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# Star SPORT

DHAKA SATURDAY JANUARY 29, 2005, E-MAIL: dssports@gononet.com

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## Crunch match today

SPORTS REPORTER



The toss has become the centre of interest in the one-day international series.

In the first three games, the toss winning sides have batted first and won and that is why both Bangladesh and Zimbabwe will be keeping one eye on the flip of the coin today hoping luck will go their way when they meet for the fourth encounter of the five-match series at another featherbed of a track at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

But Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore and captain Habibul Bashar said the win in the third match in Chittagong had given the Tigers the confidence to face any situation head on.

"This is cricket where winning the toss and losing it are very much parts of the game. I think it looks a little bit harder to chase runs if you get a total in excess of 230 or 240. But I think we are capable of winning a match batting second and we are not scared of chasing," said Whatmore whose side trail Zimbabwe 1-2 in the series.

"The morale of the team is high because they fought back to win the third game. We are still alive in the series and it's a vibrant feeling. We want to do everything we can to make the last one-day on January 31 a grand finale," said the confident Bangladesh coach.

"The last game was also a crunch one as well and we realise what we have to do and we'll have to win the series the hard way. We have another crunch match tomorrow and I think we are good enough to win it," he added.

Whatmore said that he was not worried with the problems faced by the middle-order which saw Bangladesh struggling to accelerate the score in the in the previous games.

"It's not uncommon in the other teams of the world too. If you pick up a wicket or two that's the best way to slow down the run rate. It's not exclusively a problem for us. It was not always possible to bat well throughout the 50 overs and you know that there will be some little hitches when you are batting."

Zimbabwe captain Tendin Taibu and Elton Chibumbura have given Bangladesh most headaches in the series and Whatmore said that they

were working on ways to stymie the effects of the two.

"It is in the end overs that they have been most lethal so we have a few plans for them."

Tigers skipper Bashar emphasised on not repeating mistakes from earlier games.

"I think we lost the first two games because of one or two mistakes. We can't do anything about the toss and that's why we should focus on our own performance and we will have to win the match batting second if necessary."

Bashar said he preferred to keep the batting line-up flexible and was keen on seeing partnerships developing in the middle.

"It is not always good to go for big shots. We should also concentrate on singles sometimes."

Taibu's team practised under lights in the afternoon and the 21-year old was showing no signs of any pressure after the defeat in the third game in Chittagong.

"We play the game to enjoy it. We play at our best when we enjoy the game and we are going to try and do the same thing. I think pressure is always there but the boys have coped with pressure very well. So it



(L) Mohammad Rafique runs in to bowl as Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar watches during practice in the morning yesterday. (R) Zimbabwe skipper Tendin Taibu doing some knocking when his team trained in the afternoon under lights.

## Lara in Lara mood

AFP, Adelaide



Skipper Brian Lara returned to his brilliant best Friday, blasting a record-breaking 156 as the West Indies put Pakistan to the sword with a 58-run victory to keep their tri-series hopes alive.

Lara's superb knock, his 19th century in one-day matches, helped the Windies to a ground-record 339 for four, a tally well beyond the means of a lifeless Pakistan who could manage just 281 for nine in reply.

It was also the highest individual one-day score at the Adelaide Oval, surpassing Indian Sourav Ganguly's 141 in the 1999-2000 season.

Playing in his 250th limited-overs international, it was Lara's fifth one-day century against Pakistan coming off 138 balls as he smacked five booming sixes and 12 fours.

After a scratchy start, Lara, still playing with the wrist injury which has plagued him for most of the series, put his foot on the gas and kept pushing hard.

His first 50 came off 81 balls, his second from 36 and his third off just 19 deliveries in 17 minutes as he humiliated the woeful Pakistan attack.

"Early on I still got a feeling of pain in my wrist, the ball wasn't coming off the bat properly, the bat had a bit of a split on it. Maybe that was the reason," Lara said.

"But as I got warm and the adrenaline started flowing, I think things really worked out later on."

Together with left-hander Shivnarine Chanderpaul, the pair provided the backbone which allowed the Windies to stand tall in their hour of need, with a partnership which piled on 187 runs on a

slow batting wicket.

"I enjoyed batting today and I enjoyed the fact that I went out there and did something for the team, so I'm quite happy," Lara said.

"But that's all in the past now. I'm looking forward to Tuesday and another good performance from the 11 guys that take the field."

Defeat in the match would have ended any hopes the West Indies had of playing in the best-of-three finals series against Australia, who have already qualified.

Instead, Pakistan, who were two points clear of their rivals, now trail them by the same margin and face the unbeaten host nation in Perth on Sunday.

They will then play a final match against the West Indies, also in Perth, next Tuesday which will decide the fate of both teams.

The West Indian total was the highest for a one-day match at the Adelaide Oval, beating the previous best of 329 for five set by Australia against India in 2000, and was also the fourth-highest ever set in Australia.

Lara and Chanderpaul set the platform to reach it, carrying the Windies from a tentative 56 for two after being sent in to bat.

Opener Chris Gayle was first to

fall when he was bowled by Iftikhar Anjum for just nine.

His partner Ricardo Powell, slotting in for Wavell Hinds who was moved down the order, was then trapped lbw by Rana Navedul Hasan for 23.

The situation then worsened when Ramnaresh Sarwan was forced to retire on two after a Rana Navedul Hasan delivery struck him on the right elbow.

Chanderpaul and Lara then set about restoring cricketing pride to the West Indies, although their partnership started with neither batsman able to find their timing or rhythm but both showing grit to hang in.

It was the almost the 40th over before the pair really started to really accelerate the run-rate.

Chanderpaul reached 85 off 92 balls before he was caught by Mohammad Hafeez off Shahid Afridi as the pair continued to step up the tempo in the 43rd over.

Lara was fortunate when on 97 after Afridi missed a simple caught and bowled opportunity and later he was dropped in the field while on 143.

His demise finally came when he was bowled by off-spinner Mohammad Hafeez in the 49th over

## Munna's condition improves slightly

SPORTS REPORTER

The condition of ailing former Bangladesh defender Monem Munna improved slightly yesterday but doctors said he was not out of danger yet.

"He is improving but we are not in a position to say that he had passed a critical stage because he is still breathing through a respirator," said Dr Mujibul Haque Molla, head of nephrology department at the Bangladesh Medical College and Hospital (BMCH) in Dhanmondi.

The ex-national football captain had been transferred to the BMCH on Wednesday night from the Kidney Hospital and Dialysis Centre in a semi-conscious state.

But the duty doctor of BMCH Ziaul Haque Bhuiyan told reporters that the legendary Abahani defender had regained his consciousness for brief period and was able to recognise those around him at the Intensive Care Unit.

"He talked and wrote his mobile number and even asked about his children. He also indicated with a sign to pray for him," informed Ziaul.

NAT'L JR CHESS

## Parag starts positively

SPORTS REPORTER

Reigning champion Mehdi Hasan Parag made good start when the BASIC Bank 26th National Sub-Junior (Under-20) Chess Championship began at the Bangladesh Chess Federation yesterday.

Parag beat Mohammad Sohel in the first round of the nine-round Swiss-league competition.

In the other matches, Robin beat Dhillan, Shahin beat Titu, Ali beat Farhan, Mustafa beat Shuvo, Salehin beat Wadusar, Liza beat Sohel Pathan, Nahid beat Shamim.

A total of 105 players including 13 rated players from Dhaka and 30 district sports associations are taking part in the meet.

## Pietersen has no soft corner

AFP, Kimberley

England batsman Kevin Pietersen thrashed the South Africa A bowlers Thursday and took his adopted country to victory in his first match back in the land where he learned the game.

Pietersen hammered 97 off 84 balls as England gained a six-wicket win over the South African second string in their only limited-overs warm-up game ahead of a seven-match one-day international series.

SEE PAGE 14 COL 3

## PREVIEW: WOMEN'S FINAL

## Serena the one to beat

### Australian Open

AFP, Melbourne

Serena Williams says she is impossible to beat at times, and there are a few people who might now be tempted to agree.

The former world number one has silenced the critics who suggested she is a spent force by advancing to an all-American final at the Australian Open, where she plays top seed Lindsay Davenport here Saturday.

As much as anything it is the manner in which six-time Grand Slam title winner Williams won through to her showdown with Davenport that should eradicate any lingering question marks over her competitive hunger.

Facing match-point on three occasions in her semi-final with Maria Sharapova, she stared down the challenge nervelessly and

clawed her way back from the brink of defeat for a 2-6, 7-5, 8-6 victory.

The 23-year-old American insists she has nothing to prove to anyone, and has bristled throughout the past fortnight at the notion her tennis star is on the wane as she chases her first Grand Slam title since Wimbledon in 2003.

But she admitted Friday that coming through her ordeal of fire against Sharapova, who had beaten Williams in the Wimbledon and WTA Championship finals last season, had been doubly satisfying.

"When you're winning matches 6-2, 6-1 you feel better -- you're not sore, you feel fresh, you're body's good," Williams said. "But when you're winning 8-6 in the third after saving three match-points, it's even better."

"It's like you know that you can do whatever you set your mind to. It's almost a better feeling to win that close."

"In that sense I've played some tough matches in the past year and I

haven't been able to win them all. It was a good feeling to come through that."

It was the second time Williams had saved match-points in an Australian Open semi-final following a similar escape act against Kim Clijsters in 2003, and reinforced her stated view that she remains the "top fighter out there."

During a 2004 that saw her finish without a Grand Slam title, and which also saw her drop out of the top 10 for the first time since 1999, Williams says her confidence remained intact.

"I never doubt myself. I'm always hard on myself and say different things like, 'I need to do this better.' But I never will put that doubt in my mind."

"I'm a firm believer that when I play my best tennis and when I serve well and when I hit my balls well and when I'm actually not making 50 errors, I think everyone would agree it's next to impossible for someone

SEE PAGE 14 COL 1

## Tireless Hewitt downs Roddick

AFP, Melbourne

Lleyton Hewitt took a huge step towards becoming the first home-grown Australian Open champion for 29 years Friday after beating American Andy Roddick to reach the final for the first time.

Australian third seed Hewitt, who is aiming to emulate compatriot Mark Edmondson's title triumph in 1976, came from behind to wear down big-serving second seed Roddick, triumphing 3-6, 7-6, 7-6, 6-1 in 2hr 54min.

Hewitt now plays Russian fourth seed Maria Sharapova for the singles 'crown' on Sunday, the first time an Australian has reached the final since Pat Cash in 1988.

"It's awesome, it really is. It's a little bit hard to believe right at the moment," Hewitt said.

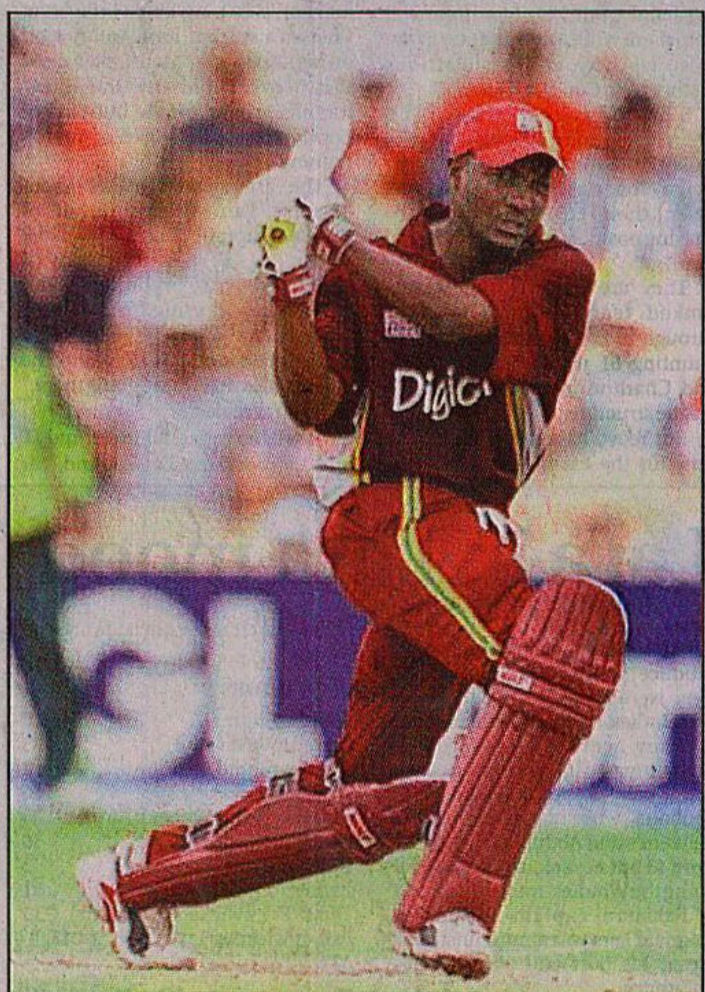
"But I know all the preparation I have done for a long time to come into this tournament."

"I would have given anything to be in this position, to have an opportunity to play one match for the title

SEE PAGE 14 COL 2

## What to Watch

- BTV and ESPN**  
 Bangladesh v Zimbabwe  
 Fourth ODI  
 Live at 12.50 pm
- ESPN**  
 Sportscentre Week in Review  
 Repeat at 4.30 pm  
 Arsenal v Wolves  
 FA Cup fourth round  
 Live at 9 pm  
 Man United v Middlesbrough  
 FA Cup fourth round  
 Live at 11.15 pm
- STAR Sports**  
 Australian Open  
 Women's Singles & Men's Doubles  
 Finals  
 Live at 8.30 am  
 Primera Liga  
 Sevilla v Barcelona  
 Live at 2.30 am (Sunday)



ENJOY! Brian Lara smashes one during his epic 156 against Pakistan at the Adelaide Oval yesterday.

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