

V-day kabadi

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Rifles (Red) and Bangladesh Army (Red) reached the final of the Victory Day Kabadi Championship yesterday.

Rifles (Red) crushed Army (Green) 112-32 with 10 Ionas in the first semifinal while Army (Red) beat Rifles (Green) 62-50 in the other match.

Bangladesh Army (Green) and Bangladesh Rifles (Green), meet in a third-place play-off match today.

Top Four v'ball

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Army finished third in the Victory Day Top Four Volleyball Tournament beating Bangladesh Navy 26-24, 25-15, 25-17 yesterday.

Nazrul Islam of Bangladesh Navy was adjudged best player of the match.

Ricky won't mind that

AFP, Perth

All-conquering Australian one-day cricket captain Ricky Ponting on Monday welcomed the opportunity to succeed skipper Steve Waugh at the helm of the world's best Test team.

But Ponting emphasised his belief that Waugh would continue in the role for as long as he wished.

Rising speculation would have Waugh, 37, dumped by selectors at the end of the Ashes series against England early next year and replaced for the four-Test West Indies tour starting April.

Ponting, 28, is a strong front-runner for the prestigious job because of his ease in adapting to the demands of leadership in the one-day game, which saw Waugh relegated to the bench in the limited-overs line-up.

Ponting's side sits atop the current tri-nations series standings ahead of England, taking a third-straight win Sunday and crushing Sri Lanka by 142 runs at the WACA Ground.

Wanting a pitch

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thinking along the same lines.

"It'll probably be wise and that's what we are looking for in this one-day series."

The local press criticised the quality of Test pitches, especially the one at the Westpac Park here where 22 wickets fell on Saturday in a sensational day of Test cricket.

"It was not so much a Test match as a low-grade farce, starring an Indian side who had effectively been nobbled by New Zealand's desire to play on wickets that would not so much advantage themselves, but disadvantage the opposition," said the New Zealand Herald.

"The lasting impression from this Test series will be the substandard pitches that India were forced to bat on and the subsequent drop-off in the quality of cricket," the paper said.

Boycott better?



REUTERS, London

Former England cricketer Geoff Boycott has been told by doctors that he has a good chance of beating cancer following three months of treatment.

Boycott, one of the greatest opening batsmen in Test history, was diagnosed with cancer in his neck in September and has since undergone chemotherapy and radiotherapy at a hospital in Leeds, Yorkshire.

"There were four lots of chemotherapy and then I began the radiotherapy on October 22," Boycott was quoted as saying in Monday's Yorkshire Post newspaper.

"I asked her (the oncologist) what the prognosis was and she was very positive, very relaxed. Of course there are no guarantees in this situation, but she says I have a good chance and I'll be fighting it."

"I have to take a month's rest now and I'm seeing her (the oncologist) again in the middle of January."

The treatment has left Boycott over 12 kilograms lighter and unable to eat solid food, the newspaper reported.

"It is the treatment that takes so much out of me. The side-effects are terrible -- burns in the neck and



GEOFFREY BOYCOTT

chest," the 62-year-old said.

"As the radiography slowly takes then burning starts on your neck and throat and tongue. Now I can't bear having anything on my mouth or tongue."

Boycott, who made his debut for England against Australia in 1964, scored 8,114 Test runs at an average of 47.42 in a 108-match career spanning three decades.

He scored 22 Test centuries and

42 half-centuries. He also hit 151 centuries in first-class cricket.

The only player to average in excess of 100 in two English seasons, Boycott also carries the distinction of receiving the first ever ball bowled in international one-day cricket.

Widely regarded as one of the most astute analysts of the game, the controversial Yorkshireman has spawned admirers and critics in equal measure.

Zahid brings Pakistan back

AFP, Pietermaritzburg

Mohammad Zahid claimed five wickets Sunday as Pakistan hit back against South Africa A on the second day of their three-day match at the Pietermaritzburg Oval.

The South Africans collapsed from 150 for two to 206 all out on day two to post a lead of just 32, having dismissed Pakistan for 174 on Saturday.

At stumps, Pakistan had progressed to 91 for two, 59 runs ahead with eight second innings wickets in hand.

Pakistan's lead was founded mainly on the 78-run partnership for the second wicket between Taufeeq Umar and Younis Khan.

Umar struck 11 boundaries in making 54 before bad light forced the players from the field for the second consecutive day.

He will continue on Monday with Yousuf Youhana after Younis Khan edged Charl Langeveldt to Daryll Cullinan at slip, having made 34.

Zahid, who is almost certain to replace the injured Shoaib Akhtar in the Test series, took five for 43 as the hosts squandered the position Jacques Rudolph and Cullinan had built.

Resuming on their overnight 76 for two, Rudolph and his skipper Cullinan put on 105 for the third wicket before Cullinan chopped Abdul Razaq onto the stumps for 40.

The dismissal signalled a mini-collapse as the hosts lost three wickets for nine runs.

Justin Ontong was trapped in front for a duck by Saqlain Mushtaq and then Rudolph edged Razaq for 92.

After lunch, South Africa A lost a further three wickets for the addition of just two runs.

10 days can

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the game really, to have very special memories," Hussain said.

"For someone like Dean Headley, that will probably be his greatest day as a cricketer. Just because the series had gone is an irrelevance to Dean now."

"That's why we play the game, for those special occasions. There is 10 possible days left hopefully of having those sort of feelings."

But he dismissed as "dribble" claims made by former team-mate Michael Atherton that England could learn something through more post-play social interaction with Australia.

"That's dribble to be honest, absolute dribble," Hussain said.

"You can go in and have a beer and then suddenly it makes you Don Bradman?"

"I've been in a bar with the Australian side at midnight in Adelaide having a drink with them and Warney with his terrible shirt on."

"You learn that Warney's got very little dress sense but not how to play his flipper so to say that is absolute dribble."

"You learn from the middle and learn from working hard."

England batsmen Michael Vaughan and John Crawley are both likely to be passed fit.

Crawley missed the second and third Tests because of a hip injury, while Vaughan sat out the first four limited overs matches after he was hit in the shoulder by Jason Gillespie in Adelaide.

Paceman Alex Tudor has almost recovered after being struck over an eye by a Brett Lee bouncer in Perth, while fellow quick Andy Caddick (knee) will be tested in the nets, said Hussain.

ICC stands by Zimbabwe



REUTERS, London

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has defended its decision to hold World Cup matches in Zimbabwe as planned early next year, despite widespread calls for the maverick southern African country to be boycotted.

"I don't think it's difficult to justify," ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed told BBC radio on Sunday.

"The ICC is a cricket organisation and we make decisions based on cricket issues. We are not a political organisation."

A 10-man ICC delegation, including Speed, visited Zimbabwe last month to monitor the security situation in light of the economic and political crisis gripping the African nation.

"We looked at the cricket issues, and particularly at the safety and security of players and officials," Speed said.

"Ultimately we were satisfied that there's no reason -- no good reason from a security perspective -- to transfer these matches away from Harare and Bulawayo."

On Thursday, the game's world ruling body announced that the World Cup matches would go ahead in Zimbabwe after reviewing the report by the ICC delegation.

But former England captain David Gower, among many others, has since called for a boycott by England and Australia of their World Cup fixtures in Zimbabwe while Robert Mugabe is president of the African country.

Six matches in the World Cup, taking place primarily in South Africa, are scheduled to be hosted by Zimbabwe -- three in Harare involving England, India and Namibia and another three in Bulawayo featuring Australia, Pakistan and the Netherlands.

While Speed admitted that he held personal opinions about the political situation in Zimbabwe, he added that he could not allow this to cloud decisions on cricketing matters.

"I do have a view on that but, for the present purpose, we can't take our personal views into account," he said. "We can only make judgement on cricket issues."

