

Easy passage for MSC

NFL draw ceremony held

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Mohammedan Sporting Club has been placed in a relatively easy group in the Nitol-Tata third National Football League.

The popular Motihheel outfit could not have asked for a better choice of opponents during the official draw that took place at the Conference Room of the National Sports Council yesterday.

Former ace national striker Sheikh Mohammed Aslam surrounded by a host of big-screen actors conducted the draw.

Mohammedan will lead Group A that also features Arambagh Krida Sangha, Moulvibazar Wanderers, Jagarani Club of Jamalpur and Jhenidha Mohammedan Sporting Club.

Mohammedan's bitter rivals and last year's runners-up Abahani will lead the other group in the ten-team final round. Muktiyoddha Sangsad Krida Chakra has also been placed in Group B along with Sirajganj Mohammedan SC, Chittagong Mohammedan SC and Bangladesh Army.

Although the draw passed off

peacefully, the audience was taken aback when president of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) SA Sultan vented his anger against the print media in his introductory speech.

The BFF boss was apparently unhappy in the manner in which some newspapers criticised the lavish spending during the SAFF Championship in January.

Questioning the wisdom of the fourth estate Sultan said that one should not write anything without having proper knowledge.

"Some newspapers are writing a lot of things that bears little or no truth. Do not write baseless reports. Maybe some reporters lack proper knowledge," said Sultan in his sweeping speech.

The fired up Sultan upstaged all around him by not allowing even his general secretary Anwarul Huq to speak for once. At one stage he even took the microphone from the chief guest State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman interrupting his speech only to introduce some guests who had just arrived.

The draw ceremony created a chaotic situation, as there were more guests on the dais than it could afford.

Sultan however struck a lucrative three-year deal with Nitol-Tata

despite not confirming that all the final round matches would be telecast live from five different venues across the country.

Nitol-Tata will pay Taka 1.5 crore for the title sponsorship right for the next three years.

Meanwhile, the chairman of Nitol-Tata Group Abdul Matlub Ahmed announced that the winners of the championship would receive an Indica V2 car apart from the cash award of Taka five lakh.

The runners-up will receive three lakh taka while the third-placed team will be richer by Taka two lakh.

Besides, all the ten teams in the final round will get Taka 100,000 each as appearance fees.

The first phase of the final round will commence on July 11. Ten teams, split into two groups, will initially compete in the first phase of the final round to be held Chittagong, Sylhet, Barisal, Khulna and Dhaka.

Six teams, three from each group, will advance into the Super Six. They will then split into two groups from where four will battle for the four semifinals slots.

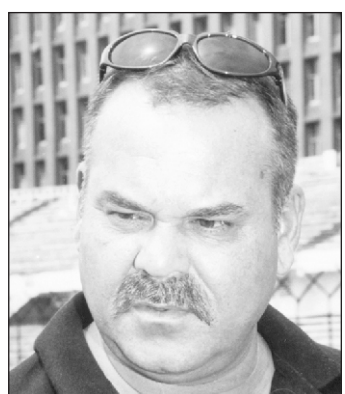
The Super Six will be held in Dhaka, but the venue was yet to be decided.

'Bangladesh improving'

Cricket

AGENCIES, Darwin

Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore says results are of secondary importance to improved individual performances in the Test series against Australia.



DAV WHATMORE

Whatmore on Sunday, less than a fortnight before their first Test with Australia here, said that the Test cricket minnows are improving and heading in the right direction.

The Bangladeshis flew into Darwin on the day, buoyed by their two-wicket tour victory of the Australian Cricket Academy in Brisbane on Saturday, but realistic about their chances against the top-ranked Australians.

Whatmore said his team was focusing on improving performance, rather than being concerned by wins or losses.

"We, as a team, have agreed that we are not going to judge the success or otherwise by wins or losses on this tour," Whatmore said.

"It's individual improvement in areas that players need to improve on. That will be done very carefully.

"Bangladesh haven't done all that well in the last few years, so it would seem to suggest that we need to improve in all areas, and that's the focus."

Whatmore said the tourists' win over the academy was a boost to the team's confidence.

Set 230 to win from a maximum 73 overs, Bangladesh scraped home with just a few minutes and balls to spare.

"That's always a good tonic," he said. "We're improving, definitely going in the correct direction."

Captain Khaled Mahmud shrugged off criticism of the Top End

SEE PAGE 14 COL 4

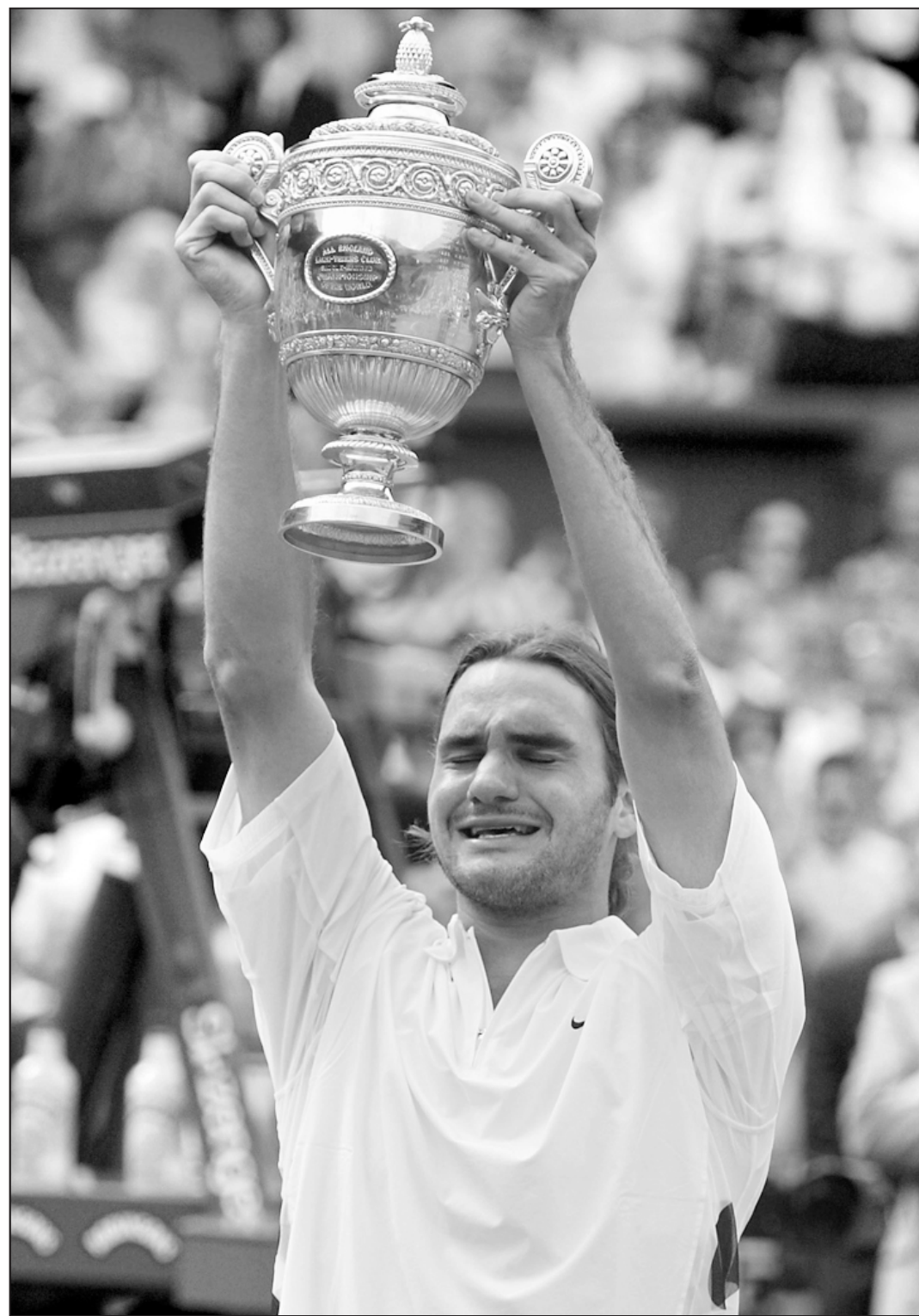


PHOTO: AFP

NOTHING COMPARES TO THIS: An emotion-choked Roger Federer of Switzerland holds aloft the Wimbledon trophy after defeating Mark Philippoussis of Australia in the men's final yesterday.

