

Nipa, Sultana share lead

UNB, Dhaka

Syeda Shabana Parveen Nipa and Zakia Sultana maintained their lead in the 24th National Women's Chess Championship securing six points each after the seventh round matches at the chess room of NSC yesterday.

They drew with each other. Afroza Khanam Bablee followed the leaders obtaining 4.5 points beating Nazrana Khan Iva (3.5 points) in the day's match while Masuda Begum (3.5 pts) defeated Dilara Jahan.

U-16 Asia Cup hockey from Mar 8

UNB, Dhaka

Holders India will take on Malaysia and last year runners-up Bangladesh face Sri Lanka in the inaugural matches of the Under-16 Boys Asia Cup hockey tournament on March 8 at BKSP.

Four teams -- hosts Bangladesh, India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka will take part in the second version of the tournament, which was scheduled to begin here on March 4 but deferred due to Iran's last moment decision on not to participate in the meet.

The four-nation tourney will be held initially on league basis and later two top teams will play in the final on March 12.

Looking to lady luck

AFP, Kimberley

West Indies team boss Ricky Skerritt was left praying for a miracle to save his team's World Cup campaign on Sunday but insisted that, come what may, there is still life in Caribbean cricket.

After defeats to New Zealand and Sri Lanka and a rained-off game with Bangladesh, the West Indies' chances are halfway between slim and none.

They have been left hoping that Canada can upset the Kiwis, Sri Lanka see off South Africa and the West Indies themselves beat Kenya here on Tuesday to reach the Super Sixes.

Skerritt isn't holding his breath and is already talking like a condemned man.

"Obviously after the loss against Sri Lanka, the boys are not in the best of moods," Skerritt told AFP referring to the six-run loss in Cape Town on Friday.

"A number of things resulted in us being where we are. We made too many errors against New Zealand and the loss of two points, because of rain against Bangladesh, means we have no chance.

A father

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A wrist injury last year forced him to miss Pakistan's tour of Bangladesh and the Test series against the West Indies at the neutral venue of Sharjah.

Recalled for the three-nation Morocco Cup in Tangiers in August, where he failed to get among the runs, Anwar was ignored for the three Tests against Australia in Sri Lanka and Sharjah.

Anwar, who holds the world record for the highest one-day innings of 194, against India in 1997, revealed he wanted to quit cricket after being left out of the tour of South Africa late last year.

"I had almost given up on the game but my close friends and relatives told me to play in the World Cup and here I am," he said.

Anwar missed Pakistan's opening match against Australia with an elbow injury sustained when he was hit in the nets by a rising ball from fast bowler Shoib Akhtar.

He made 23, 29 and 25 in the next three games before returning to form against his favourite Indian bowling attack.

"Playing against India brings out the best in me," said Anwar, who completed 2000 runs in 50 one-day games against the Indians.

"It was very disappointing to lose the game. Hopefully the next time I score runs, Pakistan wins."

Joy here

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security in case the mood of fans turns ugly.

"We could see a 1996 World Cup-like situation when losing to India in Bangalore sparked a wave of agitation against Wasim Akram who was the skipper then," Abdul Mohi Shah, a sports commentator, said in Islamabad.

Just two weeks ago, irate fans in India were berating their country's cricketers after their poor World Cup start.

Captain Saurav Ganguly was given a mock funeral in Calcutta while black paint was hurled at middle-order batsman Mohammed Kaif's house in the northern Indian city of Allahabad.

But India's fans now appeared to have been pacified.

"We don't care any more if we don't win the World Cup," said Saket Malhotra, a 26-year-old doctor, pouring himself a shot of Tequila. "Beating Pakistan is enough for me!"

Dev Squad slay Biman

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The Development Squad of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) continued their giant killing spree in the GrameenPhone Premier Division Cricket League when they upset Bangladesh Biman by 48 runs at the Dhamondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Fifties from opener Kamrul Islam and one-down Nazimuddin helped the Under-19 side reach 210 in 48.5 overs after they were invited to bat by Biman captain Aminul Islam.

Kamrul scored 54 off 100 balls with five boundaries while Nazim's 72-ball 56 contained six boundaries.

In reply, Biman were shot out for 164 after young left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny grabbed four for 30.

