



Participants of the Transcom Cup Golf Tournament are seen with the Chief of Army Staff and president of Kurmitola Golf Club Lt Gen Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury (4th from left) at the KGC course on Thursday.

Federer punishes Henman

Tennis

AFP, Melbourne

Roger Federer sounded a warning to his rivals at next week's Australian Open after blasting into the final of the elite Kooyong Classic Friday with a 6-4, 6-2 victory over Tim Henman.

The smooth Swiss, unquestioned dominator of last season with 11 titles including three of the four Grand Slams, said he was looking forward to a trophy clash with hot rival Andy Roddick.

With just hours to go before the start of Grand Slam hostilities at Melbourne Park, where the top seed will be defending his crown, Federer pronounced his form close to ideal.

"Everything is pretty good," said a player who has won his last 14 finals dating to 2003. "I'm happy with the match today, it was much better than the first (against Roland Garros winner Gaston Gaudio, where he lost a set). That's a good sign."

Federer dropped serve once in the first set but was never troubled by Henman, ranked seventh and now free from physical complaints after a back problem over the holidays.

The Swiss brooked no opposition in the second set, taking a 5-2 lead and serving out with an ace a game later.

"Of course, you'd like to win these matches," said Henman, seeded seventh at the Open. "But I'm really happy with the way things have progressed here. I'm a better player I've ever been," said the 30-year-old.

Roddick has been waiting for Federer since Thursday, when he advanced 6-5 to Andre Agassi had to quit with a hip worry which threatened his Open.

One of Roddick's most demoralising defeats in 2004 came in the Wimbledon final against Federer, and the Swiss stands ready to build upon a winning career record against every top ten opponent save Henman.

"It's always nice to play between the number one and number two -- especially two days before a Slam," said the 23-year-old.

"I'm happy with the match today. Kooyong gives you the option to try some things. But you want to play well in the final."

In consolation round matches, last year's winner David Nalbandian won as Olympic champion Nicolas Pietrangeli as a precaution with foot pain, handing over a 6-4, 2-1 win to his Argentine opponent.

"I had hernia surgery on November 30, and I just started to train two weeks ago," said Pietrangeli. "This was one of my first matches in three months and I felt some pain in my foot."

"I had it taped but still had pain. I wanted to be sure to play in the Australian Open, so that's why I retired."

Croatian Ivan Ljubicic dealt Gaudio a third match from three played, losing 6-4, 6-4, x.

EC of BSJA Chittagong

A seven-member executive committee of Bangladesh Sports Journalists Association (BSJA) Chittagong unit was elected here yesterday with Saifullah Chowdhury (Dainik Karnaphuli) and Kamal Parvez (Janakantha) as its president and general secretary respectively.

The biennial election was held at the annual general meeting of the organisation.

The other office bearers are: Vice-President- Golam Mowla Murad (Sangram), Treasurer- Majumder Najim Uddin (Amar Desh) and members: Jamsed Rehman Chowdhury (Jugantar), Tamal Chowdhury (Daily Life) and Sultan Mahmud Salim (Karnaphuli).

Brothers manager

FROM PAGE 13
complete a nervy victory as captain Akram Khan batting at the other end hit the winning runs.

Brothers captain Halim Shah and wicketkeeper Anwar Hossain were also fined by the match referee for using abusive language against the umpire while Kumaran and Johnny were fined Tk 3,000 each for the same reason.

The hearing was held yesterday.

Div I cricket

FROM PAGE 13
Sadat made unbeaten 135 off 99 balls with 18 fours and three sixes after claiming two wickets for 20 runs.

At BKSP, Azad Sporting Club managed a comfortable eight-wicket victory over Wari Club.

Wari scored 151 in 47.4 overs and Azad, in reply, scored 154 for 2 in 35.2 overs.

WI melt in Melbourne

FROM PAGE 13
Out-of-form Darren Lehmann also showed good touch coming to the crease with four overs remaining to notch a quick 20 not out.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard in the VB tri-series first one-day match between Australia and the West Indies at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Friday:

AUSTRALIA
Gilchrist c Bravo b Bradshaw 0
Clarke b Samuels 66
Ponting run out 78
Marryn not out 95
Symonds c Gayle b Bradshaw 20
Lehmann not out 20
Extras: (b-2, lb-5, w-11, nb-4) 22
Total: (For 4 wickets in 50 overs) 301
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-119, 3-207, 4-254.

Bowler O M R W
Bradshaw 10 1 46 2
Dillon 8 0 69 0
Samuels 10 0 45 1
Hinds 3 0 20 0
Gayle 3 0 21 0
Sarwan 8 0 49 0
Bravo 8 0 44 0
Did not bat: Watson, Hogg, Lee, Gillespie, Kasprovic.

WEST INDIES
Gayle lbw b Lee 0
Hinds run out 5
Sarwan c Gilchrist b Lee 4
Lara c Symonds b Hogg 58
Marshall c Gilchrist b Lee 5
Chanderpaul c and b Hogg 46
Samuels c and b Hogg 9
Bravo c Gilchrist b Hogg 3
Browne not out 20
Bradshaw c Clarke b Hogg 12
Dillon c Ponting b Kasprovic 6
Extras: (b-1, lb-13, w-3) 17
Total: (All out in 46.2 overs) 185
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-17, 3-21, 4-33, 5-131, 6-136, 7-143, 8-144, 9-167, 10-185.
Bowler O M R W
Lee 10 1 36 3

Gillespie 8 0 29 0
Kasprovic 6.2 0 26 1
Watson 7 0 37 0
Hogg 10 0 32 5
Symonds 5 0 11 0
Result: Australia won by 116 runs.
Man-of-the-match: B. Hogg (Australia).
Toss: Australia.
Umpires: Steve Davis (AUS), Rudi Koertzen (RSA).

Ford named Kent's director of cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated
Former South Africa coach Graham Ford has been named as Kent's new director of cricket on a two-year deal.

Ford, 44, coached the South African national side from 1999 to 2002, winning nine out of 11 series.

"There is a great deal of coaching and playing talent within the club," said Ford in a club statement.

"And I look forward to providing a culture and environment in which all those involved can make the most of that undoubtedly ability."

GP International

FROM PAGE 13
Will take part in the five-day event.

Speakers at a press conference yesterday told that sponsors GrameenPhone will provide Tk 3 lakh out of the Tk 5.5 lakh budget.

Bangladesh Tennis Federation president Toufiq M Seraj and general secretary Sanaul Hoque and GrameenPhone's Head of Marketing Ghalib Ahmed Ansari and Deputy Manager Media Moeen Tareq were present.



GrameenPhone's Head of Marketing Ghalib Ahmed Ansari (2nd L) speaks at a press conference at the Bangladesh Tennis Federation office yesterday.

Transcom Cup Golf goes to Jong

SPORTS REPORTER

The Transcom Cup Golf Tournament 2005 was won by Jong Pil Kim while fellow Korean Jung Sook Jung bagged the ladies' crown at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

The premier two-day golf event, sponsored by Transcom Group, was held at the picturesque KGC course from January 13-14.

President of Kurmitola Golf Club and Chief of Army Staff Lt General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury inaugurated it amidst great fanfare.

The tournament was participated by 272 players including 17 lady golfers.

On the final day, the KGC president gave away prizes among the winners in a colourful ceremony that was attended by diplomats, high civil and military officials with their spouses. Saifur Rahman, acting chairman of Transcom, was also present on the occasion.

OTHER RESULTS
Senior winner: Kazi Habib Sattar; Junior winner: Master Samin Islam Ahnaf; Best gross: Cheong Dai Hwang; Ladies best gross: C D Hwang; 2nd best gross: Bong-Su Park; Runner-up: Sung Ku Lee; 2nd runner-up: Cdre Sarwar Zahan Nizam; Front nine winner: Woo Keun Kim; Back nine winner: Maj Matiur Rahman (SGC); Nearest to pin: Luna Sarker; Longest drive: Brig Gen Shaifuzzaman; Winner nine hole: Siraj Uddin Ahmed; Senior winner nine hole: Cdre Fakhruddin Ahmed; Runner-up nine hole: Maj Gen Abdulwadud.

Liza unbeaten champion

SPORTS REPORTER

Shamima Akter Liza became unbeaten champion in the 25th National Sub-Junior (Under-16 years) Chess Championship yesterday.

Liza drew with Reza Mohammad Bakhtiar in the ninth and final round match at the federation hall room to improve her tally to 8.5 points.

Reza finished runners-up with 7.5 points.

In the other last round games, Saima drew with Saif, Rezaul beat Moni, Obid beat Sayed and Sharif beat Obaid.

Kenyan cricket

FROM PAGE 13
Of the issues. But one source said that Ayako's patience had run out and that he had decided that now was the time to act.

