

Abahani take on ROK Varsities in opener

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani will kick off their Kings Cup campaign in Bhutan against South Korean Universities on September 30.

The Sky Blues left Dhaka yesterday to take part in the 8-team tournament in Thimpu.

Abahani are pitted against Indian Army (October 2) and Nepal XI (October 4) in their remaining group matches.

Strauss not yet decided

AFP, London

England batsman Andrew Strauss said on Sunday that he has yet to decide whether or not to join international teammate Steve Harmison and boycott the scheduled tour of Zimbabwe.

"All the players have deep-rooted moral problems with going on the tour. It's not an easy situation for us to be in," Strauss told the BBC.

"The England and Wales Cricket Board is going to be sending out a cricket team to Zimbabwe – it's just a question of which personnel go.

"I can only speak for myself and I haven't made up my mind yet."

Earlier Sunday, chairman of selectors David Graveney insisted that injuries will not be used as a smokescreen to leave players out of the controversial tour of Zimbabwe in November.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) have assured players they will not face reprisals if they opt out of the five-match one-day tour like paceman Harmison on moral grounds.

But Graveney said that they remain committed to sending a full-strength squad, and will not be using injuries as an excuse to leave certain players out of the tour.

"The side has not been selected. We will finalise our squad today," Graveney told BBC Radio Five Live's Sportsweek programme.

"Steve Harmison is the only player who has indicated he is not going to Zimbabwe. We will then announce the squad on Tuesday.

Pakistan tour

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and now people from Pakistan will go to India and a lot of friendship will develop."

While India won the Test and one-day series on their first tour of Pakistan since 1989, the PCB earned as much as 23 million dollars from the tour.

Pakistan had to revise its programme for next year by inviting Sri Lanka in October this year instead of February-March as scheduled to accommodate the India tour.

Pakistan are likely to play the Tests first, with the five-day matches expected to start from February 25, two weeks after their return from Australia. The five one-day matches will follow.

It will be Pakistan's first Test tour to India since early 1999.

Pakistan have also agreed to play a one-day international in India on November 13 this year to mark the 75th anniversary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India.

Two batting

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but Whatmore did not want the media to talk to the talented youngster.

"Give him some time. He is under too much pressure," said Whatmore adding that Kapali looked good in the nets.

"He looked fine today but it is difficult to judge someone after just one day," said Whatmore.

Asian all-star athletics in Singapore

AFP, Singapore

Many of Asia's best athletes began arriving in Singapore on Monday as the city-state prepared to host a unique competition for the region's elite track and field stars.

Medallists from regional events such as the Asian Games, Southeast Asian Games and Asian Grand Prix events will compete in the inaugural Asian All Stars Athletics Championship on Tuesday.

Four Athens gold medallists, including Chinese 110m hurdle sensation Liu Xiang, will also travel to Singapore for the event, however they will only be here for promotional purposes and to conduct clinics rather than compete.

The other Athens Olympic victors are Chinese women's 10,000 metres runner Xing Huina, Japanese women's marathon champion Mizuki Noguchi and compatriot Koji Murofushi, who won the men's hammer throw event.

Indian long-jumper Anju Bobby George, who became her nation's first World Championship medallist with a bronze in Paris last year, will be the highest profile Asian athlete competing on Tuesday.

Anju, the Asian Games 2002 champion, beat Russian gold medallist Tatyana Lebedeva to win the long jump event at the Yokohama track and field meet last week in Japan, after finishing sixth in Athens.

Singapore is hoping the all-stars concept will become an annual event.



PHOTO: AFP
Sandeep Singh, who scored twice, celebrates after putting India into the lead in the second hockey match against Pakistan in Quetta yesterday. India won 4-1.

Farhat dropped from Pak side

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan retained experienced but out of form wicketkeeper-batsman Moin Khan and axed opener Imran Farhat and all-rounder Azhar Mahmood for their home tri-series, Pakistan Cricket Board announced Monday.

Pakistan face Asian champions Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe in a triangular one-day tournament between September 30 and October 16. They meet Zimbabwe in the opening game on Thursday.

The 33-year-old Moin's batting form was miserable on an England tour. He failed to score against Australia in a one-day before scoring 10 and 0 in the two games he played in the ICC Champions Trophy.

Opener Farhat was dropped from the 15-man squad for the tri-series after he fared poorly on tours of Holland and England.

The selectors have included two uncapped players, batsman Bazid Khan and paceman Rao Iftikhar, and recalled batsman Misbahul Haq.

Bazid, son of former national captain Majid Khan, hit 94 while Misbah scored a century in a side game against Zimbabwe last week.

Misbah was discarded last year after he played five Tests and 11 one-day games.

Iftikhar took 41 wickets in Pakistan's premier domestic tournament last season.

SQUAD

Inzamamul Haq (captain), Shahid Afridi, Yasir Hameed, Salman Butt, Bazid Khan, Shoaib Malik, Yousuf Youhana, Moin Khan, Misbahul Haq, Abdul Razaq, Younis Khan, Shoaib Akhtar, Mohammad Sami, Navedul Hasan, Rao Iftikhar.

SL exclude Malinga

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka have dropped paceman Lasith Malinga in favour of the more experienced Dilhara Fernando for their triangular series starting in Pakistan this week.

Left-arm spinner Rangana Herath has been called up as a third specialist spinner in support of leg-spinners Upul Chandana and Kaushal Lokuarachchi for the series which will also feature Zimbabwe.

Middle-order batsman Thilina Kandamby was selected to bolster the batting, which now includes eight frontline batsmen in a 15-man squad.

Fernando was preferred to Malinga, an exciting young pace bowler who bowls with an unorthodox round-arm action, for the final quick bowler's slot.

Off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan is still recovering from shoulder surgery and will miss the entire tour, traveling instead to Canada to raise funds for charity.

Sri Lanka will be managed by former opening batsman Brendon Kuruppu, who takes over from Ajit Jayasekera on a temporary contract.

Sri Lanka resumed training on Monday after returning from the ICC Champions Trophy and leave for Pakistan on Sunday.

The tournament starts on September 30 when Pakistan take on Zimbabwe at Multan.

SQUAD

Marvan Atapattu (captain), Mahela Jayawardene (vice-captain), Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Saman Jayakumar, Avishka Gunawardene, Farveez Maharoof, Chaminda Vaas, Upul Chandana, Nuwan Zoysa, Dilhara Fernando, Thilina Kan-damby, Rangana Herath, Kaushal Lokuarachchi.

Stay away

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beating team, but Gilchrist, who was part of the magnificent 2001 series, chose to put the current tour in perspective.

Gilchrist, however, refused to be drawn into comparing it with the traditional Ashes contests against arch-rivals England.

"From a player's perspective, I don't necessarily think this series takes over from the Ashes. It's grown its own identity, its own excitement.

"I probably don't think it's right to compare it to other series and to say one series is better than the other.

Australia open the tour with a three-day match against national champions Mumbai at the Brabourne Stadium here from Thursday.

The first Tests opens in Bangalore on October 6 and will be followed by Madras, Nagpur and Bombay.

Deal in the dock again



AFP/REUTERS, New Delhi

India's Supreme Court on Monday said it would hear a petition by a television network against the nation's cricket board raising further concerns over the upcoming home series against Australia.

The hearing by a five-judge bench on the petition filed by Zee Telefilms against the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) would commence on Tuesday.

Zee is seeking to overturn the board's decision to cancel telecast rights which the network insists were fairly awarded to it for the next four years.

The case would go to the larger panel because important contractual issues were involved, the court said.

"It will be taken up tomorrow. It has been referred to a five-judge bench," Zee lawyer Harish Salve said.

The Supreme Court also issued notice to the federal government, the BCCI and pan-Asian network ESPN-Star Sports to attend Tuesday's hearing, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported.

The BCCI had cancelled TV rights worth 308 million dollars last week following Zee's legal battle with ESPN-Star Sports in the Mumbai

High Court and said it would make its own arrangements for the Test matches, which get underway next week.

ESPN Star had also begun a case in a lower Mumbai court over Zee's eligibility, but the joint venture of media giants Disney and News Corp. withdrew its petition after the BCCI's decision to cancel the Zee deal.

Zee, however, cried foul at the BCCI decision and asked the Supreme Court to stop the cricket board from awarding the telecast rights to another channel until the Court had decided on its petition.

If the Court fails to arrive at an early decision or prohibits the BCCI from seeking help from another network, the keenly awaited four-match Test series may be called off.

Both the International Cricket Council (ICC) and Cricket Australia have said they are not in favour of the series being played without live television coverage.

"If the series is not shown live, its Test status can be withdrawn," BCCI president Jagmohan Dalmiya said.

"We will ask the Supreme Court to give an early ruling."

The BCCI informed the Court it planned to provide a live feed of the Australian matches and two home Tests against South Africa later this year to the domestic audience through state-run broadcaster Doordarshan.

"It is not yet decided who will get the international rights," BCCI lawyer KK Venugopal told the Court.

The Australian team, which arrived in India on Saturday, is scheduled to play a three-day tour opener at the Brabourne Stadium from Thursday.

Even if the matches are not beamed live, the BCCI is required to provide mandatory video footage of live calls to assist the third umpire.

The cricket board, worried it was running out of time, justified asking for fresh bids on the basis that it had not formalised the deal with Zee on paper and had even returned the interim advance of 20 million dollars paid by the network.

But Zee, India's largest listed media company, alleged there was "a clear collusion and conspiracy" between the cricket board and ESPN-Star Sports to scuttle the deal.

Zee's offer of 308 million dollars represented a six-fold increase on the 54 million dollars paid by Doordarshan for the past four years, and dwarfed even the Indian government's annual sports budget of 44 million dollars.

With cricket taking up three-quarters of sports advertising in India, Zee had expected to rake in revenues of upwards of 320 million dollars over the four years.

Paralympics

China runaway leaders

AFP, Athens

China kicked off the last full day of competition at the Paralympics Monday by winning two of the first three athletics finals, pushing their total haul of gold medals to 55.

Second-place Britain and third-place Canada -- combined -- have 56.

Deng Pufang, son of Deng Xiaoping and Chairman of China's Disabled People's Federation, will present medals later in the day in athletics, event organizers announced Monday. Deng, injured during China's violent cultural revolution in the late-1960s, is himself wheelchair-bound.

As the Games wind down, the phenomenal rise of China as the dominant powerhouse in elite sports for the disabled is topic number one of conversation here. "We have a lot work to do if we want to be competitive in 2008," Charlie Huebner, managing director of US Paralympics, told AFP.

With only two days of competition remaining, Britain would seem to have a lock on second place, with 31 gold, seven more than third place Canada and nine more than fourth place United States.

But the US, at least, said that an overall "silver" is within their grasp. "We have a chance for number two," insisted Huebner late Sunday, looking ahead to a slew of medals to be contested Monday in swimming and athletics.

Ukraine, tied with Australia but with fewer medals overall, also stands a chance of a top-five gold medal finish, which would break up the English-speaking bloc of Britain, the United States, Canada and Australia.

Meanwhile, International Paralympics Committee president Phil Craven said that apologies to Greece were in order for underestimating its capacity to host both the Olympics and the Paralympics ably.

"The worries about the Games were western-oriented," Craven told BBC on Sunday. "Now we should all apologize for not believing them" when they said they would be ready, he added.

Also on Sunday, the committee announced four more doping cases, bringing the total thus far to seven.

As was true in Sydney four years ago, most of the disqualified athletes were "powerlifters," the Paralympics equivalent to weightlifting.

IPC spokeswoman told AFP that organizers had targeted "high-risk sports and high-risk countries" in carrying out anti-doping tests.

"We don't have as much money as the International Olympic Committee, so we can't carry out as many tests as we would like," she added.

China can expect to continue its harvest of precious metal Monday in athletics and swimming. Chinese contenders are also present in ping pong, where 10 gold medals are up for grabs, and in women's sitting volleyball, where China is assured of at least a silver medal.

In tennis, the Netherlands executed nearly a clean sweep, scoring medals -- three golds, two silvers and a bronze -- in five of six events, ending Sunday. No other country has so dominated a single event except Hong Kong, which won eight out of 15 gold medals.

The Paralympics is the world's premier sporting event for elite athletes with disabilities, who compete in 19 sports over 12 days. Competition -- which has featured nearly 4,000 athletes from 136 countries -- ends on Tuesday, followed by a closing ceremony.

Clijsters sets for comeback



AFP, Hasselt

Former world number one Kim Clijsters will make her long-awaited return to action after a five-month injury absence at this week's 170,000-dollar tournament here.

The 21-year-old Belgian has been sidelined since May as she recovered from surgery to repair a torn tendon in her left wrist and hasn't played since Berlin.

The wrist first became a factor for Clijsters at Indian Wells in early March where she was attempting to defend her title.

After a first round win against Angelika Roesch, Clijsters was forced to remove herself from the remainder of the tournament in order to let her wrist heal.

She returned to action more than a month later in helping Belgium to a pair of victories in Fed Cup first round action.

Two weeks later, she had prepared for a return to the tour, but that attempt didn't last very long.

After a very lengthy second round win against Marta Marrero, Clijsters was again forced to withdraw from the event and decided to have surgery to repair her wrist - a move that would sideline the Belgian former No.1 for several months.

Prior to the injury, Clijsters was enjoying a strong start to her 2004 campaign.

She began the year by reaching the final at the Australian Open where she fell to countrywoman Justine Henin-Hardenne in three sets.

From there, Clijsters played back-



KIM CLIJSTERS

to-back events at Paris and in Antwerp, winning titles at both events.

Due to her time away from the Tour, her ranking has dipped to number seven.

After a first round bye this week, Clijsters, the number two seed, will play her first match either Iveta Benesova or a qualifier.

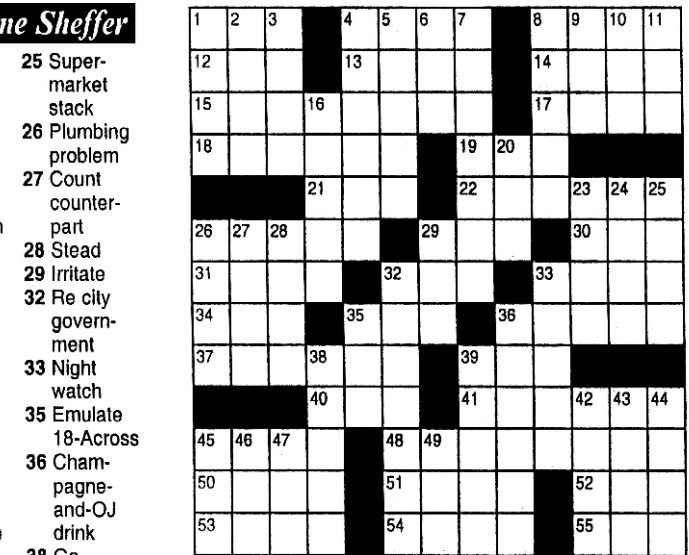
CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Eccentric
4 React in horror
8 Pull an all-nighter
12 "A pox upon thee!"
13 Melody
14 Roll call reply
15 Intrepid
17 Admitting customers
18 Gold medal winner
19 O'Hare's loc.
21 Afternoon hour
22 Intrepid
26 Author Ephron
29 Forefront
30 Biz deg.
31 Racetrack boundary
32 Blanc or Brooks
33 Line of thought
34 Anger
35 Clinton blew it
36 Objects to
37 Intrepid

DOWN
1 Dispatches, slangily
3 Letter opener
4 Lead ore
5 Mountain ridge
6 Family member
7 Easter-related
8 Hymn pre-senters
9 Agent at times
10 Exist
11 Chaps
16 Tend a stubborn squeak
20 Coop dweller
23 Portent
24 Footnote abbr.
43 Dazzle
44 Take care of
45 Pompous one
46 Mainlander's memento
47 Appreciate
49 Inventor Whitney

Solution time: 25 mins.

**BYT E NAIL REP
LOAD ALOE EGO
AGRIPTINIAIAN
BASISTE SANDY
FEAR TELTICU
OLD ITIS LEL
GIVE LEO ADEN
ILLER AM
COSMO CRUSOE
AVE MAGICLAMP
PER ABUT ERIE
ENS NAME TATE**



CRYPTOQUIP

T Z B K Y K Z I I S Y H Q U B S

X U Q H T Y W M N T U I C U T Q E G .

M R Q ' M G Q C T E T K Q I S Z

C I T E N Y C K R Q X Z M K .

Yesterday's Cryptquip: DOCUMENTARY
DETAILING YESTERDAY'S EXCITING BOXING
MATCH: "A ABOUT LAST NIGHT."

Today's Cryptquip Clue: I equals L

The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

India level

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levelled 3-0 at half time.

Pakistan forced two more short corners but Abbas was left frustrated. India hit back and availed themselves of openings to score through Tushar Khandekar with 10 minutes to go.

Pakistan tried Ghazanfar Ali in their fifth short corner and he scored the consolation goal with just a minute left on the clock.

"I am delighted that the team played very well and now we are level in the series," Indian skipper Turkey said. "Now we must keep the momentum going in the remaining matches."

India's German coach Gerhard Rach expressed pleasure that his team did not repeat the mistakes of the first match. "The body language of the Pakistani players was surprisingly not spirited," he said.

Pakistan's Dutch coach Roelant Oltmans was disappointed. "We committed a lot of mistakes and allowed a lot of openings to our opponents and had to pay the price," he said.

The remaining matches in Pakistan will be played at Peshawar on Wednesday and in Lahore on October 1.

The Indian leg will comprise matches in New Delhi (Oct 4), Chandigarh (Oct 6), Amritsar (Oct 8) and Hyderabad (Oct 10).



PHOTO: STAR