



Did U Know?

Arthur Ashe became the first black player to win Wimbledon defeating Jimmy Connors in the final in 1975.



Dave Houghton
(Former Zimbabwe cricket captain)
"It's time someone told them the truth and you can't have this cricket on the international arena. People sitting back and watching this have got to be saying that this is wrong... however much they need their plum jobs."
While calling on the ICC to take Zimbabwe out of the firing line.

What to WATCH

ESPN
Primera Liga
Deportivo vs Malaga
Repeat at 1:00 pm
English Premier Football League
Manchester City vs Bolton Wanderers
Live at 1:55 am (Tuesday)

STAR Sports
Primera Liga
Real Madrid vs Valencia
Repeat at 10:00 am
Sportsline
Live at 9:30 pm

DAY'S EVENT
Ispahani Sixth Nat'l Cricket League
(Day Four of 4-day match)
Chittagong vs Khulna
Venue: CDVS
Barisal vs Sylhet
Venue: Barisal Stadium

Zia, Rezaul share point

SPORTS REPORTER
Grand Master Ziaur Rahman shared a point in the ninth round but still maintained his solo lead with 8 points in the Mercantile Bank 31st National Chess Championship at the federation hall room yesterday.
The leader drew with FIDE Master Rezaul Haque.
Another Grand Master Niaz Mursheed also drew the board in this round against International Master Reefat Bin Sattar and followed the leader with 7.5 points.

Rumi Smriti Open TT

SPORTS REPORTER
The Rumi Smriti Open table tennis tournament got underway at the NSC Woodenfloor Gymnasium yesterday to mark the second death anniversary of eminent sports journalist Masud Ahmed Rumi.
On the opening day, Narail blanked Joypurhat 3-0, Chittagong crushed Netrokona 3-0, Barna TT Club defeated Habiganj 3-0 and Dinajpur outplayed Blue Bird by the same margin in boys' team events.
A total of 155 paddlers from 28 teams are competing in eight events. The events are: men's singles and team, women's singles and team, boys' singles and team and unseeded men's and women's singles.
Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation president Abu Solaiman Chowdhury inaugurated the four-day

Dhaka's double joy

Mahmud's men topple Rajshahi



SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka stormed to the top of the Ispahani Sixth National Cricket League first-class table with their first outright victory in the competition yesterday.
Captain Khaled Mahmud led from the front as Dhaka, who had a five-run first-innings deficit in the low-scoring four-day match, defeated hosts Rajshahi by four wickets with a day to spare at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra.

RAJSHAHI-DHAKA

Unlike Rajshahi, the hosts were dominating in the other fourth round clashes at Barisal and Chittagong.
Dhaka took sweet revenge for their one-day loss to Rajshahi when the visitors, set a 184-run target, reached 190 for six after lunch on the penultimate day.
Experienced Mahmud, who was top scorer in the Dhaka first-innings with 39 and destroyed Rajshahi's second innings with a five-wicket haul, smashed a six off left-arm spinner Saifullah Jem to end the match.

The over-boundary also brought the all-rounder's half-century that steadied the innings following a middle-order collapse.
Resuming on 18-0, Dhaka lost their first wicket with the addition of

one run to the total when Rashedul Haque was dismissed in the second over of the morning on his overnight score of six.

Anwar Hossain (26 off 88 balls) and one-down Mehrab Hossain (43 off 65 balls) took the total to 76 by the 30th over when Rajshahi staged a fightback through seamer Alamgir Kabir and Saifullah, who shared four wickets in the space of 20 runs.

But Mahmud's 54 and Neeyamur Rashid's run-a-ball 37 during a 63-run sixth wicket stand, helped Dhaka avoid a disaster like the first innings. Neeyamur also contributed 37 in the first innings.

Apart from the match winning six, man-of-the-match Mahmud also hit seven fours in his 54-ball unconquered essay.
Dhaka now have 18 points with only Chittagong, on 12 points, capable of catching them at the top by the end of this round. Rajshahi remained stuck on 12 points after tasting their first defeat.

CHITTAGONG-KHULNA

Chittagong also stayed on course to earn full points when they forced Khulna to follow-on at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

The home side will require to capture seven wickets on the final day today while Khulna, 148-3 at stumps on the third day, will have to score a further 131 runs to force Chittagong to bat again.

Resuming on 68-4, Khulna stretched their first innings to 182 as

Monirul Islam fought single-handedly. The number four batsman, who was overnight 27, remained unbeaten on 87 from 206 balls to narrow the gap despite losing teammates at regular intervals.

Monirul, who sent the ball 13 times into the fence during his five-hour stay, shared 46 runs with Jamaluddin (30) and 35 runs with Asadullah Khan (21) for the sixth and seventh wickets respectively but the tail left him stranded just 13 short of a deserved 100.

The last four wickets fell for 13 runs with part-time seamer Ehsanul Haque grabbing three of them. Habib Moballik, however, was the pick of the attack with 4-53.

Ehsanul hit the inroads as Khulna lost an early wicket in the second innings but stroke-filled fifties by opener Nazmus Sadat (55 off 57 balls) and Sazzadul Hasan (52 off 115 balls) helped them recover.

Sadat cracked eight fours and a six while Sazzad, who was unbeaten, had hit eight boundaries. Monirul was batting on 13.

BARISAL-SYLHET

At the Barisal Stadium, a 97-run opening stand between Golam Rahman (68 off 108 balls) and Moniruzzaman (51 not out) propelled Sylhet's solid second-innings

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ALL-ROUND SHOW: Chittagong's in-form batsman Ehsanul Haque who shone with the ball also, follows through while bowling his part-time medium pacers in the Khulna second innings yesterday at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

Experience only gain

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Ashraf, who had a baptism of fire as captain of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) XI in the Duleep Trophy tournament in India, said the difference in standard was an eye opener.

The BCB side returned home yesterday after their maiden appearance in the Indian first class competition where they suffered an innings and 149-run defeat against East Zone and then barely hung on for a draw against Central Zone.

"It is true that our performance was not satisfactory in the competition but I must say we have gathered valuable experience from the competition which will come in handy in our next series against England," said Ashraf.

"Bangladesh's cricket will be hugely benefited if we take part in such tournaments regularly. The standard is much higher compared to our first-class competition," added Ashraf.

The 20-year-old felt that the green-top pitches used in the Duleep Trophy was the main reason behind the batting blues of his side which failed to cross 200 in any innings.

"Our batting was found wanting as we do not play on such pitches here. We should prepare genuine

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C'WEALTH SHOOTING

Team leaves for Melbourne today

SPORTS REPORTER

A four-member Bangladesh team leaves for Melbourne today to take part in the Commonwealth Shooting Championships.

The competition will be held from March 9-15 in the Australian city.

The Bangladesh team, however, will be without Commonwealth Games and SAF Games gold medalist Asif Hossain Khan who failed to notch the qualification mark set by the Bangladesh Shooting Federation (BSF). SAF Games gold medalist Sharmin Akhter also is missing the trip due to personal reasons.

The shooters are: Anwaruzzaman, SAF Games and Commonwealth gold medalist Sabrina Sultana and Suriyaya Akhter -- all three to compete in air rifle events.

The BSF began the preparation camp in mid-December, 2004, with nine shooters but only three passed the qualification mark.

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It can be Sachin's own



AFP, Mohali

Sachin Tendulkar has amassed more than 20,000 runs in international cricket, but a small figure of 121 has assumed greater significance ahead of the first cricket Test between India and Pakistan starting here on Tuesday.

The champion batsman, whose illustrious career began way back in 1989 in Pakistan when he was just 16, needs a 100-plus innings to reach a twin milestone.

A century will smash compatriot Sunil Gavaskar's world record of 34 Test hundreds. And by scoring 121 he will become only the fifth batsman in Test history to complete 10,000 runs.

Former Australian captains Allan Border and Steve Waugh, Gavaskar and West Indies skipper Brian Lara comprise the elite 10,000-club so far.

The task is not beyond Tendulkar, who has already compiled 9,879 runs in 120 Tests with 34 centuries and 13,497 runs in 342 one-dayers with a world record 37 hundreds.

The run-up to Pakistan's first tour of India in six years may have been bumpy, but it will soon be reduced to mere footnotes in the history of the game if Tendulkar achieves his twin objective.

