



Did U Know?

Basketball and rugby balls are made from synthetic material. Earlier, pigs' bladders were used as rugby balls.

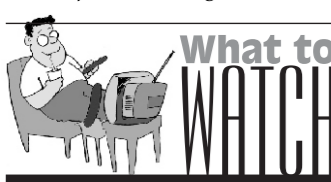


Talk Turkey



VVS Laxman

(Indian star batsman)
"It is an ongoing process of becoming the best team in the world and we want to draw on our consistency and keep on a winning streak."



What to Watch

- ESPN**
English Premier Football League
Liverpool vs Everton
Live at 8:55 pm
STAR Sports
Australian Open
Women's Singles and Men's Doubles Finals
Live at 8:25 am
English Premier Football League
Man United vs Southampton
Live at 6:25 pm
Birmingham City vs Newcastle United
Live at 8:55 pm

Star WHIZZ KID COMPETITION 205
Tick the correct answers, post to
The Daily Star
Win attractive prizes
Competition closes at 8 pm
Feb 13, 2004 and draw

- Who won the 25th National Women's Chess Championship title?
Shabana Parveen, Rani Hamid, Zakiya Sultana
- Who lifted the Hopman Cup tennis title?
Australia, America, Russia
- Steve Waugh has played how many Test matches?
132, 168, 200
- David Seaman quit football at
Name
- Class Roll No.
- School Address
- Phone: (If any)

Zia wins 10th game

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman defeated the highest rated player of the event Russian Grand Master Pavel Smirnov in the tenth round games of the first International Chess tournament in Chennai, India yesterday.

With this win Zia shared the second position with Russian GMs Alexander Fomin, Sergei Iskusnyh and GM Koneru Hampy of India.

IWM Rani Hamid earned 5 points, Zakiya Sultana, Hafizul Islam Chapal earned 4.5 points each and Afroza Khanam Bably earned 4 points. In the eleventh round Zia will play against Fomin.

Notice

Dear Whizz Kids due to some technical difficulties the draw of Competition-205 could not take place last night. It will now be held on February 13.

Wanderers hurt Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER

WESTERN UNION
After a brilliant finish to the first round where they beat arch foes Mohammedan, Abahani started the return leg of the Western Union Premier Division football league on the wrong foot when Dhaka Wanderers Club held them 1-1 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

The slightly built Mohammad Yusuf spoiled Abahani's night when he equalised seconds from the end much to the disappointment of the supporters of the Sky Blues who thought the first half goal from Brazilian Alessandro was good enough to secure three points.

The draw was a massive blow for Abahani's title aspirations as they are now six points behind leaders Brothers Union and jointly share the third spot with Sheikh Russell Kirra Chakra with 18 points from 10 matches each. Brothers have 24 points and second placed Muktijoddha Sangsad have 21.

Wanderers' collection rose to nine points from 10 matches.

Alessandro, who had been instrumental in both Abahani's goals against Mohammedan, was again in his elements and gave his side the lead in the 24th minute with an unstoppable shot from

outside the D box.

Surprisingly the Dhanmondi giants preferred to sit on the slender lead and allowed Wanderers to get back in the game.

In injury time Abahani defenders Usamanu and Nicolai both were found slow to clear a Masud Alam through from the midfield and Yusuf pounced on the opportunity to fire the ball into the far corner of the net.

Yellow cards: Nikolai, Sila (Abahani), Jahangir, Masud and Jamal (Wanderers).

TEAMS

Abahani: Nizam, Osamanu, Sila, Nikolai, Mahmudul Hasan, Masood Rana, Joy (Pranotosh), Parvez (Rakib), Alessandro, Khokon and Uzal.

Dhaka Wanderers: Sohel, Yusuf, Jahangir, Dulal, Shipon, Dominic (Dalim), Kamruzzaman, Yusuf, Masud Alam, Monir and Ritu.

Referee: Abdur Rakib.

SKRUSSELL 1; VICTORIA - 0

In the other match of the day, Sheikh Russell Kirra Chakra posted a solitary goal win over Victoria Sporting Club.

After a barren first half, midfielder Asif scored the winner in the 48th minute from a penalty after their forward Yunus was

Nepal U-19 due today

SPORTS REPORTER

Nepal under 19 World Cup cricket team will arrive in Dhaka today afternoon as part of their preparation for the ICC U/19 World Cup that is scheduled to be held in Bangladesh from February 10 to March 5.

The Nepal team, who are the first team to arrive for the 16-nation competition, will stay initially at the BKSP and play five warm-up matches against the Bangladesh under 19s.

The Nepalese team will then move to Chittagong where they will play their group matches of the World Cup against England, South Africa and Uganda. They will kick off their campaign against England at the MA Aziz Stadium on February 15.



