

Munna: 1966-2005

FROM PAGE 13
capacity. As manager of Abahani he guided the Dhanmondi-based club to three major domestic titles -- the Premier League, National League and the Federation Cup -- in that year.

But this season he had gone through a lot of trouble both on and off the pitch. But whatever that may have been, Munna will live in the hearts of millions for being a footballer who never knew how to say no.

Meanwhile, Abahani have announced a weeklong mourning programme which includes keeping the club's flag at half-mast, opening of a condolence book from February 12 to 18 and arranging a milad mahfil on February 15 followed by a condolence meeting.

Singh, a member of the International Olympic Committee and secretary of the Indian Olympic Association, said the decision to omit cricket was taken at the OCA's executive council meeting in Kuwait on February 5.

Rain gives SA

FROM PAGE 13
5-169, 6-171, 7-180, 8-208, 9-208

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Gough	9	2	14	2
Wharf	9	1	48	3
Ali	8.3	0	44	3
Collingwood	5	0	35	1
Giles	10	0	38	1
Vaughan	5	0	24	0

ENGLAND (target 213 in 48 overs)
Trescott hit c Kallis b Pollock 1
Jones c Nel b Ntini 2
Vaughan not out 2
Strauss not out 0
Extras: (lb-1, w-1) 2
Total: (For 2 wkts in 3.4 overs) 7
Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-7
Did not bat: Pietersen, Solanki, Collingwood, Giles, Ali, Gough, Wharf

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Pollock	2	1	2	1
Ntini	1.4	0	4	1

Result: Match abandoned because of rain and take winning 3-1 lead.
Final match: Sunday, Centurion.

Athletes assault university PE director?

RU CORRESPONDENT

A group of athletes yesterday allegedly assaulted Rajshahi University's director of physical education department Fazlur Rahman and demanded immediate holding of the inter-hall athletics competition.

According to Sumun Mahmud, of Latif Hall, the PE department was supposed to hold an annual athletics meeting sometime in January or February. But for the last two years it did not take place.

Witnesses said around one hundred athletes of several halls gathered in front of the university stadium demanding the start of the meet. They then manhandled Fazlur.

On hearing the incident, RU student advisor Prof Zahid Hossain Milky rushed to the scene and brought the situation under control.

When contacted the physical education department director, however, denied being assaulted and instead said that some students came with a request for holding of the athletics competition. He also assured them that the competition would be held next month.

'Murali not a chucker'



AFP, Colombo

Australian leg-spin genius Shane Warne on Saturday brushed aside the controversy over rival Muttiah Muralitharan's bowling action, saying he did not believe the Sri Lankan spinner was a chucker.

"The most important thing is that he (Muralitharan) does not chuck," Warne was quoted as saying in the Colombo-based Daily News.

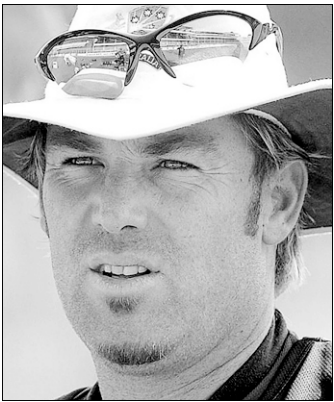
Warne, Test cricket leading wicket-taker with 566 wickets in 120 Tests, is currently in Sri Lanka to raise funds for tsunami survivors. His closest rival to the world bowling record is Muralitharan, who has 532 Test scalps.

The Sri Lankan, born with a bent elbow, was called thrice for 'chucking' by Australian umpires and then reported last March by English match-referee Chris Broad during the third Test against Australia in Colombo.

In contention was Muralitharan's 'doosra', a delivery that turns away from right-handed

batsmen instead of coming into them like a conventional off-break.

"I think it's the way he bowls that has raised a few eyebrows," said



SHANE WARNE

Warne.

The Australian also played down his spin rivalry with Muralitharan, saying he had always got along well with the Sri Lankan.

"There has been so much said and written about us going for the world record, rivalry and things like that. I don't think there's so much

rivalry. We always get along okay," said Warne.

Warne, who called Muralitharan "soft-hearted" for pulling out of the Australian tour last year, recently said he had promised the Sri Lankan he would do anything possible for the tsunami victims.

The spin greats joined hands for the relief efforts and visited various parts of the country, including the tsunami-devastated Galle Stadium where Warne bagged his 500th Test wicket last year.

