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Did U Know?

India played their first ODI on 13-01-1974 v/s England at Headingley, Leeds. Lost by 4 wickets.



Ricky Ponting
(Australia cricket captain)
"He can do whatever he wants to put us off but it will be a challenge for us to be as strong as we can and to make sure we're doing the job with the bat." On Pakistan's express bowler Shoaib Akhtar.



TEN Sports
India vs South Africa
Second Test, Day Five
Live at 9:50 am

ESPN
Sportscentre
Live at 9:00 pm
STAR Sports
Sportsline
Live at 8:00 pm



Green Delta Premier Cricket League
Mohammedan vs Indira Road (DCS)
Abahani vs Young Pegasus (FCS)
Uttara SC vs Brothers Union (BKSP)
Green Delta Premier Hockey League
Usha KC vs S Bima (1:15 pm)
Sonali Bank vs Wari Club (3:00 pm)
Dutch-Bangla Chess League

Green Delta Hockey Ajax smile with Rahat double

SPORTS REPORTER

Rahat Sarwar scored both the goals as Ajax Sporting Club beat Dhaka Railway 2-1 for their first victory in the Green Delta Premier Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhashani National Stadium yesterday.

Smarting under a 2-0 defeat in their opening encounter against giants Mariner Youngs Club, Ajax could have won by even bigger margin had their forwards not wasted four easy chances.

They led the first half 1-0 after Rahat scored a nice field goal in the 16th minute. His second goal came two minutes after the break.

Dhaka Railway pulled one goal back through Mushtaq at the stroke of the final whistle but that was not enough to avoid second successive defeat after a solitary goal loss to title contender Usha Kriha Chakra.

Shahin deaf chess champ

SPORTS REPORTER

Obidul Islam Shahin of Dhaka Deaf Sports Association became unbeaten champion in the 13th National Deaf Chess Championship which ended in the city yesterday.

Shahin earned full five points in the 5-round Swiss League while seven players finished with four points each.

After the tie-breaking, Majedul Islam of Dhaka Deaf Sports Association was runner-up.

'It is better to face India now'

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Every series in charge of Bangladesh comes as a challenge for Dav Whatmore and every match holds equal importance. However, the immediate assignment against India is a far stiffer prospect than the last one versus New Zealand or the series to follow against Zimbabwe.

From Bangladesh's point of view, the two Tests and three one-day internationals against Sourav Ganguly's men should be taken as a chance to gain valuable experience for the much weaker Zimbabwe, who play two Tests and five ODIs in Bangladesh in January. But Zimbabwe are not on Whatmore's mind at the moment.

Talking to reporters after a five-hour net practice at the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS) the 50-year-old Australian, who recently returned from a two-week vacation in Sri Lanka, said it was a good time to take on the formidable Indians who are struggling for form.

"They are not playing well at the moment. Sachin (Tendulkar) is not getting the runs as well. Although their batting is not clicking, I still think they have a very strong batting line. But it is better to

face them now," Whatmore said.

Whatmore was still feeling bothered by the Tigers' inability to push New Zealand in the recent series.

"In the Test matches, we were pretty upset about our inability to be competitive and take the matches into five days. We will try to be as competitive as we can (against India)."

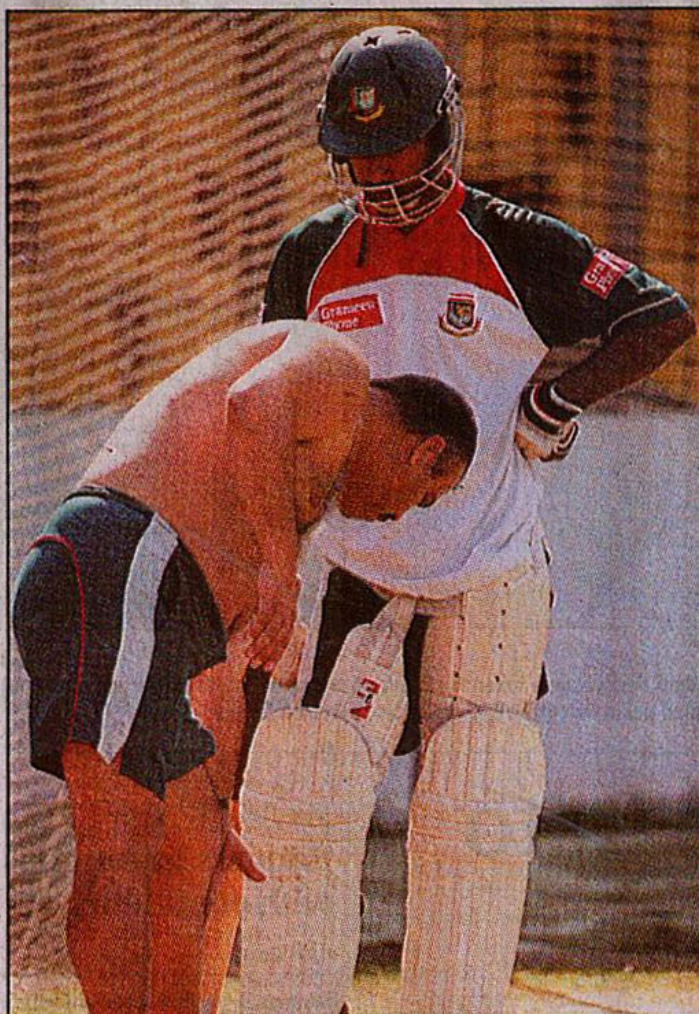
"Because we play so close to New Zealand, it's still fresh in the mind and I hope we can show marked improvement in testing the opposition."

Having been taken on a spin by Daniel Vettori, the Bangladeshi batsmen are prime candidates for getting exposed to India's fearsome spin duo of Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh but Whatmore feels that things do not always go as anticipated.

"They are probably much better spinners than Vettori but it does not necessarily follow that pattern. Kumble has taken 431 wickets and Harbhajan has a striking rate of 6-8 wickets per Test. The pair is dangerous and make India a good team overall. We have hard work ahead."

"We have to play spin properly. Concentrating on nudging and pushing the ball for runs and only being defensive is not the key. We want to learn from the past series and it was on an exceptionally turning wicket in Chittagong, with no

SEE PAGE 14 COL 2



IF THE BALL COMES AT THIS HEIGHT ...: Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore gives AI Shahriar some batting tips during a net session at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday morning.

PHOTO: STAR

'Token' transfer on

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday launched the first-ever token hand-over programme to the footballers in an effort to bring about a change in the traditional inter-club players' transfer system.

But practically it turned out to be the same old type of bourse as most of the booters instantly deposited their tokens after drawing it from BFF's Bangabandhu National Stadium office, making the official six-day transfers starting from December 17 an academic one.

Not only most of the top players came to the BNS with the officials of their preferred clubs they did not even bother to keep the tokens for another two weeks.

Striker Rokonuzzaman Kanchan

was the first booter to receive token and handed it over to his old club Muktiyoddha Sangsad.

Muktiyoddha also received tokens from two little known players -- custodian Mamun from BRTC and defender Rony from Mohakhali Eleven on the first day of the 22-day programme.

Defending champions, Brothers Union, who had arrived at last season's transfers with a grand rally, also virtually assured the services of three Abahani footballers by receiving the tokens of fullback Masud Rana, midfielder Pranotosh and striker Saiful Islam Khokon.

Ace central defender Jewel Rana, a regular Mohammedan face, also handed over his token to the Gopibagh outfit manager Amer Khan along with three young players Tareq, Shaheen and Anwar Khan.

With a hope to erase bitter memories of the last season, Mohammed-

dan Sporting Club manager Amirul Islam Babu also appeared on the scene with a big smile as he carried along with him Muktiyoddha's dynamic medio Maitur Munna, Brothers striker Alfaz Ahmed, Abahani defenders Mahmudul Hassan and Ibnul Siraji and Sheikh Russel striker Biplab.

Their old worriers Nakib, Sentu, Kaiser, Faisal Mahmud, Khokon Das also deposited their tokens.

Another popular name Abahani were also delighted after receiving some positive confirmations. Muktiyoddha defenders Lajuk and Pradip Poddar, Mohammedan strikers Farhad and Shahzuddin Tipu submitted their tokens to Abahani's football official Satyajit Das Rupu.

Midfielder Joy and custodian Nizamuddin also decided to stay with the Sky Blues for another season.

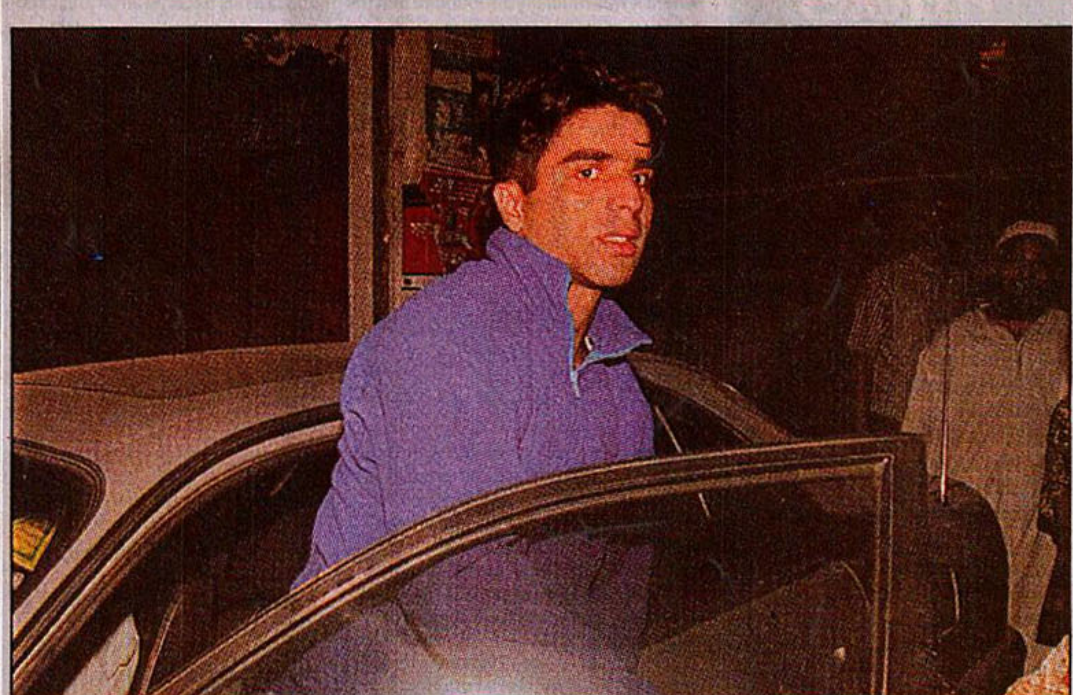


PHOTO: STAR

Pakistani batsman Taufeeq Umar arrives at the Abahani Club yesterday. The opening batsman will play for the Dhanmondi-based side in the ongoing Green Delta Premier Division Cricket League.

Umar relief for Abahani

Bashar returns to lead MSC

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Pakistani batsman Taufeeq Umar flew in the city yesterday to boost the frail Abahani batting ahead of their second Premier cricket league match against Young Pegasus.

The 23-year-old was originally scheduled to play for the popular Dhanmondi-based club in the opening match against Bangladesh Biman on Saturday but could not arrive in time due to the death of a close family member.

Abahani lost that match by 34 runs despite dismissing the national

flag carriers cheaply.

"We lost the match against Biman because of an inexperienced batting line-up. But the inclusion of Umar will certainly bolster our batting," said Abahani coach Jalal Ahmed Chowdhury.

Umar's arrival came as a big relief in the Abahani tent after an uninspiring player-acquisition in the transfers last month.

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SEE PAGE 14 COL 8

Div III cricket qualifiers

SPORTS REPORTER

Kafrul Cricket Club snatched a thrilling one-wicket win over KKCC in a Third Division qualifying cricket match at the Gulshan Youth Club ground yesterday.

