



KEEP SMILING, YOU'LL BE BACK SOON! Newly appointed stand-in captain Rajin Saleh (R) jokes with injured Bangladesh skipper Habibul Bashar prior to the Tigers' departure for England yesterday.

## U-19s lose 2nd ODI

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh U-19 cricketers lost the second one-day international against England U-19s by 8 wickets at Hove in Sussex yesterday.

In reply to the visitors' moderate 189, England cruised to 191 for 2 in 39.4 overs with Joe Denly top-scoring with 62 and James Hildreth hitting a blazing 53.

The first match was abandoned due to rain. The third and final match will be played today at Hove.

Earlier, opener Shamsur Rahman's 57 salvaged Bangladesh to 189 before being booked in the penultimate ball of their innings.

After skipper Shahriar Nafees elected to bat, Rahman lost national called-up Nafees Iqbal and Aftab Ahmed on the same score of 31. Rahman, who hit seven fours and one six in his 122-ball lone battle, got some assistance from the skipper (24 of 34 balls) during a 42-run stand for the third wicket.

Rahman, who almost carried his bat but was the last man out when he was caught by Ravinder Bopara off Thomas Smith, who mopped up

SEE PAGE 14 COL 5

## What to WATCH

Nitol-Tata National Football League

Abahani v Sheikh Russel

Live at 4 pm

Athens Games

Highlights

At 8.30 pm

## ESPN

Sportscentre

Sports News

Live at 8.30 pm

English Premier League

Preview show

Taped at 9 pm

Here We Go

Football show

Same day delay at 10.30 pm

First Edition

Football programme

Taped at 11 pm

UEFA Super Cup

FC Porto v Valencia

Live at 12.30 am (Saturday)

## STAR Sports

Sportsline

Sports News

Live at 8 pm

Manchester United Premier Cup

Football programme

Repeat at 11.30 pm

## Anxious Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER



Security concerns are on the back of Abahani players' minds when they face Premier Division runners-up against Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra in today's match of the Nitoltata National Football League.

The opening match of the six-team final phase, which kicks off at 4 pm at the Sher-e-Bangla Mirpur National Stadium, will be telecast live by Bangladesh Television.

"My players feel very nervous after Saturday's grenade attack on an Awami League meeting," said Abahani man-

ager Monem Munna yesterday. "They don't know whether the atmosphere at the ground will allow them to play their natural game," the former national captain added.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) confirmed that it has taken tight security measures for the final phase matches. Besides the usual police presence, members of Bangladesh Rifles will be deployed.

Abahani, the team in form, not only stormed into the super six as the first team but also topped the table with four bonus points. Fifth-placed Russel however start the Dhaka leg with just one bonus point and cannot afford any slip-ups in their three matches.

This time Abahani will also be

hoping to set the record straight with a maiden victory against the upstarts Russel.

And Russel's veteran coach Wajed Gazi knows too well that the Sky Blues will be coming at them all guns blazing. But he is not at all concerned and rather relishes the chance to inflict more misery on the popular Dharmundi outfit.

"We have beaten them here once before and we're capable of doing it again," the coach said.

Gazi only hoped that pitch at the Sher-Bangla National Stadium would suit his players especially the foreigners.

SEE PAGE 14 COL 6

## Hail Halkia

REUTERS, Athens



Greek sensation Fani Halkia blitzed to gold in the Olympic women's 400 metres hurdles on Wednesday to confirm her meteoric rise in the world elite.

Halkia, a no-hoper last year, raced home in 52.82 seconds to trash Romania's Ionela Tirlea-Manolache (53.38) and Ukraine's Tetiana Tereshchuk-Antipova (53.44).

World champion Jana Pittman of Australia, running after a brave battle against injury, faded to fifth while world record holder Yuliya Pechenkina of Russia trailed in last after a wretched run.

The winner, who came from nowhere to run the sixth fastest time in history during the semifinals, knelt on the ground to kiss the track after her triumph as the crowd bayed their support.

"I felt I would win when I came into the stadium," Halkia said, wearing a blue and white national flag around her shoulders.

"The Greek soul is enough by itself. We don't need anything else. We were born winners."

It was the biggest margin of victory in the event for the past five Games.

"She did an awesome job," Pittman said.

"It's a beautiful story for her to win in front of her home crowd."

Halkia's time in the final was the eighth equal fastest of all time. Only four women have ever run faster.

SEE PAGE 14 COL 7

## GREEK GODDESS!

Fani Halkia of Greece on the winners' podium during the medal ceremony for the women's 400m hurdles finals on August 25.

## Saleh looking forward

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh cricket team left for London yesterday morning to take part in next month's ICC Champions Trophy.

The Tigers, under stand-in captain Rajin Saleh left two weeks ahead of the competition as they will play four warm-up matches in Ireland and Scotland as part of their preparation leading up to the tournament that begins on September 10.

Only left-handed batsman Faisal Hossain, who replaced injured captain Habibul Bashar, could not accompany the team because of some last-minute complications regarding his papers. Faisal is expected to leave Dhaka on August 28.