Abahani's Brazilian recruit Alessandro's (not in the picture) shot flies over the outstretched hand of Wanderers custodian Sohel for the first goal at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Flawless Federer in final

Australian Open

REUTERS, Melbourne

rangy Spaniard's angles. On his second serve he stayed back, thrashing groundstrokes from side to side as Ferrero scrambled

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Roger Federer of Switzerland rejoices after defeating Spain's Juan Carlos Ferrero to reach the men's singles final of the Australian Open yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Roger Federer routed Spain's Juan Carlos Ferrero 6-4, 6-1, 6-4 on Friday to reach his maiden Australian Open final and take the world number one ranking for the first time.

The Wimbledon champion and second seed knocked all life out of his opponent in 89 minutes before kneeling on centre court and saluting the awe-struck crowd.

"I knew I had the chance to be number one in the world," he sighed with relief. "Maybe I have a poker-face most of the time but I felt nervous."

Those nerves were never on show as the stylish Swiss hit shots lesser players can only dream of, humbling the French Open champion and third seed in the process.

"I am confident. I mean, have you ever seen a number one in the world who is not that confident?" he joked on court.

Federer will face mighty Marat Safin in Sunday's final after the unseeded Russian downed defending champion Andre Agassi in five sets on Thursday.

Federer can be assured vocal support from the ever-growing Swiss contingent.

"The Swiss are neutral when it comes to other things but when it comes to sport they are freaking out right now," he laughed.

Looking forward to Sunday's showpiece, Federer said: "(Marat is) a great player, it will be a great match. He's in the finals and it's very nice to see."

If Federer can reach the heights he scaled in this semi-final, it is hard to see how Safin could live with him.

On the Rod Laver Arena he bore down on the net, setting out his game plan from the beginning.

Slashing his serve out wide or into the Spaniard's body, he followed his first one in and cut off the

WI 83-3

STAR SPORT MONITOR

West Indies were 83-3 in 27.5 overs when rain forced players off the ground at Kingsmead in Durban in the third one-day international yesterday.

Trailing the five-match series 2-0, West Indies skipper Brian Lara won the toss but the tourists fell into trouble when they lost opener Chris Gayle with score on three. But then hard-hitting Ricardo Powell was sent up the order and he responded with a valuable 49-run second-wicket stand with Shivnarine Chanderpaul before the latter was out for 17.

Powell, who scored his seventh ODI fifty, was the last wicket to fall before the rains came.

Clijsters out for revenge

AFP, Melbourne

Kim Clijsters is determined to ditch her 'serial-choker' tag when she takes on compatriot Justine Henin-Hardenne at the Australian Open in yet another all-Belgian Grand Slam final Saturday.

Pipped by world number one Henin-Hardenne at last year's French and US Opens, 20-year-old Clijsters is chasing her first Grand Slam crown after defeats in three finals so far.

The losing record has left second seed Clijsters with a point to prove as she prepares to face Henin-Hardenne at the Rod Laver Arena in the latest instalment of a rivalry that stretches back to childhood.

In head-to-head meetings Clijsters just leads, with nine victories to Henin-Hardenne's eight. But record when the two have met when it mattered most, leading 6-2 in finals.

Clijsters, who has shown remarkable courage in winning through to Saturday's final despite carrying an ankle injury, is dismissive at any notion of Henin-Hardenne enjoying a psychological stranglehold over her.

"That's always something they're gonna keep saying if you lose against her," said Clijsters, the darling of fans in Melbourne thanks to her romantic involvement with Australia's Lleyton Hewitt.

"I definitely don't think I have a problem. In those matches I knew where the problem was, and I knew it wasn't psychological."

Even so, Henin-Hardenne unarguably has the better record when it comes to winning tight matches.

She blocked out a ferociously partisan New York crowd and saved two match-points when she knocked Jennifer Capriati out of the US Open semi-finals last September before going on to defeat Clijsters in the final.

Dazzling Motaleb

SPORTS REPORTER

A blistering 89 by Motaleb Hossain gave Rahmatullah Model High School a comfortable 59-run victory over Hazi Abdul Awal High School in their Dhaka Metropolitan zone qualifying match of the Standard Chartered 22nd National School Cricket Championship at the Mirpur Outer Stadium yesterday.

Motaleb led his side from the front to pile up 218-9 in the stipulated 35 overs in the day's only match despite Shaheen finishing with an amazing six-wicket haul.

Opting to bat, Rahmatullah Model made a flying start when Motaleb and Rajib Shaha contributed 122 for the opening stand but once the pair broken they kept losing wickets regularly.

Shaheen grabbed six for 41 in 7

overs to almost throttle the innings.

Motaleb belted 12 fours and six over-boundaries in a 67-ball blitzkrieg. Rajib added 46 off 82 balls with eight hits to the fence.

In reply, Hazi Abdul Awal High School were dismissed for 159 in 30.2 overs with Jamal hitting highest 38 off 42 deliveries.

Mehedi Hasan was the pick of the bowlers for Rahmatullah claiming three for 26 in 4 overs while Saifur Rahman, Rajib Shaha and Sohail took two wickets each.