A row over venues and telecast rights will be pushed in the background as the focus shifts to cricket, especially on Tendulkar who leads a strong batting line-up against the inexperienced Pakistani attack.

The 31-year-old is keen to prove he has regained fitness after being troubled with an tennis elbow injury, which forced him to miss three major one-day tournaments and two home Tests against Australia earlier this season.

Tendulkar played just one four-day domestic match in the last two

months, in which he made four runs to leave fans wondering if he had fully recovered from the injury.

India, who won both the Test and one-day series in Pakistan last year, look well-equipped to maintain their supremacy over their arch-rivals since they are playing with a full-strength side.

Skipper Sourav Ganguly faces a problem of plenty as both

Laxmipathy Balaji and Ashish Nehra have recovered from injuries to stand alongside pace compatriots Zaheer Khan and Irfan Pathan.

With spinners Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh almost sure to play, Ganguly will be forced to drop two of his four pacemen.

Pakistan expect skipper Inzamamul Haq to lead from the

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WE ARE ALL COUNTING ON YOU: Coach John Wright (L) puts his arm on star batsman Sachin Tendulkar's shoulder during practice in Mohali yesterday.

The battles within



AFP, Mohali

Key battles in store when the Test series between India and Pakistan gets underway here on Tuesday:

SALMAN BUTT V ZAHEER KHAN

Young Butt promises to solve Pakistan's opening woes after the retirement of Saeed Anwar and Aamer Sohail. He is 20, full of confidence and bold strokes. He ruined India's party with an audacious century in a one-off match at Calcutta last year, impressing everyone with his remarkable stroke-play under pressure.

An engrossing duel is on the cards as Butt takes on Indian left-arm seamer Zaheer, who has regained fitness after being dogged by injuries last season. Zaheer has the ability to test the best with his speed and accuracy.

INZAMAMUL HAQ V ANIL KUMBLE

Inzamam is performing a dual role of

captain and batsman, but Pakistan cannot afford his batting lapses. He is the tourists' best batsman, having the technique and temperament to excel against both pace and spin. His side expect him to lead from the

front.
Even India are aware they will be in trouble if the Pakistan captain gets going. They have a formidable leg-spinner in Kumble, capable of

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INDO-PAK TEST SUMMARY

AFP, Mohali

Summary of Test matches played between India and Pakistan ahead of the three-Test series starting here on Tuesday:

| Year | Hosts | Tests | IND | PAK | Draw |
|--------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1952/53 | India | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| 1954/55 | Pakistan | 5 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| 1960/61 | India | 5 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| 1978/79 | Pakistan | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| 1979/80 | India | 6 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| 1982/83 | Pakistan | 6 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| 1983/84 | India | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| 1984/85 | Pakistan | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 1986/87 | India | 5 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| 1989/90 | Pakistan | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| 1998/99 | India | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 1998/99 | India | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 2003/04 | Pakistan | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| In India | | 27 | 5 | 4 | 18 |
| In Pakistan | | 23 | 2 | 6 | 15 |
| Total | | 50 | 7 | 10 | 33 |

Nisa due today

SPORTS REPORTER

Nisa FC of Turkmenistan arrive here today to open their Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Cup first-round away match against Brothers Union.

The match will be held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Wednesday. But first the international fixture at the BNS, which has just been handed over to football, has left organisers concerned with the state of the pitch.

"It is very difficult to prepare the ground within a week," BFF general secretary Anwarul Haque Helal.

Brothers, on the other hand, is excited at the prospect of getting some international exposure after a successful domestic seasons that saw a re-born Gopibagh outfit lift their first-ever Premier and National League titles.

"We are not thinking how well we will do against our opponents. It's our first international assignment in Asia. All we want to do is play some good football," said Brothers manager Amer Khan.

While Brothers will host Nisa, their rival Muktiyodha set off for Kolkata today to face Indian giants East Bengal in another AFC Cup fixture.

The match kicks off at the Salt Lake Stadium also on Wednesday.

AKC, MSC avoid each other

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani and Mohammedan were drawn in separate groups when the draw for the Independence Day Football Tournament was held on Saturday night.

The eight-team football competition, organised by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) to mark its permanent possession of the Bangabandhu National Stadium, begins at the premier venue from March 10.

Mohammedan will head a tough Group A that contains fellow giants Muktiyodha, Premier League runners-up Sheikh Russel and giant-killer Arambagh.

Abahani has been placed in Group B along with Premier and National League champions Brothers Union to first Division outfits -- Farashganj Sporting Club and Youngmen's Club Fakirpool.

Two top finishers from each group will advance into the last four after completing the round robin phase.

BSC finish top

SPORTS REPORTER

Leaders Bangladesh Sporting Club (BSC) finished the first leg of the Green Delta First Division Hockey League on a high when they defeated Dhaka Wanderers Club 3-1 at the Maulana Bhashani National Stadium yesterday.

After a barren first half, Azam put the winners ahead in the 36th minute while Javed doubled the margin in the 64th minute.

Tarekul Islam pulled back one goal back for Wanderers in the 66th minute before Jagdish Singh sealed it for Bangladesh Sporting in the 67th minute.

Bangladesh Sporting finished with highest 21 points from eight games while their vanquished opponents have earned 19 points from equal number of outings.

Bowlers power BD A



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh A bowlers helped their side bounce back in the second one-day match against their Zimbabwean counterparts when they won by 34 runs at Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo on Saturday.

The five-match series is now tied 1-1. Zimbabwe A had won by five-wicket in the first one dayer. The third game is scheduled today.

Bangladesh A won the toss again and decided to bat. But they were staring at doom at 71 for 6 before first Shamsur Rahman and then Syed Russel pulled them out of the hole.

Shamsur was the only top-order batsman to provide resistance and was the 7th man out with the score on 107 after a defiant 59. But the decisive partnership came from the most unlikely of sources. Fast bowlers Russel and Shahadat

Hossain Rajib added 62 for the 9th wicket. Russel contributed 41 while Rajib added a valuable 26 before he was run out off the last ball of the 50th over with his team on 202.

Zimbabwe A's reply was no better than the Bangladesh one as they slumped to 65 for 5. The difference was no one was there to rescue them and despite some fight from the lower order they were bundled out for 168 in 48.2 overs.

"Our bowlers bowled a very good line and length as they had done in the previous match and Zimbabwe's aggressive tactics backfired," said Bangladesh A coach Richard McInnes.

Country's fastest bowler Rajib, his new ball partner Russel and left-arm spinner Enamul Haque Jr finished with two wickets each.

Greg Strydom top scored for Zimbabwe A with 37.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH A: 202 all out in 50

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Inzamam not worried



AFP, Mohali

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq remained confident on Sunday ahead of the first Test with India despite seeing his team's only warm-up match washed out by rain.

Bad weather continually disrupted the three-day match against a Board President's XI in Dharamshala, which was eventually abandoned with less than an innings played.

"It would have been nice had we got a full match because every team needs practice before a Test, but I am confident it won't affect us much as our boys are coming after playing first-class cricket back home," Inzamam told AFP ahead of

Tuesday's Test.
"True, the match atmosphere is different and we would have liked more batting and bowling practice, but I am sure the boys will get in the right groove for the Test."

Pakistan batted just once in the three-day game, scoring 273. But their bowling preparations were severely affected as they sent down only 34 overs.

Inzamam said his batsmen still had a chance to give a good account of themselves but failed to cash in on it.

"We should have made 400 or 500 because you need to score big in practice matches and I hope my batsmen will show more responsibility in the Test series," he said.

The Pakistani captain pinned his hopes on his openers, saying his team needed a solid start to boost

their chances of posting a big total.
"We didn't get a good start (in the practice game) and that put more pressure on the middle-order. Asim Kamal, Abdul Razaq and myself had good outings in the middle but I still expected more."

The tourists also faced off-field problems as they had to squeeze into two planes to reach and leave the venue at Dharamshala, which is served by a tiny airport.

The matter was raised by manager Saleem Altaf but Inzamam played down the problems.

"It was not an ideal place to hold cricket matches but the people and their warm reception helped us forget everything," said Inzamam, whose 35th birthday was celebrated at the ground on Thursday.

Hundreds of fans wished the

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YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO! Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer talking to captain Inzamamul Haq during a practice session in Mohali yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP