



Did U Know?

Bangladesh's 257 for nine in the third ODI is their highest total against India, surpassing 249 for six in the 1999 Asia Cup at Dhaka.



Ronaldinho

(Brazil soccer super star)

"I still have a video of my father, which I watch before every game I play for Brazil. It gives me strength, makes me determined."

What to WATCH

ESPN

English Premier Football League

Liverpool vs Chelsea

Live at 6:40 pm

Arsenal vs Charlton Athletic

Live at 8:55 pm

Man United vs Middlesbrough

Live at 11:25 pm

New Zealand vs Sri Lanka

Second ODI

Live at 5:00 am (Sunday)

STAR Sports

English Premier Football League

Everton vs Hotspur

Live at 8:55 pm

Australia vs Pakistan

Third Test, Day One

Live at 5:25 am (Sunday)



Green Delta Premier Hockey

(Super League)

Mohammedan vs Ajax SC (2:45 pm)

Rumman bowls Azad to victory

SPORTS REPORTER

A four-wicket haul by Kabir Rumman propelled Azad Sporting Club's way to a narrow 17-run win over Lalmatia Club in the First Division Cricket League at the BKSP ground yesterday.

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Kapali misses three-dayer

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Alok Kapali received a jolt in his bid to return to the national side as the talented batsman failed to recover from his injury ahead of BCB XI's three-day match against Zimbabwe that starts today in Chittagong.

The visitors will play their only warm-up game during the 31-day tour against the virtually second-string Bangladesh side, led by Rajin Saleh, at the newly-built Birshreshtha Ruhul Amin Stadium in Chittagong.

Both sides reached the port city yesterday morning but the local side had to fly with 12-men as Kapali did not fly due to his wrist injury during a practice session two weeks ago.

"Both the national team physio and local physio suggested me to take rest as I am still feeling a little bit of pain in the wrist. Actually it will not be impossible for me to play the match but I opted out as a precaution," Kapali told The Daily Star over phone.

The selectors picked an all-paced-up team including Tareq Aziz Khan, Mohammad Sharif, Shafaq Al Jabir, Shahjahan Selim and country's quickest bowler Shahadat Hossain Rajib as the Bangladesh think-tank has decided to offer a green-top track

to Tatenda Taibu's men.

The focus will be on the right-arm pacer Sharif, who is going to play an international match after two years.

Apart from Rajin and Sharif, three more Test caps are in the squad with middle-order batsman Al Shahriar and Tushar Imran desperately trying to draw attention before the two Tests and five one-day internationals against Zimbabwe.

But it was learnt that the Faruque Ahmed-led selection committee was not eager to make too many changes like in the past but they are still looking forward to include another spinner when they will announce the 13-member squad for the first Test tomorrow.

The first Test of the two-match series begins at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong from January 6.

It is likely that left-arm spinner Enamul Haque will join Mohammad Rafique and all-rounder Mushfiqur Rahman to make way for the young spinner.

Any of the pace bowlers for the three-dayer could get a surprise call in the Test squad as back-up for tearaway Mashrafe-Bin-Mortuza and tested Tapash Baisya.

If that is the case, the axe will be on Talha Jubair and Nazmul Hossain, who played against India

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TRUST ME, I'VE SEEN SOME GREAT FAST BOWLERS HOLD IT LIKE THAT! Zimbabwe coach Phil Simmons, the former West Indies batsman, corrects the grip of a net bowler during the tourists' first training session at the Chittagong Divisional (Birshreshtha Ruhul Amin) Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

Abahani pass Mariner test

Hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani stayed hot on the heels of leaders Usha Kira Chakra when the defending champions cruised to a 3-1 win over Mariner Youngs Club in yesterday's Green Delta Premier Hockey League match at the Maulana Bhashani National Hockey Stadium.

Abahani's eighth win in ten outings saw the Dhanmondi outfit's collection improve to 25 points, two behind Usha. Mariner are virtually out of the race with 18 points from the same number of games.

Mariner began brightly in their third meet of the season against the Sky-Blues but squandered a series of chances as the first half finished 0-0.

Mariner, who gave up a 3-0 lead to lose this year's Club Cup final 4-3 to Abahani, came close to scoring even before their opponents had settled down. However, Issa Mia shot over from a fourth-minute penalty corner. The national defender had another setpiece to take advantage of two minutes later but his rising hit was stopped well by Abahani custodian Bappi.

Mariner then spoiled a sitter when Pakistani recruit Yamin Bhatti pushed straight into Bappi's

pads with the goal post at his mercy.

Abahani's only chance before the break fell to Russel Mahmud Jimmy but the lively forward's reverse hit flew over the keeper.

Abahani took control in the second half but had to wait till the 54th minute to break the deadlock. Youngster Rajib Hasan Issa sent a powerful pass inside the box to Indian striker Prakash Calke who beat the rival keeper with a first-time flick.

Ten minutes later, Shamim Reza dribbled down the middle to find Jimmy who doubled the lead with a fierce hit into the back of the net from the top of the box for his tenth goal in the league.

It could have been 3-0 in the next minute but an unmarked Prakash saw his feeble mishit from a handshaking distance saved by a diving goalkeeper Jahangir.

Mariner briefly came back from a counter attack from the right when Kamal pushed home a pass by Prashanta in the 67th minute. But the Arambagh side failed to sustain pressure. Then one minute from time Abahani's Indian defender Christopher Edward made a dashing run down the left flank to set up Shamim who received the ball near the 25-yard circle and went past two defenders before beating goalkeeper Jahangir with an angular hit.

