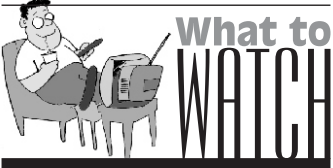




The smallest crowd to watch a World Cup soccer game was the 300 who showed up to the game between Romania and Peru during the 1930 World Cup of soccer in Uruguay.



Shoaib Akhtar
(Pakistan speedster)
"I personally like to come to Mumbai whenever I can as I love this city. In fact Mumbai is my second home and I would like to come here quite often."



ESPN
Sri Lanka vs Zimbabwe
Second ODI
Live at 1:20 pm
Sportscentre
Sport News
Live at 9:00 pm
UEFA Cup
Villareal vs Valencia
Live at 1:30 am (Friday)
STAR Sports
Monaco Tennis Masters Series
Last 16
Live at 2:00 pm
Sportsline
Sport News
Live at 8:00 pm

Star WHIZZ KID COMPETITION 210

Tick the correct answers, post to
The Daily Star
Win attractive prizes
Competition closes at 8 pm
April 23, 2004 and draw shortly afterwards

- How many gold medals did Bangladesh win in the recently concluded SAF Games?
5 4 3
- Who is the coach of Chelsea?
Eriksson Wenger Rianeri
- What is the title of the official Euro 2004 song?
Forma Forza Forca
- Who clinched the WTA Key Biscayne title?
Venus Henin Serena
- What was the score of the India-Pakistan one-day series?

Name
.....
Class..... Roll No.....
School Address
.....
Phone: (If any)

SLC slams the media

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's cricket authorities Wednesday slammed "speculative reporting" for fuelling a controversy over star spinner Muttiah Muralitharan running the risk of an immediate 12-month ban.

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) chief Mohan de Silva accused local media of speculating on the findings of a biomechanical expert who tested Muralitharan for suspect bowling action in Australia and casting doubts over the player.

"What the media has done is to selectively take bits and pieces

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CCL comes alive

SPORTS REPORTER



After an uninspiring start on Tuesday, the first-ever GrameenPhone Corporate Cricket League

sprang to life yesterday.

The eventful second day marked a tied match between GrameenPhone and BCB Development Squad at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium Minhazul Abedin showed why he was considered the best batsman in domestic cricket with a terrific half-century to present MM Ispahani Limited a five-wicket win against Gazi Tank.

National discard Moniruzzaman might have missed the chance of becoming the first player to hit a ton in the CCL by two runs but his effort was decisive to give CityCell a 12-run victory over Acme Labora-tories at the Fatullah Stadium.

But there was no match to the drama that unfolded at the 'big bowl' where the BCB Development squad, who were there only for exposure, almost upstaged a star-studded GrameenPhone side before tumbling in the final over.

Needing only four runs from the last six deliveries to topple GrameenPhone's 224 for 8 in the stipulated 50 overs, the youths could only finish on a par with their opponents with two wickets in hand after Mazhar Uddin failed to sneak a single from the last two deliveries off left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak.

A nippy Razzak, one of the two uncapped players picked for the West Indies tour, not only held his nerve in the final over but also removed dangerman Nazmul Hossain. The number nine batsman struck a 21-ball 30 to take the Development squad within three runs of the target, but mistimed an attempted lofted drive in the second ball of the final over only to be caught at mid-off by Anwar Hossain.

Mazhar remained stuck on 45. Earlier, the GrameenPhone total was built around a fine 84 from Anisul Hakim and Tushar Imran's run-a-ball 41.

But the star recruits of the country's largest cellular phone operators Shahrir Hossain (12), Alok Kapali (16) and captain Khaled Mahmud (20) failed to make any impact.

GAZI TANK-ISPAHANI

In a Group A match at Dhanmondi, Minhaz struck a captain's knock of 87 as Ispahani overhauled Gazi Tank's challenging total of 258 with more than three overs to spare.

The 38-year-old right-hander wasted little time to fulfil the pledge of Ispahani boss Salman Ispahani, who set a target of winning one game in the competition, clobbering ten fours and two sixes in his 82-ball knock.

The former national captain launched the assault from where opener Abdul Ahad and one-down Mahbubul Karim had left.

Ahad hammered 52 off 59 balls with eight fours and one six while Mahbubul hit a 71-ball 59 that featured four boundaries and three

sixes.

Earlier, Sheikh Nizamuddin scored a sparkling 94 not out for Gazi Tank. The number-three batsman anchored the innings but missed a deserved century. His 116-ball knock was punctuated by eight fours and a six.

ACME-CITYCELL

While their cellular rivals were struggling at the BNS, CityCell showed no such jitters at the Fatullah Stadium. The last minute entrants baffled national captain Habibul Bashar-led Acme in their first outing.

The upset win by CityCell was fashioned by Moniruzzaman, whose fine 98 was the cornerstone of an impressive total of 257-6.

The right-hander from Mymensingh hit six fours and two sixes in his 141-ball knock before being unfortunately run out. He put up 111 runs for the second wicket with opener Imran Ahmed, who chipped in with 47 off 75 balls.

Country's top batsman Bashar scored a 71-ball 50 and national opener Hannan Sarker made 75 off 86 balls for Acme. But contributions from others were few and far between as Acme could only manage 245 for eight before exhausting their share of 50 overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

GrameenPhone v BCB Development Squad
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium.

GrameenPhone: 224 for 8 in 50 overs (Anisul Hakim 84, Shahrir Hossain 12, Alok Kapali 16, Tushar Imran 42, Khaled Mahmud 20;

Samsur 1-37, Nazmul 1-33, Rajib 1-34, Kamrul 2-58, Bashar 2-28)

BCB Dev Squad: 224 for 8 in 50 overs (Samsur 18, Kamrul 39, Golam Rahman 24, Mazhar 45 n.o, Raziul 18, Rajib 14, Nazmul 30; Monjurul 2-49, Razzak 3-42, Enamul 2-28)

Result: Match tied.

MM Ispahani v Gazi Tank

Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium

Gazi Tank: 258-5 in 50 overs (Nizamuddin 94 not out, Shafiu 30, Shanjay 28, Wasel 16, Nishan 31, Azad 30 not out, extras 27, Yasin 3-42, Saiful 1-64)

MM Ispahani: 260-5 in 46.5 overs (Minhazul 87, Mahbubul 59, Ahad 52, Arif 20, Mokhtar 17 not out, Masumuddin 16, extras 9, Murad 2-43, Morshed 1-13), Monirul 1-61)

Result: MM Ispahani won by 5 wickets.

CityCell v Acme Lab

Venue: Fatullah Stadium

CityCell: 257-6 in 50 overs (Moniruzzaman 98, Imran 47, Rajin 28, Rosel 27, Tapas 20, extras 27, Debabrata 2-48, Bikash 2-52, Ahsanullah 1-27)

Acme Lab: Hannan 57, Bashar 50, Mortuza 29 not out, Parvez 23, Nahidul 26, Nasiruddin 20, extras 31, Tapas 2-46, Alamgir 2-61, Sohail Rana 2-31, Rajin 1-34

Result: CityCell won by 12 runs.



PHOTO: STAR

GrameenPhone's Anisul, who scored a magnificent 84, lofts the ball over covers during their GP Corporate Cricket League encounter against BCB Development Squad at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

25th Nat'l jr chess Parag on track

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champion Mehdi Hasan Parag stayed on course to retain his junior chess title when he maintained sole lead in the 25th National junior chess championships with maximum seven points yesterday.

Parag, who now has a one-point lead over Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar and Obaidul Islam Shahin, defeated Nahid Parvez in the seventh round at Chess Federation auditorium yesterday.

Sagar beat Mohammed Ali and Shahin defeated Sabber in their seventh round ties.

Najir Salehin, Shamima Akhter Liza and Masum Hossain, who also won yesterday, were in joint third with 5.5 points.

In other matches, Evana beat Kahar, Saif beat Dalim, Shirin Rony, Awlad beat Moseh and Ashraf beat Uzzal.

U-21 Asia Cup hockey Malaysia crush Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh were handed a 3-0 defeat by Malaysia in their second match of the Under-21 Junior Asia Cup hockey championships yesterday in Karachi.

Bangladesh, who drew 2-2 with China in their opener on Tuesday, will take on Sri Lanka tomorrow and India on the next day.

Shoaib in Mumbai

PTI, Mumbai

Pakistan's tearaway bowler Shoaib Akhtar arrived here on Monday for the shooting of a commercial along with Indian batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar, Australian paceman Jason Gillespie and film star Shahrukh Khan.

"I am here to shoot for an ad for motorcycle manufacturer TVS Victor with Sachin and Gillespie," he told NDTV.

"I love riding motorbikes. I'm going to ride a little here. It's fun," Akhtar said.



GP Corporate Cricket League
Araf Apparels vs BEXIMCO
Venue: Bangabandhu Nat'l Stadium
Partex vs Akteel
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium

NFL in mid-June BFF swinging into action



SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has decided to start the 4th National Football League (NFL) in the third week of June.

BFF's executive committee in a meeting yesterday evening made the decision.

There have been unconfirmed reports that NFL's sponsors Nitol-Tata have lost their interest in staging the competition but BFF's general secretary Anwarul Haque Helal dismissed those fears and confirmed that the league will be sponsored by Nitol-Tata.

"We still have a contract with them and there is no reason for them to abandon us mid-way through the agreement," Helal said after the meeting.

"The NFL committee will decide on how the teams can be accommodated in the competition," added Helal.

If the BFF sticks to its previous

policy of involving two teams from Dhaka -- the Premier Division League and the Federation Cup champions, one of the country's popular-most sides Abahani have to sit out the prestigious meet as the clubs finished last season without a trophy to show for.

Helal also added that a three-member probe body headed by BFF vice-president Abdur Rahim has been formed to investigate the reasons behind Bangladesh's failure in the 9th SAF Games football competition in Islamabad last month. BFF vice-president Sirajul Islam Bachchu and assistant general secretary Manzoor Hossain Malu are the other members.

Bangladesh, who won the football gold medal at the 8th Kathmandu SAF Games in 1999, failed to reach the last four in Islamabad.

The BFF executive committee also approved a Tk 11.76 lakh budget for the Sher-e-Bangla National Football Championships, which kicks off later this month.

Helal informed that the BFF has

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Orchard now Aussie ump

CRICINFO, undated

Dave Orchard is among six umpires named by Cricket Australia in their national panel for the 2004-05 season. The 55-year-old Orchard represented South Africa in the ICC's elite panel and has officiated in 44 Tests -- including two matches in the recently concluded series between Sri Lanka and Australia -- and 107 one-day internationals.

However, he has been an Australian resident for the past seven years and is expected to be granted Australian citizenship soon. His contract with the ICC ended earlier this year.

The appointment makes Orchard eligible to officiate in Pura Cup, ING Cup, and national second XI competitions, and also in some international fixtures like Australia A games and tour matches.

A left-handed batsman and a right-arm medium-fast bowler, Orchard scored 1634 runs and took 47 wickets in a first-class career which lasted 11 years, before he took to umpiring. Over the years, he gained a reputation for being among the less conservative umpires, often giving batsmen out lbw when they stretched forward to spinners without offering a stroke.

Murali can't bowl doosra



AFP, London

Muttiah Muralitharan's controversial 'doosra' delivery could lead to the Sri Lanka spinner being banned for up to 12 months if he continues to bowl the ball.

Muralitharan recently underwent tests at the University of Western Australia after being reported by match referee Chris Broad during last month's Test series against Australia.

Although their report has yet to be made public, Bruce Elliott, who led the biomechanics team which tested Muralitharan's bowling action in Perth, has called on the International Cricket Council (ICC) to allow spinners to

extend their arm by ten degrees instead of the current limit of five, which he said would make Muralitharan's doosra 'legal'.

However, the ICC said here Tuesday "the existing regulations governing the degree to which a spin bowler can straighten his arm or 'level of tolerance' (five degrees) remain in place and will be enforced."

The ICC added: "Should any bowler be reported for a second time within 12 months of the first report, the ICC will convene a hearing of its own Bowling Review Group which has the power to impose a ban of up to 12 months should it determine that the bowlers action is illegal."

Muralitharan, 32, has taken 513 Test wickets and is just six short of breaking retired West Indies pace-

man Courtney Walsh's world record of 519 -- a mark he could reach during Sri Lanka's forthcoming series which would see him overtake Australian spin rival Shane Warne (517) in the process.

ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed said: "The current levels of tolerance reflect the reality that most bowlers straighten their arm to some degree when bowling."

"As recently as last September at its meeting of Board Chief Executives in India, the ICC reviewed these levels and all countries were in agreement that the current standards should remain in place.

"There has been some media speculation that because the ICC will be conducting further research into the actions of spinners, the current levels of tolerance should

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PHOTO: AFP

A goal mouth action during the Fifth Under-21 Asia Cup hockey tournament fixture between Bangladesh and Malaysia in Karachi yesterday. Bangladesh lost the match 3-0.

McGrath back for Australia



REUTERS, Sydney

Fast-medium bowler Glenn McGrath has been recalled to Australia's Test and one-day team for their tour of Zimbabwe that begins next month.

Australia's selectors also named all-rounder Cameron White in the Test squad for the first time after leg-spinner Stuart MacGill made himself unavailable on moral grounds.

McGrath has not played for Australia in almost a year because of an ankle injury but has proved his fitness.

"Glenn's 100 per cent fit and ready to go so it's sensible that he returns to the squad given his prior status as the premier fast bowler in the world," chairman of selectors Trevor Hohns said in a statement.

"With the short nature of the tour, it's a good opportunity for Glenn to ease his way back into competitive cricket and it gives us an opportunity to assess how well he is going in a view to the next 12 months and what lies ahead for the Australian cricket team."

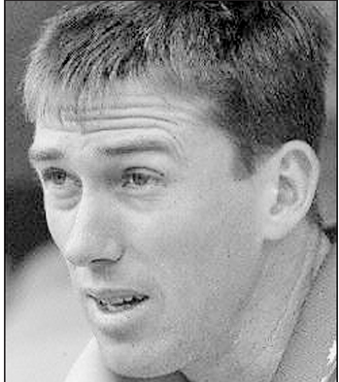
MacGill's decision not to tour prompted the selectors to name White as the back-up to Shane Warne.

"We were keen to take two spinners to Zimbabwe and given

Stuart's unavailability for the tour, we now have an opportunity to look at one of our younger spinners," Hohns said.

"His form in the (domestic competition) with both bat and ball was very good and we're looking forward to seeing him take the next step on the international stage."

All-rounder Andrew Symonds



GLENN MCGRATH

was dropped from the Test side just weeks after he made his debut in Sri Lanka but kept his place in the one-day squad.

"Andrew's selection in the Test squad for Sri Lanka was exclusively based on the conditions in that country, and with the squad for

SEE PAGE 14 COL 5

England's Zim tour likely

REUTERS, London

England appear likely to tour Zimbabwe in October despite reservations about the host country's government after a meeting at Lord's on Tuesday with Zimbabwe Cricket Union (ZCU) chairman Peter Chingoka.

"It's fairly certain that England will have to honour the commitment so long as it's safe and secure," England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chairman David Morgan told the BBC.

Chingoka, who attended the brief meeting with ZCU member Ozias Byute, expressed optimism that the tour would take place.

"We had the opportunity to state our case very clearly to the ECB," Chingoka told reporters. "We're hoping in a couple of weeks' time they'll come up with a decision that's correct and that's a decision to tour as scheduled in October and November."

Morgan's statement on Tuesday follows an uncompromising stance by the International Cricket Council (ICC), which has threatened international suspension and a 2-million-dollar fine for teams who refuse to tour unless there are either legitimate safety or security concerns or they are asked not to go by their governments.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair's official spokesman said last month the government had serious concerns about President Robert Mugabe's administration but made it clear that a final decision on whether to tour lay with the British government.

Long hospitalisation looms for Maradona



AFP, Buenos Aires

Argentine football idol Diego Maradona was recovering in hospital Tuesday, two days after suffering acute heart failure, but doctors said he faces a long hospitalisation.

"Maradona is making acceptable progress," a hospital statement said.

Alfredo Cahe, his longtime personal doctor, said Maradona would have to remain hospitalised for a "long time."

"He is doing a little better than yesterday," Cahe said. "We are moving step by step, but it is still very early. He is in a delicate state."

"I noticed a clear improvement and we feel a little more at ease," the doctor said earlier.

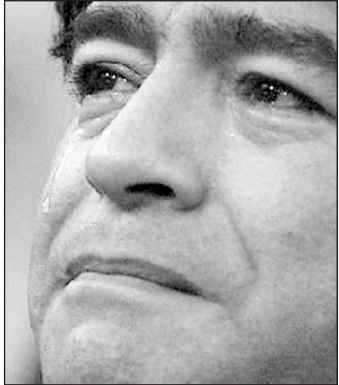
The 43-year-old was breathing on an artificial respirator. Reports here said tests had revealed traces of cocaine in his blood, indicating the superstar may have relapsed after recovering from a cocaine addiction he suffered from 1984-1991, with Italian side Napoli.

"I do not know anything about that," said Cahe.

The famed football star's career, a showcase of dazzling dribbling skills and spectacular goals, was also mired by drug use allegations.

He was admitted to a private clinic late Sunday with heart trouble.

Cahe, who has also cared for former Argentine president Carlos



DIEGO MARADONA

Menem, said Maradona's heart condition had been complicated by an infection in both lungs but he felt confident "he will respond positively to treatment with antibiotics."

Maradona suffered a near fatal heart attack in Uruguay four years

ago that was brought on by his years of cocaine use.

But the doctor who treated him then, Frank Torres, told the DyN agency this hospitalization was more serious because he did not need a respirator to help him breathe in 2000.

Cahe said Maradona remained on a respirator as "a precaution and part of his treatment."

Sports Minister Roberta Perfumo said outside the hospital that Maradona's father, also named Diego, had told her the respirator was turned down low and would be removed on Wednesday if his health continued to improve.

Maradona began his career in 1975 and retired in 1997 after playing for home team Boca Juniors, Italy's Napoli and Spain's Barcelona.

In between, he scored 34 goals in 91 games for Argentina, including two mesmerising scores that led to a 2-1 victory over England in the 1986 World Cup quarterfinals.

Maradona scored with his hand, scoring the famous "hand of God" goal that fooled the referee, and later in the game he took the ball at

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