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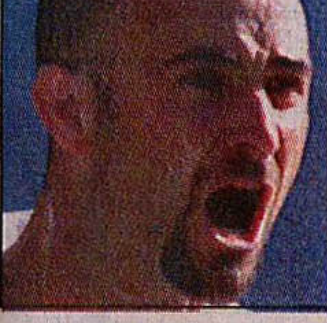


Did U Know?

The word 'deuce' in tennis comes from the French phrase à deux, which means 'at two' (as in needing two more points to win).



Talk Turkey



Andre Agassi
 (American tennis great)
 "I plan to be back, but a year's a long time. It's hard to say right now. You know me. I have to play it by ear and make some good decisions." After losing to Roger Federer at the Australian Open.



What to Watch

ESPN
 Bangladesh v Zimbabwe
 Third ODI
 Taped version at 1 pm
 Sportscentre
 Live at 8.30 pm
 Here We Go
 Same Day Delay at 10 pm

STAR Sports
 Australian Open tennis
 Women's Doubles Final/Mixed Doubles Semifinal
 Live at 10 am
 Australian Open tennis
 Men's Singles Semifinal
 Live at 2.30 pm
 Sportsline
 Live at 7.30 pm

Nat'l chess meet from today

SPORTS REPORTER
 Holder Mehdi Hasan Parag will face tough competition from three-time winner Minhajuddin Ahmed Sagar, ex-champion Mohammed Ali and sub-junior champion Shamima Akhter Liza in defence of his title when the BASIC Bank 26th National Junior (under-20) Chess Championship gets underway at the Bangladesh Chess Federation (BCF) hall-room today.

About 100 participants including ten rated players will take part in the nine-round Swiss League meet, informed BCF general secretary Syed Sujauddin Ahmed in a press conference at the NSC conference room yesterday.

BASIC Bank's Deputy General Manager S Asif Ahmed also spoke on the occasion.

The sponsors will provide Tk one lakh.

The champion will represent the country in this year's World and Asian Junior Championships.

PCB sacks Rashid

CRICINFO, undated
 Pakistan has sacked Haroon Rashid, their team manager, who has held the position since April 2003. The decision to replace him comes less than a month before Pakistan leave to tour India.

Haroon, 51, was removed because the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) thought they needed a change ahead of the India tour.

PCB chairman, Shaharyar Khan, told Pakistani newspaper The News: "Due to the sensitivities attached with the Indian tour it has been decided to appoint a manager who can handle things on the diplomatic front."

Shaharyar explained that Rashid's replacement has yet to be appointed, although an assistant manager will be in place for the Indian tour.

Rafique blows hot and cold

SPORTS REPORTER



Mohammad Rafique barely escaped disciplinary action ten months after he was forced to fly back home from Harare following a heated exchange with his captain Habibul Bashar.

The experienced left-arm spinner, who missed the first three one-day games because of a strained hamstring, lost his composure for the second time while going through a fitness test at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

This time the leading wicket-taker of the country engaged in a verbal war with team physio Robbie Hunt at the latter stage of a gruelling one-hour fitness test.

A visibly excited Rafique, who was at that time practising running between the wickets, furiously raised his bat at Hunt before fitness trainer Stuart Karpinnen intervened.

The unsavory incident stunned members of both the Bangladesh and Zimbabwe teams, who were also training at the time.

Rafique then walked off the ground with his head hanging over his shoulder and stayed inside the dressing room for the remainder of the training.

A visibly disturbed Hunt, on the other hand, kept quiet for the rest of the session and refused to talk to reporters while rushing back to the dressing room.

Although both Rafique and Hunt did not speak, it was assumed that the trouble started after the Australian physio said something that apparently offended Rafique.

Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore and Habibul Bashar tried to play down the incident in an attempt to uphold the spirit of the team ahead of the crucial fourth one-day match on January 29.

But Zimbabwe captain Tatenda Taibu, who was batting in the nets when the incident took place, certainly enjoyed the episode.

Taibu, who is leading the five-match series 2-1, refused to make any comment but with a broad smile on his face said: "I have curiously

SQUAD

Habibul Bashar (captain), Nafees Iqbal, Rajin Saleh, Aftab Ahmed, Mohammad Ashraf, Manzarul Islam, Khaled Mashud (wicketkeeper), Khaled Mahmud, Alok Kapali, Mohammad Rafique, Mashrafe-Bin-Mortuza, Tapash Baisya, Nazmul Hossain and Enamul Haque.

looked at what happened in the middle."

However, in the end the Bangladesh team management after a series of discussions brokered a truce with chief selector Faruque Ahmed playing the role of peacemaker.

"Here is an announcement for you that Rafique has passed the fitness test and he has been included in the 14-member squad for the last two games replacing left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak," he said while confirming that Rafique and Hunt had put the incident behind them.

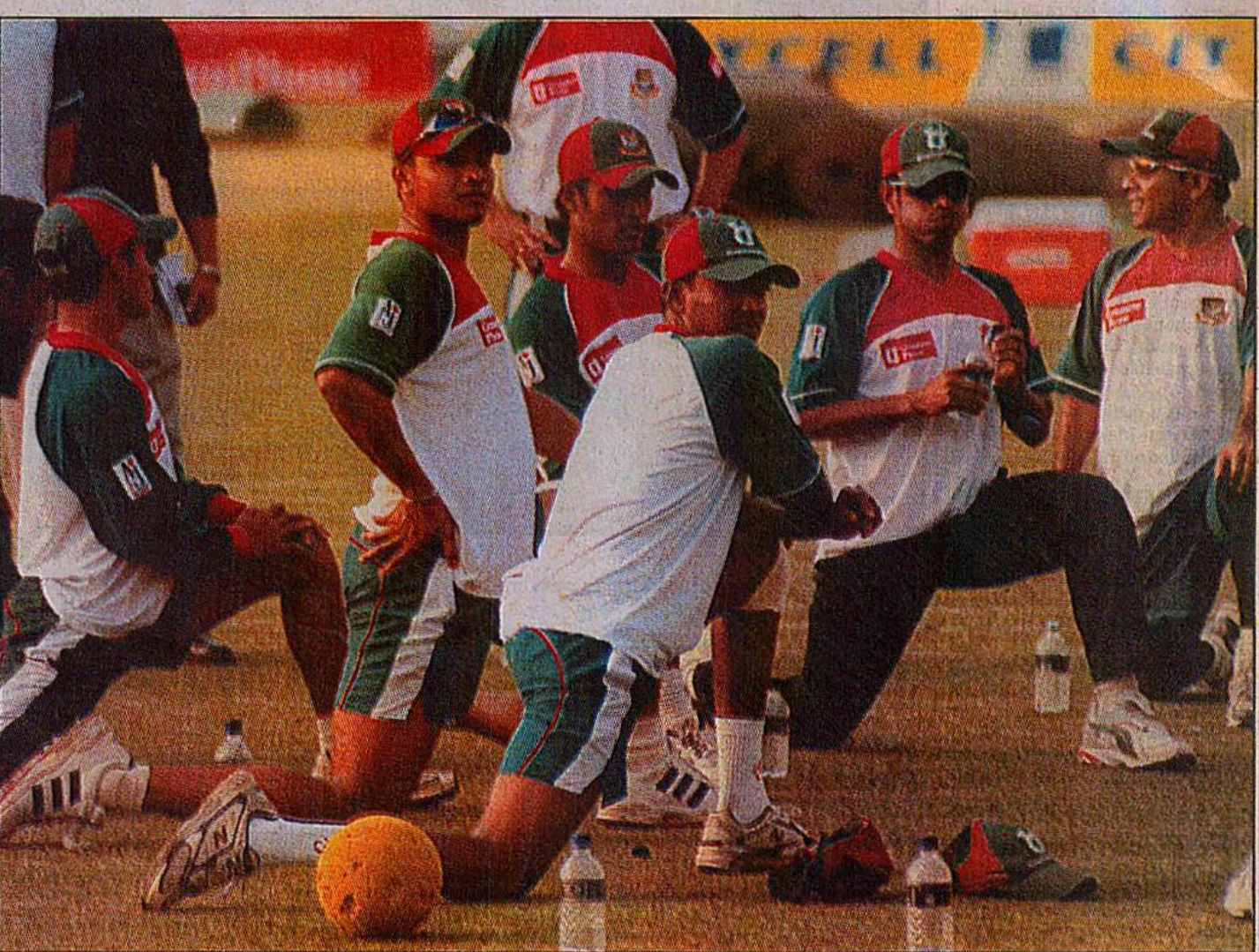
"I have talked to both Rafique and Hunt and all they wanted to say was they were friends again. Whatever happened today can happen to any team. But I can tell you that they shook hands and wanted to get on with the business of cricket," the chief selector told reporters.

But the uncalled for incident had a bearing on training as the cricketers, who flew into Dhaka from Chittagong in the morning, nonchalantly played a game of football before engaging in a monotonous drill.

A witty Whatmore however said that the training was a spirited one.

Bashar, on the other hand, was totally focused on tomorrow's day-night clash at the premier venue of the country.

"We have won the last game



The Bangladesh players stretch during a light training session at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. The Tigers, who trail the five-match one-day international series against Zimbabwe 1-2, play the fourth game tomorrow.

Serena wins classic contest to meet Lindsay in final

Australian Open

AFP, Melbourne

Serena Williams and Lindsay Davenport set up an Australian Open showdown here Thursday after fighting back from the brink of defeat in two epic semi-final duels.

Former world number one Williams pulled off an extraordinary escape to defeat fourth-seeded Russian teenager Maria Sharapova, saving three match points to win 2-6, 7-5, 8-6 in 2hr 39 min.

Top seed Davenport, meanwhile, was made to work just as hard before she finally overcame French 19th seed Nathalie Dechy 2-6, 7-6, 6-4 in a nerve-jangling encounter on Rod Laver Arena.

In the end, the experience of Williams and Davenport, who have nine grand slam titles between them, was to prove crucial.

For Williams, it was a case of history revisited. Her pulsating contest bore a striking resemblance to her 2003 Australian Open semifinal with Kim Clijsters, when she saved two match points before going on to win.

Williams said she had been comforted by the memory of that Houdini act as she fought off three match points on Sharapova's serve when trailing 5-4 in the final set.

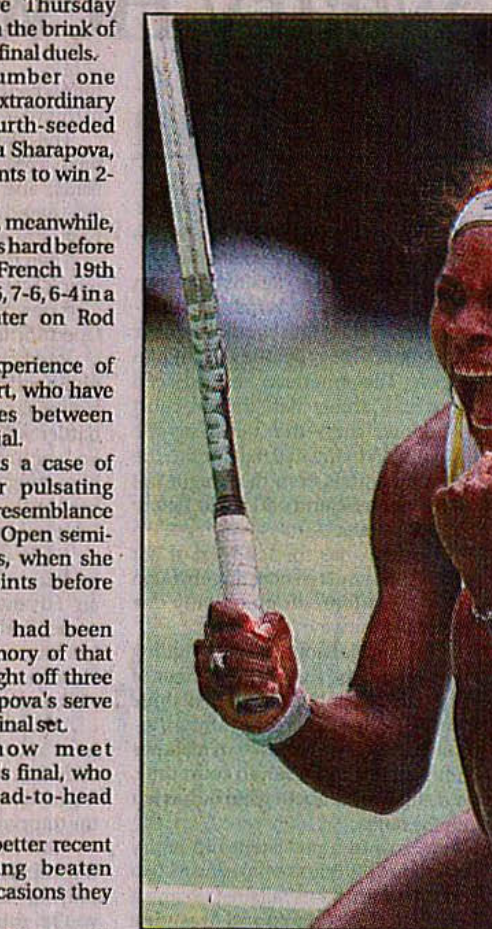
Williams will now meet Davenport in Saturday's final, who she leads 9-4 in head-to-head encounters.

Davenport has the better recent record though, having beaten Williams on the two occasions they met last season.

But the experienced 28-year-old will want to make a quantum improvement after toiling desperately against Dechy before finally staggering over the line.

She amassed 52 unforced errors, 10 double-faults and it might have been a different story had Dechy kept her composure when leading 4-1 in the second set tie-break.

Instead, she buckled and Davenport fought back to square the match, going on to clinch victory in



FEEL THE POWER! Serena Williams lets out a scream of ecstasy after winning her Australian Open semifinal against Maria Sharapova at Melbourne yesterday.

the decider.

Davenport said she thought she had been heading for defeat.

"Making as many errors as I was making and not feeling like I could even keep that many balls in, being down a set and 4-1 in the tiebreak... I

SEE PAGE 14 COL 5

Enamul fined, reprimand for Taylor

REUTERS, Dhaka

Zimbabwe batsman Brendan Taylor and Bangladesh spinner Enamul Haque have been reprimanded after clashing during Wednesday's third one-day international in Chittagong.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) also fined Enamul 25 per cent of his match fee for the angry confrontation, which followed a tussle between the pair when Taylor was running between the wickets and Enamul was fielding after bowling.

Bangladesh won the match by 40 runs and the victory enabled them to narrow Zimbabwe's lead to 2-1 in the five-match series.

Safin stops Federer run

AFP, Melbourne

Marat Safin gave himself the perfect birthday present by scoring a stunning upset over world number one Roger Federer to reach the Australian Open final here Thursday.

Swiss ace Federer, the overwhelming tournament favourite, saw his hopes of a third consecutive grand slam title dashed as Russian fourth seed Safin twice fought back from a set down to win 5-7, 6-4, 5-7, 7-6, 9-7.

Safin, celebrating his 25th birthday, will now play either second seed Andy Roddick or Australian hope Lleyton Hewitt in Sunday's final after securing a thrilling victory in 4hr 28min on the Rod Laver Arena.

It was a dream performance from Safin, who had been trounced in straight sets by Federer in last year's final, and was also a losing finalist at Melbourne Park in 2002.

SEE PAGE 14 COL 4

Pro league from 2006

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) will launch a professional football league early next year as part of Vision Bangladesh, the development plan for football in the country.

"The Vision Asia has given us a difficult task of introducing a nation-wide professional football league from January 2006. But we have accepted the challenge," said BFF president SA Sultan at a press briefing yesterday.

A five-member BFF delegation led by Sultan returned to Dhaka Wednesday night from Kuala Lumpur where they met Vision Asia officials to finalise the Vision Bangladesh programme.

Vision Asia, a programme for

development of the game in under-developed Asian nations, is the brainchild of AFC (Asian Football Confederation) president Mohammad Bin Hammam.

"They have asked us to name it (the professional league) Bangla League or B-League but we have expressed a different view about naming the tournament. We will find a suitable name for the competition which will replace the existing National Football League," Sultan said.

"We have been working on this for one and half years and now we are going to go on all-out action. The structure will be completed by September this year. We have accepted eight of their (Vision Asia) suggestions and we now have to open eight new departments for the first phase of Vision Bangladesh. We hope to implement them in three years time," added the BFF chief.

"They have just showed us a systematic and a professional way to

do the work which we had been doing in an unorganised manner," said Sultan.

The BFF's top priorities are setting up a professional infrastructure, rebuilding the competitions, coaches' education, referees' development, marketing, communications and forming a National Task Force featuring representatives from ministries, the federation, sponsors and all related organisations.

"There will be no changes in the elected executive committee as part of administration restructure but like the AFC, we also feel that we need full-time professionals to execute the committee decisions," Sultan said. "Unless football in Bangladesh becomes a golden game, we will have deficits. But in three years, we hope to overcome that problem."

BFF general secretary Anwarul

SEE PAGE 14 COL 4

Munna stays semi-conscious

SPORTS REPORTER

Lying motionless in a bed at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the Bangladesh Medical College and Hospital (BMCH), former Bangladesh international defender Monem Munna, who once roamed the football pitch like a king, was fighting for life.

The ex-national football captain was transferred to the BMCH on Wednesday night from the Kidney Hospital and Dialysis Centre in a critical condition.

"He is in a coma but I should add that he is in a semi-conscious state and not unconscious. He has been suffering from multi-organ dysfunction," said Dr. Mujibul Haque Molla, the head of nephrology department of BMCH after the meeting of a medical board yesterday.