The news leaves Sharad Ghai, the KCA's embattled chairman, out in the cold, but few expect him to take the situation lying down. In May 2002 Francis Nyenze, Ayako's predecessor, disbanded the KCA executive committee citing financial mismanagement, and replaced it with a caretaker committee. On that occasion the KCA went to court and got the decision overturned. It is more than likely that Ghai will consider similar action this time.

One thing Ghai might find especially unpalatable is that the interim committee includes Samir Imandir, the head of the Coast Cricket Association, and Salim Dhanji, who runs the Nairobi Provincial Cricket Association. Both associations have been at loggerheads with the KCA, and the board's expulsion of the NPCA triggered the current crisis. Of the existing board, only Obingo is included in the interim executive. Tom Tikolo, a former national player and coach, is also included.

It has also emerged that three members of the KCA executive resigned over Christmas, leaving Ghai increasingly isolated.

"We have been waiting for seven years," said one delighted senior administrator of the developments.

"This is the beginning of the end."

Eng hit by Ntini

FROM PAGE 13
Trescothick c Boucher b Steyn 16
Strauss c Kallis b Pollock 147
Key c Smith b Ntini 83
Vaughan not out 29
Thorpe c Dippenaar b Ntini 0
Hoggard c De Villiers b Ntini 5
Flintoff c Smith b Ntini 2
Jones c Smith b Pollock 2
Giles not out 1
Extras: (lb-5, nb-3) 8
Total: (For 7 wickets in 104 overs) 293
Fall of wickets: 1-45, 2-227, 3-262, 4-263, 5-273, 6-275, 7-278.
Bowler O M R W
Pollock 28 11 59 2
Ntini 27 7 67 4
Steyn 18 6 55 1
Kallis 17 2 55 0
Boje 14 2 52 0
SOUTH AFRICA: G Smith, H Gibbs, J Rudolph, J Kallis, H Dippenaar, A de Villiers, M Boucher, S Pollock, N Boje, M Ntini, D Steyn
Umpires: Aleem Dar (PAK) and S Bucknor (WIS)
Television umpire: K Hunter (RSA)
Match referee: C Lloyd (WIS)

PREVIEW: SERIE A

Two decades of greatness

Football

AFP, Rome

AC Milan captain Paolo Maldini will lead his team out against Udinese at the San Siro on Sunday almost 20 years to the day after he made his Serie A debut against the same opposition.

The imperious defender has stayed loyal to the club ever since pulling on the famous red and black stripes for the first time in Udine on January 20, 1985 as a bright-eyed 16-year-old.

Having learned his trade from his trusted mentor, the legendary Franco Baresi, Maldini is regarded as one of best defenders of his generation.

He has won seven league championships, four European Cup/Champions League titles, four UEFA SuperCups, the Italian Cup and three Italian SuperCups.

The level-headed number three, who has only recently moved into the centre of defence from left-back due to a slight slowing of his 36-year-old legs, is also Italy's most-capped player, having represented the Azzurri 126 times.

AC Milan hold a five point advantage over third-placed Udinese and need to win on Sunday, not only to distance themselves from Luciano Spalletti's side but also to maintain the pressure on leaders Juventus.

who face an equally tough task away to Cagliari.

Juve extended their lead over their closest rivals to four points last week



PAOLO MALDINI

and AC Milan defender Giuseppe Pancaro knows that the margin for error is small against their bogey side, who have won two out of their last three league meetings at the San Siro.

"The match will definitely be a tough challenge given our recent results against them and because Udinese are having a great run," said the 33-year-old Italy international, who joined AC Milan from Lazio in 2003.

"In the last 12 games they have taken more points than anybody and in many ways it feels like a match between two great teams. But we are very confident and believe in our strengths and I'm sure it's going to be a great game."

Cagliari will fancy their chances of toppling Juve at their intimidating Sant'Elia stadium where they have picked up 20 of their 25 points this season. The only team to win in Sardinia so far this season has been AC Milan.

FIXTURES

(all 1400 GMT unless stated)
Saturday: Brescia v Fiorentina (1700), Reggina v Inter (1930)
Sunday: AC Milan v Udinese, Atalanta v Siena, Cagliari v Juventus (1930), Chievo v Roma, Lazio v Palermo, Livorno v Messina, Parma v Lecce, Sampdoria v Bologna

PREVIEW: PREMIERSHIP

All eyes on Morientes

Football

AFP, London

Fernando Morientes helped Monaco into last season's Champions League final and Liverpool fans will have their fingers crossed that the former Real Madrid striker can work similar miracles for them when arch rivals Manchester United come visiting on Saturday.