Swiss fairytale

WIMBLEDON

AGENCIES, London

Roger Federer produced a tennis masterclass to claim his first Grand Slam title with a 7-6, 6-2, 6-2 demolition of big-serving Mark Philippoussis in the Wimbledon final on Sunday.

The 21-year-old fourth seed from Switzerland produced a display of cool artistry on Centre Court to confirm his status as a new dominant force in men's tennis with a comprehensive victory over the Australian in one hour and 56 minutes.

"It's an absolute dream for me. I always used to joke around when I was a boy that I was going to win this and I have it," said Federer, cradling the famous Challenge Cup after his emphatic win.

"It's such a nice trophy. I'm so happy with the way I played. It was the best two matches maybe of my career," added the Swiss, who demolished hot favourite Andy Roddick in three sets in the semifinals.

"I kept it going in the final. It's just incredible right now. It's incredible, I don't know how I did it."

"A lot of people came from Basel and home, it's so nice to share this

moment. Thanks to everybody, it's great," he concluded, his voice cracking with emotion as he broke down in tears.

Philippoussis said: "Roger was too good I just congratulate him, it's his day definitely. I only had one break point. He returned a lot better than I did today. He took his chances."

"But I'm definitely proud, there are a lot of positive things to take away from these two weeks. I will definitely be back that's for sure," added the player dubbed the 'The Scud' for his rocket-like serves.

With both players appearing in their first Wimbledon final they could have been excused some early nerves. But if there were any, they were well disguised in a start to the match lit up by booming aces, flashing returns and rock-solid volleys.

The first 12 games all went with serve and did not feature a single break point, although Federer looked slightly more threatening and twice had the Australian at 30-30 on serve.

Philippoussis, who also lost in the 1998 US Open final, reacted to the danger in characteristic fashion by sending down unreturnable serves, one ace in the eighth game being clocked at 138 miles per hour (221.1 kph).

The 26-year-old unseeded Australian dug himself out of a

mini-crisis at 5-6, snuffing out the danger to take the first set into a tiebreak.

A 15-stroke baseline rally at 2-2 in the tiebreak had both players scampering from corner to corner before Federer cracked a forehand winner down the line.

The decisive moment came at 4-5 when an edgy looking Philippoussis served his third double fault to hand Federer two set points and the Swiss clinched the set on the second.

With Philippoussis visibly deflated, Federer stepped up a gear in the second set to establish a 3-0 lead in 11 brilliant minutes.

Two dipping forehand winners and a volley mistake from Philippoussis gave him his first break of the match. After holding easily for 2-0 he then broke again as Philippoussis' challenge began to crumble.

A slight lapse in Federer's concentration gave Philippoussis a glimmer of hope in the next game when he reached 0-30 on his opponent's serve. But the fourth seed stayed cool, moving into a 4-0 lead with a crosscourt forehand into an empty court.

Philippoussis stopped the rot to hold in the fifth game, but there was no respite as Federer main-

SEE PAGE 14 COL 4



Did U Know?

George Lohmann of England holds the record for the fastest first 100 Test wickets (in terms of playing in fewest matches and balls bowled). He reached that aggregate in his 16th Test and 3421 balls.



What to WATCH

ESPN
England vs Zimbabwe
NatWest Series
Seventh ODI
Repeat at 1:30 pm
Sportscentre Hindi
Sport News
Live at 8:30 pm

STAR Sports
Wimbledon C'ships
Men's Singles Final &
Women's Doubles Final
Repeat at 9:30 am
Sportsline Tonight
Sport News
Live at 8:00 pm



Brian Lara
(West Indies cricket captain)
"We lost both the Test and one-day series against Australia, but we learnt a lot from them. They are a champion side."

Green Delta hockey

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka Wanderers Club earned a 5-1 victory over Bachelors SC in the Green Delta Metropolitan Senior Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

Wanderers led the first session 2-0. Javed, Yousuf, Ramzan, Jahangir and Mustaque scored one goal each for the winners while Roman netted the consolation goal for the losers.

In the day's other match, Shishu Kishore Sangha blanked Mukta Bihanga Tarun Sangha 3-0 after dominating the first half 1-0 at the same venue.

Maksudur Rahman, Ranjan Banik and Jahangir Alam scored for the winners.