Bashar was there at the Zia International Airport to wish his mates luck.

Two members of the side Nafees Iqbal and Aftab Ahmed, who are now touring England with the Under-19 team, will join the squad on August 28 in Ireland.

The Tigers had an hour-long team meeting at the airport before their departure. Coming out of it Saleh told reporters that he was not feeling any extra pressure on becoming the captain again.

"I am not worried because the senior players in the side will guide me. I also hope that we will be able to bury the memories of the Asia Cup and play the way we did in the Caribbean.

"If we can repeat the same form, I believe we can even win against the West Indies who are also in our group," said the 21-year-old.

The Tigers take on Ireland on

SEE PAGE 14 COL 4

## Ibrahim in town

SPORTS REPORTER

New Bangladesh hockey coach Qamar Ibrahim arrived in the capital yesterday. The former Pakistani international immediately went to BKSP at Savar to take charge of the national hockey team which has been training under local experts.

Bangladesh are preparing for an invitation international tournament to be held in Dhaka in September.

Pakistani fitness trainer Ershad Haider also arrived with Ibrahim.



IS THERE ANYTHING HEAVIER? Iranian Hossein Rezazadeh after becoming the world's strongest man at the Olympic Games in Athens on August 25.

## Hercules is Iranian!

REUTERS, Athens



There may be no such thing as perfection but it takes a brave man to tell Hoss-ein Rezazadeh, the world's strongest man, that he is doing it all wrong.

Shane Hamman was willing to try, though.

"His technique could definitely be better," the American said after the 26-year-old "Iranian Hercules" had destroyed Hamman and the rest of the field in the Olympic super-heavyweight weightlifting division on Wednesday.

"He bends his arms and you are supposed to keep them straight. But he has short arms and that helps him," said Hamman, who finished seventh in the over 105 kg class, after Rezazadeh broke his own world record in the clean and jerk.

The American conceded: "He is intimidating with the ease with which he lifts those weights."

"His gold gained Iran respect."

President Mohammad Khatami told Rezazadeh in a message: "Your ranking first was not only a sporting victory but a proper response to our nation's expectations. I congratulate

"He is the strongest man I have ever seen."

Rezazadeh came from nowhere four years ago to win the crown and his title was never in serious threat in Athens.

He thrilled the crowd, which included dozens of Iranians assuring him of "May God help you".

Before each lift, Rezazadeh uttered a traditional Shi'ite Muslim prayer and finished by setting a world record lift in the clean and jerk of 263.5 kg for a total of 472.5 kg.

Back home in Iran, his new victory set off wild rejoicing.

"I was so proud because this year we sent Hercules to Athens," said Shirin, 35, a furniture designer in Tehran.

"He won because he believes in God," the Islamic Republic's Abrar-e Varzeshi newspaper said.

"Iran's national anthem was played in Athens, thanks to our champion," said the state-run Iran newspaper.

"His gold gained Iran respect."

President Mohammad Khatami

referred to Rezazadeh in a message: "Your ranking first was not only a sporting victory but a proper response to our nation's expectations. I congratulate

you, therefore, for delighting the hearts of the Iranian nation."

State television on Wednesday showed hundreds of people in Rezazadeh's home city of Ardebil cheering and letting off fireworks to celebrate the local hero's triumph.

"We thank you for delighting tens of millions of Iranians," Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a message.

Rezazadeh, a devout Muslim who whispers a prayer before each lift, came from nowhere four years ago to win the crown and his title was never in serious threat in Athens.

His victory confirmed his status as the country's only real sporting superstar. His stocky form gazes down from Tehran billboards advertising a motor oil, vying with Michael Schumacher and David Beckham who front rival brands.

Iran's other best chance for a medal ended in controversy last week when judo world champion Arash Miresmaeli pulled out after being drawn against an Israeli in the first round.

## Jones in long jump final

REUTERS, Athens



Triple champion Marion Jones made a low-key return to Olympic competition on Wednesday by successfully qualifying for Friday's women's long jump final.

Jones, who won three gold medals at the 2000 Sydney Games, qualified only for the long jump in Athens although she will run for the United States in the 4x100 relay.

Her partner Tim Montgomery, the world 100 metres record holder, failed to qualify for the Games and has received a letter from the US Anti-Doping Agency

(USADA) alleging serious doping violations.

Jones is also being investigated by USADA, although neither athlete has ever failed a dope test.

On Wednesday Jones fouled her first attempt after waiting for an official to move a plastic cone from the runway. With her second, she leaped 6.70 metres, safely over the automatic qualifying distance of 6.65.

"The first jump was a big jump but I just fouled a little bit," she said.

"I then just wanted to make a safe jump on the second."

Jones won the 100 and 200 in Sydney

and also got a gold medal in the 4x400 relay. She finished third in the long jump and took another

SEE PAGE 14 COL 5

SEE PAGE 14 COL 4

SEE PAGE 14 COL 4