Barring a last-minute bureaucratic hold-up, the 6.3-million-pound Spanish forward is expected to make his debut against United at Anfield in a match the visitors simply can not afford to lose if they are to cling on to any hope of catching Premiership leaders Chelsea.

Liverpool boss Rafael Benitez has no doubts about Morientes's ability to make an immediate impact on English football and plug the gap created by injuries to Djibril Cisse and Harry Kewell.

"He is important to us," Benitez said. "He is good in the air, he is a good finisher and can shoot with both feet. We need a target man with experience - for the supporters, for the team and for the players."

"He is not the quickest, but he can play with Milan Baros and they could form a good partnership because one is good in the air and the other is quick."

Benitez is aware that any player leaving Real may have psychological problems adjusting to what will almost inevitably be perceived as a step backwards in his career.

But the former Valencia coach

believes Morientes is a different case and proved as much with the impact he made at Monaco last season where he was instrumental in helping the French side to the Champions League final.

"He played well there and gained more confidence, then he went back to Madrid and said: 'OK, if I don't play a game I will leave.'"

"Now he has the best mentality for us because he wants to play well and prove himself."

United make the short journey to Liverpool bolstered by the rapid increase in manager Sir Alex Ferguson's selection options.

French striker Louis Saha, defender John O'Shea and South Africa midfielder Quinton Fortune all made their return from injury against Chelsea in the League Cup semi-final in midweek.

Ferguson is also having Rio Ferdinand and Ryan Giggs fit in time for Saturday's lunchtime encounter.

With better finishing, Ferguson argued, United could have edged Wednesday's encounter with Chelsea and the Scot has been encouraged by the recent form of his team.

"We have had six clean sheets in a row and that breeds confidence," he underlined.

United however are still faced with a daunting task if they are to make up the 11 points that currently separate them from Chelsea in the Premiership table.

The leaders have repeatedly defied predictions that they would start to drop points but Saturday's trip to Tottenham does look like the

kind of fixture where Jose Mourinho's side could come unstuck.

When Spurs visited Stamford Bridge earlier in the season the encounter finished goalless and Mourinho accused them of "parking the bus" in front of goal.

Since then however, Jacques Santini has left Tottenham and, under Martin Jol, the club has reverted to the kind of attacking football with which it has been traditionally associated and a strong recent run has lifted Spurs to seventh in the table.

Second-placed Arsenal, seven points adrift of Chelsea, travel to Bolton for an evening fixture bolstered by the restorative influence of having had a full week off.

The time to heal has helped Thierry Henry, Sol Campbell, Freddie Ljungberg, and Ashley Cole all recover from various injuries and Arsene Wenger is likely to have a strong squad at his disposal for the trip to the north west.

FIXTURES

(1500 GMT unless stated)
Saturday: Aston Villa v Norwich, Bolton v Arsenal (1715 GMT), Charlton v Birmingham, Liverpool v Manchester Utd (1230 GMT), Manchester City v Crystal Palace, Newcastle v Southampton, Portsmouth v Blackburn, Tottenham v Chelsea
Sunday: Fulham v West Brom (1605 GMT), Middlesbrough v Everton (1400 GMT)

PREVIEW: PRIMERA LIGA

Barca shaken up

Football

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona may still have a seven point lead on top of the Spanish first division but a loss last weekend showed that the title is far from won and they are out to get back on track against Real Sociedad on Sunday.

The Catalan club crashed 3-0 at Villarreal, their worst defeat of the season in any competition, to give a big boost to the confidence of the chasing pack led by arch-rivals Real Madrid.

"It wasn't the best way to start the New Year," said Barca coach Frank Rijkaard, after spending nearly an hour with his players in the dressing room on Monday analysing what went wrong.

"I'm calling on all the players to improve their concentration and raise their game."

After losing a game like we did last week, the thing is to win well in the following game. We can't think anymore about Villarreal, the world hasn't stopped turning."

Rijkaard will give a rare starting chance to Andres Iniesta, the Spanish under-21 international stepping into the breach left by the suspension to Deco.

Ronaldinho missed training on Wednesday, complaining of lumbar problems, but the World Footballer of the Year was back, albeit tentatively, on Thursday and Rijkaard is monitoring his progress closely.

For their part, Real Sociedad have lost Valery Karpin and Mikel Arteta for their visit to the Nou Camp, the pair going down with an injured right thigh and left knee ligament

problems respectively.

Barcelona have 42 points from their 18 games as the league reaches its halfway point over the weekend, and they are assured of taking the unofficial title of 'winter champions'.

Real Madrid and Valencia are back on 35 points, and lie second and third respectively separated by only the number of wins.

After triumphing 3-0 at Atletico in the Madrid derby last Sunday, Real are optimistic that they can keep up the pressure on Barca by beating visitors Real Zaragoza on Sunday.

"Seven points isn't an insurmountable gap. I remember one year when we won the league, we had a lead like that but we ended up having to fight until the last game of the season," said Real goalkeeper Iker Casillas.

However, Real's new coach Wanderley Luxemburgo has worries over the fitness of two of his key players.

Club captain Raul Gonzalez has a tender left hamstring while Ronaldo is suffering from a series of niggles in his left leg, a result of Spanish first division defenders paying constant attention to the Brazilian World Cup winner.

Zaragoza's task of restraining Real will not be helped by the suspension of the Argentine central defender Gabriel Milito, who last season had two outstanding games against the club that signed him and then refused to complete the deal on the pretext of a failed medical test.

If the top two slip up, then Valencia could take advantage.

After a shaky start, Valencia coach Claudio Ranieri has guided the reigning Spanish champions to eight straight unbeaten games and will be looking to extend the streak to nine at Osasuna.

FIXTURES

Saturday (kick off GMT): Celta v Atletico Madrid (1600), Malaga v Sevilla (2100)
Sunday: Albacete v Racing Santander (1600), Athletic Bilbao v Espanyol (1600), Real Betis v Real Mallorca (1600), Deportivo La Coruna v Numancia (1600), Levante v Villarreal (1600), Osasuna v Valencia (1600), Barcelona v Real Sociedad (1800), Real Madrid v Real Zaragoza (2000)

Real sign Danish international

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid have signed Everton's Danish international Thomas Gravesen on a three-and-a-half year contract, the Spanish club announced Friday.

"Real Madrid and Everton have reached an agreement for the transfer of Thomas Gravesen," Real said in a statement.

"Gravesen will play for Real Madrid for the remainder of the season and three more years."

The Spanish giants did not give details on the value of the transfer of the combative 28-year-old midfielder, but Spanish sporting dailies AS and Marca put it at around 3.5 million euros.

Maradona wins Greek hearts

AFP, Athens

Former Argentine superstar Diego Maradona said Thursday that the Greek national team winning the Euro 2004 title last summer was a "miracle."

"There are always miracles in football. Greece beat everybody and it is always good for football when small teams win championships. This shows that this small country has good players," an overweight Maradona told reporters at Athens airport.

Maradona was in Greece to give an interview with a private Greek television station.

"The people should keep their enthusiasm for football and this was great what happened in Greece. There are a lot of negative things in football, but that what happened in Euro 2004 was great for all."

ITALIAN CUP

Juve shown the door

AFP, Rome

Atalanta, currently anchored to the bottom of Serie A with just one win in 17 matches, sensationally dumped league leaders Juventus out of the Italian Cup Thursday to clinch a place in the quarter-finals.

Juventus, who have won the cup nine times, more than any other team, were held at home to a 3-3 draw having led three times and lost 5-3 on aggregate to the Bergamo club.

Andrea Lazzari, who netted both of Atalanta's goals in their first leg win, was once again the architect of Juve's downfall, scoring a hat-trick for the plucky visitors.

The only positive thing Juve could take from a demoralising defeat was the return from injury of striker David Trezeguet, who grabbed Juve's third goal 11 minutes from time and played the whole 90 minutes.

The France international recently underwent shoulder surgery and was making his first appearance since October 3.

Atalanta's prize for beating the Turin giants is a last eight meeting with Inter Milan, who on Wednesday knocked out Bologna.

Roma overwhelmed Siena 5-1 away from home to advance to the quarter-finals.

Trailing 2-1 from the first leg, Roma stormed into a two-goal lead thanks to a header from Greek Euro 2004 winner Traianos Dellas and Francesco Totti's angled shot before the game was suspended.

In Thursday's early ties, Cagliari and Udinese booked their places in the next round after wins against Lazio and Lecce respectively.

SPANISH CUP

Valladolid hold giants

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid made do with a goalless draw at Valladolid on Thursday in their Spanish Cup round of 16 first leg.

Having sold Fernando Morientes to Liverpool and announced Javier Portillo's return from a loan spell with Italian side Fiorentina, Real gave Michael Owen a chance to prove himself after he had been left on the sidelines for the first two matches under new coach Wanderley Luxemburgo.

But like his teammates, Owen and reserve striker partner Roberto Soldado drew a blank as Real settled for a result which leaves them favourites to reach the last eight after the second leg.