to see the BFF being banned. Whether or not I'm in the BFF, I don't want an international isolation for our football. All I want is for Bangladesh football to flourish," said Harun over phone on Sunday night.

But he blamed the government for the unwanted situation.

"It could have avoided had they handled the matter discreetly," Harun observed.

Mahbub makes the grade

Umps for BD-Pak series named



Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Jahangir Alam will look after the final day-night encounter on January 25.

The three-day match will be officiated by former national cricketers Ziaul Islam Masud and Samiur Rahman.

The International Cricket Council has already appointed former New Zealand captain Brian Hastings as match referee for the series.

Pakistan arrive in the capital tomorrow morning while the home side are scheduled to return home from New Zealand tonight.

Following umpires will be involved in the Bangladesh-Pakistan series:

First Test
Umpires: Akhteruddin and John Hampshire (England).

Second Test
Umpires: Mahbubur Rahman and Russell Tiffin (Zimbabwe).

Third ODI
Umpires: Mesbahuddin Ahmed.

First ODI
Umpires: Sailab Hossain and Akhteruddin.

Second ODI
Umpires: Manjur Rahman.

Third ODI
Umpires: Mahbubur Rahman and Shaukatul Rahman.

Fourth ODI
Umpires: Mesbahuddin Ahmed and Jahangir Alam.

Fifth ODI
Umpires: Mesbahuddin Ahmed and Jahangir Alam.

Sixth ODI
Umpires: Mesbahuddin Ahmed and Jahangir Alam.

Seventh ODI
Umpires: Mesbahuddin Ahmed and Jahangir Alam.

Eighth ODI
Umpires: Mesbahuddin Ahmed and Jahangir Alam.

Ninth ODI
Umpires: Mesbahuddin Ahmed and Jahangir Alam.

Tenth ODI
Umpires: Mesbahuddin Ahmed and Jahangir Alam.

PCB leaves it up to WI



Cricket

REUTERS, Karachi

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) want their West Indies counterparts to decide whether their players will tour Pakistan next month or play the series at a neutral venue such as Sharjah or Tangiers.

The tour has been thrown into doubt after the escalation of border tensions between Pakistan and India.

"The ball is in their court," PCB chairman Tauqir Zia told Reuters.

"Our stand is that we are willing to host West Indies at home. But if they want to play at a neutral venue they should let us know."

"We have no objections to playing at a neutral venue if they want to do that."

West Indies are scheduled to play three Tests and three one-day

internationals from January 25.

The West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) said on Saturday it was waiting for a response from the PCB to see if conditions were conducive for the series to go ahead.

Zia said: "There is no doubt that conditions have taken a twist in the last eight days."

"But we still say we can organise the series in Pakistan. But we have not ruled out playing at a neutral venue as a second option."

Pakistan cricket has been hit hard after the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington led to the cancellation of tours by New Zealand and Sri Lanka.

India also pulled out of a full series and an Asian Test Championship match at Lahore, causing the PCB an estimated revenue loss of 8-10 million dollars.

The PCB had hoped to make up for the lost revenues through home series against West Indies and a planned tour by New Zealand in

April-May.

"We just want this series to go ahead," Zia said. "Our team has been without international cricket for too long now."

Zia said cricket promoter Abdul Rehman Bukhatir of the Cricketers Benefit Fund Series (CBFS) had offered Sharjah and Tangiers in Morocco as possible venues to host matches between Pakistan and West Indies.

"He has also assured us that we would get our revenues from the television coverage," Zia said.

Zia added that the WICB had asked the PCB to confirm a proposal to send two of their representatives to Pakistan to judge the conditions for themselves.

"What we feel is that since Clive Lloyd is coming over to Pakistan to work with our junior team, there is no better person than him to give feedback on this to the WICB," Zia said.

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SA turn to Boje



Cricket

REUTERS, Sydney

Left-arm spinner Nicky Boje has been rushed back into the South African squad for the final Test against Australia starting in Sydney on Wednesday in a last-ditch move to avoid a 3-0 series whitewash.

