

Intriguing last day



SPORTS REPORTER

Arafat Sunny's six-wicket haul enabled Dhaka Division to take a minimal first innings lead against Sylhet on Day Three of their first-round match of the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea Sixth National Cricket League yesterday but Sylhet's bowlers reduced the home team to 70 for four by close to keep the match open going into the last day.

Rajshahi meanwhile, were in control against Chittagong with a 289-run lead already at Bogra while Khulna required 145 on the last day against Barisal at home with eight second innings wickets remaining.

DHAKA v SYLHET

Sylhet rode on a career-best 160 from Golam Rahman Himel and a defiant innings from skipper Tapash Baishya to reach 316, just nine short of Dhaka's total at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. Bangladesh paceman Tapash then struck twice as the hosts slumped to

29 for four before Mohammad Ashrafal saw the innings to close without further damage by putting on 41 with wicketkeeper Anwar Hossain.

Resuming on 181 for five, overnight pair Himel and Tapash defied the Dhaka attack throughout the entire first session and took the score to 236-5 by lunch.

Tapash contributed 39 (110 balls) during a 77-run fifth wicket stand with Himel before left-arm spinner Sunny cut short the resistance picking up four wickets either side of tea. Sunny finished with six for 50 as the visitors lost their last three wickets in the space of 16 runs. 17-year-old Himel's brilliant knock, that lasted eight hours finally ended when his glance was taken down the leg by Anwar off Mehrab Hossain Jr (305-9).

Himel hit 22 fours in his 378-ball stay but after being given out, he stood at the crease for some time, which prompted the match referee to call him for a hearing later.

"I did it out of frustration as I failed to give my side a lead," said Himel after the day's play.

It was his second century in the

National League. He made 115 at home against Chittagong last year.

Tapash and Nazmul Hossain then put Dhaka on the back foot.

Javed Omar, who made 79 in the first innings, played on to a Nazmul delivery after making 10 while his opening partner Mehrab Jr was trapped lbw by the same bowler.

Al Shahrar edged a wide delivery from Tapash to wicketkeeper Golam Mabud for an 11-ball duck while Halim Shah was clean bowled for the second time in the match as Dhaka lost four wickets inside ten overs.

However, Ashrafal treated the crowd to some excellent strokes while easing the Dhaka nerves. He was not out on 31 off 38 balls (5x4).

KHULNA v BARISAL

Despite Shahin Hossain's second fifty in the match, Barisal were struggling to save their fixture against Khulna at the Khulna Divisional Stadium.

Barisal were bundled out for 169 in their second innings having started the day on 88 for five with left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak Raj

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SPORTING EXCELLENCE 2004: Prime Minister Khaleda Zia (C) is seen with the recipients of the National Sports Award 2004 at the International Conference Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Fed Cup 1st phase ends March 5

SPORTS REPORTER

The qualifying phase of the Tibet 20th Federation Cup will end on March 5.

A total of 18 teams, five from Premier League, eight from First Division and five services teams, split into three groups will play for the three qualifying spots for the curtain-raiser event of the domestic football that kicks off on February 25.

All matches will be played at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

TEAMS

GROUP A: Dipali JS, Wari Club, Dhanmondi Club, Agrani Bank, Bangladesh Air Force, Youngmen's Club Fakirapur.

GROUP B: Farashganj SC, BRTC, Victoria SC, Badda Jagarani, Bangla-desh Navy, Dhaka Wanderers.

GROUP C: Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Police, Rahmatganj MFS, Mohakhali XI, Bangladesh Rifles and Arambagh KS.

Big win for Lalmatia

SPORTS REPORTER

Lalmatia Club recorded a convincing nine-wicket win over Prantik KC in yesterday's First Division Cricket League at the BKSP ground in Savar.

In reply to Prantik's paltry 120, Lalmatia stormed to 121-1 in just 25.5 overs.

In other matches, Nabin Sangha (196-7) beat Kathalbaggan GCC (195-8) by three wickets also at the BKSP while Bangladesh Boys Club (267-8) handed Jatrabari KC a 26-run defeat at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

What to WATCH

ESPN

English Premier League
Newcastle v Charlton
Repeated at 10.30 pm
South Africa v England
Fifth ODI highlights
Repeated 5 pm
South Africa v England
Sixth one-day international
Live at 6.30 pm
Sportscentre
Live at 10 pm

STAR Sports

English Premier League
Chelsea v Man City
Taped version at 12.30 pm
Asian 2006 WC Qualifier
Uzbekistan v Saudi Arabia
Taped version at 2.30 pm
English Premier League Preview
Taped version at 7 pm
Sportsline
Live at 7.30 pm



PHOTO: STAR

I'VE TIMED IT PERFECTLY: Dhaka and Bangladesh middle-order batsman Mohammad Ashrafal executes a pull shot during the third day of the Ispahani Sixth National Cricket League match against Sylhet yesterday.

PM distributes Nat'l Sports Awards

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday stressed the need for immediate formulation of sports guidelines keeping in mind that there is no alternative to adopt a co-ordinated plan and implement it to achieve desired results in the field of sports.

"Bangladesh has achieved many successes in international and national sports arena. I hope, one day we shall surely be able to occupy the seat of honour and prestige in international sports arena if the country can go ahead by maintaining continuity of its recent achievements," she said while distributing National Sports Award-2004.

The Prime Minister awarded National Sports Award -2004 to 11 sportsmen and women as well as organisers for their outstanding contributions in the field of sports both in the national and international arena.

While appreciating Bangladeshi sportsmen for their notable successes in Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, World Kabadi and SAARC Cycling competition, the

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SA take unbeatable lead Pietersen heroics go in vain



AFP, East London

Kevin Pietersen hit England's fastest one-day international century but could not stop South Africa winning a high-scoring fifth limited-overs clash at Buffalo Park here Wednesday.

South Africa won by seven runs to take an unbeatable 3-1 lead in the seven-match series.

South Africa seemed set for a comfortable win when captain Graeme Smith hit his second century in three matches and big-hitting Justin Kemp went on the rampage as South Africa piled up 311 for seven.

Smith made 115 not out while Kemp thrashed 80 off just 50 balls with four fours and seven sixes.

England's cause looked hopeless when they needed 205 off the last 25 overs but Pietersen took them agonisingly close, reaching 100 not out when he hit the last ball of the match, a low full toss from Andre Nel, for six.

His innings took just 69 balls and he hit seven fours and four sixes.

"It was a tremendous effort by Kevin but we let them get too many in the field," said England captain Michael Vaughan.

"Graeme Smith's knock was outstanding and Justin Kemp hit the ball so hard and far it was difficult to control. When we went out to bat we made a good effort. We got within hitting range and Kevin nearly got us there with a little help from the lower order."

Smith had gone 58 matches without scoring a one-day international century until he made 105 and led South Africa to victory in the third match in Port Elizabeth last Friday.

The big left-hander made a brisk start, reaching 50 off 53 balls with five boundaries. He didn't hit another four as he went to his century off 120 deliveries.

But Smith needed do no more than rotate the strike when Kemp joined him. In an astonishing display of power batting the tall Kemp three times hit two sixes off successive balls, off Paul Collymore, Matthew Hoggard and Kabir Ali.

Kemp was aided by the bound-

aries being brought in some 10m because of a wet outfield caused by heavy overnight rain and a further shower in the morning, which delayed the start by an hour. But some of his sixes would have carried the longest boundaries anywhere.

South Africa's run spree exposed England's lack of bowling depth.

Only Darren Gough was able to keep the batsmen in check and he ended Kemp's innings in the 49th over with a reverse-swinging yorker. He bowled Mark Boucher with his next delivery and a third wicket fell off the next ball when Shaun Pollock was run out attempting a third run after pushing Gough past mid-off.

The onslaught was started by Smith and Jacques Kallis, who put on 90 for the second wicket off 93 balls.

Kallis hit five fours off Kabir Ali's first over. The medium-pace was taken off immediately, came back to bowl a good spell in which he took two for 21 off seven overs, but then conceded 25 off his final over when Kemp was in full flight.

England lost both openers as

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Bid to damage Mohali pitch thwarted

REUTERS, New Delhi

Right-wing Hindu activists opposed to Pakistan's cricket tour of India were arrested on Thursday while making an unsuccessful attempt to damage the pitch at one of the match venues.

A police official said six members of the hardline Shiv Sena party were arrested as they tried to enter the Mohali Stadium in the northern state of Punjab bordering Pakistan.

"They were caught trying to enter the ground. There is no damage to the pitch," police officer Tarlochan Singh told Reuters by telephone from Mohali.

Shiv Sena is opposed to any sporting ties with Pakistan, accusing Islamabad of aiding an armed separatist revolt in Indian Kashmir.

Shiv Sena activists dug up the pitch at New Delhi's Ferozeshah Kotla Stadium before Pakistan's last Test tour in 1999.

ICC to consider Pakistan's plea

AFP, Sydney

The International Cricket Council (ICC) said Thursday it would consider a request by Pakistan for using two neutral umpires in one-day internationals.

ICC spokesman John Long confirmed the ICC had received a letter from the Pakistan Cricket Board following their disappointing tour of Australia, which was marred by a series of controversial umpire decisions.

The Pakistanis claim the umpiring during the one-day series heavily favoured Australia and want one-day internationals to conform with Tests, in which neutral umpires have been mandatory since 2001.

Currently one-day internationals are controlled by one home and one neutral umpire.

"We have received a letter on that topic and it will be dealt with in the appropriate forum at the appropriate time," Long told the Australian Associated Press.

The matter is likely to get an airing at the next meeting of the ICC's cricket committee at Lord's in May.

The cricket committee would then make a recommendation for the chief executives of member countries to consider when they meet in mid-year.

The final decision rests with the ICC executive board.

Umpiring has replaced chucking as the hot issue in international cricket after accusations that umpires have been intimidated by the all-conquering Australian team.

Retired New Zealand opener Mark Richardson added fuel to the debate this week in a newspaper interview in which he said Australians had mastered the technique of influencing umpires' calls.

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Full marks to Wanderers

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka Wanderers Club managed a solitary goal victory over Combined SC in the Green Delta Metropolis First Division Hockey at the Maulana Bhashani National Stadium today.

Sabbir Hossain scored the match winner for Wanderers in the 55th minute from a penalty-corner in the day's lone match.

Together for a noble cause



AFP, Colombo

Test cricket leading wicket-taker Shane Warne of Australia and Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan have buried their spin rivalry for a worthy cause - raising funds for tsunami survivors.

Warne and Muralitharan spent more than two hours together Thursday offering bowling tips to hundreds of schoolboys in Colombo, many of whom were from tsunami-battered schools.

The Australian leg-spin genius promised that he would come again to Sri Lanka to continue with tsunami relief work as often as possible.

"The devastation that I saw at Galle has touched me and it is a different experience to actually witness the destruction that we see on television," Warne told reporters here.

"I wish I could do more for Sri Lanka."

Warne on Wednesday rushed along with Muralitharan to the tsunami-hit southern town of Galle, where he made history last March by becoming the first bowler to complete 500 Test wickets.

It was an unforgettable moment for Warne, who was playing his first Test after serving a 12-month ban for taking drugs.

"It was my comeback Test and I got my 500th Test wicket here. It was a special moment for me," Warne said after visiting the cricket ground, devastated by the killer waves that hit the country on December 26 and claimed almost 31,000 lives.

"It was one of the most picturesque cricket grounds and it's heartbreaking to see it like this," said Warne, who has so far grabbed 566 wickets in 120 Tests.

Muralitharan is breathing down Warne's neck, having claimed 532 victims in 91 Tests. He has been out of action since playing the opening Test against South Africa at Galle last August due to a shoulder injury.

"A record between the two of us is good for cricket. I hope that a spinner holds that record ... it could be either me, Murali or Anil Kumble," Warne told AFP.

The on-field rivalry has not stopped the spin greats from joining hands for the tsunami relief efforts.

"When the disaster struck, he (Warne) asked me how he could help. I just told him that his being here will help," said Muralitharan, who is playing a significant role in distributing aid among survivors as an ambassador for the UN World Food Programme.

Warne said many in Sri Lanka still needed shelter and food and promised to see what Australia could do in this regard.

"The great city of Melbourne has already raised millions for tsunami victims. I will see how it can be used for Sri Lanka."

Warne has rarely been a crowd favourite here, especially after Muralitharan was first called for

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National Chess qualifiers from tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

The qualifying rounds of the Marcantille Bank 31st National Chess Championship begin tomorrow at the BCF hall-room.

Over hundred players from across the country will take part in the 11-round Swiss League. The top nine players will join five automatic qualifiers in the finals.

The automatic qualifiers are: Grand Masters Ziaur Rahman and Niaz Murshed, International Masters Reefat-Bin-Sattar, Abdullah Al Rakib and Enamul Hossain Rajibi.

Test venue row may go upto govt level

AFP, Islamabad

The Pakistani and Indian governments will get involved if cricket chiefs cannot sort out a row over venues for Pakistan's first tour over the border in six years, an official said Thursday.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said on Monday that it had rejected the western Indian city of Ahmedabad on security grounds.

"If the matter of the venues is not decided properly, it will have an impact on our bilateral relations. So I met foreign office officials and they have taken notes and will interact on the government level and decide," PCB chairman Shaharyar Khan told AFP.

Shaharyar added that he was confident Indian Foreign Minister Natwar Singh would "definitely" discuss the matter during his February 15-16 visit to Pakistan to prevent it becoming a diplomatic incident.

"Cricket is followed like a passion in both the countries and that's why we want to avoid any mishap," said the PCB chief.

"We feel for the people of Ahmedabad and we hope India will listen to our stance," he said.

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PHOTO: AP

ENGLISH LIGHTNING: England's Kevin Pietersen flicks one off his pads in his hurricane hundred against South Africa during the fifth one-day match at East London on Wednesday.

Waugh's money on India



AFP, Kolkata

India received a shot in the arm before the home cricket series against Pakistan, with legendary former Australian captain Steve Waugh saying the hosts start as firm favourites.

"Pakistan are a very talented side but India start as favourites in the home series," Waugh told reporters on arrival here Thursday.

Pakistan are scheduled to arrive

in India in the last week of this month to play three Tests and five one-day internationals.

"India have a strong batting lineup and they now have a quality bowling attack, especially young paceman Irfan Pathan who, it seems, will become one of the best in world cricket," said Waugh, who is to raise funds for Indian tsunami survivors.

Even Waugh's all-conquering side failed to taste success in India, suffering a shock 2-1 defeat in a three-Test series in 2001.

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PHOTO: AFP

HOLD IT LIKE THIS: Champion Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne shows a trick to some schoolboys while his Sri Lankan rival Muttiah Muralitharan looks on at Moratuwa Stadium yesterday.

Ispahani 6th Nat'l Cricket League

(Day 4)
Dhaka v Sylhet
Venue: BNS
Rajshahi v Chittagong
Venue: Bogra
Khulna v Barisal
Venue: KDS

