

Dhanmondi and Sonargaon win

SPORTS REPORTER

The top three batsmen smashed half centuries as Dhanmondi Club handed a 51-run defeat on Eskaton Sabuj Sangha in the First Division Cricket League at the Jagannath Hall Ground yesterday.

Rumi made 83 off 140 balls but his opening partner stole the show with a blistering 50-ball 72 studded with 12 fours and two sixes. Skipper Emon, who came at number three, made 57 as Dhanmondi reached 264-5 in 50 overs.

In reply, Eskaton were bundled out for 213 in 42.1 overs with Ripon making highest 65.

In the day's other match, Sonargaon Cricketers came back to winning ways when they beat Gazi Tank by six wickets at BKSP. New ball pair Nasiruddin and Sajidul shared six wickets between them to shoot out Gazi Tank for exactly 100 (35.4 overs). Sonargaon took only 22.3 overs to reach 104-4.

Australian fans give \$55,000

AFP, Sydney

Australian cricket fans at the opening day of the final Test against Pakistan at the Sydney Cricket Ground Sunday donated a total of 71,786 dollars (\$5,275 USD) to the Asian tsunami relief fund, officials said.

Organisers are expected to receive their target of 100,000 dollars for more fund-raising over the remaining four scheduled days of the SCG Test.

Sharapova shocks Venus

AFP, Bangkok

Reigning Wimbledon champion Maria Sharapova overpowered American Venus Williams Sunday in an exhibition match in northern Thailand overshadowed by last week's tsunamis that ravaged the kingdom and much of Asia.

The two stars appeared all business in the opening games, matching each other's trademark booming serves and groundstrokes with the Russian teenager prevailing in straight sets 6-4, 6-3.

Zim practice

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Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

**BCB XI:** First innings, 317/7 in 80 overs, Dec (Nafees 97, Rajin 36, Tushar 102 not out, Matsikenyeri 4-53)

**ZIMBABWE:** First innings (overnight 41 no loss in 10 overs)

Matsikenyeri	retired	150		
Rogers c Saqib b Tareq		44		
Sibanda c Shamsur b Shahadat		122		
Masakadza	batting	26		
Taylor	batting	11		
Extras: (b-2, lb-22, nb-7)		31		
Total: (For 3 in 100 overs)		384		
<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Shahadat	16	4	67	1
Jabir	16	2	74	0
Tareq	17	4	57	1
Sharif	14	4	39	0
Saqib	26	5	85	0
Shamsur	5	0	20	0
Tushar	5	0	18	0

Star cast World XI

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to charity," Speed said.

The West Indians have three in the team -- Lara, Chris Gayle and Dwayne Bravo -- although they may struggle to get all three to play as they have only 14 players in Australia and one-day matches on either side of the January 10 game.

The December 26 tsunami, which was triggered by an earthquake off the coast of Indonesia's Aceh province, has officially killed 127,000 people with the toll mounting.



Usha's hattrick hero Mohammed Nayeem (R) tries to race past a Mariner defender during their Green Delta Premier Hockey League match at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

England wrest initiative

AFP, Cape Town

England spinner Ashley Giles made a crucial breakthrough for his country when he dismissed South African captain Graeme Smith for 74 on the first day of the third Test at Newlands here on Sunday.

South Africa were 164 for three at tea, with second Test century-maker Jacques Kallis again holding the key to his team's fortunes. Kallis was 47 not out.

Smith and Kallis appeared to be playing South Africa into a strong position during a third wicket stand of 75 before Giles struck.

Smith should have been out for 70 when he went on a sweep against Giles. The ball deflected off the bottom edge of his bat onto his pad

and looped up for wicketkeeper Geraint Jones to take what seemed an easy catch.

But Smith stood his ground while the players celebrated and umpire Daryl Harper gave him not out.

The South African captain added only four more runs, however, before Giles dismissed him in his next over, with Smith walking after edging a ball which went off Jones' thigh to Marcus Trescothick at slip.

Smith won the toss for the third successive time but it was England, leading 1-0 in the five-match series, who gained the initiative on a hard, true pitch when Herschelle Gibbs was out in the third over with just nine runs scored.

The out-of-form Gibbs misjudged the line of a ball from Matthew Hoggard and padded up to a delivery which moved in slightly off the pitch and hit his off-stump.

It was a repeat of his dismissal by Hoggard in the second Test in Durban.

Smith and Jacques Rudolph put on 69 before Rudolph was out for 26 shortly before lunch, caught behind by Geraint Jones off an inside edge from Simon Jones.

Rudolph had twice gained boundaries off the inside edge off the same bowler before his dismissal.

**SCOREBOARD**  
Scoreboard at tea on the first day of the third Test between South Africa and England at Newlands here on Sunday:

<b>SOUTH AFRICA:</b> First innings				
Smith c Trescothick b Giles	74			
Gibbs b Hoggard	4			
Rudolph c G Jones b S Jones	26			
Kallis not out	47			
Dippenaar not out	8			
Extras: (b-2, nb-2, w-1)	5			
Total: (For 3 wks in 54 overs)	164			
Fall of wickets: 1-9, 2-70, 3-145				
To bat: Amla, De Villiers, Pollock, Boje, Ntini, Langeveldt				
<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Hoggard	12	3	39	1
Harmison	11	1	39	0
Flintoff	12	2	30	0
S Jones	9	0	29	1
Giles	10	0	25	1

**ENGLAND:** Vaughan, Trescothick, Strauss, Key, Thorpe, Flintoff, G Jones, Giles, Hoggard, S Jones, Harmison.

**Toss:** South Africa.

**Umpires:** Steve Bucknor (West Indies) and Daryl Harper (Australia).

Wasim foresees English chances

REUTERS, Karachi

England have been given an even chance of reclaiming the Ashes from Australia this year by former Pakistan captain Wasim Akram.

"For the first time in eight years I can see a side which can compete on even terms with Australia," Akram told Reuters on Sunday.

The left arm fast bowler who retired after the 2003 World Cup with a haul of 414 Test and 502 one-day international wickets said England had formed a very good team and can win the Ashes this summer at home.

"I tell you it is going to be one hell of an interesting series. Australia obviously is the best these days. But guys like Andrew Flintoff, Steve Harmison and Andrew Strauss are mature players and have made England a very competitive and dangerous outfit."

While Australia completed five Test series wins last year including a first win in India in 35 years, England won 11 matches and drew two in the same period.

The Australians have also won the last two World Cups in 1999 and 2003.

Akram who played for 10 years with English county side Lancashire said the Australians were a first rate side at absorbing pressure and were mentally very strong.

"And England is also getting there. That is why the Ashes this time could go either way," he added.

Akram, now a commentator, said the Ashes rubber would be a big boost for the sport.

"I don't agree with the argument that cricket has stagnated due to the complete dominance of the Australians. They have set a benchmark for other teams and it is intriguing waiting to see which side dethrones them."

He also felt there should be no surprise over Pakistan being out-classed by Australia in the ongoing Test series.

"I don't know why people are so surprised. Pakistan went to Australia with a very inexperienced batting line-up. And I know that not only Pakistan but other teams have also struggled with more experienced players."

Hopman Cup Argentina down Italy

AFP, Perth

Guillermo Coria exorcised a few ghosts on Sunday when he recorded his first victory in more than six months as Argentina made a winning start to the Hopman Cup with a 2-1 victory over Italy.

The 22-year-old eased to a 6-1, 7-6 victory over Davide Sangamnetti to level the round-robin tie at 1-1 after Francesca Schiavone had beaten Gisela Dulko 6-1, 6-3 in the opening match of the mixed team event.

Familiar Pak collapse

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reached his debut century and was out shortly after for a determined 108 in over four and a half hours with 16 boundaries.

The 20-year-old left-hander from Lahore had a hundred at his mercy before he was needlessly run out for 70 in the first innings of last week's second Melbourne Test defeat.

But he made sure of the three-figures on Sunday as he defied Australia's stellar bowling attack.

McGrath, who was curiously held back from bowling by skipper Ricky Ponting for four hours after his initial morning spell, claimed Salman's wicket with the third ball of his second spell, caught behind by Adam Gilchrist in the 67th over of the innings.

Yet again Pakistan disintegrated losing eight wickets for 99 runs after they were looking in good shape at 193 for one.

The collapse took on a predictable re-run of other batting debacles in Australia's four-day victories in Perth by 491 runs and in Melbourne by nine wickets.

At stumps, Kamran Akmal was unbeaten on 35 with Mohammad Asif yet to score.

Pakistan profited from three dropped catches to put on a 102-run opening stand between Salman and Yasir Hameed, promoted to opener from No.3 with Imran Farhat axed.

Yasir was dropped twice off consecutive balls on three and for a third time on 56, before he topped a sweep off wrist-spinner Shane Warne to Michael Clarke at short fine leg shortly after lunch. It was Test cricket's leading wicket-taker Warne's 562nd wicket.

Yasir had two lives off consecutive balls in Jason Gillespie's opening over and second of the match.

Warne spilled a two-handed midriff catch at first slip off the third delivery and next delivery Gilchrist brought more groans from the home crowd when he got a glove to the ball but grassed the chance.

McGrath put Yasir down for a third time off a difficult running catch at deep mid-off before Yasir perished in the same Warne over.

Nearing tea, Younis Khan misjudged a MacGill leg-break and spooned a catch straight to McGrath at mid-off for 46 leaving Pakistan 193 for two.

'Lara no problem for me'

Cricket

AFP, Melbourne

New West Indies cricket coach Bennett King says there are no problems in his working relationship with team captain Brian Lara.

The West Indies arrived here Sunday to prepare for their triangular one-day series with Australian and Pakistan throughout January-February.

King, the former head coach of the Cricket Australia Centre of Excellence, said he would like to do things differently with Lara, the side's batting superstar, because of his standing in the game.

King admitted 35-year-old Lara would follow his own training regime because of his age and experience, but said talk the left-hander was difficult to manage was way off the mark.

"At the moment I don't know where it (talk) comes from and I was conscious of going in with an open book and having heard all the rumours and all the innuendo and making my own opinion," King told a media conference shortly after the 14-man squad's arrival here.

"But from my point of view, he smiles at me every day and I smile at him every day, so it goes all right."

King said there was no problem unifying a side containing players from all over the Caribbean.

But he added he would take a different approach to coaching Lara -- a veteran of 112 Tests and 244 one-day internationals -- because of his age, experience and place in the team.

"We've got to be mindful of his longevity in the game and how we manage him so we get the best out of Brian for as long as he wants to play," Kingsaid.



BENNETT KING

"He's had 35 years in cricket and he's hit 10 million cricket balls in his career as it is, whereas a 20-year-old's probably hit about 200,000 so it's not going to take Brian that long to get into pretty good shape."

The West Indies' lead-up to their arrival in Australia was dominated by fears the side's best players -- Lara among them -- would not tour because of a sponsorship-related contract dispute.

But Bennett was never in doubt the dispute would be resolved and said finding the resources to train his players properly had been of greater concern.

"It's been a pleasure to work with these boys from the islands and the limiting factor for them is... the amount of resources that are available within the Caribbean to consistently train and put in the hours that some of the other nations have the opportunity to," he said.

King said his first goal was to have his side perform more consistently after it endured a fluctuating 2004 in which the West Indies lost a Test series to England at home, yet bounced back in September to win the Champions' Trophy one-day tournament.

The West Indies play Victoria in a day-night match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Wednesday, before matches against Australia A in Hobart next week.

They launch the tri-series against Australia at the MCG on January 14.

Victoria march on, Abahani crash

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204-4 in reply to Uttara's 200-6 with more than five overs to spare at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Coming in to bat at number five, the national wicketkeeper struck eight fours and a six in his 75-ball essay after Victoria lost early wickets. Mashud, adjudged man-of-the-match, shared 54 runs with Pakistan batsman Fahadullah (30) and a further 78 for the unbroken fifth wicket with Mohammad Salim (22 not out).

Uttara, who have now lost seven of their eight matches, were put into bat first and in-form opener

Golam Rahman made 60 of 101 balls. Asadullah Khan, however, was more impressive hitting a 46-ball 48 featuring half a dozen boundaries.

**MOHAMMEDAN-PEGASUS**

Solid top-order batting saw Mohammedan put an end to their four-match losing streak. After being put into bat in a 48-overs-a-side match at the Fatullah Stadium due to fog, Mohammedan got off to a slow start as Nafees Iqbal (21 off 42 balls) and Shahriar Hossain (20 off 51 balls) put on 38 runs in 12 overs.

One-down Parvez Ahmed also settled for a sedate 48 (78 balls) as Mohammedan scored just 89-2 halfway through their innings. However, the experience of captain Habibul Bashar and ace Kenyan batsman Steve Tikolo helped them cross the 200-mark.

Bashar, who was adjudged man-of-the-match, hit four fours and one six to score 59 off 69 balls while Tikolo's explosive 33-ball 47 was studded with three fours and three sixes.

The target proved far beyond the reach of bottom-table Pegasus who managed 175-9 in the allotted 48 overs.



WINDIES DOWN UNDER: Captain Brian Lara (L) and teammate Dwayne Bravo, along with the rest of the West Indies squad, arrive in Melbourne yesterday. The Caribbeans will play in a triangular series with Australia and Pakistan later this month.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

**ACROSS**

1 Shut noisily

5 Woodwind

9 Law enforcer

12 Guadalajara greeling

13 Telephone, slangily

14 Flamenco cheer

15 Clarified head

17 Keanu, in "The Matrix"

18 PC picture

19 Author Sinclair

21 Marsh plant

24 Geometry answer

25 Analgesic target

26 Speed

30 Ar-tee connector

31 Salary

32 Dundee denial

33 Union events

**DOWN**

2 Bagel topping

3 Mont Blanc, e.g.

4 Slander

5 Part of B.&O.

6 Former German capital

7 Tramcar load

8 Withstands

9 Held part

10 Toast enhancer

11 Manual laborer

16 Expert

20 Through Jet forth

21 Jet forth

22 Relaxation

23 Treated with scorn

24 Brewery products

26 Lacks the skills

27 Batter ingredient

28 Story

29 Scream

31 Conclusions

34 Press for payment

35 Upper part of a dress

37 Nay canceler

38 Vivacity, to

39 Semisolid fat

40 Crockpot recipe

41 Sea flock

44 Teachers' org.

45 Pal of Wynken and Blynken

46 First lady

47 Hideaway

**Solution time: 21 mins.**

PAPA SIT EBON  
OVERTONE NERO  
MERCHANT TRAM  
AMINOGRAM  
FADER MERMAID  
TAG HONEY DOE  
MERITED PORE  
ALLO SOLAR  
HONOR PIEW  
AGUE MEREDITH  
NEIL ALPHECIA  
DENY NIE REINT

**CRYPTOQUIP**

TA YMTZYTGIVIE PSVP VJN  
JNRAZYMW VOOIN QNPNJE  
QAMEYTNJ PSNRENIZNE  
V QAJN WJAGO?

Yesterday's Cryptquip: I HAVE TO ADMIT I LOVE WINNIE-THE-POOH CHARACTERS. WOULD YOU SAY I'M TIGGER-HAPPY?

Today's Cryptquip Clue: P equals T

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.