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Squeaky win for Mohammedan Bankers hold Mariner

Hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Title contenders Mohammedan Sporting Club made a shaky start in the Green Delta Premier Division Hockey League when they scored a hard-fought 3-2 victory over Wari Club at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

While the popular Motijheel outfit escaped unscathed, another giant Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club stumbled to a goalless draw with Sonali Bank in the other match at the same venue.

Ariful Haque Prince saved the Mohammedan blushes with two first-half strikes while his young strike partner Ashraf Islam Shishu scored the winner after the break.

The Black and Whites led their Motijheel neighbours 2-1 in the first half. But Wari stalked their fancied opponents menacingly throughout the game with Rajib Hossain scoring a brace, once in each half.

Prince opened the account for

the last year's runners-up with a fine finish after being fed by Ashiqzaman in the 11th minute. He scored his second goal two minutes away from the lemon break converting a penalty corner.

But Wari finished the half with a lot of promise with Rajib sounding the board capitalising on a defensive lapse on the stroke of the breather.

Mohammedan came out firing on all cylinders in the second half and it was in the 40th minute when Wari defence buckled under pressure. Mashiur Rahman orchestrated a fine move down the middle before sending a pass to an unmarked Sishu, who made no mistake to slot the ball past an advancing Wari goalkeeper Nahid.

But Mohammedan's two-goal cushion did not last long as Rajib was on target for the second time six minutes later, intelligently pushing the ball home from a goalmouth melee.

MARINER-SONALI BANK
 Mariner Youngs fresh from a satisfying Club Cup, where they finished runners-up, got off to the worst



A Mariner (L) and one of his Sonali Bank opponents are in pursuit of the ball during their Green Delta Premier Division Hockey League clash at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

Leonine keep top position

SPORTS REPORTER

Leonine Chess Club blanked Dhaka University Chess Team 4-0 in the third round to maintain their solo lead in the Dutch-Bangla First Division Chess League at the federation hall room yesterday.

The all Grand Master Leonine secured full 12 points after the round while Muktijoddha Sangsad Kriha Chakra were hot on their heels with one point short.

Making their first appearance in the domestic chess circuit, Muktijoddha beat Sonali Bank 3.5-1.5 with both of their Vietnamese and Russian GMs - Ni Hua and Igor Rausis - winning their boards. Their other victory came through Pakistani International Master Tahir.

Holders Bangladesh Biman had 10 points to remain in third position.

The national flag carrier, boosted by GM Ziaur Rahman, defeated Mohakhali Prodeep Sangha 3-1.

In other matches, Bangladesh Ansar checkmated Friend Chess Power 3.5-1.5. Titus Club defeated Destiny 2000 2.5-1.5. Narayanganj City Chess Club outdid Farashganj Sporting Club 2.5-1.5 and Anushilan Daba Kriha Chakra beat Rajshahi Daba Unnayan Sangsatha 2.5-1.5. Star Vision Chess Team drew with Kamalpur SKKS 2-2.

Smith scare for SA Kolkata Test starts today

Cricket

REUTERS/AFP, Kolkata

South Africa captain Graeme Smith is in doubt for the second and final Test against India after a car ran over his foot in a freak accident on Saturday.

Smith, 23, was walking towards the team hotel after practice when the chauffeur of his car unintentionally drove over his right toe, witnesses said.

He was immediately taken for an X-ray and MRI scans.

"The X-ray has revealed no bone

damage, but only bruising to the tissue on the right toe," South Africa media manager Gerald de Kock told reporters.

"Graeme was very disappointed and surprised at the incident. We'll decide tomorrow if he can play, depending on how he is feeling," he added.

Vice-captain Boeta Dippenaar will lead the side if Smith is unable to play.

Earlier reports say, Smith is aiming to inflict a defeat on favourites India in the second and final Test starting at the Eden Gardens starting here on Sunday.