"It's always good fun to catch up with Murali here in Sri Lanka or in Australia," the paper quoted Warne as saying.

"We always spoke about spin bowling. Spoke about who's hard to bowl to. Murali thinks it's Brian Lara, but I believe Sachin Tendulkar is hard to bowl to."

Warne also lauded the efforts of Muralitharan and his teammates for raising funds for tsunami survivors.

"Anybody who thinks of Sri Lanka thinks of Murali," he said. "Sri Lanka is Murali, the face and the big black eyes."

New twist in Shoaib saga



CRICINFO, undated

Express pacer Shoaib Akhtar has scarcely been able to stay out of the limelight for a day in the lead-up to Pakistan's forthcoming tour of India.

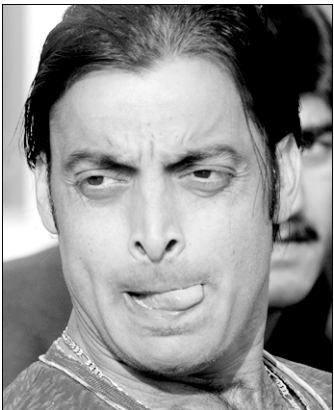
Newspapers have reported that he failed to report to the doctor appointed by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) to assess his fitness.

In the absence of their foreign support staff, who are on holiday, the PCB appointed Meesaq Rizvi, a sports physician, to look into Shoaib's fitness.

Rizvi had asked Mohammad Sami, Shabbir Ahmed and Mohammad Khalil, apart from Shoaib, to report for fitness tests. But Shoaib failed to report, and this could have spurred the latest reaction of the PCB.

Saleem Altaf, the director of cricket operations, has instructed Shoaib to take part in the ongoing Patron's Trophy to prove his fitness.

The News reports that Altaf told Shoaib he had to play for his team, KRL, in the next round of four-day



SHOAIB AKHTAR

Patron's Trophy matches that begins on February 14, in order to be eligible for selection for Pakistan's forthcoming tour across the border.

Interestingly Shoaib was called

back from Australia in order to give him time to rest a troublesome hamstring and be fit in time for the Indian series.

On return to Pakistan Shoaib was assessed by Grant Compton, the Pakistan team's physiotherapist, and a two-week rest was prescribed. Following this examination Compton left Pakistan on vacation.

"Compton outlined a rehabilitation programme to Shoaib to recover from his hamstring strain and then left for South Africa abruptly. But even before leaving he was working with Shoaib as it was confirmed he had a hamstring problem that needed two-week recovery period," a PCB source was quoted as saying.

"It is in this background that Altaf's directives to Shoaib come as a total surprise. How does he expect Shoaib to resume playing in the next round of Patron's Trophy to prove his fitness when he (Shoaib) has been told he required two weeks period to recover from the hamstringing."

Kevin looks to double act



SPORTINGLIFE, undated

England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff is excited by the prospect of forming a destructive duo with Kevin Pietersen this summer following the England new boy's ascent in South Africa.

While Pietersen set a new English record 69-ball one-day hundred on Wednesday, his fellow big hitter Flintoff was back home recovering from ankle surgery.

When it became apparent that all-rounder Flintoff required an operation to solve his bone spur discomfort, Pietersen was lined up for his role.

But the 24-year-old son of a British mother has made such an explosive start to his international career, culminating in his whirlwind effort in the seven-run floodlit defeat by the South Africans in East London, that the two will now conceivably play together this summer.

"I got a text message from Freddie the other day saying he was looking forward to doing some damage together, which sounds pretty cool to me," said Pietersen.

"I can't wait to stand at the other end and watch him bang it; he is a great player who hits the ball a lot

harder and longer than I do."

Yet Pietersen has a superior strike rate in the infancy of his career than the 92.95 Flintoff has managed over 71 innings.

His latest contribution actually threatened to turn a contest dominated for its entirety by the home side, only failing at the last, moments before he celebrated crunching the six runs he needed for three figures over the rope at mid-wicket.

"It would have been a great effort if we had won the game but to lose and go 3-1 down was not the best way to get a hundred and a record-breaking hundred," said Pietersen, who grew up here and schooled in Pietermaritzburg 45 minutes up the road, after the defeat.

"We had lost so the emotions had gone but Darren Gough walked down the wicket and said 'right, here's an opportunity to get a hundred'."

"I told him I was not really bothered whether I got it or not, I was not too perturbed but Andre Nel gave me a juicy full toss which I dispatched with a broken bat."

"I was happy personally but it was overtaken by the loss really: I never gave up until that last ball, even in the last over I backed myself to hit three sixes and someone else to chip in."

Pietersen does not lack confi-

dence, nor does he back down in duels; unruffled by opponents' eye-balling and crowd cackling alike, he has piled up 338 runs in five innings this series.

His latest effort left its mark physically, his sore left hamstring will be strapped up as will the two bats which were cracked by aggressive hitting.

He is unsure what kind of greeting to expect at Centurion as England attempt to finish on a winning note but will not mind more hostility.

"It definitely makes me play better," Pietersen said. "I love a challenge and to hear people booing me, going ballistic gets me going and makes me hungry for success."

"They have their points of view but I am very happy with what I do. Perhaps I need to get these crowds over in England!"

"I am fulfilling a dream, I love playing cricket for England and succeeding for England."

"I am as happy as anything to be wearing the three lions."

His performances here could go a long way to ensuring he wears them on his chest in Test cricket as well before too long.

After all he averages more than 50 in four seasons of first-class cricket with Nottinghamshire, accumulating his runs in a contrasting style to his shuffle and shovel method which has served him so well here.

But he insisted: "All I can concentrate on is playing well here and let the selectors decide what happens from there."

"In four-day cricket I am a lot more patient when I am batting. People have said I am using my wrists too much but that is all in order to get balls going through areas I want to get runs."

"In one-day cricket I need to get a run-a-ball and you cannot play methodically, picking out fielders at extra cover."

"If I can get a ball from here to there to get England another run that is all I am interested in."

Vaughan eyes

FROM PAGE 13
For the hosts the series success represents a huge turnaround -- they won only once in 14 limited-overs internationals prior to the three straight victories inside a week.

And it left Smith believing they might have opened up a greater advantage here as he said: "It would have been a tough ask, it always does a lot here under lights."

"We are satisfied with a series win, though. A score of 4-1 is the obvious target now particularly after the last 12 months when things did not go well."

Glazer bid faces new setback

AFP, London

US businessman Malcolm Glazer's latest bid to take over English soccer giants Manchester United met with more resistance Friday when the club's board said it would be "unlikely to recommend" it to shareholders were it to become a formal offer.

Glazer, whose family owns 28.8 per cent of United's shares, is planning an offer of 300 pence per share in cash with a minimum 75 percent acceptance level which would give him complete control of the club.

In a statement to the London Stock Exchange, United's board said Glazer's latest plan would not involve the club being burdened with as much debt as was envisaged in his October proposal - a major stumbling block back then.

However the statement said: "The Board continues to believe that Glazer's business plan assumptions are aggressive and that the direct and indirect financial strain on the business could be damaging."

"If the current proposal were to develop into an offer - and there can be no certainty that this will occur - the Board considers that it is unlikely to be able to recommend the offer as being in the best interests of Manchester United, notwithstanding the fairness of the price."

"However, it is ultimately for the shareholders to determine whether an offer will succeed."

Real rubbish Owen-Reyes swap

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid insisted on Friday there were no plans to swap England striker Michael Owen for Arsenal's unsettled Spanish attacker Jose Antonio Reyes.

"Real Madrid do not envisage an exchange between Michael Owen and Jose Antonio Reyes," said a statement on the Real website.

"Real Madrid are satisfied with the work of the English player. There have been no contacts from agents nor Arsenal with Real Madrid."

Reyes left Sevilla for Arsenal in January 2004 in a 35 million euro deal, on a four and half year deal, but is believed to be homesick in London.

Owen joined Real from Liverpool for 12 million euros last summer but has struggled to become a regular starter at the Bernabeu.

On Friday, Reyes denied he wants to leave the English champions despite being hoaxed into a radio interview where he said he would like to join Real Madrid.

"I have seen stories in the media linking me with Real Madrid," he told the Arsenal website.

"Of course it's flattering but not only am I under contract at Arsenal, I am happy here and committed to helping the team win more trophies."

"The season is not over for us, we have much to play for and I am focussed on giving my best so we can finish in the strongest position possible."

Dhaka, Khulna

FROM PAGE 13
lost the race against an ever-increasing run-rate after their big hitting captain Akram Khan departed for 2.

Earlier, the Rajshahi total was built around some useful knocks by the middle-order despite a five-wicket haul by Vasconori, the find of the GP Pace Hunt this year.

The right-arm quick finished with 5-27 in 9.5 overs to collect the man-of-the-match award.

SCORES IN BRIEF

DAHAKAV SYLHET

Venue: BNS

SYLHET: 76 all out 29.3 overs (Himel 25, Mabub 15, Extras 19; Ashrafal Haq 4-13, Mahbub 2-18, Mehrajir 2-8)

DHAKA: 77 for 1 in 15.4 overs (Al-Shahriar not out 37, Javed 23 not out, Rashedul 16; Nazmul 1-18)

Result: Dhaka won by 9 wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Ashrafal Haq (Dhaka)

RAJSHAHI V CHITTAGONG

Venue: Bogra

RAJSHAHI: 218 all out in 46.2 overs (Hasanuzzaman 43, Anisur 33, Rezwanul 24, Forhad 21; Wascoroni 5-27)

CHITTAGONG: 212 for 9 in 50 overs (Ehsanul 55, Aftab 47, Faisal 36, Elias 28 not; Shahjada 3-49, Alamgir 2-55)

Result: Rajshahi won by 6 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Wascoroni (Chittagong)

KHULNAV BARISAL

Venue: KDS

KHULNA: 210 all out in 48 overs Razzak 35 not out, Mashrafeze 30, Salim 24, Manjarul 29, Asadullah 34; Anisur Rahman 3-24, Ishraq Sonet 2-41, Tanquil 2-49)

BARISAL: 80 all out in 37.1 overs (Salahuddin 30, Mosharraf 23; Mashrafeze 3-10, Razzak 3-24, Monjurul 2-9)

Result: Khulna won by 130 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Mashrafeze-Bin-Mortuza (Khulna).



PHOTO: AFP

A file photo of Manchester United captain Roy Keane kissing the FA Cup after victory over Millwall in May last year.

Keane to retire in 2006



AFP, Manchester

Roy Keane will quit football when his contract with Manchester United expires at the end of next season.

The Irish midfielder is playing some of the best football of a trophy-rich career and there had been speculation that he might be persuaded to carry on beyond 2006.

But Keane, who fears he might need hip replacement surgery once his playing days are over, insisted that he had no plans to extend his current contract.

"I feel good," the 33-year-old said.

"My hip feels good, my left knee was a bit sore but overall I am not too bad. Mentally I am enjoying my football."

"But when I signed my current contract I believed it would be last playing contract and I still believe that to be the case."

If Keane does retire in 2006, his swansong could come at the World Cup in Germany.

Ireland are well-placed to qualify for the finals and Keane has unin-

ished business with his country after walking out on Mick McCarthy's squad prior to the last World Cup in Japan and South Korea.

United manager Alex Ferguson is bound to greet the news with a sense of disappointment, although the canny Scot will not have totally given up hope of losing his talisman, who has confounded the critics who had written him off before the season started.

Over the past month alone, Keane has rampaged over heir apparent Steven Gerrard at Anfield, and squared up to Patrick Vieira in the Highbury tunnel in show of aggressive force that set the tone for Manchester United's superb 4-2 win.

He then capped an exceptional display against Birmingham last week by netting his 50th goal for the Red Devils.

Such has been the magnitude of those performances, suggestions were being raised that Keane would be offered a new contract.

However, the Republic of Ireland international has revealed he is not looking to extend his stay at Old Trafford beyond 2006, meaning he could end his career at the World

Cup, four years after he memorably walked out on the last one.

After being forced to overcome a major hip operation and cruciate knee ligament surgery, Keane may count himself fortunate to be playing at all, let alone the standard he is currently reaching.

Typically though, the Cork-born star is not entirely satisfied with his contribution, although he did admit the balance between playing matches and rest is better this season than it was 12 months ago, when he became frustrated at the number of games he was missing.

"I feel I'm doing OK but you always feel there is room for improvement," he said.

"I prefer to look back at the end of the season, not when you've got three months to go but I do feel good in myself."

"We have probably got the balance right this year on the medical side of things."

"We have a big squad, so it's only right I miss the odd game here and there but I have felt fresh and physically good in the ones I have played in."

Ruud on the mend



AFP, Manchester

Manchester United face Manchester City on Sunday buoyed by news that injured striker Ruud van Nistelrooy is on course to return in time for the Champions League clash with AC Milan later this month.

The 28-year-old Dutchman has been sidelined for three months because of an Achilles injury and the last 16 tie with Milan has been pencilled in for his return.

"Alan Smith starts training on Monday, while Ruud van Nistelrooy starts training on Tuesday," said United boss Alex Ferguson.

"It is good to have them both back. In fact, it's terrific to have them back. Well, assess their fitness as the week goes on."

Meanwhile, United have been given a huge boost ahead of Sunday's derby with news that Roy Keane (knee), Ryan Giggs and Rio Ferdinand (both hamstring) have all recovered from injuries that kept them out of international action this week.

However, Cristiano Ronaldo is a doubt due to a heavy challenge from Damien Duff in the international friendly between Ireland and

Portugal.

"It was a bad tackle from Duff," Ferguson told the United website www.manutd.com.

"I was surprised because he is not usually that type of player. Rio, Ryan and Roy are OK for Sunday, but Cristiano is certainly doubtful."

United have taken 38 points from a possible 42 in their last 14 matches as they try to rein in runaway Premiership leaders Chelsea who have a nine-point advantage.

"You get used to dealing with the international matches," said Ferguson.

"There is nothing you can do about it. It is an unfortunate part of the job. You hope it doesn't stop the momentum we have built up over the last few months. But I am confident. If you are going into a derby game, you want to be in good confidence and form. At the moment we have got that."

"Chelsea drawing against Manchester City was two points dropped," added Ferguson.

"You come to the part of the season where you want to have good form. I don't think Chelsea have been playing as well as they have been. Obviously that could make it interesting to the end of the season."

"We have to maintain our own

form but we also hope to get some help in the form of Chelsea dropping points."

United have been beaten on their last two trips to their city rivals but Ferguson is confident of turning that around on Sunday.

"We have lost the last two to City away from home," he said.

"But our record in derby matches in the 18 years since I came here has been fantastic."

Ferguson has won 14 of his 26 Manchester derbies but his side have only taken just six points from the last six local showdowns.

City boss Kevin Keegan believes midfielder Joey Barton could play a pivotal role on Sunday in the absence of the suspended Paul Bosvelt.

"Paul is a good influence on Joey," said Keegan.

"Instead of looking as if they were going to be fighting for the same place in the starting line-up, in the main they have been in the same team."

"Paul's experience is invaluable for a young player."

Steve McManaman could be handed a rare start on Sunday or Jon Macken could start alongside Robbie Fowler with a four-man midfield.

Agassi sent crashing



AFP, San Jose

American Andre Agassi was upset by Austria's Jurgen Melzer 6-3, 6-1 in the quarterfinals of the 380,000 ATP San Jose hardcourt tournament.

"It's always tough to come out to play Andre," Melzer said.

"I didn't want him to play his game. He makes you run like a dog all over the court."

The second seed Agassi's only prior loss this year was to world No. 1 Roger Federer of Switzerland in the Australian Open quarter-finals.

"I had opportunities to loosen myself up," Agassi said. "But I didn't convert on the big points."

In Friday's final match, defending champion and top seeded American Andy Roddick rallied to defeat Sweden's Thomas Enqvist, 3-6, 7-6, 7-5.

In the second-set tiebreaker, Roddick won the first six points, then dropped the next six before winning the final two.

In the 12th game of the third set, he

Steffi wins libel case

REUTERS, Berlin

Tennis great Steffi Graf has sued a German radio station that aired a sketch supposedly of her and husband Andre Agassi in the throes of love-making.

WDR broadcast a conversation on December 29 in which actors batted words back and forth before settling on Jaden Gil, the name of Graf and Agassi's first child. The radio station then asked listeners to identify the famous pair.

Graf took offence at the coarse sketch and filed a complaint claiming injury to her reputation with a court in the western city of Cologne. It heard the case on Friday.

WDR backed down and issued an undertaking not to air any similar sketch in the future, agreeing they would pay a 5,100 euro (3,500 pounds) penalty if they did.

"The court made it clear they would have banned any further broadcasts if the station had not done so," a court spokesman said.

WDR were also made to pay the legal costs of around 5,000 euros. Neither Graf nor Agassi, both former world number ones, was present on Friday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

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12 A religion

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Solution time: 25 mins.