The South African management said Boje, just recovered from injury, had been added to the squad in response to a request from the tour selectors but wouldn't arrive in Australia until New Year's Day, just a day before the final Test is due to begin.

Boje, the team's most experi-

enced spinner, was an original



NICKY BOJE

selection for the tour, but was forced to withdraw because of a knee problem, Claude Henderson replacing him.

Boje's late inclusion suggests the Proteas are planning to play two spinners on the turn-friendly Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) wicket although they would not confirm it. Their scheduled training session on arrival in Sydney was cancelled.

South African team manager Goolam Rajah said the Proteas were feeling down after losing the first two matches of the three-game series but were determined to turn things around.

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Troll Masters Chess Three going to Norway

SPORTS REPORTER

A three-member Bangladesh chess team will participate in the Troll Masters chess tournament at Gausdal, Oslo in Norway.

International Masters Reefat-bin-Sattar and Enamul Hossain Razib of Biman and International Arbitrator Haroon-ur-Rashid will take part in the week-long meet starting from January 4. Fifty players from across the globe will engage themselves in the cerebral warfare that includes six Grand Masters and five International Masters.

Reefat and Razib already left Dhaka last night while Haroon would start out on January 3.

Hussain may go after World Cup

REUTERS, London

Fresh after receiving an OBE (Order of the British Empire) in the British New Year honours list, England captain Nasser Hussain has indicated that he is likely to step down after the next World Cup.

In an interview published in Monday's Sun newspaper, the 33-year-old batsman targets the 2003 event in South Africa as his last tournament as skipper.

"I took over from Alec Stewart after the last World Cup and it would complete a natural cycle," he said.

"I don't want to stay in the job too long...the World Cup would be a good time to step down and let someone else take over."

"But of course, I might get the axe before then if results go badly. I might not have the option of deciding when to resign," he added.

However, Hussain is certain that he remains focussed on the

Lanka, Murali on a roll



Cricket

AFP, Colombo

win.

It was Sri Lanka's biggest victory in 116 Tests, having beaten Bangladesh by an innings and 137 runs in the Asian Test Championship here in September.

Zimbabwe, trailing by 402 runs, were shot out for 236 in the second innings on the fourth day to suffer their heaviest defeat against the

hosts in 11 Tests, the previous margin being by an innings and 77 runs here in 1996-97.

It was the hosts' sixth victory in a row since August, having already beaten India and Bangladesh once and then the West Indies 3-0 in their last five matches.

Star off-spinner Muralitharan continued to strike it rich, grabbing 4-35 in his disciplined 36 overs in the second innings to take his match-tally to 8-88.

He is now two short of becoming the seventh-highest wicket-taker in the world, having captured 382 in 70 matches.

West Indian Courtney Walsh heads the list with 519 wickets, followed by Indian Kapil Dev (434), New Zealander Richard Hadlee (431), Australian Shane Warne (424), Pakistan's Wasim Akram (414), West Indian Curtly Ambrose (405) and Englishman Ian Botham (383).

The Zimbabwean batting was vulnerable to pace also, with seamers Charitha Buddhika and Nuwan Zoysa sharing four wickets to keep the pressure from the other end.

Nightwatchman Travis Friend was the top-scorer with 44 in a feeble batting performance by the tourists for the second time in the one-sided contest. Heath Streak contributed 36 late in the innings.

Muralitharan grabbed two wickets in the post-lunch session after Buddhika had struck twice in successive overs in the morning to put Zimbabwe in trouble.

The 29-year-old spinner bowled Friend, the only batsman to defy the Sri Lankan attack. The Zimbabwean batted for nearly three hours, hitting six fours in his 142-ball knock.

He then dismissed Grant Flower (18), caught off the gloves at silly mid-off by a diving Hashan Tillakaratne after hitting two boundaries.

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PHOTO: INTERNET

Sri Lanka spinner Muttiah Muralitharan setting his field for the next delivery on the fourth day of the first Test against Zimbabwe in Colombo on Monday.

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