Munna, one of the finest defenders in the history of Bangladesh's football, was a booter destined for stardom and was among the country's highest-paid booters of all time.

After retiring from the game in 1998, Munna was diagnosed with kidney related complications and underwent a transplantation in January 2000 in Bangalore, India. He had made a comeback to football since in the role of the manager of Abahani where he played for 12 years.

"When he was admitted to this hospital, we found him suffering from multiple problems. Following a viral fever, he suffered septicemia, which means his blood became infected. His haemoglobin level is low and so is the white blood count. He came here with high fever and very low blood pressure including renal failure. We kept him on ventila-

tion and once we managed to improve his blood pressure, we started giving him dialysis," the kidney specialist informed.

"It is a rare case but we have covered everything in our power. He is on antibiotics but I am in no position to comment on his condition unless I get the blood-culture reports which is due in 48 hours."

The doctors at BMCH were in contact with the hospital in Bangalore where Munna's transplantation was done.

It was learned that Karuna Kiran, the surgeon who performed the operation on the footballer, had requested that Munna be flown to Bangalore once his condition became stable.

"In his present state, it will take at least one week before he can be

SEE PAGE 14 COL 1



KEEP FIGHTING! A nurse fixes the respirator of a critically ill former Bangladesh football captain Monem Munna at the Bangladesh Medical College and Hospital in Dhanmondi yesterday. Munna, who is suffering from kidney related complications, was learnt to be in a semi-conscious state.

Crucial Pak-WI tie today

AFP, Adelaide



Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq said Thursday that his team would need a dramatic reversal of form if they were to give Australia a decent challenge in the triangular VB Series competition.

Pakistan face the West Indies in a crucial match at the Adelaide Oval on Friday and were favourites to join Australia in the best-of-three finals series.

Unbeaten Australia have already qualified for the finals while Pakistan, with just one win, have not confirmed their place, although they are two points ahead of the West Indies on the qualifying table.

Inzamam said Pakistan needed to beat the Windies on Friday then win their remaining two qualifying matches in Perth to ensure they went into the finals with the confi-

dence needed to beat the host nation.

"If we are through to the finals we need some victories, because the last couple of months, the last two months, we are not playing good cricket," Inzamam said.

"If we win, then winning is I think a habit and we will continue this, that's what will help in the finals."

"If we reach the finals, it is very important for us to win a victory against Australia before that."

Inzamam estimated Pakistan was still 20-30 per cent below playing its best cricket.

He said that was largely due to the absence of injured pace trio Shoaib Akhtar, Mohammad Sami and Shabbir Ahmed, and also to spinner Shoaib Malik's being ruled out with a suspension.

The captain, himself under pressure in his current role, also noted that his side's fielding had been poor.

But he said a long batting line-up, including all-rounders Shahid

Afridi, Abdul Razaq, Azhar Mahmood and Mohammad Hafeez, could give Pakistan the edge over the West Indies on Friday.

West Indian skipper Brian Lara disagreed, saying his side had the better bowling attack.

"I think we're bowling better, we've got wicket-takers," Lara said.

"On a couple of occasions in the three matches we've played against Australia we had them four wickets down for little runs."

"But I think overall both teams will have to improve to beat Australia, whoever meets them in the finals."

Left-arm swing bowler Pedro Collins has been the standout for the West Indies in their past two matches, taking 5-43 against Australia in Adelaide on Wednesday following his 3-8 against the world champions in Brisbane last week.

Although the West Indies are winless so far, Lara said his team was confident they could overcome

SEE PAGE 14 COL 1

2nd tsunami cricket match postponed

AFP, London

The second cricket Tsunami appeal match has been postponed until April due to concerns about player workloads, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced in a statement here Thursday.

The match had been due to take place on February 13 in Kolkata.

But following talks between the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), ICC member countries and players' representatives, ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed said a decision had been taken to put the match back in the calendar.

"On reviewing the proposed date of February 13, it became apparent that there were serious workload issues for many of the players who have indicated a desire to play in this match," Speed said.

"At that time, England will still be in South Africa and Australia's series against New Zealand will be about to begin," he added.