"We've been consistent all along here. There have been sporting boycotts and other political interventions in the past -- for example in relation to South Africa. But there are no such sporting sanctions here and it simply hasn't happened."

"Politicians have had many opportunities to use them against Zimbabwe but have not done so."

"Zimbabwe is a valuable country for us and there are a lot of people who will take a lot of pleasure from

these matches.

"And Zimbabwe is not the only country where people suffer from food shortages. We can't solve issues like world hunger."

Speed confirmed that the ICC had a contingency plan if Zimbabwe became "too dangerous", with matches scheduled to be held there being relocated to primary hosts South Africa.

The same also applied to the two matches taking place in Kenya. "The contingency plan is in place -- and has been for some time," he added.

The World Cup will be staged from February 9 to March 23. The holders are twice champions Australia.

Coaches course

BSS, Dhaka

The certificate distribution ceremony of the Olympic Solidarity Athletics Coaches Course was held at a city hotel yesterday.

The Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) organised the course under the auspices of the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) from December 10 to 23.

Coach Mehedi Hasan became first in the course among 23 coaches.

Five of the best



BBC ONLINE, undated

Following are five significant moments in the world of cricket:

MAKHAYA NTINI, 1ST VB SERIES FINAL, SOUTH AFRICA V NEW ZEALAND

As if an Aussie one-day triangular final without the hosts wasn't special enough, Makhaya Ntini lit up the first match with a stunning performance.

The paceman returned figures of five for 31, inspiring South Africa to an eight-wicket win that they followed up with an equally emphatic win in Sydney.

Ntini's movement off the seam was impeccable, and the Kiwis were effectively snuffed out when both openers succumbed to the quick in the first few overs.

It was the start of a fine year for Ntini, one in which he came of age and eased into the strike bowler's slot made vacant by Allan Donald.

SOUTH AFRICA V AUSTRALIA TEST SERIES

The Clash of the Titans was a Test series to set cricket fans the world over salivating with expectation.

It followed Australia's triumph at home and gave South Africa a chance for swift redemption - not to mention top billing on the ICC Test Championship if successful.

In the end, South Africa were put

firmly in their place as Australia won the first two Tests before dropping the dead third by five wickets.

As a contest, the clash probably didn't befit the pre-series hype. But at least it ended debate over who was the best Test team in the world.

MICHAEL VAUGHAN VERSUS 'ALLCOMERS'

Vaughan burned in the English summer, hitting four centuries against Sri Lanka and India to announce his arrival as a world class Test opener.

India chased down 326 in a thrilling match that neither side deserved to lose, but one that England contrived to after a loose bowling display.

With Messrs Tendulkar, Sehwag, Ganguly and Dravid back in the dressing room, England suddenly emptied as Mohammed Kaif and Yuvraj Singh helped get India home in the last over.

It was an important away win for India, while England skipper Nasser Hussain's colourful celebration upon reaching his ton - at number three, if you don't recall - was a sight to behold.

WEST INDIES' ONE-DAY SERIES WIN IN INDIA

How the West Indies have been missed.

Not disgraced in the Test series, a young Windies unit covered themselves in glory in the one-dayers and stole the headlines away from the unsavoury behaviour of the crowds.

After Carl Hooper's troops won the first two matches, it all boiled down to the seventh and final game.

A 135-run win in Vijayawada and a series win was no more than they deserved.

Caribbean stars abounded, with Ramnaresh Sarwan averaging over 100 and Chris Gayle winning man-of-the-series honours with 455 runs.

And with young quick Jermaine Lawson promising much, the Windies are all of a sudden live outsiders for the World Cup.

bag.

Vaughan is still capable of digging in, but a newborn expansiveness to his strokeplay has unsurprisingly coincided with his advent on the world scene.

And happily for England, his relationship with fellow opener Marcus Trescothick appears an enduring one.

NATWEST SERIES FINAL, ENGLAND V INDIA

A cracking contest which contained everything that defines the modern one-day game.

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	37 "Holy moley!"	DOWN	20 Ovine remark
1 Make a beeper beep	38 Miata star	1 Settled up	21 Runner fans
5 Enjoy Telluride	41 Sound of kova	2 Tennis star	22 Lopez, to Morse
8 Shirk work	42 Immigrants' study	3 Veldt herd	23 Morse code message
12 Part of A.D.	45 Precinct (Abbr.)	4 Many mil-lennia	24 Make a decision
13 Toper's interruption	46 Confirm	5 Acute place	25 Grazing place
14 — facto	48 Roster	6 Flying toy	26 Get ready to rumble
15 Flood	49 The whole shooting match	7 Top a torte	27 Pair into cash
17 Witty rejoinder	50 "...against — of	8 Convert	28 Altar vow
18 "— Kapital"	51 After curfew	9 Piece of work	29 Zlich
19 Mined find	52 Plaything	10 — were (so to speak)	31 Young seal
20 Some statury	53 "Edward Scissor-hands" star	11 Dandies	34 "— Believer"
21 Cagney or Lacey	54 "Let's Make a Deal"	12 Dandies	35 Big rig
22 — alai	55 "Edward Scissor-hands" star	13 Let's Make a Deal"	37 Small ravine
23 Type of energy		14 Let's Make a Deal"	38 After-school hangout
25 He found a genie		15 Let's Make a Deal"	39 Met melody
30 Admitting clients		16 Let's Make a Deal"	40 Verve light?
31 Golf course employee		17 Let's Make a Deal"	41 Head light?
32 German car		18 Let's Make a Deal"	42 Relaxation lesson
33 Sports venue		19 Let's Make a Deal"	43 Dance lesson
35 Milkier's perch		20 Let's Make a Deal"	44 Jump
36 Mischief-maker		21 Let's Make a Deal"	46 Cistern
		22 Let's Make a Deal"	47 1989 Jack Lemmon movie

Solution time: 21 mins.

BAD	GIS	SEX
ALIC	ALE	TIOGA
COLA	POT	ANEW
HELPS	CURT	
ICE	PEELER	
LASTING	SICARE	
AISEA	DAT	AVIIO
OTALS	POM	PAINO
DANGER	UR	
AXIS	STAND	
ANTI	GOP	AWAY
PEON	HAL	LOVE
TIES	TRY	LIED

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12					13				14	
15				16					17	
18				19			20			
				21			22			
23	24	25			26			27	28	29
30				31				32		
33				34				35		
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45				46				47		
48				49				50		
51				52				53		

CRYPTOQUIP

HEP XPIWIXA QOIV EJM
 OPJWWA QIIO PAPMBXEH.
 EP GPPQM HJGBDX QPIQWP
 VIO XOJDBHP.
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I HEARD ABOUT A HALF SNOWMAN/HALF VAMPIRE WHO WENT AROUND GIVING PEOPLE FROSTBITE.
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Q equals P
 The Cryptoquip 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.

Nazim-Akram

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for 69 runs.

SCOREBOARD

Scorecards on the first day of three Ispahani National Cricket League matches held at different venues yesterday:

Chittagong v Sylhet				
Venue: BNS				
Toss: Sylhet.				
CHITTAGONG: First innings				
Nafees c Parvez b Enamul jr	15			
Nizamuddin b Imtiaz	140			
Aftab c Nayeem b Enamul jr	24			
Minhazul c Hasibul b Nayeem	12			
Akram Khan batting	96			
Azam batting	13			
Extras: (b-2, lb-5, nb-1, w-1)	9			
Total: (For 4 wickets in 90 overs)309				
Fall of wickets: 1-21, 2-61, 3-91, 4-279				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hasibul	17	3	67	0
Nayeem	15	5	45	1
Parvez	7	4	14	0
Enamul jr	29	10	89	2
Ejaz	3	0	18	0
Rana	3	1	13	0
Rajin	9	0	36	0