SEE PAGE 14 COL 4

Advantage India

Cricket

AFP, Kolkata

Prolific spinner Harbhajan Singh struck it rich as India seized control of the second and final cricket Test against South Africa at the Eden Gardens here on Wednesday.

The off-spinner grabbed 4-58 as South Africa, who conceded a first innings lead of 106, were reduced to 172-5 by stumps on the fourth day.

The tourists, just 66 runs ahead with five wickets in hand, need a mammoth effort from the overnight pair of Jacques Kallis (52) and Zander de Bruyn (nine) to prevent India from winning the match and the short two-Test series.

The first Test ended in a draw in Kanpur last week.

Harbhajan, nicknamed the 'Turbanator', ripped through the top order after claiming the prize wickets of captain Graeme Smith and first Test centurion Andrew Hall with good turn and flight.

Having taken two wickets before tea, Harbhajan came back in the last session to remove Smith and debutant Hashim Amla.

Smith was out when Venkatesh Laxman, fielding at slip, took a high catch lunging full length to his left, while Amla's was a bat-pad dismissal with Laxman the fielder again.

Harbhajan had dismissed opener Hanu when the batsman gloved the ball in trying to sweep and gave wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik an easy catch.

In his next over, Harbhajan trapped Jacques Rudolph leg-before with a ball that came in to the left-hander as South Africa slipped from 77 for no loss to 81-2.

Harbhajan was unlucky not to get another wicket before tea when umpire Daryl Harper ruled Kallis not out on a bad-pad catch appeal. Replays showed the ball had touched the batsman's bat.

Leg-spinner Anil Kumble, bowling round the wicket to take advantage of bowlers' footmarks, chipped in with the wicket of Boeta Dippenaar, caught by Virender

Sehwag in the slips after the ball bounced off Karthik's pads.

It was Kumble's 432nd wicket and left him just two short of equaling Kapil Dev's Indian record of 434.

Earlier, India's lower-order batsmen frustrated South Africa by taking their first innings to 411 after resuming at 359-6.

The home side added 52 during the morning session although fast bowler Makhaya Ntini's two wickets ensured the score was not inflated further.

Ntini accounted for overnight batsman Irfan Pathan (24) and Kumble (eight), both of whom were caught in the slips. He finished as the

most successful bowler for South Africa with 4-112.

Karthik (46) was trapped lbw by paceman Shaun Pollock while Harbhajan (14) was the last man out. He top-edged a reverse-sweep to Dippenaar at cover, giving leg-spinner Justin Ontong his maiden Test wicket in his second match.

Last-man Zaheer Khan remained not out on 11 off 32 deliveries.

Both teams and the umpires took the field wearing red ribbons on their shirts to mark World AIDS Day.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close on the fourth day of the second and final Test