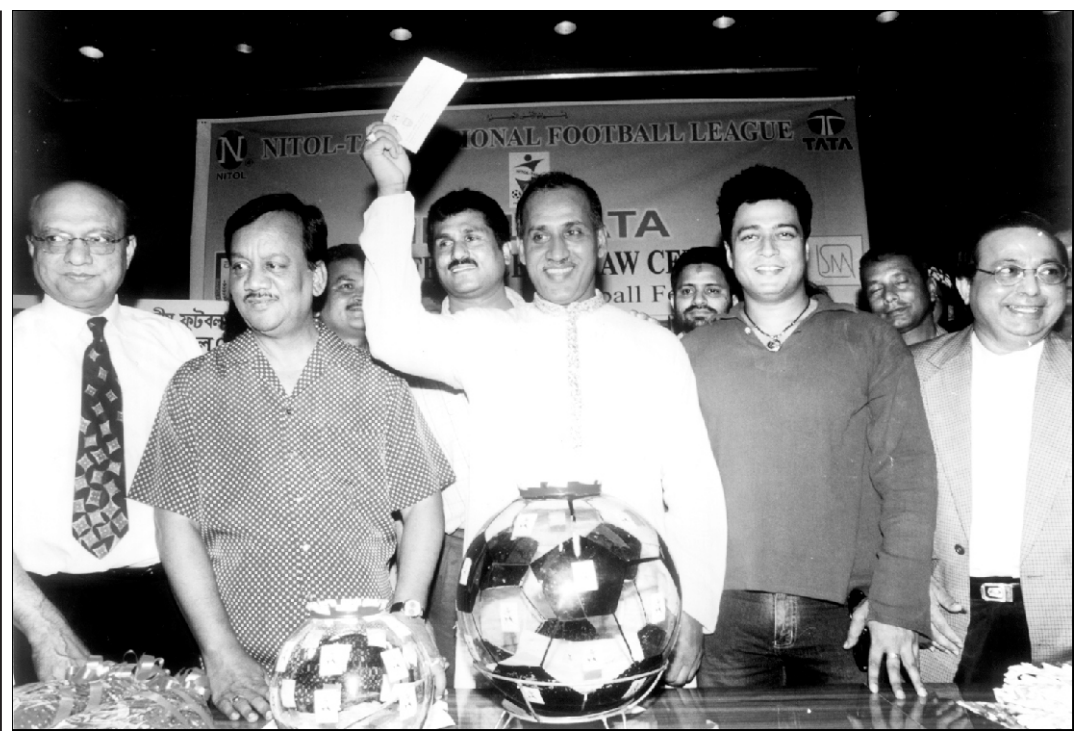


PHOTO: STAR

Former national striker Sheikh Mohammad Aslam shows one of the teams' name during the draw ceremony for the final round of the Nitol-Tata third National Football League at the National Sports Council yesterday. He is flanked by actor Ferdous (2nd from R) and Nitol-Tata Group chairman Abdul Matlub Ahmed (R). State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman (2nd from L) attended the function as chief guest. President of Bangladesh Football Federation SA Sultan (L) was present.

England oust Zimbabwe

Cricket

AFP, Bristol

All-rounder Andrew Flintoff steered England to a six-wicket win over Zimbabwe here on Sunday that booked England's place in the NatWest triangular one-day series final against South Africa.

Flintoff, who took three for 13 with his lively pace bowling as Zimbabwe were bowled out for 92, then made an unbeaten 47 after England had collapsed to 25 for four.

Darren Gough took four for 32 as Zimbabwe, after losing the toss, were bowled out for their lowest one-day international score against England.

It was the first time England had bowled out a side for under 100 in a one-day international since they dismissed Pakistan for 74 at Adelaide during the 1992 World Cup.

But Zimbabwe captain and fast bowler Heath Streak then took four wickets for no runs in 16 balls on a lively Nevil Road pitch.

He finished with four for 21 from nine overs.

However, Flintoff ended the match in style with a six off the lively Andy Blignaut, whose 5.5 overs cost 56 runs, as England won with over 32 overs to spare.

Flintoff faced 37 balls including two sixes and 11 fours. England captain Michael Vaughan was 11 not out.

England will now play South Africa at Lord's on Saturday for the trophy after Zimbabwe failed to gain the bonus point they needed to stay alive in the tournament.

