



Did U Know?

Portugal's defeat means the Netherlands, in 1988, remain the only nation to win the European Championship title after losing their opening match.



Shane Warne

(Australian master spinner)

"Every time there's been a script written, I've just about done it. I suppose I'm allowed one that I don't get every now and then."

After the world record eluded him against Sri Lanka at Cairns.



TEN Sports

Copa America
Costa Rica vs Chile
Repeat at 4:00 pm
Brazil vs Paraguay
Repeat at 9:30 pm

ESPN

Euro 2004
Highlights
Repeat at 7:00 am

STAR Sports

Gillette World Sports Special
Int'l Sports News
Repeat at 12:30 pm
Sportsline
Live at 10:30 pm



Tick the correct answers, post to

The Daily Star

Win attractive prizes

Competition closes at 8 pm
July 23, 2004 and draw shortly afterwards

1. How many Test matches will India play against Bangladesh in December?

Three Two Four

2. Who is Pakistan's new cricket coach?

Miandad Woolmer Marsh

3. Who won the Rating chess title?

Rajib Rakib Reefat

4. Who is the youngest scorer at UEFA Euro 2004?

Rooney Vanlanthen Ronaldo

5. Who scored the first goal at Euro 2004?

Zidane Karagounis Figo

Name

Class

School Address

Phone: (If any)

MSC test for U-17s today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Under-17 football team will take on Dhaka giants Mohammedan Sporting Club in a practice match today at the Shaheed Mustafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

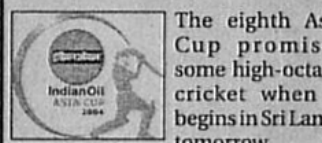
Under coach Shahidur Rahman Shantoo, the youngsters are preparing for the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Under-17 Championship to be held in Japan next September.

For Mohammedan, it will be

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Preparations over, it's showtime

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo



The eighth Asia Cup promises some high-octane cricket when it begins in Sri Lanka tomorrow.

While both India and Pakistan will renew their rivalry in the emerald island after their historic series in March-April, the hosts get little time to regroup after an energy-sapping series Down Under.

For Bangladesh the regional cricket carnival brings an opportunity to show that they are no push-overs anymore.

To acclimatise with the conditions, the Tigers landed in Colombo well before the tournament starts and their victories in both practice matches and coach Dav Whatmore's knowledge of Sri Lanka only boosted their confidence.

Captain Habibul Bashar while justifying the two-week condition-

ing camp said, "It's always nice to start a tournament on the back of two wins. We were fortunate to play those games after arriving in Colombo on July 1. We also had long training sessions to gear up for the event," Bashar told the official press conference at the crowded Crystal Room of Hotel Taj Samudra yesterday.

Whatmore, the Australian who grew up in Sri Lanka and coached them to 1996 World Cup triumph, however said that the Sri Lankan condition was nothing alien to the other participating nations like Pakistan and India.

"The boys of the Asian region have played lot of cricket in Sri Lanka and they have a very good idea of the nature of pitches and other things. So I am not the only coach to have that sort of advantage and I am not sure we can go that length," said Whatmore, who guided the Tigers into a competitive unit since taking over a year ago.

However, Indian skipper Sourav Ganguly did not speak at the briefing. Ganguly did appear for the conference but hurried off due to a delayed start. Instead coach John Wright spoke.

Also missing was the Sri Lankan team, which is due to return early this morning from Australia.

"As I anticipate it, the tournament would be very competitive and tough. The challenge is to get going early. We respect all the oppositions here," said Wright, whose boys feature against United Arab Emirates (UAE) at Dambulla on the opening day.

Bangladesh will take on Hong Kong in the other group opener at the Sinhalese Sports Club Ground in Colombo.

Bob Woolmer, on his first assignment as Pakistan coach, have had very little time to know his boys but happily announced that speedster Shoaib Akhtar was ready to roar.

"I am looking forward to good,

competitive cricket for the next two weeks. And I would like to add that my team will show respect to all the teams," said the former South African coach.

When asked whether there was any sort of rift inside the Pakistan team, Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq came straight with his answer.

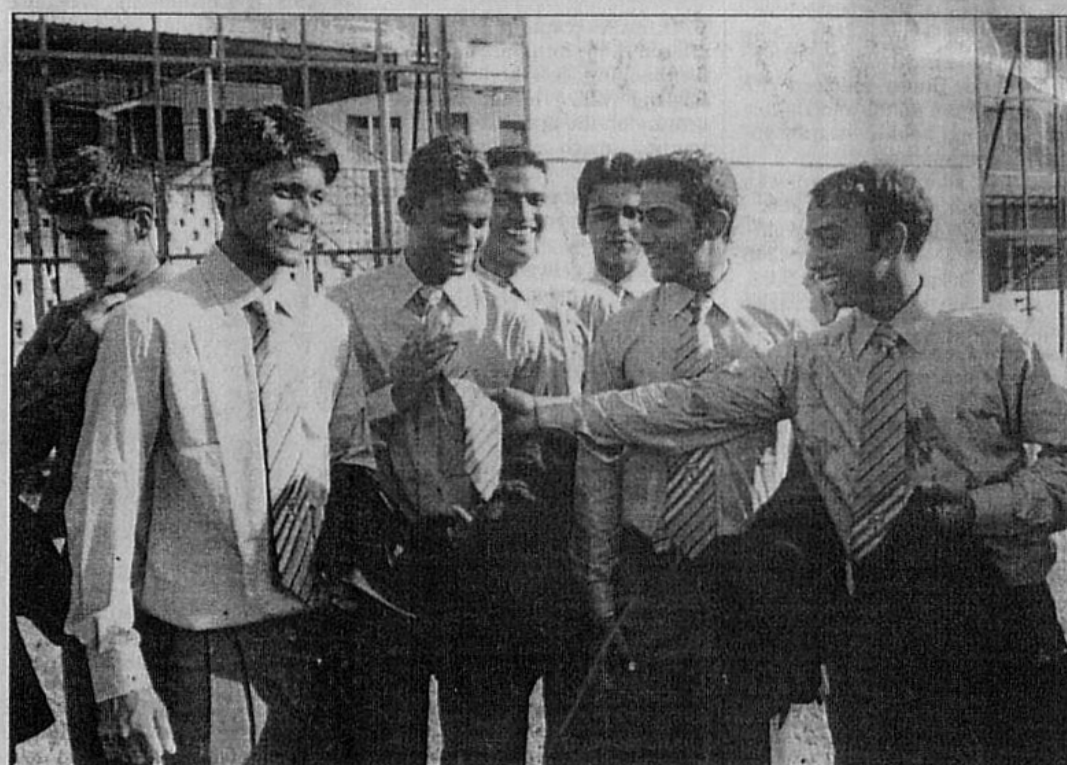
"There was nothing wrong. We are confident to defend the championship and we are here to do that. We have had 15 hard day's training before coming here," Inzamam said.

Meanwhile, CEO of ACC Syed Ashraf Haque informed that the tournament offers US dollars 1,80,000 as prize money, which is 1,40,000 up from the last edition held in Dhaka four years back.

The former Bangladesh Cricket Board general secretary informed that the second round matches will continue on reserve days instead of a replay.

Ashraf Haque was happy at the

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YOUR TIE LOOKS BETTER THAN MINE! Bangladesh U-19 side's Aftab Ahmed (R) jokes with captain Enamul Haque while Nafees Iqbal (2nd from R) looks on after an official photo session at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. To the captain's right is tear-away Shahadat Hossain.

PHOTO: STAR

BEFORE THE KICK

Manik: Making a mark

SPORTS REPORTER



NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

When the going gets tough Shafigul Islam Manik gets going. The Muktiyoddha Sangsad coach has already earned the unique distinction of winning all three

major domestic football titles and now the 42-year-old takes the challenge of another battle in his stride when the fourth Nitol-Tata National League begins at Mymensingh on July 18.