"It would be fantastic to pull off a

win here," said Smith. "We are going in very positively, planning to fight it out for a full five days, with a win definitely in our minds."

The first Test in Kanpur ended in a tame draw earlier this week but Smith felt his team had learned a lot from the match.

"We batted very well and even our bowlers got a feel of the conditions, so we are looking ahead confidently for a second match," said Smith, who took over the captaincy from Shaun Pollock after last year's World Cup.

"Our pacemen, Pollock and (Mahyav) Ntini are adjusting well here but we are not sure whether (Jacques) Kallis will be able to bowl," said the 23-year-old opener.

All-rounder Kallis could not bowl in the first Test after suffering a side strain in a preceding three-day practice game in Jaipur.

"The pitch here is expected to help spin later in the match, so I think it would be an advantage to bat first," Smith said.

South Africa started the series as underdogs because most of their players lacked experience of playing in India but they finished with a creditable draw in the first Test, taking the first innings lead.

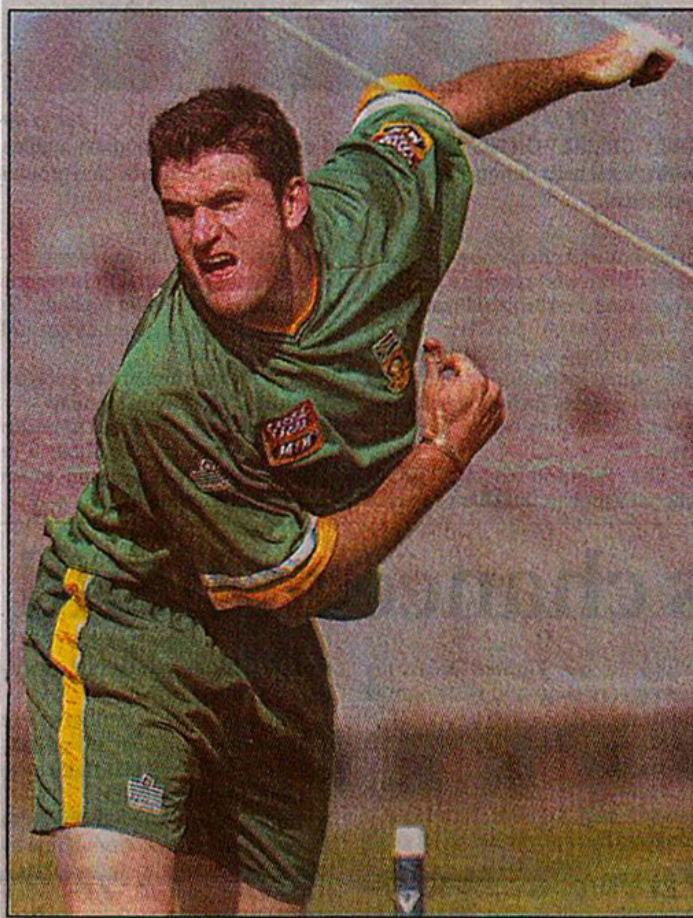
South Africa have a good record in India, having won three of six Tests played on Indian soil, losing two and drawing the first Test of the ongoing series. They won both matches of their last series here in 2000.

Indian skipper Sourav Ganguly too was hoping to wrap up the series.

"We have not played very many home series in the recent past and so it becomes important to win this match and series," said Ganguly.

"This pitch will surely see a result," said the Indian captain, on whom a two-match suspension was cancelled Friday after he appealed against the ban imposed for slow over-rate in a one-dayer against Pakistan.

"It was a relief to hear the news as I really wanted to play on my home ground," said Ganguly, who hinted at going in with two seamers unlike in the first match, where India played just one seamer and three spinners.



AT THE CENTRE OF ALL ATTENTION: Graeme Smith bowls in the nets during a practice session at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata yesterday. The South African captain later injured his right toe and is doubtful for the second Test that begins today.



Did U Know?

The first tie in an ODI was in the match Australia vs West Indies on 11-02-1984.



What to Watch

- TEN Sports**
 India vs South Africa
 Second Test, Day One
 Live at 9:50 am
- ESPN**
 Football Extra
 Live at 9:00 am
 England vs Zimbabwe
 First ODI
 Live at 1:20 pm
- STAR Sports**
 Australia vs New Zealand
 Second Test, Day Three
 Live at 6:25 am
 Hockey Series
 India vs Spain
 Live at 1:45 pm
 English Premier Football League
 Newcastle vs Everton
 Live at 7:55 pm
 Liverpool vs Arsenal
 Live at 10:00 pm
 Primera Liga
 Real Madrid vs Levante
 Live at 2:00 am (Monday)



Shoib Akhtar
 (Pakistan fast bowler)

"I want to make a difference because I don't know whether I would get another chance to play in Australia. I know it's a tough tour for us but I want to show my ability because I have been waiting for this series for a long time."

Parag wins Round 11

Mehdi Hasan Parag won his 11th round board against Lieven Artsels of Belgium in the 43rd World Junior Chess Championship at the Indian Chess Championship at the Indian

Naimur steps into Akram's shoes League resumes today

SPORTS REPORTER

When Abahani launch their Green Delta Premier Cricket League campaign against Bangladesh Biman at the Bangladesh National Stadium today they will certainly miss a very special person - Akram Khan.

Abahani and Akram have been uttered in the same breath by fans for the last 16 years until the big man from Chittagong decided switch to

new boys Old DOHS this year.

Akram's departure was one of Abahani's major losses in the transfer market, which ultimately saw them forming a team mostly made up of mediocres.

The only consolation for the popular Dhanmondi outfit is that their other long-serving member and former national captain Naimur Rahman will be leading the side.

The switching of Naimur from Abahani's rival camp Mohammedan could be seen as a challenge for the off-spinner to prove a point to the national selectors and also show that even a half-strength Abahani

can compete on a level playing field.

The Dhanmondi-based club however tried its best to make for their transfer losses by signing a major foreign name but only managed to hook Pakistani Tareq Mehmood, who is expected to play in Sunday's crucial fixture.

But if the events on the opening day are anything to go by, more upsets are on the cards as the league resumes after a two-day break.

After a gap of one year the country's colourful league started on Thursday with a bang as defending champions Victoria and runners-up City Club both succumbed to new-



Scene from the third round of the Dutch-Bangla First Division Chess League at the federation hall room yesterday.

Wright hopes to be in Dhaka

Cricket

NEW DELHI, Pallab Bhattacharyya

India cricket coach John Wright has expressed the hope that he will accompany the team on its two-Test tour of Bangladesh beginning on December 7.

"I hope to be going with the team to Bangladesh," Wright yesterday told reporters in Kolkata replying to a question about his continuance as coach after the ongoing two-Test series against South Africa.

His remarks assume significance in the wake of speculation and reports that the former New Zealand opener, appointed Indian coach four years ago, might not continue.

After a spectacular victory by the Indian team both in Test and one-day series in Pakistan earlier this year, the performances of Sourav Ganguly and his men have not been at all encouraging since then.

The side lost to their cross-border rivals in the Asia Cup in Sri Lanka, in a triangular tournament in Holland and in the ICC Champions Trophy in England in the following

months.

They lost a home Test series to Australia for the first time in 35 years and drew with South Africa in the first Test in Kanpur earlier this week. India have also lost to Pakistan in the Indian Board's Platinum Jubilee one-day match in Kolkata recently.

Reacting to the speculation, Wright said, "I have been in the role for four years now and these kind of rumours gain ground when the team is not performing to potential."

"From my point of view, I hope to be going to Bangladesh."

The speculation got a little boost when the secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India Karunakaran Nair recently said that negotiations were on with Wright, whose contract expires in April next year, as well as physio Andrew Leips.

Wright said he wanted to take the Indian team forward after the Pakistan tour. "I've only liked to see the team improve. I came back from Pakistan with that in mind. I constantly want to take the team forward."

The Indian team for the

Bangladesh tour will be announced during the second Test against South Africa that begins at Kolkata on Sunday.

Pepsi Media cricket

UNB, Dhaka

Janakantha, Ajker Kagoj, ATN Bangla and Channel-i emerged group champions to reach the semifinals of the third Pepsi Media Cup Cricket Tournament yesterday.

Ajker Kagoj will take on Channel-i while ATN Bangla meet Janakantha in the semis on Monday at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The final will be held on the same day.

SCORES IN BRIEF
 Channel-i (88-2) beat Naya Diganta (87-2) by three wickets.
 Ajker Kagoj (93-2) defeated Bhorer Kagoj (57-1) by 36 runs.
 ATN Bangla (117) won by 44 runs against New Age (73 for all) and Janakantha (57-4) beat Sangbad (52-3) by one wicket.

NZ under pile of runs

Cricket

AFP, Adelaide

New Zealand were forced to endure another demoralising day in the field on Saturday and then lost two early wickets after Australia declared their first innings on a massive 575 for eight in the second cricket Test.

At stumps, New Zealand were 56 for two with skipper Stephen Fleming leading from the front on 38 and nightwatchman Paul Wiseman on four. The Black Caps need to score 376 to make Australia bat again.

Ricky Ponting called a halt to Australia's first innings after 10.5 hours at the crease under a hot sun and then unleashed his potent bowling attack on the fatigued Kiwis in the 22 overs remaining.

They gained instant reward when Mathew Sinclair stabbed at a Jason Gillespie out-swinger to Shane Warne at first slip for a duck in the fourth over, leaving the tourists at two for one. It was Warne's 101st Test catch.

The other opener, Mark Richardson, survived an apparent catch by Darren Lehmann at short leg off Warne before Michael Kasprowitz bowled him in the next over for nine to have the Kiwis 44 for two.

Australia have dominated the trans-Tasman series and are chasing a clean-sweep after winning last week's first Brisbane Test by an innings and 156 runs.

"It's going to be tough work, the pitch is still holding together really well, so I think tomorrow will be a good day to bat on it and then I think it will start to spin a lot over the fourth and fifth days," said Lehmann, who missed out on a coveted home-ground Test century.

New Zealand were hoping to emulate India's come-from-behind win in last year's corresponding Test after Australia scored 556 batting first.

"We take a lot of heart in what India did here last year with similar totals and if we can get a score close to 500 then we can make Australia bat again under pressure and we will have a very good chance of forcing a result," said spinner Daniel Vettori, the best of the Kiwi bowlers with 5-152 on Saturday.

"Obviously, if we don't bat well over the next two days then we've got no chance, but we are confident of doing that."

The Australians, resuming at 327 for three, strolled through Saturday's morning session without losing a wicket before Justin Langer's marathon knock ended soon after lunch.

The left-hander failed to fully connect with a sweep at Vettori and lofted a catch to Jacob Oram.

The 34-year-old opener's 215 -- his third double-century in his 82nd Test -- came off 368 balls in 499 minutes with 25 fours and three sixes.

Langer's other double-tons came against India (223) in Sydney in 2000 and England (250) in Melbourne in 2002.

It was his third Test hundred at the Adelaide Oval along with his 179 not out against England in 1998 and 116 against South Africa in 2001. He averages 62.5 in 15 innings at the ground.

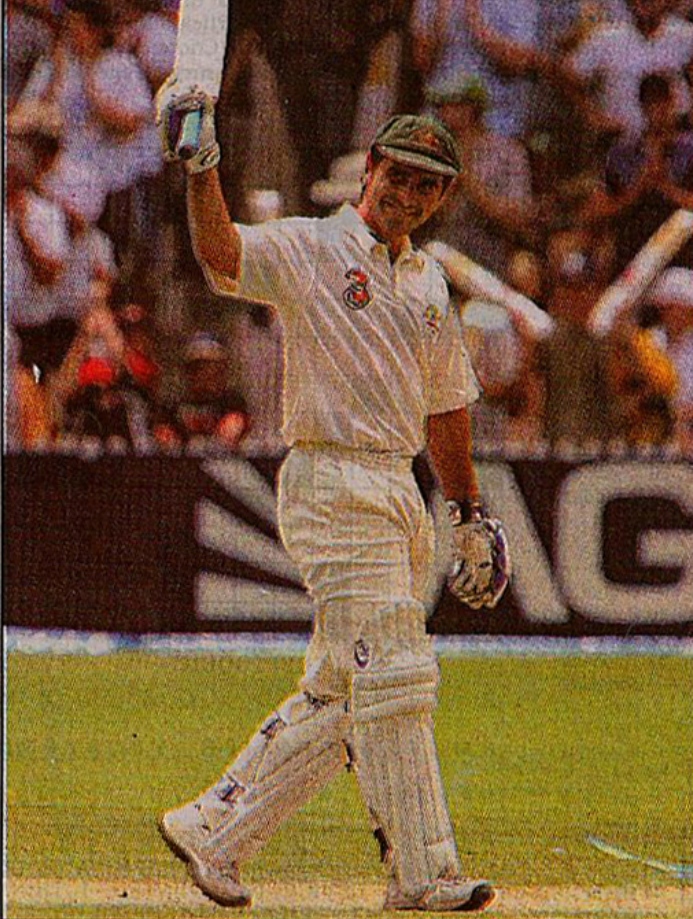
Langer's 20th Test century placed him in illustrious Australian company -- only Steve Waugh (32), Don Bradman (29), Allan Border (27), Greg Chappell (24), David Boon (21) and Neil Harvey (21) have scored more centuries for their country.

The champion Australian team now holds the distinction of their top-three order batsmen, Matthew Hayden, Langer and Ricky Ponting, all scoring 20 Test centuries.

The Kiwis made further inroads into the Australian line-up with batting wunderkind Michael Clarke lasting just 16 balls for seven before he was lbw to Vettori.

Lehmann brought groans from his home-town crowd when he was bowled by Wiseman off his pads for 81 playing well outside leg-stump.

Lehmann, who was hoping for



JUST-IN TIME FOR LANGER: Australia opener Justin Langer waves to the crowd upon reaching the double century against New Zealand yesterday.

Green Delta Premier Cricket League
 Abahani vs Biman (BNS)
 BU vs Young Pegasus (DCS)
 Uttara SC vs Indira Road KC (BKSP)

Green Delta Premier Hockey League
 Usha KC vs Dhaka Railway (3:00 pm)
 Dutch-Bangla Chess League

Pak Olympic captain for Usha

SPORTS REPORTER

Local giants Usha Kriha Chakra boosted by three Pakistani stick-wielders take on Dhaka Railway today in the Green Delta Premier Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium.

Midfielder Nadeem Ahmed, who captained Pakistan in this year's Athens Olympic Games, signed for the title aspirants yesterday along with forward Nayeem Ahmed and defender Anwar Sazzad.

Meanwhile, Indian midfielder Christopher Edwards joined holders Abahani on Friday while compatriot Prakash Chakraborty, who played for the Dhanmondi-based outfit in the recently-concluded Club Cup competition, is expected to join his teammates within a couple of days.

On the other hand, title chasers Mohammedan Sporting Club was yet to confirm any name so far.

Nabarun Open Bridge Dec 2

SPORTS REPORTER

The Nabarun Open Bridge Championship will take place at the Bangladesh Bank Club premises on December 2-3.

The interested teams have been requested to confirm their entries by 4:30pm on December 2 at the Bangladesh Bank Club.