SCORES IN BRIEF
RAHMATULLAH MODEL HIGH SCHOOL: 218/9 in 35 overs (Rajib 46, Motaleb 89, Raju 2-15, Sumon 1-60, Shaheen 6-41)

HAZI ABDUL AWAL HIGH SCHOOL: 159/10 in 30.2 overs (Rocky 35, Jamal 38, Raju 33, Mehedi 3-26, Saifur 2-9, Rajib 2-36, Sohail 2-38)

Result: Rahmatullah Model High School won by 59 runs.

Howard won't step in

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Prime Minister John Howard said Friday it was up to Cricket Australia to decide if the national team will go ahead with a planned tour of Zimbabwe in May, even though the government strongly opposes the visit.

"I respect in the end it is a matter for them," Howard said in a radio interview when asked if he wanted Cricket Australia to cancel the tour.

"I have had some discussions about it with the people in Cricket Australia. I don't want to go into those. I simply say in the end it is a matter for them to decide," he said on Melbourne radio 3AW.

The Australian and British governments have led diplomatic moves to isolate the government of President Robert Mugabe, who they accuse of oppressing political opponents and other human rights violations.

Australia played a World Cup match in the Zimbabwe city of Bulawayo, but had cancelled a tour of the country in 2002, citing security considerations.

Earlier this week Foreign Minister Alexander Downer called on Cricket Australia to cancel the Zimbabwe tour.

Cricket Australia subsequently said it would send a fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe in March to review the security situation, but insisted it would not make a decision on the tour based on political

Bashar opens his innings today

SPORTS REPORTER

Habibul Bashar will start his new assignment as captain when the Tigers play Namibia in their first limited-overs practice match in the capital Windhoek today.

The 16-member Bangladesh team led by Bashar, who replaced Khaled Mahmud, left Dhaka on Wednesday night to play three limited-overs warm-up games and a three-day match against the hosts.

The short tour is being used as part of their build-up for the Zimbabwe tour beginning February 10.

The second practice limited-overs game is on February 1 and the series concludes next Wednesday. The lone three-day fixture begins on February 6.

The Test babes' last visit to Namibia was prior to the 2003 World Cup in South Africa when they won limited-series 4-1.

Zim decision in March

Cricket

AFP, London

Responding to the ECB announcement Mani, from Pakistan, said: "During our meeting earlier this week I suggested to David Morgan (ECB chairman) that an appropriate forum for this issue would be the ICC executive board meeting in March."

"I am pleased that the ECB Board has now accepted this suggestion and welcome this decision today," added Mani who earlier this week told The Times he expected the tour to be cancelled.

The British government has strongly advised the ECB to call off the tour in protest at the policies of Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe.

Crucially however, the government has stopped short of ordering the ECB to cancel the tour in the way that India banned bilateral tours of Pakistan for over a decade.

Under ICC rules, barring a government ban the only other grounds on which the ECB could withdraw without paying compensation is for security reasons.

However, a report by ECB official Des Wilson published last week said moral concerns could form

Zim decision in March

the basis for a withdrawal.

Meanwhile Thursday's ECB statement indicated it had still not given up hope of changing the ICC's hardline stance.

It said the ICC meeting offered an "opportunity to explore with all interested parties, all of the prevailing circumstances surrounding the planned tour, in order to establish whether they constitute an exceptional case."

England agreed in March to tour Zimbabwe in return for Zimbabwe touring England in 2003, having controversially withdrawn from a World Cup match in Harare in February last year.

However, the prospect of an England withdrawal prompted an angry response from Zimbabwe Cricket Union (ZCU) chairman Peter Chingoka who accused Morgan of going back on his word.

Chingoka also warned England's 18 cash-strapped counties they could be faced with a multi-million pounds compensation bill if the tour did not go ahead as planned.

DAY'S EVENT
Western Union Premier Division Football League
Mohammedan vs Arambagh (4:30 pm)
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Mirpur



Tennis legend Martina Navratilova (R) hits an overhead return while her partner Leander Paes of India looks on during their mixed doubles semifinal against Israel's Jonathan Erlich of Israel and South African Lizele Huber yesterday.

Paes' comeback dream comes true

REUTERS, Melbourne

An emotional Leander Paes reached the mixed doubles final of the Australian Open on Friday in his first tournament since recovering from a brain abscess.

Indian cricket greats Sunil Gavaskar and Ravi Shastri were among those who rose to applaud the courageous Paes after he and 47-year-old Martina Navratilova, the defending champions, beat Jonathan Erlich and Lizele Huber 6-4, 6-4 at Melbourne Park.

"It's magic. It's already a dream come true. In the final, we'll just be playing for the cherries on top," said a teary-eyed Paes, who was sidelined for five months with a non-malignant brain lesion.

"I'm pretty much trying to put it all behind me. To be here was a long shot (a few) months ago, so being in the final is just phenomenal. We are playing like two kids in a candy store."

Wearing a baggy, long-sleeve

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