

On May 31, 2002, the 17th FIFA World Cup will kick off. It will be the first time two countries host the World Cup football. The final will be played on June 30th.

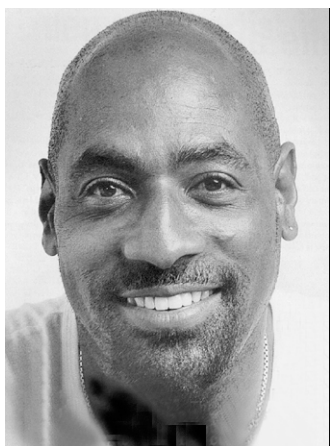


ESPN

World Cup Mix
Football Magazine
10:30 am
Charlton v Tottenham
English Premiership
Repeat at 11:00 am
Australia v South Africa
First one-day international
Live from 1:55 pm
Sportscenter Hindi
Sports News
Live at 9:30 pm
Western Union World Football
10:30 pm
Super Selector
Cricket Programming
11:00 pm

STAR Sports

England v New Zealand
Second Test, Day Two
Live from 4:00 am
Repeat from 4:00 pm
Sportsline Today
Sports News
12:00 am
Arsenal v Aston Villa
English Premiership
Repeat at 1:00 pm
Sportsline Tonight
Sports News
Live at 8:00 pm
Here we go!
Football Magazine
8:30 pm
Super Selector
Cricket Programming
10:00 pm



Vivian Richards

(West Indies cricket legend)
"Sachin Tendulkar deserves everything he gets, because he takes everything out on to the field."

Star WHIZZ KID COMPETITION 168

Tick the correct answers, post to

The Daily Star
Win attractive prizes

Competition closes at 8 pm March 29, 2002 and draw shortly afterwards

1. Who won the Prof Abdur Razzak 28th national chess title?			
Reefat-bin-Sattar	Ziaur Rahman	Niaz Murshed	
2. Who became Asian Test champions?			
India	Sri Lanka	Pakistan	
3. Who clinched the World Cup hockey title?			
Name			
Class.	Roll No.		
School Address			
Phone: (If any)			

Premier League kicks off today



SPORTS REPORTER

Holdings Mohammedan Sporting Club take on promotees Young Pegasus in one of the three matches scheduled for the opening day at the newly built Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Cricket Stadium in Fatullah when the much anticipated GrameenPhone Premier Division Cricket League, kicks off today.

In the other two games, last year's runners up Abahani Krira Chakra will meet Uttara Sporting Club at the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP) ground in Savar while another title contender Bangladesh Biman play Young Cricketers at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Twelve premier Dhaka-based clubs are taking part in the elite league which will be fought over two phases.

After the first round, the top six teams will qualify for the 'Super League' while the bottom six will battle to escape relegation.

GrameenPhone, one of the country's leading cellular phone companies, have decided to sponsor the league for the next three seasons including this year's one.

GrameenPhone's deputy general manager (marketing) Intekhab Mahmud at a press conference at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday gave details of the sponsorship deal.

Grameen plan to spend Taka 36 lakhs (Taka 12 lakhs for each sea-

son). Apart from the sponsorship sum, GrameenPhone will also award Taka 1 lakh to the champions, 50,000 to the runners up and the third placed team Taka 30,000. Besides, players who will become man-of-the-match in the first phase will receive Taka 1,000 while in the Super League the prize will double to Taka 2,000.

Intekhab also informed that they would award a mobile phone and Taka 10,000 in cash to the most valuable player of the league.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) directors Jalal Yunus and GS Hasan

Tamim, who is also the chairman of Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM), were present at the media briefing.

Speaking to the newsmen, GS Hasan Tamim revealed that they would not be able to hold any match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium before the first week of April as the ground needed some repair work.

He also disclosed that the first round of the league would conclude on March 19 while the super league will start after a week's break at the best.

FIXTURES

Date	Match	Venue
March 22	Mohammedan SC v Young Pegasus Biman v Young Cricketers Abahani KC v Uttara SC	KOACS DCS BKSP
March 23	Kalabagan KC v Victoria SC Surjo Tarun v City Club	BKSP DCS
March 24	Biman v Brothers Union Mohammedan SC v Uttara SC	KOACS DCS
March 25	Abahani KC v Young Cricketers Kalabagan KC v City Club	BKSP DCS
March 26	Surjo Tarun v Young Pegasus Biman v Victoria SC	BKSP KOACS
March 27	Abahani KC v Brothers Union Mohammedan SC v Young Cricketers	BKSP DCS
March 28	Kalabagan KC v Surjo Tarun Dhanmondi Club v City Club Uttara SC v Young Pegasus Mohammedan SC v Brothers Union	BKSP DCS BKSP KOACS

Note:
KOACS: Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Cricket Stadium, Fatullah
DCS: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.
BKSP: Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan
BNS: Bangabandhu National Stadium.



PHOTO: STAR

Intekhab Mahmud, deputy general manager (marketing) of GrameenPhone, addresses a media conference at the BCB office at Bangabandhu National Stadium on Thursday in connection with the Premier Cricket League which begins today.

Rain makes Butcher smile

Day One washed out in Wellington



AFP, Wellington

Windy Wellington's notorious weather claimed the opening day of the second cricket Test Thursday but it was welcomed by England batsman Mark Butcher.

The umpires abandoned play without a ball bowled with the Basin Reserve buffeted by gale-force winds and driving rain. More rain is forecast for early Friday but it is expected to clear.

Butcher cracked his right thumb taking a slips catch in the opening Christchurch Test win over New Zealand, and was considered out of the running for the Wellington match.

But he has batted in the nets this week and Thursday's weather intervention bought him some more

time in his recovery to play.

England coach Duncan Fletcher said Butcher was confident he would be able to bat, but that catching was a problem.

"We want to wait for as long as we can to test his thumb before we make a decision," said Fletcher Thursday.

"Twenty-four hours made a big difference to Butcher this week, so this will be an advantage to him." England lead the series after their 98-run win in last weekend's Christchurch Test.

Fletcher took the team to an indoor facility in the afternoon to keep the players active after the loss of the first day's play.

"It would be easy to go back to the team hotel and switch off, but we have to be ready to switch on and play, even though we are one-up in the series," he said.

Fletcher confirmed the same 12

that played in Christchurch would be fielded again in Wellington, meaning that if Butcher could not convince selectors of his fitness then all-rounder Craig White would come into the starting eleven.

Butcher would be given fielding drills to check if he could last out the Wellington Test, Fletcher said.

Fletcher said the Basin Reserve pitch looked "underprepared" when he glanced at it earlier in the week before the deterioration in the weather.

The pitch has been under large covers for the past two stormy days and locals believe it to be a result-pitch given the outcome of domestic games there this season.

High winds and rain are forecast to continue with clearing conditions expected Friday.

Play will be extended by an hour over each of the four remaining days to make up for some of the lost playing time.

Great awaits great



AFP, New Delhi

West Indian great Brian Lara said on Thursday he was fully recovered from injury and looked forward to the challenge of playing against Sachin

"Tendulkar is the best player in the world and playing cricket on the same pitch as him is a challenge," Lara told Star News in an interview at his home in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad.

The gifted left-hander, who suffered a shoulder injury on the Sri Lankan tour in January, said he was fit and raring to go in the five-Test

"I think it is going to be exciting," Lara said. "They love our conditions, it is going to be a tough series for us also and I would love to be part of the challenge."

The battle between the two modern greats is expected to be the highlight of the demanding tour.

Lara, 32, has scored 7,221 runs from 83 Tests at an average of 50.49 with 18 centuries and 34 half-centuries.

Tendulkar, who turns 29 on April 24, has 7,673 from 91 Tests at 58.57 with 28 hundreds and 30 half-centuries.

The Indian is far ahead in one-day internationals, with a world record 11,069 runs and 31 centuries from 286 matches.

Lara, who has played only 193 one-dayers, has scored 7,257 runs with 14 hundreds.

Before sustaining the shoulder injury, Lara showed he was back to his best form when he hammered the Muttiah Muralitharan-led Sri Lankan attack for 688 runs in just

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Tikolo in Dhaka, due to play today

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending Premier Division cricket league champions Mohammedan Sporting Club's architect of last year's success Steve Tikolo arrived in Dhaka yesterday.

The star Kenyan batsman amassed 1222 runs with an astonishing average of 111.09 in the last season and almost single-handedly guided the popular Motijheel outfit to the coveted title after a barren spell of five years.

The 31-year-old fascinated the local cricket fans with four hundreds and seven fifties in 15 innings' Premier League innings he played for (MSC). The highest score of the attacking right-hander was a mammoth 185 against Bangladesh Biman.

Tikolo, who is also an agile fielder and a useful off-spinner, is all set to resume his Mohammedan career in the League opener against Young Pegasus at the Fatullah Stadium today. This will be Tikolo's third year with Mohammedan in the Dhaka league.

While Mohammedan will start their title defence with Tikolo, arch rivals Abahani will miss their foreign recruit Pakistani all-rounder Mohammed Hossain for their first match against Uttara Sporting Club today.

Club sources informed that the southpaw will not be available before Abahani's third match against Brothers Union on March 26.

31 called up in U-20 soccer camp

BSS, Dhaka

A total of 31 booters were selected for the training camp of the upcoming Asian Under-20 football championship to be held in Pakistan.

The players have been requested to report to national coach George Kottan at 7:30 am on March 23 before the beginning of the camp at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium

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Davis Cup Bangladesh jolt Jordan

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh secured a berth in the super league of the Davis Cup Asia-Oceania zone Group Four qualifying round with a 3-0 thrashing of Jordan in their second first round Group B match at the National Tennis Complex yesterday.

Country's number one player Shibu Lal gave the home side a brilliant start with a 6-4, 6-1, win over Jordan's Fabio Badra in the first match and his brother Hira Lal then won the second match against an injured Ahmad Ali 6-2, 1-0 (retired with injury). Shibu later paired with Dilip Pasia to win the doubles against Fabio Badra and Tareq Shikakwa 6-3, 6-1.

Bangladesh, who outplayed Oman by an identical margin in the first match on Wednesday, finished atop the Group B table collecting maximum four points.

Oman and Sri Lanka are in the second position with two points each while Jordan are yet to earn any point.

Kyrgyzstan are leading the other group with four points while Iraq and Bahrain are following the leaders with two points apiece.

Brunei, the other team in Group B, have lost both their matches. Top two teams from each group will play in the super league that begins tomorrow.

In today's fixture, Bangladesh will meet Sri Lanka in their last first round match while Jordan and Oman clash in the other tie.

Ponting ready to rule

Super seven series starts today



AFP, Johannesburg

Defending champions Australia start their countdown to the 2003 World Cup when they meet South Africa in the first of seven one-day internationals at the Wanderers Stadium here on Friday.

A new-look squad, led by Ricky Ponting, is designed to take Australia through to next year's

20.

Australian convenor of selectors Trevor Johns said earlier this month at the announcement of the team: "We think we have chosen a squad that has a good mix of youth and experience. Giving the side a chance to play together in South Africa and Zimbabwe will prepare it well for next year's World Cup."

Shaun Pollock will return as captain of South Africa's one-day squad after missing the Test series against Australia because of a side

Adam Gilchrist had been regular openers but Test opener Matthew Hayden has been recalled to the one-day side and will have a chance to win a long-term place in the shorter version of the game after playing in only 29 one-day internationals.

Also in the squad is Queensland opening batsman Jimmy Maher, who shone for Australia A against South Africa and New Zealand and was outstanding in Australian domestic matches this season.

South Africa have a formidable record in one-day internationals at home, where they have not lost a series since Australia pipped them 4-3 in 1996/97.

One of the keys for the home side could be World Cup star, all-rounder Lance Klusener, who has been back to his best form, starring in two provincial four-day matches after being dropped from South Africa's Test side.

TEAMS

SOUTH AFRICA (from): Shaun Pollock (captain), Mark Boucher (vice-captain), Nicky Boje, Boeta Dippenaar, Herschelle Gibbs, Andrew Hall, Jacques Kallis, Gary Kirsten, Lance Klusener, Neil McKenzie, Makhaya Ntini, Jonty Rhodes, Roger Telemachus

AUSTRALIA (from): Ricky Ponting (captain), Adam Gilchrist (vice-captain), Michael Bevan, Andy Bichel, Jason Gillespie, Ian Harvey, Nathan Hauritz, Matthew Hayden, Brett Lee, Darren Lehmann, Jimmy Maher, Damien Martyn, Glenn McGrath, Shane Warne, Shane Watson

Umpires: Brian Jerling, Rudi Koertzen (Rsa)

Match referee: Cammie Smith (Wis)



RICKY PONTING

tournament, which will be played at the same grounds on March 23 next year, one year and one day after Friday's match.

Ponting has been appointed as captain in place of Steve Waugh, who was axed as one-day captain by Australian cricket authorities.

Waugh, who captained Australia to victory in the 1999 World Cup in Britain, is on holiday at a game reserve in South Africa.