Pacer Ziaur Rahman and another left-arm spinner Enamul Haque took two wickets each.

Opener Jahangir Khan (57) was the lone Biman batsman to offer any resistance.

Biman's sixth defeat in eight matches that kept them in the bottom half of the 13-team table with 12 points.

On the other hand, the under-19 side, who beat Kalabagan by 77 runs on Saturday, recorded their fifth win against five defeats.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the GrameenPhone Premier Division Cricket League match between Biman and BCB Development Squad at the Dhamondi Cricket Stadium yesterday:

BCB DEVSQUAD

Nayeem st Mortuzab Aminul jr	9			
Kamrul b Ahsanullah	54			
Nazimuddin run out	56			
Sagor run out	16			
Kafi c Mortuzab b Ahsanullah	6			
Ashiq run out	11			
Arafat run out	4			
Bashar c Shariful b Anis	22			
Rubaiyat run out	9			
Ziaur b Anis	11			
Enamul not out	1			
Extras: (b-2, lb-2, nb-1, w-6)	11			
Total: (All out in 48.5 overs)	210			
Fall of wickets: 1-14, 2-114, 3-121, 4-137, 5-156, 6-163, 7-164, 8-183, 9-207.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Aminuljr	7	1	26	1
Anis	7.5	1	27	2
Shariful	10	0	43	0

Athar	4	0	23	0
Ahsanullah	9	0	36	2
Aminulsr	7	0	33	0
Jahangir	4	0	18	0

BIMAN

Jahangir c Enamul b Arafat	57			
Rashedul c Sagir b Ziaur	0			
Alam c Sagir b Rubaiyat	8			
Athar c Sagir b Enamul	9			
Hasanuzzaman st Sagir b Bashir	10			
Aminul sr b Arafat	31			
Ahsanullah c & b Arafat	19			
Mortuza c Rubaiyat b Arafat	7			
Shariful c Sagir b Ziaur	0			
Anis c Rubaiyat b Enamul	7			
Aminuljr not out	1			
Extras: (lb-6, nb-1, w-6)	13			
Total: (All out in 45.1 overs)	162			
Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-35, 3-74, 4-80, 5-93, 6-138, 7-154, 8-154, 9-154.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Ziaur	8	2	25	2
Rubaiyat	8	2	30	1
Arafat	10	2	30	4
Nayeem	3	0	17	0
Enamul	8.1	2	18	2
Bashar	8	1	36	1

Result: BCB Development Squad won by 48 runs.

Flower's finger the key

ICC Cricket World Cup SOUTH AFRICA 2003

REUTERS, Bulawayo

Grant Flower's spinning finger could well hold the key to Zimbabwe's chances of pulling off an upset win over Pakistan in their World Cup Pool A match on Tuesday.

Although Pakistan will be heavily fancied to beat Zimbabwe in a game both sides need to win to have a chance of qualifying for the tournament's Super Six stage, Flower will be hoping to reproduce his remarkable track record at Queens Sports Club.

The one-day all-rounder's batting average of 61.57 at the Bulawayo venue is almost double his career average but he did not play in Zimbabwe's game against the Netherlands on Friday because of a badly cut finger.

He sustained the injury while fielding in the match against India in Harare on February 19, and the wound required five stitches.

However Zimbabwe nearly always play two spinners on the flat Queens Sports Club pitch, and they need Flower to partner leg spinner Brian Murphy in that department to give themselves their best chance of beating Pakistan.

"It (the finger) should be fine for Tuesday, and hopefully I'll be able to bowl," Flower told Reuters on Sunday. "I've tried bowling in the nets, but I can just roll it off the finger rather than spin it hard."

On paper, Zimbabwe have no chance of beating Pakistan, having won just two of 29 one-dayers between the sides while losing nine out of 11, with one tie, at home.

Although Pakistan will be smarting from their six-wicket loss to India in Centurion on Saturday, they will happily recall their most recent visit to Zimbabwe, having crushed their hosts 5-0 in a one-day series last November and December.

"They taught us a huge lesson, they outplayed us in every facet of the game," Flower said. "They might not be playing as confidently as they were then, but they seem to have their form again."

"They're the type of players who rise to the big occasion. They're all quality players and, when it comes to the important matches, they raise their game. "You've got to have quality bowlers to counter them when they're flying, and you can't panic. You need guys who can raise their game equally."

Flower added that Zimbabwe's attack needed to improve if they were to have a chance of keeping

Pakistan's batsmen in check.

"We're bowling too many bad balls and we aren't creating enough pressure," Flower said. "Our big problem has been not containing the other sides in the first 15 overs."

Flower expects a stiff challenge from Pakistan's bowlers.

"Against the weaker teams you get loose balls, you get wide balls to cut and short balls to pull," Flower said. "Against the better attacks, you don't."

"On their day, Pakistan's attack is up there with the better ones in the game, but they can be erratic and they can lack discipline."

That, and the pressure created by the battle in Pool A for the third spot in the Super Sixes, could even the odds between two otherwise mismatched teams.

Australia and India have already qualified for the second phase, with England, Pakistan and Zimbabwe all vying for the remaining berth from the group.

"They (Pakistan) have a lot more quality players than we have but, in the World Cup format, this match is a mini-final," Flower said.

"It comes down to which team is more up for it, and I think there's a pretty good spirit in our side at the moment."

Look before you leap

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like Habibul Bashar, whose form of late has been miserably even before the competition kicked off, but was chosen ahead of Akram Khan who sat on the sidelines until the final game against arch-rivals Kenya.

What was the point of inviting former coach Gordon Greenidge at short notice to spend some time with the players in Namibia as a batting advisor?

Though it's never wise to speculate nevertheless there is more to the abject failure than meets the eye? Could it be a division inside the camp intended to make Bangladesh look like laughing stocks?

In every single game the pattern was the same; an early collapse through injudicious shot selection followed by a late-order revival.

Can somebody please explain why chasing 218 for a rare win over the Kenyans seemed like a bridge too far when the side was packed with nine batsmen?

Clearly, the think-tank is not thinking. This leads to another point on its ineffectiveness. There are stories circulating that manager ASM Faruque and coach Mohsin

Kamal are not working as a team. If the rumours are true the Board should have realised it much earlier when they named the team manager.

Besides, Kamal's training methods were the subject of scrutiny by an Agence France-Presse correspondent.

The writer went on to say that Kamal, a former Pakistan Test bowler, did not deserve to be coach of any national team.

Another puzzle that needs unravelling is what was the benefit of employing a South African physiologist for a brief period when the signs indicate a long-term session is absolutely essential to get rid of the mental scars.

As we lick our wounds after the national team failed to live up to expectations, the bigwigs sitting at home also must share the brunt of responsibility.

Barring their upset of Pakistan in 1999, the Tigers have not won a one-day international since gaining Test status a year later. This speaks volumes of where our cricket now stands.

We don't need to look too far to find the root of the problem. It lies beneath their feet and in their

heads. Yes, it refers to the state of domestic pitches, the way they are being prepared and in the manner they are managing the game.

On such tailor-made tracks, any player can bash the leather around the ground without a worry in the world. This may be attractive to watch and no doubt will push his end of season averages up, but ultimately it will cause more harm than good when he is pitted against even mediocre bowlers because he lacks the techniques, footwork to handle any situation later in his career.

So, it is about time the Board stops the practice of producing 'friendly wickets' and instead invests time and money in getting pitch specialists from other Test-playing countries such as Australia, South Africa to help train our local groundsmen.

The game's administrators must realise Bangladesh needs a high quality coach, not an average one. And that coach should have total freedom in his work.

Otherwise, we will continue to be Tigers on paper while other countries like Kenya prosper at our expense.

Youngsters not to be blamed

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attainable target on this wicket. But our batsman failed again. I do not blame Al-Shahriar or Ashraf for departing early. But I strongly oppose the way Tuskar and Sanwar got out when they should have carried the innings."

But then he feared worst might follow if the Bangladesh Cricket Board failed to take immediate steps to prepare sporting wickets at home and provide uninterrupted outdoor training facilities round the year.

"It will not help if we only train at the docile wickets at the BKSP. We need true wickets and good grounds to practice on."

"Besides, I feel the national cricketers should be allowed to play in competitive domestic events be it the National League or Dhaka League," said Mashud adding that it would help the players improve their mental strength in pressure situations.

Mashud said that he was still adamant on quitting the captaincy.