Manik will be standing for the eighth successive year at the helm when the Reds launch their title defence in the 12-team finals of country's major football competition.

Although coaches in domestic football have so far been regarded as a norm rather than a necessity, Manik redefined the meaning by winning the Premier League, Federation Cup and the National League for Muktiyoddha. His achievement was all the more significant because it showed people that success can be earned without being a part of two proven giants Mohammedan and Abahani.

Manik however faces a more demanding task this time after the emergence of Brothers Union, who broke the bank to build a virtual national team.

"The departure of Rajani and Sujon certainly rocked my defence and it ultimately denied us a hat-trick of titles last year," said Manik in an interview with The Daily Star Sport.

Manik led Muktiyoddha to National League and Federation Cup glory before his side tumbled in the Premier League.

"The defence played a vital role in our National League and Federation Cup victories but unfortunately we failed to field the same line-up in the Premier League," Manik said adding that his two central defenders Rajani and Sujon were the best in the business.

But in the changed circumstance Manik wants to draw inspiration from the success of Greece in Euro 2004.

"I think good strategy is a major factor in modern day football and Greece is the best example for us. They did not have a star name but played like a disciplined unit and won the second best title in world football."

"This Muktiyoddha team may not be the best side on papers. But this is also an ideal situation for a coach to prove his worth and I'm excited to take the challenge," said the former national midfielder.

Although Manik has lost his two trusted rearguards he possesses country's number one goalkeeper in Aminul. He also owns a creative midfield trio in Motiur Munna, Bidyut and Tushar. Young Saiful also has the ability to come out of the

bench and create havoc with his tireless running and natural skills.

Manik has two potentially explosive attackers in Moni and Kanchan. But his problem lies somewhere else.

Star right-back Hasan Al Mamun, who is now in the United States, will miss the first leg at Mymensingh.

Besides, Manik feel that the time for preparation all the teams got for a major competition was too little for comfort.

"The organisers claimed it is the main tournament in the country but it is also unfair for them to bring players into action only a week after the completion of another major league in Chittagong," said a bitter Manik.

He also put emphasis on good grounds for better football.

"A good ground is essential for quality football but unfortunately our players hardly get a chance to play on a proper field," said Manik.

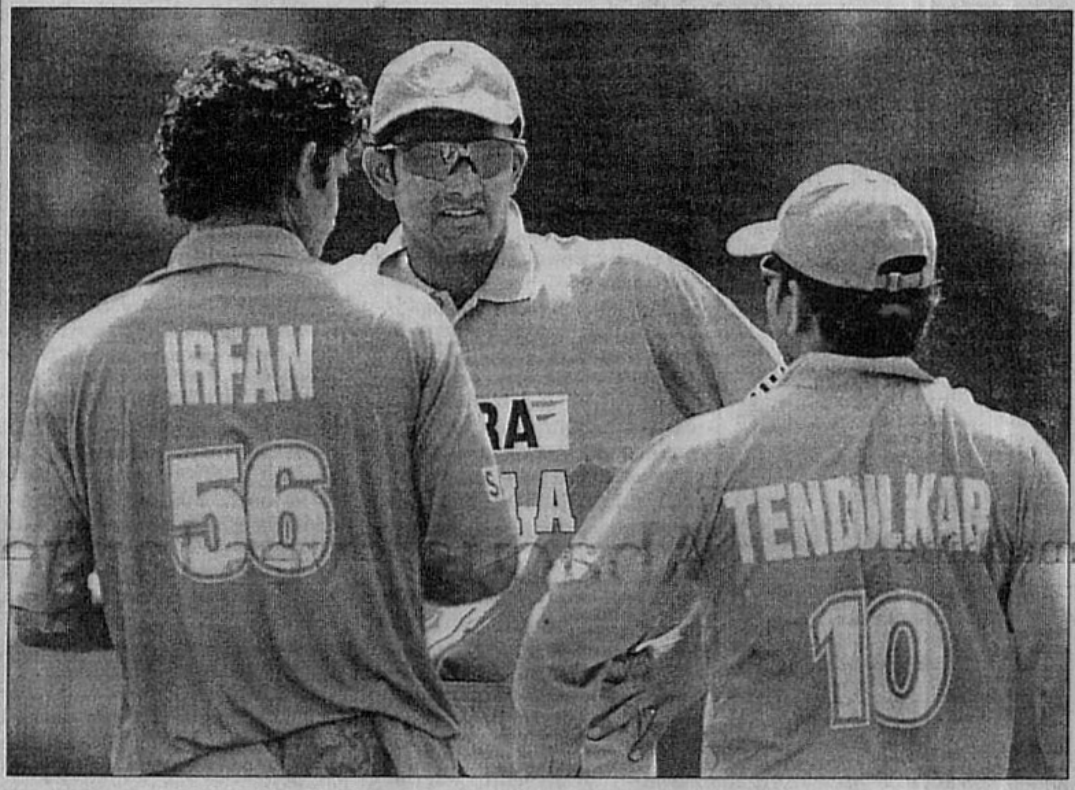
The shrewd tactician said that he was expecting the biggest challenge from Brothers Union and dark horses Sheikh Russel Kria Chakra in the competition.