The Australian Test skipper and brother Mark Waugh were dropped out of a 15-man one-day squad which includes two uncapped players in Tasmanian all-rounder Shane Watson and Queensland off-spinner Nathan Hauritz, both aged



SHAUN POLLOCK

20. South Africa won a triangular series in Australia last month, beating New Zealand in the best-of-three finals after Australia failed to qualify.

All three teams finished on equal wins in the round robin stage, with Australia being squeezed out on bonus points.

But Australia won three of their four matches against South Africa in the tournament.

South Africa will be buoyed by a win in the third and final Test in Durban Monday, which ended a string of five successive Test defeats against Australia.

Mark Waugh and vice-captain

Jaffar in, Shewag out

Batting-strong India pick 16 for WI tour



AFP, Bombay

India's cricket selectors on Thursday named Bombay opener Wasim Jaffar in a batsmen-dominated squad for next month's tour of the West Indies.

Jaffar, 24, who was discarded after two Tests against South Africa at home two years ago, returns as Shiv Das' opening partner following centuries in each innings of a recent domestic match.

The predictable 16-man squad has seven specialist batsmen, including the seasoned quartet of captain Sourav Ganguly, Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and Venkatsai Laxman.

With the selectors also picking all-rounder Sanjay Banger and two wicketkeepers, Ajay Ratna and Deep Dasgupta, there is room for just two spinners. Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh.

India will play five Tests against the West Indies, with the first to be played at the Bourda Oval in Georgetown, Guyana from April 11.

The team for five subsequent one-day internationals will be named



WASIM JAFFAR

later, Indian cricket board secretary Niranjan Shah said.

Left-armers Zaheer Khan and

Ashish Nehra will share the new ball with pace spearhead Javagal Srinath with young Tinnu Yohannan as the back-up fast bowler.

Dinesh Mongia, whose unbeaten 159 helped India clinch the one-day series against Zimbabwe on Tuesday, was selected for his first Test tour after playing 15 one-dayers for India.

The Punjab left-hander replaces dashing batsman Virender Sehwag, who was ruled out of the tour after sustaining a shoulder injury in the second Test against Zimbabwe earlier this month.

There was, however, no place for attacking stroke-player Yuvraj Singh despite an aggregate of 155 runs in the final two one-dayers he was selected to play against Zimbabwe.

Yuvraj will, however, replace Mongia in the India A squad that begins a tour of South Africa next week.

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Langer for Zim tour



REUTERS, Perth

Australia opening batsman Justin Langer said on Thursday he would be disappointed if next month's tour of Zimbabwe was postponed because of the African nation's political problems.

"If it doesn't go ahead it will be a shame because they are a young side trying to make it in international

cricket," Langer told reporters at Perth airport.

"We have got to leave the politics to the politicians.

"I'd like to think that...we will go there."

Langer arrived in Perth, Western Australia, on Thursday after Australia's 2-1 series victory against South Africa to retain the top ranking in Test cricket.

Australia will play a seven-match limited-overs series starting on Friday in South Africa before travel-

ling to Zimbabwe next month for three one-day matches and two Tests.

One-day captain Ricky Ponting, however, has expressed concerns over the Zimbabwe tour following the troubled African country's election and its subsequent suspension from the Commonwealth.

The Australian Cricket Board (ACB) announced on Wednesday it planned to proceed with the tour despite concerns expressed by Australia prime minister John Howard and foreign affairs minister Alexander Downer.

Langer, 31, also backed 36-year-old Waugh twins Steve and Mark who made 95 runs at 19.00 and 169 at 33.80 in Australia's series victory over South Africa.

"I have no doubt that Mark Waugh has a future in Test cricket. His body is still like a Rolls Royce. He moves so well, he's a magnificent fielder," Langer said.

"We have had so much success in the team over a long period and he has been an integral part of that.

"I'd be surprised if they made any changes."

World Cup-winning captain Steve Waugh was dumped from the one-day side after his team failed to qualify for the finals of the triangular limited overs series against South Africa and New Zealand in Australia in February.

The Waugh twins, who were not selected for Australia's seven-match one-day series against South Africa, are due to arrive in Sydney on Friday.

"Well, I think the twins have finally found what it is like to live in my world for a few days," said Langer, a veteran of 51 Tests but who has played in just eight limited-overs internationals.

Australia's squad for the two-Test tour of Zimbabwe is expected to be released next week.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh's Shibu Lal in action against Fabio Badra of Jordan during their Davis Cup match at the National Tennis Complex at Ramna yesterday.