Before the leaving for South Africa the 26-year-old wicket-keeper-batsman announced that he would be stepping down after

the World Cup.

"I will talk to the Board once I return home and then make my final decision," said Mashud.

The team will return home on March 5. Akram Khan, who came as a replacement for injured Mashrafe-bin-Mortuza on February 20, however left yesterday.

He played only two game scoring 13 and 44 respectively.

Team manager ASM Faruque believed the middle-order batsman also proved a point that his experience could help boost the team's sagging morale.

"Akram showed the others how to bat," referring to his fighting knock of 44 against Kenya.

Faruque observed that except Akram and Mashud, the rest lacked commitment, application and involvement in the game.

A former Mohammedan captain Faruque, who took over the job in Bangladesh's away series in Sri Lanka last year, made no secret of his failure to motivate his side.

"I have nothing to say. Being a part of the team I have also failed."

When asked whether he was

interested to carry on he said the World Cup might be his last assignment.

"I don't think the people will appreciate it after the debacle in the World Cup. But I still believe that this team has the ability to perform far better," said Faruque.

Meanwhile, Kenyan captain Steve Tikolo said that they should be included in the Test arena after their outstanding performance in the World Cup.

"I believe we are capable of playing Test cricket. Though it is up to the ICC to decide, but we have proved strong point with our performance in the World Cup," said Tikolo.

Tikolo however was modest to say that Bangladesh has improved a lot since their victory in the ICC Trophy in 1997.

"We have won the match because we were positive in our approach even we knew that we were not defending a very good total. But at the same time I have noticed an improvement in Bangladesh. You have got some very good batsmen. But they did not get runs," said the elated Kenyan captain.

AUS-ENGLAND SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the World Cup Pool A match between Australia and England at St. George's Park in Port Elizabeth on Sunday:

ENGLAND

Trescothick c Martyn b McGrath	37			
Knight c Martyn b Bichel	30			
Vaughan c Gilchrist b Bichel	2			
Hussain b Bichel	1			
Stewart b Bichel	46			
Collingwood c Gilchrist b Bichel	10			
Flintoff c Gilchrist b Bichel	45			
White not out	16			
Giles c Bevan b Bichel	2			
Caddick not out	5			
Extras: (lb-3, w-3, nb-4)	10			
Total: (For 8 wks in 50 overs)	204			
Fall of wickets: 1-66, 2-72, 3-74, 4-74, 5-87, 6-177, 7-180, 8-187				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
McGrath	9	2	41	1
Lee	9	0	58	0
Bichel	10	0	20	7
Hogg	10	1	28	0
Lehmann	10	0	34	0
Symonds	2	0	20	0

AUSTRALIA

Gilchrist c Vaughan b Caddick	22			
Hayden c Giles b Caddick	1			
Ponting c Giles b Caddick	18			
Martyn lbw b Caddick	0			
Lehmann c Stewart b White	37			
Bevan not out	74			
Symonds c and b Giles	0			
Hogg c Stewart b Caddick	1			
Lee run out	6			
Bichel not out	34			
Extras: (b-4, lb-4, w-4, nb-3)	15			
Total: (For 8 wks in 49.4 overs)	208			
Fall of wickets: 1-15, 2-33, 3-33, 4-48, 5-111, 6-112, 7-114, 8-135				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Caddick	9	2	35	4
Anderson	9	0	66	0
Flintoff	9.4	1	26	0
White	10	2	21	1
Giles	10	0	42	2
Vaughan	2	0	10	0

Australia won by two wickets. Man-of-the-match: Andy Bichel. Toss: England. Umpires: Russel Tiffin (Zim), Aleem Dar (Pak). Tv umpire: David Orchard (Rsa). Match referee: Wasim Raja (Pak)

WORLD CUP STANDINGS

AFP, Johannesburg

World Cup standings after Sunday's Pool A match between Australia and England (played, won, lost, tied/no result, points, net run-rate):

POOL A

Australia	6	6	0	0	24	+2.04
India	6	5	1	0	20	+1.11
England	6	3	3	0	12	+0.82
Zimbabwe	5	3	2	0	12	+0.50
Pakistan	5	2	3	0	8	+0.23
Netherlands	5	0	5	0	0	-2.04
Namibia	5	0	5	0	0	-3.32
POOL B						
Sri Lanka						