

## Ugliness follows disappointment

**Hockey**

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Abahani came from two goals down to salvage a 2-2 draw with arch-rivals Mohammedan Sporting Club in the Green Delta Premier Hockey League yesterday.

The exciting draw of the two hockey heavyweights however did not help their cause. Rather it opened the door for leaders Usha Kriya Chakra to sniff a maiden League triumph.

The result of the crucial Super Five match not only dented Abahani's hopes of completing a hat-trick of League titles but also threw Mohammedan out of the race with two more rounds to go.

Usha now need a win from their last two games against Abahani and Mohammedan to secure their first crown. Abahani, on 26 points, now can only hope that

Mohammedan does them a favour tomorrow and defeat Usha in order to close the gap before their final Super League match with the table leaders.

But Monday was a disaster for both Dhaka giants. Not only were both teams left mentally scarred but also physically abused in an after-match free-for-all.

The ugly after the match episode unfolded when the players were walking off the pitch after a lively 70-minute battle.

First there was a fistfight between two Abahani teammates - Rafiqunnabi Nakib and striker Russel Mahmud Jimmy. It prompted a group of unruly Mohammedan fans to invade the field and start hurling abuse at the Sky Blue players. Abahani winger Sheikh Ramij was so incensed that he lashed out at Mohammedan's poor Shamsuddin Tuhin with his stick. And then all hell broke loose with Black and White

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RIVALRY HEATS UP! (L) Abahani's Indian defender Christopher tries to block Mohammedan's Kuti. (R) Players and officials of the bitter rivals get involved in an ugly brawl at the end of the crucial Green Delta Premier League hockey game at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.



PHOTOS: STAR



## Did U Know?

Rajin Saleh (82) recorded the highest individual innings for Bangladesh in the third ODI against India.



## Bennett King

(West Indies cricket coach)

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

Denying there is a rift between him and West Indies captain Brian Lara.



## ESPN

Football Focus

Live at 6:30 pm

Sportscentre

Live at 8:30 pm

English Premier Football League

Arsenal vs Man City

Live at 1:30 am (Wednesday)

## STAR Sports

South Africa vs England

Third Test, Day Three

Live at 2:30 pm

Sportsline

Live at 9:30 pm

English Premier Football League

Man United vs Tottenham Hotspur

Live at 1:55 am (Wednesday)

Australia vs Pakistan

Third Test, Day Four

Live at 5:25 am (Wednesday)



Green Delta Premier Cricket League

Old DOHS vs Orient SC (BKSP)

Biman vs Agrani Bank (FCS)

Indira Road vs City Club (DCS)

Green Delta Premier Hockey

(Super League)

Mariner Youngs vs Ajax SC (2:45 pm)

## Ganguly to lead Asian XI

### Alok Kapali lone Tiger

**Cricket**

SPORTS REPORTER

Indian skipper Sourav Ganguly has been given the responsibility of leading an Asian XI against the ICC XI in next week's charity cricket match for tsunami victims in Asia.

Alok Kapali is the only Bangladeshi cricketer in the 14-man squad chosen for the first match to be played in Melbourne on January 10. There are six Indians, five Sri Lankans and two Pakistanis in the side. Top world stars like Sachin Tendulkar, Muttiah Muralitharan and Shoaib Akhtar are all expected to turn up for the game at the Melbourne Cricket Stadium.

The highly talented Kapali is on the verge of a recall to the Bangladesh team following some impressive performances with the bat for his club Victoria in the Dhaka Premier Division league so far.

A second charity fixture between the same teams will be held either in India or Sri Lanka in March but with a different set of players.

The Cricket world unites for a noble cause and all the funds raised from the 'Cricket Aid' will go to the relief effort for the distressed," said Asian Cricket Council's CEO Syed Ashraf Haque at a press conference at the Hotel Sonargaon yesterday.

"As Sri Lanka and India have been directly affected by the quake, we have decided to hold the second match in one of the two countries," Ashraf added.

Earlier, chief cricket selectors of the four Test playing countries of the sub-continent - Asantha de Mel (Sri Lanka), Kiran More (India), Wasim Bari (Pakistan) and Faruque Ahmed (Bangladesh) had picked the Asian side. Bari was the only selector not present in Dhaka but gave his opinion on phone.

"We wanted to pick more players from Bangladesh but as we are engaged in a very important series against Zimbabwe, we could not release the top players," Faruque explained when asked why only one Bangladeshi was in the side.

"It will evoke great interest and we have selected the best possible team with the players available. A number of Pakistani cricketers and India's Irfan Pathan were unavailable due to injury," said former

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Asian Cricket Council's CEO Syed Ashraf Haque speaks at a press conference at the Hotel Sonargaon yesterday where the Asian XI was announced. Ashraf is flanked by chief cricket selectors of the India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

PHOTO: STAR

## Awards for BD-Zim ODI series

SPORTS REPORTER

Rahimafrooz Limited and Reckit Benckiser have announced prizes for the ODI series between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe.

Rahimafrooz will sponsor two prizes -- 500 dollars each for the highest run scorer and the highest wicket-taker -- in the five-match one-day international series.

Reckit Benckiser will give 300 dollars for the award titled 'Dettol Fastest Fifty' to the player scoring the quickest half-century in each match.

## Div I cricket Rupali ride on Sumon

SPORTS REPORTER

A sparkling 69-ball 79 by Sumon Bhuiyan steered Rupali Bank to a 50-run victory against Lalmatia Club in yesterday's First Division Cricket League at the Jagannath Hall ground of Dhaka University.

In reply to Rupali's 241-7, Lalmatia were all out for 191.

Elsewhere, Azad Sporting Club (147-8) snatched a thrilling two-wicket win over Prantik Kriya Chakra (146) with 11 balls to spare at the BKSP ground while Kathalagan GCC (183-9) handed a thumping 91-run defeat to Jatrabari Kriya Chakra (92) at the City Club ground.

## Amazing Al Shahriar

### BCB XI clinch a draw from jaws of defeat

**Cricket**

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Chittagong

Unwillingly unaware that his team had further slumped to 125-7, the right-hander continued his barrage of strokes to all corners of the park. His composed hundred was testimony to the class of a bats

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National discard Al Shahriar struck a scintillating century as the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) XI snatched a draw from a certain defeat against Zimbabwe on the final day of the three-day practice match at the Divisional Stadium here yesterday.

The final day was supposed to offer a tame finish after Zimbabwe, resuming on 384-2, continued to bat until lunch before declaring on 522 with overnight batsmen Hamilton Masakadza and Brendan Taylor remaining not out on 92 and 77 respectively.

That left the home side needing to wipe out a first innings deficit of 206 in the remaining 63 overs of the day's play. The task should have been a relatively easy one after the BCB XI's good showing in their first innings, where they scored 316-7 declared.

But that was not the case as Rajin Saleh's men crashed to 83-5 before Al Shahriar came and played a characteristically aggressive innings.

Coming into bat at number seven, a position quite unfamiliar for the one-time Bangladesh opener, Al Shahriar struck a blazing 118 not out off 114 balls studded with 18 glorious boundaries and four mighty sixes to help BCB XI eventually finish on 197-7.



PHOTO: ZOAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

AWESOME! Al-Shahriar executes a sweep during his whirlwind hundred on the final day of the three-day practice match against Zimbabwe at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

## Ponting's ton finally comes

**Cricket**

AFP, Sydney

Skipper Ricky Ponting produced his first Test century for over a year to propel Australia into a powerful position against Pakistan in the third and final Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Monday.

The 30-year-old right-hander erased the memory of an unproductive last 12 months to compile his 21st century, and first since his 257 against India in the 2003 Boxing Day Test and first as Australian captain, against a threadbare bowling attack on an easy batting strip.

Ponting, anxious to begin the new year on an upswing after scoring 697 runs in 2004 at 41.00 at the lower-rung of Australia's top six batsmen, blazed an unbeaten 155 in 325 minutes with 23 boundaries.

At the close of the second day, Australia were 340 for four with Adam Gilchrist on 17 to lead Pakistan by 36 runs with six wickets in hand and with three days' play remaining in Australia's final domestic Test of the summer and a third straight win over the injury-hit tourists in the offing.

"It was nice to spend a lot of time at the crease and walking off the ground today my feet are a bit (more) sore than they have been for a long time and that's obviously a good sign and it's a good way to start 2005," Ponting said.

"I've been a little worried about not scoring one (century) for the whole of last year which was disappointing. I made a couple of 90s and a few 50s but didn't get that century."

Ponting said he would be looking for the team to get another 100 runs on Tuesday to help Australia having to bat in the fourth innings.

"The wicket is going to be extremely hard to bat on last. We've had a very good day today and we have to capitalise on that tomorrow and get as many (runs) as we can and that would make it hard for Pakistan to get back into the game."

Australia are playing in a dead rubber Test after clinching the series with a massive 491-run win in the first Perth Test and a nine-wicket triumph in the Melbourne Boxing Day Test.

Ponting put on 174 runs for the third wicket with Damien Martyn, who missed out on emulating a Don Bradman scoring feat.

Martyn, coming off a stellar last year of six centuries and 1,353 runs at 56.37, was shooting for his third hundred in consecutive Test innings after scores of 100 not out in Perth and 142 in Melbourne.

But he was stumped for 67 off leg-spinner Danish Kaneria, preventing him from becoming the first Australian batsman since Bradman in 1948 to score three consecutive centuries.

Michael Clarke, playing in his first home ground Test, appeared set before he threw away his wicket when he was also stumped off Kaneria for 35 off 50 balls.

Pakistan had to do without their 'Rawalpindi Express' Shoaib Akhtar, who was off the field for 75 minutes during the middle session with what appeared to be a strained right hamstring.

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