"Mohammedan and Abahani might get the biggest crowd behind them but it won't be a major factor on the battlefield. I think Brothers are real contenders after their success in the Premier League. I also rate Sheikh Russel as tough opponents especially after their fantastic run in the Premier League," he said.

Muktiyoddha have been placed in Group A along with Abahani, Chittagong Mohammedan, Najirpara KC of Chandpur, Panchagarh Brothers Union, Kararchar KC of Narsingdi.

SQUAD

Aminul, Titoo and Zia (goalkeeper), Hasan Al Mamun, Papel, Lajuk, Deen Mohammad, Balal, Prodig and Ghana (defence), Madur Munna, Bidyut, Saiful, Kabir, Tushar and Masud (midfield), Moni, Kanchan, Enamul, Kaboo and Tipu (forward).



India cricketers (L-R) Irfan Pathan, Anil Kumble and Sachin Tendulkar discuss strategy during a practice match against Sri Lanka Cricket Academy XI in Colombo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Talha's tour in doubt

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-19 team's fast-medium bowler Talha Jubair will not be leaving for England today with the squad on their first ever official tour as he is yet to recover from a back injury suffered during the ICC Under-19 World Cup earlier this year.

The junior Tigers will play three under-19 Tests and as many one-day matches against their English counterparts during the seven-week tour but the 19-year-old pacer with Test experience might join the team for the limited over games only provided he regains his fitness.

"Talha is not fully fit. He could be arriving in England after the longer version matches to replace another right-arm pacer Ishraq Sonnet but everything will depend on his condition," said coach Richard McInnes.

The youth team coach also said that the nippy quick might be sent to Australia for better treatment.

India ease to warmup win

BBC ONLINE, undated

India warmed up for the Asia Cup with a comfortable seven-wicket win against Sri Lanka Cricket Academy XI on Wednesday.

The academy team was skittled for 187 runs in the 44th over after batting first in Colombo.

India overtook the mark in the 31st over with openers Sachin Tendulkar and Virender Sehwag hitting half-centuries before retiring.

Captain Sourav Ganguly made an unbeaten 37 with Yuvraj Singh scoring 39 as India posted 190-3.

The only setback for the Indians was the first ball dismissal of vice-captain Rahul Dravid.

Earlier, 19-year-old Sahan Wijeratne hit two sixes and two fours in his 46 for the local team.

Kanchana Gunawardena gave him able support with a patient 28 as the pair put on 52 runs for the fourth wicket.

Lakshmiipathy Balaji, Harbhajan Singh, Yuvraj and Tendulkar each took two wickets for India.

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Captivated by foreigners

AFP, Colombo



If any proof is needed that cricket officials in Asia have lost faith in home-grown coaches, look no

further than the six-nation Asia Cup starting here on Friday.

India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, the four Test-playing nations taking part in the continent's premier limited-overs tournament, are all coached by men from outside the region.

And the two qualifiers, Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates, have enlisted the services of two former Indian internationals, Robin Singh and Abid Ali.

Defending champions Pakistan are coached by an Englishman Bob Woolmer, India by John Wright of New Zealand, while two Australians look after Sri Lanka (John Dyson)

and Bangladesh (Dav Whatmore).

Woolmer, who took over Pakistan after Javed Miandad was sacked in the wake of the defeats against arch-rivals India in March-April, is on his first assignment with his new wards after a successful stint with South Africa.

Others have tasted a reasonable amount of success to suggest that taking foreign help is not such a bad idea after all.

Ever since Wright arrived in 2000, India have shown rapid improvement, even beating world champions Australia in a home Test series and reaching the World Cup final in South Africa in March last year.

Under Wright, India have won 16 of their 41 Tests and 59 of 109 one-day internationals.

Dyson, a former Australian opening batsman, came to Sri Lanka after Whatmore quit the former World Cup champions last year to join Bangladesh.

The new coach has led Sri Lanka to 13 wins from 23 one-dayers, but just three wins in 14 Tests. When Australia came calling earlier this year, Dyson saw his countrymen thrash Sri Lanka in all three Test matches.

Whatmore, who masterminded Sri Lanka's World Cup triumph in 1996, has taken up the challenge of improving standards in Bangladesh, who have yet to win a Test match and have been successful in only four of 90 one-dayers they have played.

But the Whatmore magic is beginning to show. Bangladesh look a more competitive side and even held the West Indies to a draw in a Test match in June.

Abid Ali, one of India's leading all-rounders, took over the UAE side in 2001 and won the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Trophy for associate nations three times.

Robin Singh, a gutsy all-rounder

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Argentina fix date with hosts



REUTERS, Piura

Argentina set up a Copa America quarterfinal against hosts Peru after their 4-2 win over neighbours Uruguay on Tuesday, while Mexico sent unhappy Ecuador packing.

Striker Luciano Figueroa's first two goals for his country steered Argentina clear of a possible quarterfinal with Brazil.

Mexico kicked off the group B double bill with a 2-1 win over Ecuador, who finished bottom of the group with three straight defeats.

The Mexicans finished top with seven points and stay in Piura to face the runners-up in group C on Sunday, which could be Paraguay or Chile.

ARGENTINA 4; URUGUAY 2

Second-placed Argentina travel to Chiclayo for Saturday's showdown with the hosts and Uruguay qualify as one of the best third-placed teams.

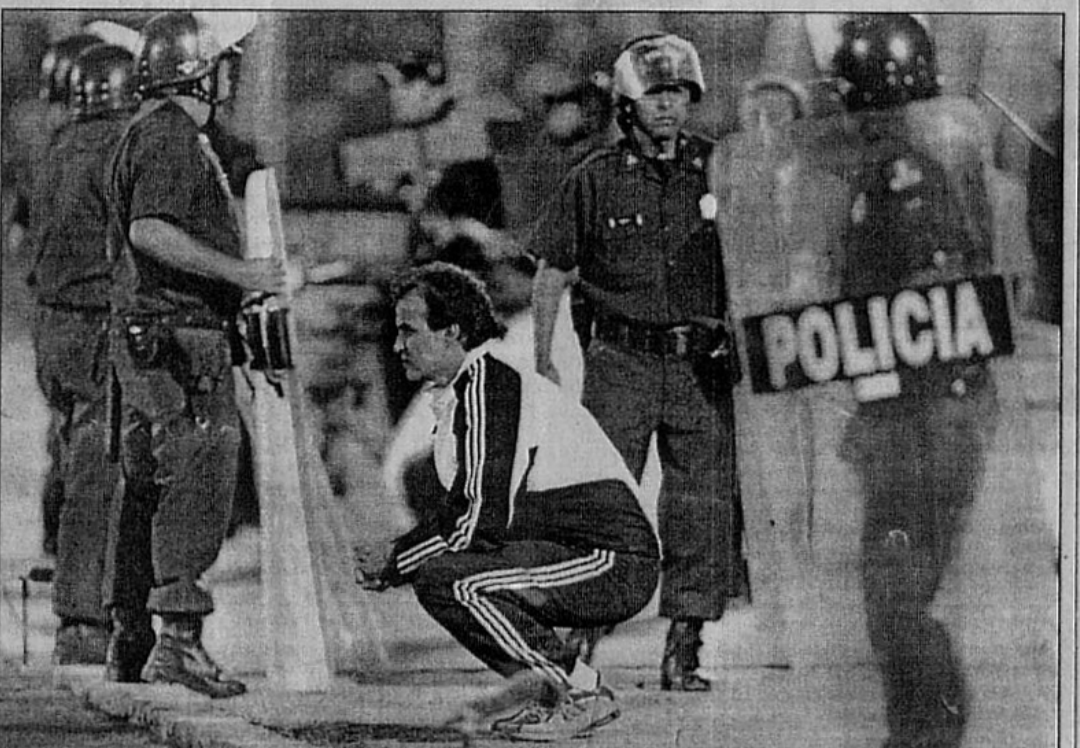
The Uruguayans appear set to finish as the best of the third-placed teams which will earn them a trip to Tacna at the southern extreme of the country, nearly 2,000 kilometres away, where their most likely opponents will be Brazil.

Argentina, beaten 1-0 by Mexico on Saturday, and Uruguay were both qualified before kicking off their match but still served up a typically full-blooded River Plate derby.

"This game was similar to the one against Mexico," said Argentina coach Marcelo Bielsa. "The difference is that we scored in this one and we didn't against Mexico."

Uruguay coach Jorge Fossati, whose team had conceded eight goals in losing two World Cup quali-

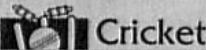
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FEELING SAFE! Argentina's coach Marcelo Bielsa watches his team in action against Uruguay surrounded by security men at the Miguel Grau Stadium in Piura on July 13.

PHOTO: AFP

WC finale in Barbados



AFP, Montego Bay

Barbados will host cricket's 2007 World Cup final at the Kensington Oval, organisers announced.

Chris Dehring, managing direc-

tor of ICC World Cup West Indies 2007 Inc., opened the envelope at the Ritz-Carlton resort and announced the news.

"Certainly one of the most impressive countries on our host venue verification tour and the country that we are asking to bring it all home and to leave that lasting footprint on the ICC World Cup 2007 -- Barbados," Dehring said on Tuesday.

The Barbadian delegation, led by Chris de Caires, chairman of World Cup Barbados Inc., were invited on stage to accept the crystal goblet presented to all eight host venues during the presentation of the venues.

In Bridgetown, Barbados' prime minister Owen Arthur and cricket legend Sir Garfield Sobers, as well as other former Barbados and West Indies cricket stars, along with government and cricket officials watched the announcement -- broadcast live on radio and television around the Caribbean -- on giant television screens.

"I charge the whole country to mobilise itself over the next three years to get Barbados ready to make 2007 a date with destiny and a date that will live on as a glorious chapter in the history of this island," remarked prime minister Arthur in a brief television address to the nation following the announcement.

"I believe Barbadians are soaring on new wings of pride, but they are also humbled by the awesome responsibility that now falls to us to showcase the Caribbean in a new and unique way as a world-class civilisation."

In all, Barbados will stage seven matches. The hosts of the final will also stage six matches in the quarterfinals, also known as the Super Eight League, which consists of three of the six most competitive matches at this stage of the competition.

The semifinals have been allocated to Jamaica, where the headquarters of the ICC World Cup WI 2007 Inc. is located, and St. Lucia, whose Darren Sammy recently became the first cricketer from the

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