Only Stuart Matsikenyeri (26) and Blignaut (17), whose eighth wicket stand of 33 in 33 balls took Zimbabwe close to breaking 100, made it into double figures for the Africans with 24 of their runs coming in extras.

In reply, England were rocked by Streak's blistering burst.

He first had left-handed opener Marcus Trescothick (eight) caught low down in the slips by Travis Friend.

England then sent in hard-hitting tallener Richard Johnson. But he went for nought, skying Streak to one-day international debutant Charles

Coventry at cover.

And 20 for two became 22 for three when Vikram Solanki (seven) edged Streak through to wicketkeeper Tatenda Taibu.

Anthony McGrath (one) fell next to the former Hampshire quick, well caught in the slips by Grant Flower.

But Flintoff took the game away from Zimbabwe in the 14th over. He straight drove pace bowler Blignaut for consecutive fours and also pulled a no-ball for six, Coventry dropping the 'catch' before the ball crossed the rope.

Flintoff then drove another four, 21 runs in all coming off the over to leave England 60 for four.

Earlier Zimbabwe's first three wickets went in eight balls before senior players Flower (one) and Streak (five) both fell to the combination of Gough and wicket-keeper Chris Read, who took four catches, as the Africans slumped to 45 for six.

Matsikenyeri then defied England before he was bowled by Flintoff, having faced 35 balls including two fours.

SCOREBOARD

Final scoreboard in the NatWest triangular series one-day international between England and Zimbabwe on Sunday:

ZIMBABWE			
Ebrahim c Trescothick b Gough	7		
Coventry c Vaughan b Anderson	3		
Friend c Read b Gough	4		
Flower c Read b Gough	1		
Taibu c Trescothick b Johnson	5		
Matsikenyeri b Flintoff	26		
Streak c Read b Gough	5		
Ervinec Clarke b Johnson	0		
Blignaut c Clarke b Flintoff	17		
Price c Read b Flintoff	0		
Hondo not out	0		
Extras: (b-1, lb-3, w-16, nb-4)	24		
Total: (All out in 24.5 overs)	92		
Fall of wickets: 1-14, 2-14, 3-20, 4-34, 5-39, 6-45, 7-51, 8-84, 9-84			
Bowler			
Anderson	5	0	15
Gough	9	1	26
Johnson	5	0	16
Harmon	3	0	18

ENGLAND			
Trescothick c Friend b Streak	8		
Solanki c Taibu b Streak	7		
Johnson c Coventry b Streak	0		
Vaughan not out	11		
McGrath c Flower b Streak	1		
Flintoff not out	47		
Extras: (b-2, lb-2, w-12, nb-5)	21		
Total: (or 4 wickets in 17.5 overs)	95		
Fall of wickets: 1-20, 2-20, 3-22, 4-25			
Did not bat: Clarke, Read, Gough, Anderson, Harmison			
Bowler			
Streak	9	3	21
Hondo	3	0	14
Blignaut	5.5	0	56
Result: England won by six wickets.			
Man-of-the-match: Andrew Flintoff.			



PHOTO: REUTERS

MAN-OF-THE-MATCH: England's Andrew Flintoff pulls one for four during his innings against Zimbabwe in the NatWest Series at the County Ground in Bristol yesterday.

U-23's 3rd 2-dayer today

SPORTS REPORTER

The visiting Bangladesh Under-23 team faces Moors SC Under-23 squad in their third two-day friendly match in Sri Lanka today. The young Bangladesh cricketers earned a massive victory in their first two-day match and drew in the second one. They went down in the four limited-over encounters.

The team is expected to return home on July 12 after playing their last two-day match against the Sri Lankan Under-23 national squad on July 10-11.

Asif shoots for Nitol-Tata

SPORTS REPORTER

Commonwealth gold medalist Asif Hossain is going to be appointed as Public Relations officer of Nitol-Tata Group.

The young shooter of BKSP shot to fame at the Manchester Commonwealth Games last year in the 10m Air Rifle event.

He is likely to get a monthly salary of Tk 20,000 for the next ten years.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman said this while talking to newsmen during the draw ceremony of the Nitol-Tata third National Football League yesterday.

StanChart school chess starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Standard Chartered Bank School Chess tournament will begin today at 3:00 pm at the Bangladesh Chess Federation Auditorium.

Over 200 school students from Bangladesh and India are taking part in the event. The tournament will be held in Swiss-League system.