SEE PAGE 14 COL 5

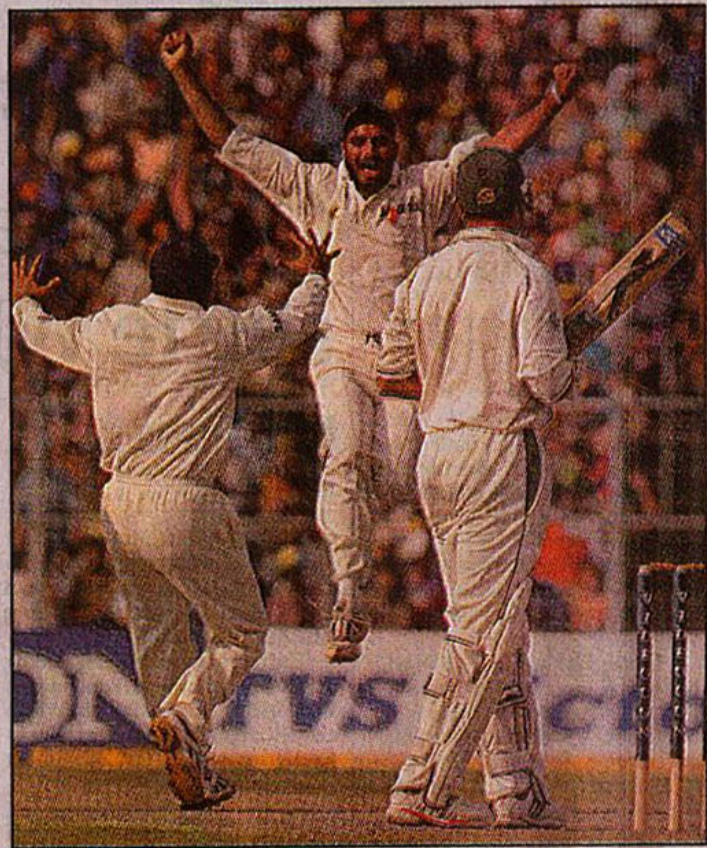


PHOTO: AFP

Mercurial India off-spinner Harbhajan Singh (in the air) and his teammates unsuccessfully appeal for an lbw decision against South Africa's Jacques Kallis on the fourth day of the Kolkata Test yesterday.

Younis shines for Pakistan

Cricket

AFP, Perth

Pakistan paceman Shoaib Akhtar sent an early warning to Australia's ever-confident batsmen with a blistering spell of bowling that clearly signalled his intentions for the upcoming Test series here on Wednesday.

The 'Rawalpindi Express' kicked off his tour with a sizzling five-over spell which caught a Western Australian second XI by surprise on the first day of their opening three-day tour match at James Oval in Perth.

At stumps on the first day Pakistan were 235 for 7 in reply to Western Australia's 158.

Younis Khan was at the crease unbeaten on 132 and Danish Kaneria was with him on two.

Although his figures of 1-22 weren't the best in the team -- those belonged to his fellow opening paceman Mohammed Sami who claimed 3-17 -- Shoaib was clearly on target and on song.

At one point the pair had the home side reeling at 18 for 4 before a 70-run stand between Luke Ronchi

with 66 and Scott Meuleman with 32 gave the innings some credibility.

Pakistan had slumped to 37 for 3 in reply, but steadied to lead by 77 runs at the close of play.

Shoaib's figures could easily have been better but most of the runs he conceded were lucky edges through the slips cordon while he also had Meuleman caught off a no-ball.

Since his disappointing series against India earlier this year, when he took just seven wickets at 42.43 in three Tests, Shoaib said he had put in some serious training and the results were starting to show.

"I have been bowling fast," he said.

"After the India series I really worked hard, got back in rhythm, reduced my weight, I've trained really, really hard with my trainers and I'm just getting back (to form)."

"It's about time isn't it?"

Pakistan skipper Inzamam-ul-Haq decided not to play in the tour opener with Younis Youhana captaining the side in his absence.

At one stage in Shoaib's spell Youhana's field included five slips, a gully and a point, putting massive pressure on the home side with three top-order batsmen, including Zimbabwean Sean Ervine falling for

England toy with Zim

REUTERS/AFP, Harare

A record stand between Kevin Pietersen and Geraint Jones led England to an emphatic 161-run victory over Zimbabwe in the second one-day international on Wednesday.

Pietersen and Jones, who came together with the touring side struggling on 121 for five, added 120 to guide England to a total of 263 before Zimbabwe were dismissed for just 102 in 36 overs.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the second of four one-day internationals between Zimbabwe and England at the Harare Sports Club ground on Wednesday:

ENGLAND
Solanki b Taibu b Utseya 42
Bell c Ebrahim b Panyangara 5
Vaughan lbw b Panyangara 11
Strauss b Ewing 33
Pietersen not out 77
Collingwood c Taibu b Matsikenyeri 7
Jones c H Masakadza b Panyangara 66
Giles not out 3
Extras: (nb-2, w-12, lb-5) 19
Total: (For 6 wickets in 50 overs) 263
Fall of wickets: 1-13, 2-30, 3-94, 4-103, 5-121, 6-241
Did not bat: Wharf, Gough, Anderson
Bowler O M R W
Panyangara 10 1 61 3

SEE PAGE 14 COL 4

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