Langer, Kumble top Test class of 2004

Cricket

REUTERS, Sydney

Australian opener Justin Langer and Indian spinner Anil Kumble topped test cricket's international batting and bowling lists for 2004.

Langer finished as the world's leading run scorer for the year with 1481 runs at an average of 54.85 while Kumble was the top bowler with 74 wickets at 24.84.

The left-handed Langer struck five centuries, including a knock of 215, to equal the third highest run

tally in a calendar year. The record of 1710 was set by West Indian Viv Richards in 1976.

Langer's Australian team mate Damien Martyn finished second with 1353 runs at 56.38, including six centuries, followed by South African Jacques Kallis, whose 1288 runs came at an astonishing average of 80.50.

West Indian captain Brian Lara regained his individual test world record with an unbeaten 400 not out against England in April while Indian opener Virender Sehwag was the only other player to pass 300 with his 309 against Pakistan in March.

Kumble broke Saqlain Mushtaq's record for the most Test wickets in a calendar year as well as passing Kapil Dev as India's greatest wicket taker.

Australia's Shane Warne also broke Saqlain's old mark of 69 with 70 wickets at 24.07 but gained plenty of consolation for finishing second as he became the greatest wicket-taker of all time.

Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan had taken the record from Courtney Walsh earlier in the year but injury restricted his appearances during 2004 and he finished equal fifth with

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CA proposes tsunami match

AFP/REUTERS, Sydney

Australia's cricketers on Thursday proposed an international match to raise funds for tsunami victims but said the event depended on cooperation from cricket bodies.

Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland met players' representatives and ICC officials Friday to discuss the practicalities of staging a charity match in Melbourne in January.

Sutherland said the match was a way for cricket to do something tangible to help victims of the tsunami disaster.

But he said it could not go ahead without the support of international cricket regulators.

"If an international cricket fund raising match is to happen, we can't do it alone and will need the support of both the Asian Cricket Council and the International Cricket Council," he said.

Media reports in Sydney said the proposal was for a one-day match featuring a Rest of the World side versus either Australia or a combination of Australian and New Zealand players.

The Australian Test team has already donated its 17,000 dollars (13,100 US) match-winning bonus from its recent victory over Pakistan to tsunami relief. But a match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, which has a capacity of 65,000, would generate significantly more.

Meanwhile, the Indian cricket board has pledged 10 million rupees (approximately 230,000 dollars) for relief and rehabilitation in southern India.

Players of the national team, amongst the highest-paid cricketers in the world, have said they will each also donate the match fees of one one-day international for the victims.

Woes mount for Pakistan

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

It's a New Year's Test of stark contrasts: Pakistan are scratching to come up with a team while Australia are blessed with options after naming a 13-man squad for the final Sydney cricket Test getting under way on Sunday.

Injuries and illness have compounded Pakistan's selection problems after losing their three-match series in Melbourne by nine wickets last Wednesday on top of their 491-run debacle in the first

Perth Test.

The Pakistanis, who haven't beaten Australia for 11 Tests since winning by 74 runs here a decade ago, have to find replacements for fast bowler Mohammad Sami (heel) and all-rounder Shoaib Malik (split webbing), while fitness doubts exist over captain Inzamamul Haq (back) and Abdul Razaq (virus).

Australia underlined their bulging depth of playing talent by adding Sydney Cricket Ground spin specialist Stuart MacGill and all-rounder Shane Watson to their squad and leaving out regular 12th man Brett Lee.

Pakistan can only dream of

Australia's lavish playing resources as Ricky Ponting's team look to launch a busy 2005 playing schedule with victory over the tourists following their 10 wins in 14 Tests and only one defeat to India this year.

Pakistan have failed to ram home their advantage after having the Australians 78 for five in Perth and 171 for five in Melbourne, only to implode and lose both Tests heavily.

But their English coach Bob Woolmer believes his Pakistan team is on an upward trending curve.

"I take a lot of positives out of

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Vaughan hails mates

Cricket

AFP, Durban

England captain Michael Vaughan pledged that his team would seek to carry over their triumphant form of 2004 into the new year after they came within two wickets of a ninth successive victory on a dramatic fifth day of the second Test against South Africa at Kingsmead Thursday.

Bad light came to South Africa's rescue with 15 overs still due to be bowled but Vaughan said it had been a great effort by his team to

get so close to victory after being bundled out for 139 on the first day and trailing by 193 on the first innings.

"The way our team have come back to have South Africa on the rack was a fantastic effort," said Vaughan.

"The clouds came in at the end and there was nothing we could do about that but we're delighted still to be 1-0 up in the series."

England finished the year unbeaten in 13 Tests, winning 11 matches and drawing two.

"Our aim is to have as good a year in 2005 as we did in 2004," said Vaughan, looking ahead to the

third Test of the five-match series, starting in Cape Town on January 2.

"I'd prefer to be in my shoes than in (South African captain) Graeme Smith's. We're going to go to Cape Town to play as well as we did the last three days."

Smith acknowledged that South Africa were lucky to escape with a draw.

"We were on top of this Test match after two and a half days but we didn't finish it off and they came back and played superbly. We had to fight from there on," said Smith.

South Africa, set an unlikely

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Mariner's Pakistani recruit Yamin Bhatti (L) controls the ball as Abahani defenders anticipate his next move during their Green Delta Premier Hockey League match at the Maulana Bhashani National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR