

Gaibandha cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT

First Division Cricket league Our Correspondent, Gaibandha Munshipara Krira Sangstha defeated GKSP by 61 runs in the First Division Cricket league at Gaibandha Stadium yesterday. Winning the toss, Munshipara made a fighting 193 runs before being all out in 47.1 overs. In reply, GKSP managed to score 132 in 42 overs.

Worcestershire sign de Bruyn

AFP, London

South Africa Test batsman Zander de Bruyn has joined Worcestershire as one of their overseas players for 2005.

De Bruyn, 29, made his Test debut last year and has since hit three hundreds and three half-centuries in the South African domestic season.

In the field, he is also a fast-medium bowler and Tom Moody, Worcestershire's director of cricket, said de Bruyn was just the kinds of player the midlands county were after.

"We have spent some time looking for a batting all-rounder to fill one of our overseas spots, and I believe we have found the right person in Zander," said Moody, whose team were relegated from Division One of the County Championship last summer following promotion the previous year.

"He has had an outstanding first-class season in South Africa and is determined to make the grade at international level," Moody, himself a former Australia batting all-rounder added.

"He will bring the right qualities to our squad, and I have no doubt he will make a positive impact throughout the season."

De Bruyn, who was dropped from the South Africa team after featuring in the first Test of the recent 2-1 home series defeat against England, was upbeat about his prospects at New Road.

"I am really looking forward to the opportunity of playing with Worcestershire and to contributing to a successful season," he said.

Nafees' new

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teacher at Green Valley International School.

Relatives, friends, cricketers, journalists and selected guests, attended the engagement function.

High drama

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Africa and England at Springbok Park on Wednesday:

ENGLAND: 270 for 5 in 50 overs (Pietersen 108 not out, Vaughan 42, Collingwood 40, Trescottick 37; Hall 1-50)

SOUTH AFRICA

Smith c Jones b Hoggard	25
De Villiers c sub (Solanki) b Ali	20
Kallis c Trescottick b Giles	63
Gibbs c Gough b Hoggard	78
Kemp b Gough	32
Boucher c Giles b Ali	15
Pollock not out	17
Prince run out (Bell)	0
Hall st Jones b Ali	0
Extras: (b-4, lb-6, nb-5, w-5)	20
Total: (For 8 wkts in 50 overs)	270
Fall of wickets: 1-47, 2-51, 3-185, 4-237, 5-239, 6-268, 7-269, 8-270	
Did not bat: Ntini, Nel	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Gough	10	0	49	1
Hoggard	10	1	42	2
Ali	8	0	56	3
Collingwood	10	0	42	0
Giles	8	0	46	1
Trescottick	4	0	25	0

Result: Match tied and England lead 7-ODI series 1-0.
Man-of-the-match: Kevin Pietersen.
Next match: Port Elizabeth, Feb 4.

Smith stays upbeat



REUTERS, Bloemfontein

South Africa captain Graeme Smith remained upbeat despite his team losing five wickets for 33 runs to tie the second one-day international against England on Wednesday.

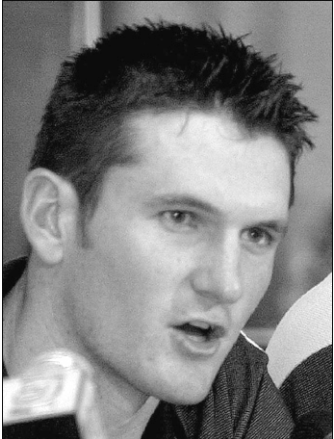
"It was obviously disappointing that we didn't close it out when we needed three runs off six balls, but there are lots of positives to come out of the game," Smith told reporters.

"Everything was a lot better than in Johannesburg and we actually took the game away from them before things went awry in the last over. Funny things can happen in the last over, so that's why we aim to finish games before that.

Smith praised England's bowlers, especially Kabir Ali, for their fightback.

"They're also allowed to bowl well and put the ball in the right places and I thought Kabir Ali bowled a superb last three deliveries, especially since the first two in that over had been waist-high full tosses.

"We move to Port Elizabeth (for the third match) and we will take a lot of confidence there. When you go



GRAEME SMITH

through a trough like we've done it's important to get that confidence back and learn how to win games."

Marcus Trescottick, who stood in as captain in the field for England as Michael Vaughan had a stomach bug, played down his role at the death.

"I didn't know what was going on,

I was more concerned with chatting with Kabir than the field settings.

"Kabir is our death bowler and he has plenty of experience of that with Worcestershire. He hadn't had the greatest night and it was a crucial over, but he stuck his hand up and to do that in front of 15,000 people with the game in your hands and the rest of the match suddenly irrelevant is pretty impressive," Trescottick said.

The England opener admitted he thought his team was well beaten at times.

"I didn't think we could come back, but it's amazing what pressure does. It's a very, very good feeling to pull that one back from the fire," Trescottick said.

"We're pretty delighted to tie the game after the situation we were in."

Earlier, South African-born Kevin Pietersen caned an unbeaten 108 off 96 balls as England made 270 for five after they were surprisingly sent in on a good batting pitch.

"It's fantastic. I'm just thrilled to be on this tour and representing England," said Petersen, who praised also Ali.

"He showed the biggest bit of character and did a great job."

Vaughan may be fit for today's tie

BBC ONLINE, undated

Captain Michael Vaughan hopes to be fit enough to help protect England's 1-0 lead in the one-day series in the third match against South Africa on Friday.

Vaughan was forced out by a virus from the latter stages of Thursday's thrilling tie in Bloemfontein.

He said: "I am not too bad. I didn't feel too good yesterday. But I hope to play, and it has got better."

England may elect to replace Kabir Ali with fit-again Steve Harmison, despite Ali's heroic final over in Bloemfontein.

Vaughan said: "It was a real gutsy performance from the young Kabir.

"To gather his thoughts and be mentally tough enough to produce those yorkers was a great effort.

"The more death-bowling options we have the better, and he is certainly one of those options."

South Africa will continue their policy of batting Herschelle Gibbs at number four at St George's, a ground which proved hard work for the batsmen during the 2003 World Cup.

It was the venue where England should have defeated Australia only for an incredible, unbroken ninth-wicket stand of 73 between Michael Bevan and Andy Bichel to overhaul a 205-run target in the final over.

MILLROSE GAMES

Johnson, Lagat favourites



AFP, New York

Four-time world champion Allen Johnson and Frenchman Ladji Doucoure have both confirmed their entries in the 98th Millrose Games.

The 33-year-old Johnson, of the United States, and the defending Millrose champion is facing one of the brightest young talents in 21-year-old Doucoure in Friday's indoor track and field meet at Madison Square Garden.

The 2004 Olympic silver medalist Bernard Lagat will also be trying to repeat his 2003 title in the Wanamaker mile.

In one of the most highly anticipated miles in years, the 30-year-old Kenyan and 2000 Olympic bronze medalist will duel with American favourite Alan Webb.

Johnson will be tough to keep off the podium as he has two world indoor titles and a gold medal from the 1996 Summer Games. A fall in the rounds at the Athens Olympics kept him from trying to win his second hurdles gold.

Doucoure broke the French record in the 2004 Olympic semi-finals with his time of 13.06 seconds.

New Yorkers have grown accustomed to seeing mild-mannered Lagat whose previous Wanamaker Mile triumphs came in odd-

numbered years (2001 and 2003) so he looks to be on track to do it again.

Friday's mile also includes 2004 Olympic trials third-place finisher Rob Myers, who owns a personal best of three minutes 53.78 seconds, Laban Rotich of Kenya, who upset Lagat last Saturday at the Boston Indoor Games and Wanamaker runner-up James Thie of Great Britain.

When he won at Millrose in 2003, it was a strategically-run race that took 4:00.36; his 2001 triumph came in 3:58.62.

"I'd like to see the first quarter-mile run in about 55 seconds," said Lagat.

Hingis loses comeback test

AFP, Pattaya

Former world number one Martina Hingis failed in her comeback attempt when she was beaten 1-6, 6-2, 6-2 by Marlene Weingartner in the first round of the Volvo Open in Pattaya.

It was the first match since October 2002 for Hingis, who retired from tennis after failing to sufficiently recover from a left ankle injury.

Saying at first that she was playing the event to raise money for children's charities, she later admitted that she wanted to judge whether she might be able to consider a full comeback.

On the evidence of her performance against 74th-ranked Weingartner, that appears unlikely.

"I think I'm ready for playing exhibitions," said Hingis. "I felt pretty good about my game. I just couldn't raise it when she started playing quicker.

"She really raised her level, and that's another step for me to do physically. That's the game of today."

Although Hingis took the opening set with ease, that was in large part due to her opponent's errors.

Weingartner, perhaps nervous at playing in such a high-profile match, struggled to keep the rallies going and also had problems with her serve.

She was broken in all four of her service games in the first set, conceding the set with her third double-fault as she was broken to love, and Hingis seemed to be heading for a comfortable and encouraging victory.

But once Weingartner settled, early in the second set, the match began to turn. Hingis was never the most powerful of players, and her serve in particular began to be punished by her German opponent.

The turning point came as Hingis led 2-1 and then 40-0 on her opponents serve. Weingartner responded by winning nine of the next 10 points, breaking to lead 3-2, and Hingis' game became increasingly ineffective against a stronger and more confident opponent.

More good returns gave Weingartner another break for 5-2, and the final set slipped away from Hingis just as quickly.

A netted backhand gave Weingartner a break for 1-0, and an impressive double-handed backhand down the line gave her a second break and virtually ended the contest.

"It takes so much energy and so much focus," said Hingis.

"I almost didn't miss a ball in the first set. But keeping that focused and that consistent the whole match is just almost impossible at this point.

"I've never had plans further than this step. Maybe I'll play some exhibitions. That's my plan at the moment. At this point I have no plans to play any more tournaments.

"My life has been very good the last couple of years. I'm very comfortable, and this is really hard work."

Zvonareva, Conchita advance

REUTERS, Pattaya

Top seed Vera Zvonareva fired nine aces on her way to a 6-2, 6-3 win over Germany's Anca Barna in the second round of the Thailand Open on Thursday.

Spain's Conchita Martinez won the last four games to defeat Croatia's Silvija Talaja 7-5, 2-6, 7-5 for her place in the quarterfinals.

Third seed Martinez struggled to establish any kind of rhythm or consistency. The 32-year-old twice had to recover a break of serve but she took the first set when Talaja hit her fourth double fault.

A forehand error from Martinez in the second set gave Talaja a 3-2 lead and the Croatian broke again to love for 5-2.

Talaja failed to serve out the match at 5-4 in the third and Martinez saved two break points at 5-5 before taking victory.

Russian Zvonareva's serve and forehand did the most damage against Barna but after breaking to a 4-1 lead in the second set the 20-year-old from Moscow suffered a scare when she lost the next eight points in good condition.

"Even if we get another 20, or 30 or 40mm on the outfield, it will drain straight through and as soon rain stops tomorrow we can uncover and be ready to play," curator Tony Ware said Thursday.

Both teams will be named on Friday.

TEAMS

AUSTRALIA (probable): Matthew Hayden, Adam Gilchrist, Ricky Ponting (captain), Damien Martyn, Darren Lehmann, Michael Clarke, Andrew Symonds, Shane Watson, Brett Lee, Jason Gillespie, Glenn McGrath.

PAKISTAN (probable): Salman Butt, Kamran Akmal, Yasir Hameed, Younus Youhana, Inzamamul Haq (captain), Shoaib Malik, Abdul Razzaq, Shahid Afridi, Azhar Mahmood, Rao Iftikhar, Navedul Hasan.

Olympic cities on edge



AFP, Paris

The fate of the five cities vying for the right to host the 2012 Olympics will be decided over the next few weeks when the IOC's powerful evaluation commission visits each of them before delivering it's verdict on their bids.

Although the commission's findings will not guarantee a winner, a critical report on any of the five hopefuls -- Madrid, Paris, London, Moscow and New York -- will almost certainly prove fatal.

The commission, led by 1984 Olympic women's 400m hurdle champion Nawal El Montawakel, began its study on Wednesday when the 12-strong team touched down in Madrid.

For the next seven weeks all five would-be hosts will be visited and then the commission will publish its findings in May.

The 2012 report will carry more weight than in previous bids.

Even since the Salt Lake City scandal in 1999, when 10 IOC members were either expelled or resigned, members have been banned from visiting bid cities.

The IOC ethics commission has also introduced draconian restrictions on the bid cities, dramatically reducing their chances of meeting IOC members and trying to win over their vote.

Even a planned debate between the five cities to be shown on BBC World was rejected by the ethics commission.

Members of the evaluation commission have been barred from talking to the press during their whirlwind trips to the five cities.

"We had to sign a confidentiality agreement," members of the commission have told AFP.

The visits by the commission will be a nerve-wracking time for the cities. Their plans to host the Games will come under the microscope and the slightest hiccup could dash their hopes.

The final report will not list the cities in order but IOC members know how to read the carefully crafted observations in the conclusion where key phrases make it clear the commission's verdict.

Both London and Madrid will be using their Royal families to try and impress the evaluation team at an official reception.

All five cities will also be hoping to ensure there are no public protests by people opposed to the

Olympics coming to the city.

IOC members are very wary of protest groups, they need to know that they are welcome.

On the eve of the start of the tour, Paris is considered favourite to win in Singapore, with New York and London close behind. Madrid and Moscow are considered as outsiders.

But the battle to win 2012 is expected to be the closest in modern history, with the winner being announced at the IOC Congress on July 6 in Singapore.

A bad evaluation report or a host of other political machinations within the IOC can derail a bid.

Originally the 2012 vote was to be the star item at Singapore but it has now been overshadowed by the expected move to expell IOC members Ivan Slakov and vice-president Kim Un Yong for bringing the movement into disgrace.

Slavkov was caught on a BBC Panorama sting into vote buying within the IOC. Kim was jailed for two years by a Korean court on corruption charges.

Both men are expected to fight the bid to oust them and members' minds are more likely to be fully focused on the fate of Kim and Slavkov than the fate of the 2012 candidates.

FACTBOX

A factfile on the five 2012 bid cities -- London, Paris, New York, Madrid and Moscow - and where they stand five months from the vote in Singapore on July 6.

LONDON

Population: City -- 2.9 million, Greater London -- 7.4 million
Bid slogan: "Back the bid"
Cash investment: 3.8 billion dollars for the Games, 15.8 billion on infrastructure.

Main Olympic stadium: 80,000 capacity for Games, reduced to 25,000 for use after the Games.
Distances: 97 per cent of athletes will be within 30 minutes of their venue, 80 per cent within 20 mins.

Previous Olympics: 1908, 1948
Chances: London got off to a bad start but have made up ground fast with bid leaders Seb Coe and Keith Mills making their presence felt. Considered by some observers to be second to Paris at this stage, London will need a massive final push to pull off victory.

MOSCOW

Population: 10.5 million
Bid slogan: "Believe in one's dream"
Cash investment: 8 billion dollars for Games and infrastructure
Main Olympic stadium: 80,000 capacity.

Distances: the majority of Olympic venues will be situated within 12km

distance from the centre of the city. The maximum distance between the venues will be approximately 22-25km.

Previous Olympics: 1980
Chances: Moscow were lucky to make it to final five and only intense political pressure got them through. Bid driven by Moscow Mayor and so far failing to win many converts. Cannot be ruled out but have a lot of ground to make up on their fourivals.

PARIS

Population: City -- 2.3 million, Greater Paris -- 11.2 million
Bid slogan: "L'Amour des Jeux" (Love of the Games)
Cash investment: 2.6 billion dollars for Games, 6.2 billion dollars for infrastructure.

Main Olympic stadium: 80,000 capacity (Stade de France)
Distances: 75 per cent of events will take place within 12kms of Olympic Village.

Previous Olympics: 1924
Chances: Began campaign as favourites and still considered the front runners which is not necessarily a good thing this far out. Quietly working in the background to win votes and doing everything not to make a major mistake. New team has learnt from failure of the 2008 bid.

NEW YORK

Population: 8 million
Bid slogan: "Let the dreams begin"

Cash investment: 7.5 billion dollars for Games and infrastructure
Main Olympic stadium: 78,000 capacity

Distances: No Olympic site will be more than 30km from Village.

Previous Olympics: None
Chances: Are fast making ground on pre-vote favourites Paris. Claims that US foreign policy will kill off bid are grossly exaggerated. Much depends on bid leader Dan Doctoroff, who has been confirmed as head of New York Organising Committee if bid successful. If IOC members like him, much needed votes could be secured.

MADRID

Population: 3.1 million
Bid slogan: "Preparados para ti" (Ready for You)
Cash investment: 6.47 billion euros
Main Olympic stadium: 75,000
Distances: Most events will take place in a 10km radius
Previous Olympics: None
Chances: Trailing Paris and London at present. Several people close to bid admit their chances are slim. Hampered by fact that 1992 Games were held in Barcelona. Reports that former IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch is less than impressed with top Madrid bid officials.

Davenport back in groove



AFP, Tokyo

World number one Lindsay Davenport shrugged off the bitter disappointment of Grand Slam defeat to book her place in the quarterfinals of the Pan Pacific Open here Thursday.

Davenport, beaten by Serena Williams in last Saturday's Australian Open final in

Melbourne) and today physically I finally started to feel a little bit better," said American top seed Davenport.

"It's a tough loss to get over the final of a grand slam, the toughest loss. It's tough to come a few days later and play an important tournament.

"I'm really happy that I decided to come and try to move on. It's gonna take a few weeks but hopefully not too much longer to get it out of my system."



PHOTO: AFP

Daniela Hantuchova of Slovakia makes a return against Russian Maria Kirilenko at the Pan Pacific Open tournament in Tokyo yesterday. Hantuchova won 4-6, 6-0, 6-2.

Melbourne, said she was still getting over the shattering loss but came through to beat Japan's Saori Obata 6-4, 6-3 in 64 minutes.

"It was a really great, but demanding long two weeks (in

Davenport said she was frustrated when she lost her first service games to go 3-3 in the first set, and again when she missed several set points at 5-3.

"But overall I got through it, started to serve better in the

match, which is the most important on this (fast) surface, and I'm happy that I actually get to go out there for the doubles (later) today and try to hit some more balls to get used to the court," she added.

Sydney Olympic silver medalist Elena Dementieva, seeded four, overcame a shaky start that saw her hit four double faults to trail 0-2 before scoring a lop-sided 6-2, 6-2 win Akiko Morigami of Japan in 63 minutes.

"I lost the first two games and then I won it 6-2, six games and in a row. I usually have a slow start," said Dementieva, runner-up at Roland Garros and the US Open last season.

"But I was very comfortable on the court, because I knew that I just have to find my rhythm and I can win this match, so I think I played very well, even though I lost my game from the beginning," she added.

Dementieva said the experience of reaching the finals in the grand slams last season had helped her beat better players, but said there was room for improvement.

"Especially my serve, but for the moment I know must continue to work hard and I feel like if I do, I can do it (winning a grand slam) this year," added the 23-year-old Russian.

Japan's number two Shinobu Asagoe kept local hopes alive when last year's US Open quarterfinalist whipped Roberta Vinci of Italy 6-0, 6-2 for a place against Dementieva Friday.

Russian sixth seed Elena Likhovtseva had a hard time beating former Japan Open champion Jill Craybas of the United States 7-5, 4-6, 6-2, to book a place against Wimbledon champion Maria Sharapova of Russia, second seed.

Tibet Fed Cup

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semifinalists Abahani and Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra and National and Premier League winners Brothers Union are automatic qualifiers for the final round.

Three qualifiers will join the big guns for the final phase, which will be staged the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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