

Shahin, Mehrab star on draw day



SPORTS REPORTER

None of the three National Cricket League matches produced results yesterday but the last day was no less exciting.

Two heroic hundreds from Barisal's Shahin Hossain and Dhaka's former Bangladesh opener Mehrab Hossain helped their sides ensure draws from spots of both. Barisal wicketkeeper Shahin became the first player to record hundreds in both innings of a National League match after his unbeaten 110 in the second innings against Chittagong. That followed a 119 not out in the first essay. Chittagong however gained four points from the draw by virtue of their first innings lead.

Dhaka went into the last day needing 262 for outright victory. But they adopted a defensive approach to ensure four points.

At the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium, visitors Sylhet were looking at a daunting 303-run target and ended with 254 for 6. Rajshahi however had four points for their first

innings advantage.

After the third round, defending champions Dhaka, Chittagong and Rajshahi all have 12 points while Khulna are two points behind. Sylhet and Barisal were languishing on four points each.

CHITTAGONG v BARISAL

Shahin, who is on a roll, came to Barisal's rescue at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium when the visitors slumped to 109 for four after beginning the day on 85 for one.

Number five Shahin received good support from Nahidul Haque as the pair added 121 runs for the fifth wicket before Nahid (46 off 121) was run out.

Once the partnership was broken, the Barisal innings experienced another mini collapse as they lost two wickets in the space of 16 runs but Nadif Chowdhury (31) added 53 vital runs for the eighth wicket with Shahin as they played out crucial overs.

Shahin's 241-ball unconquered innings spanned over five hours.

DHAKA v KHULNA

Mehrab Sr. continued his climb back from wilderness at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

Dhaka had lost his namesake

Mehrab Hossain Jr. in the second over of the day with no runs on the board. But the senior Mehrab, who had missed a hundred by just two runs in the previous match against Barisal at the same venue, joined opener Anwar Hossain and both batsmen dug in.

Runs came at a snail's pace during their partnership that produced 65 runs in 36 overs as the holders made their draw intentions clear.

Wicketkeeper Anwar scored 20 runs but played 105 balls while Mehrab's 107 came off 230 balls with nine boundaries. He was dismissed by left-arm paceman Manjurul Islam late in the day as Dhaka stuttered a little losing three wickets in 11 overs but Khulna were always racing against time.

Khulna's pace duo Monjurul and Mashrafe Bin Mortuza picked up three wickets each.

RAJSHAHI v SYLHET

Mymensingh batsman Moniruzzaman, who is playing as a guest player for Sylhet, gave his side a solid start with a fluent 74 that included eight

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Dhaka's Mehrab Hossain sweeps one on way to scoring a hundred against Khulna on the fourth and final day of their National Cricket League encounter at Fatullah yesterday.

SMS from Zimbabwe

SPORTS REPORTER

After radio and television here comes SMS (short message service) in the world of sport. The technology has proved very handy for journalists wanting to know what the Bangladesh A team is up to in Zimbabwe, where access to information is tough.

The latest SMS arrived in Dhaka at 8.15pm on Sunday read Zimbabwe A were 97-3 at tea on the third day of the third and final Test at the Kwekwe Sports Club.

The home side took a 115-run lead after the second string national team added 28 runs to their overnight score of 223-7.

But that was the most that SMS could provide.

According to a CricInfo Day Two scoreboard, the tourists limped to 223 for seven after wrapping up the Zimbabwe A innings on 269.

Bangladesh A began badly, losing both openers with just 20 runs on the board. From that position they mounted a recovery through Tushar Imran, who made 58, and Saqibul Hasan who chipped in with 47.

But there was a further change in fortunes after the two were separated by Blessing Mahwire who captured four for 43 from 19 overs.

The Bangladesh team has already clinched the three-match series 2-0 winning both the previous four-day Tests at Bulawayo.



Did U Know?

In 1956 Melbourne Olympics, the gold medal winning hammer thrower from America, Hal Connolly, won despite a physical disability - his left arm was inches shorter and much less developed than his right.



Virender Sehwag

(India batsman)
"When India meet Pakistan the motivation level will be very high for both teams."

On the upcoming Indo-Pak



ESPN

Sportscentre
Live at 8:30 pm
New Zealand vs Australia
4th ODI

Live at 3:27 am (Tuesday)

STAR Sports

Sportscentre
Live at 8:30 pm
English Premier Football League
Norwich City vs Manchester City
Live at 1:55 am (Tuesday)



Federation Cup Soccer
First Round
Venue: Kamalapur Stadium

JU annual sports

JU CORRESPONDENT

The 30th annual sports competition of Jahangirnagar University (JU) will be held on the campus today.

Education Minister Dr M Osman Faruk will inaugurate the event at 9 am at the central playground while JU VC Prof Khandaker Mustahidur Rahman will attend as special guest.

Smith sets SA alight



Cricket

AFP, Durban

Captain Graeme Smith hit his third century in seven matches as South Africa punished a depleted Zimbabwe attack in the second one-day international at Kingsmead Sunday.

Smith made a career-best 117 to lead his team to a total of 329 for six. It was the second time in succession the hosts topped 300 after being sent in by Zimbabwe captain Tatenda Taibu. They made 301 for seven when they won the first match by 165 runs in Johannesburg Friday.

Smith and Herschelle Gibbs (75) shared a fourth wicket stand of 134 off 137 balls as South Africa recovered from a shaky start.

They were 67 for three when the pair came together in the 15th over. Smith made his runs off 129 balls with five fours and four sixes, while Gibbs faced 73 balls and hit eight fours and a six.

3 top national chess table

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Masters Zairur Rahman and Niaz Murshed were sharing the lead along with International Master Abdullah Al Rakib after the end of the third round of the Mercantile Bank 31st National Chess Championship at the federation hall room yesterday.

All three recorded wins in the round to increase their tally to 2.5 points each.

IM Reefat Bin Sattar followed the leaders with two points but he has one game in hand.

In the day's matches, Zia beat Mainuddin Ahmed, Niaz beat Hasan Imam, Rakib beat FM Shakil, Reefat beat FM Rezaul Haque, IM Enamul Hossain Rajib drew with junior champion Mehdi Hasan Parag, Khondokar Aminul Islam beat Aminul Islam Palash and Syed Mahfuzur Rahman Emon shared point with Uten.

Tuffey shown the door

AFP, Wellington

Struggling paceman Daryl Tuffey has been made the scapegoat for New Zealand's ineffective opposition to Australia in the one-day cricket series, being dropped for the fourth match on Tuesday along with injured batsman Michael Pappas.

International newcomer Lance Hamilton replaces Tuffey, while batsman Craig Cumming has been recalled in place of Pappas who took a fearful knock on the head from Brett Lee in Auckland on Saturday where Australia sealed the five-match series with their third consecutive win.

Cumming averages 15.33 from 10 one-day internationals all against Pakistan, while left-arm Hamilton, 31, was the standout performer in New Zealand domestic

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'Let's work together'



Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) directors have urged president Ali Asghar to immediately call a board meeting showing respect to Saturday's High Court verdict.

"We requested him over telephone today to convene a meeting immediately but he told us that he won't say anything until he received the copy of the verdict," said Mubasshar Hussain, one of the directors.

During a press conference under the banner of 'Bangladesh Cricket Board' at the National Press Club yesterday, the aggrieved directors emphasised on reaching an amicable resolution of the issue.

"Rather than entering into any kind of war of words, we want to work in a friendly environment. Let's work together for cricket's sake instead of indulging in 'mudslinging,'" said Mubasshar.



Bangladesh Cricket Board director Mubasshar Hussain (5th from L) briefs the media about Saturday's court verdict to reinstate its Board of Directors at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

FED CUP F'pool shoot BAF down

SPORTS REPORTER

Youngmen's Club Fakierepool moved into the group A final in the Tibet 20th Federation Cup Football Tournament with a 3-0 thrashing of Bangladesh Air Force at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Tabid Awalad, Rajan and Tapan scored one goal each for the First Division outfit.

They will meet the winners of tomorrow's match between Dipali Jubo Sangha and Agrani Bank in the group final on March 3 at the same venue.

Agrani Bank edged past Dhanmondi Club by 2-1 with Rashid scoring both the goals in the first half.

Bangladesh Army will meet Bangladesh Police and Rahmatganj MFS face Mohakhali XI today.

Mamun hatrick leads Combined

SPORTS REPORTER

Mamun slammed a hatrick to guide Combined Sporting Club to a 4-0 victory over Shantinagar SC in the Green Delta Metropolitan First Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

After a barren first half, Imran put Combined SC in front with a 36th minute field goal before Mamun struck trice in the 46th, 63rd and 68th minutes.

In the day's other match, Mukta Bihanga Tarun Sangha beat Farashganj SC 1-0 with Krishna Kumar slamming the all-important goal in the 50th minute from a penalty corner.

Russell to help Jones

BBC ONLINE, undated

Former England and Gloucestershire wicketkeeper Jack Russell has been called in to give coaching to current national team gloveman Geraint Jones.

Jones did not have the best of tours in South Africa, dropping catches and conceding too many byes.

Now England coach Duncan Fletcher has sought out the 54-Test veteran.

Russell told the Daily Express: "Duncan and captain Michael Vaughan have asked me to build a relationship with Geraint and give him whatever help he needs."

The pair have already worked closely but Russell will be heavily involved as the countdown to the Ashes begins.

He said: "Geraint has got the ability to play 100 Tests for England. He has the right attitude."

"People have to remember he is still quite raw. There are some things we need to work out but it's just a case of smoothing out a few rough edges."

"In terms of winning the Ashes, he has got an important role to play. He can do some real damage and I've no doubt he has the stomach for a fight."

Who is your winner?



Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Never make the mistake of predicting a winner in an India-Pakistan contest, cricket experts have warned ahead of the high-profile series between the arch-rivals.

Opinions are already divided, with some claiming India will complete a 3-0 whitewash on the strength of their spin on low, slow home pitches.

Others disagree, saying a young Pakistani side have the wherewithal to surprise the hosts in the three-Test series and the six one-day internationals to follow.

"Never predict winners in an India-Pakistan series," says former Pakistan captain Imran Khan, who led his team to victory in the 1992 World Cup in Australia and also vanquished India on their own soil in 1987.

"I think the ability to cope with pressure will decide the issue in this series. We had a weak team in

1987, but still won in India because we handled pressure better than our rivals," said Imran.

"Pakistan need to show team spirit and fighting qualities on the tour, especially after losing key paceman Shoaib Akhtar due to a hamstring injury."

"On paper, Pakistan appear weaker than India but it could turn out to be a blessing in disguise."

Imran believes pace will be Pakistan's best bet against a strong Indian batting line-up.

But Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer says his team will have to be better against Indian spinners Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh in order to win the series.

"It's a huge challenge to face Kumble and Harbhajan, but our boys have done it before," said Woolmer.

Leg-spinner Kumble troubled Pakistan the most on their last tour in 1999, becoming only the second bowler after Englishman Jim Laker to claim 10 wickets in a Test innings in the second match at Delhi.

Kumble again exposed the

Pakistani batsmen's weakness against leg-spin last year, finishing with 15 wickets in three Tests to play a crucial role in his team's maiden series victory across the border.

"You need to play psychological games in a Pakistan-India match," said Woolmer.

"The hosts always start favourites, so India appear to have the edge but mental games are key to success in these games," said the Pakistani coach.

Former captain Wasim Akram said Pakistan's batting performance against the spinners would be the key.

"Kumble is a dangerous spinner and Pakistan need to play him cautiously," said Akram, who led his team to victories in two of the three Test matches in 1999.

"Pakistan need to play with a plan and if they stick to a plan you can always win against India since our team is a balanced team," he said.

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Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi bats during a practice session at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore yesterday. Pakistan come to India today to play three Tests and six ODIs.

Nobody is a favourite



Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Sourav Ganguly, named Indian captain only for the series against Pakistan, reflected on his years as captain, playing Pakistan and John Wright's future in an interview on Sunday with an Indian newspaper.

"Whenever we play Pakistan, there is pressure of winning," Ganguly said about the upcoming clash. "And it's going to be no different this time."

He refused to play down Pakistan's chances and call India the stronger contenders. "I don't think anybody is a favourite. Pakistan is a good side. They have a

few injury problems but they are still a very good side. And we will have to play very, very well to beat them."

India's good performances abroad had revolved around strong batting performances and a resurgent bowling attack, but one half had gone awry last year, and this, many believed, led to India's poor showing.

Ganguly sought to put it behind him, saying that the batting had begun to improve towards the end of the year. "We batted well against South Africa and Bangladesh in the last two series. We did not play well in the series against Australia, which we understand, and that's the reason we lost the series 2-1. It is a one-off thing and I don't think it's a major worry."

One thing -- among others -- that did concern him was the absence of an all-rounder. Every other department was fine.

"I don't think we have a problem with the openers. Gautam Gambhir has done well in that position. The wicketkeepers are still young, but I'm sure one of them will definitely come up and do the job. As for all-rounders, yes, that's definitely a problem in India. That's the only problem area."

He spoke of the highs -- "... the 2003 World Cup, the series in Pakistan, the series in Australia, the two ICC mini-World Cups which we've played, the tour of England, the Natwest Series, beating Australia in 2001..." -- and the lows -- "Losing to Australia recently..."

and

said

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