



Did U Know?

A soccer ball is made up of 32 leather panels, held together by 642 stitches.



TEN Sports & DD Sports
India vs Pakistan
First Test, Day Three
Live at 10:30 am

ESPN
UEFA Champions League
Leverkusen vs Liverpool
Same Day Delay at 3:00 pm

Sportscentre
Live at 8:30 pm
New Zealand vs Australia
First Test, Day Two
Live at 3:30 am (Friday)

STAR Sports
Sportsline
Live at 8:00 pm
UEFA Champions League
Monaco vs PSV Eindhoven
Live at 12:30 am (Friday)



Laxmipathi Balaji
(Indian paceman)

"It is always challenging to stage a comeback after injury but I worked really hard. I sought help from Australian great Dennis Lillee who advised me to change the bowling action a little bit. And it all paid off here."

After claiming a maiden five-wicket haul in the opening Test against Pakistan in Mohali.

Sehwag sounds ominous for Pakistan

AFP, Mohali

Swashbuckling Indian opener Virender Sehwag Wednesday sounded a warning to Pakistan, saying he would continue to bat in the same attacking vein to put his team in a winning position in the first Test here.

"I aim to bat throughout the day on Thursday," Sehwag said after

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Sehwag shines in rain

AFP, Mohali



Virender Sehwag put Pakistan's attack to the sword with a rapid and unbeaten 95 to strengthen India's position in the opening Test here on Wednesday.

Let off twice, the opener provided a breathtaking display of aggressive batting as India reached 184-1 at stumps in reply to Pakistan's first-innings total of 312 on a rain-hit second day.

Rahul Dravid was the other unbeaten batsman on 39 when bad light stopped play 10 overs before the scheduled close.

Just 40 overs were possible due to rain, but those were enough to thrill nearly 20,000 spectators who braved the inclement weather.

Sehwag made sure the home fans watching did not leave the stadium disappointed as he dominated an entertaining 113-run stand for the opening wicket with Gautam Gambhir (41) to put his team on course for a big total.

The free-hitting Sehwag, who scored a triple-century against Pakistan at Multan last year, continued to feast on the tourists' attack with one six and 12 fours on a seamer-friendly track.

Sehwag made Pakistan pay for letting him off the hook early in his innings and unleashed a flurry of boundaries to expose the tourists' bowling limitations.

Fast bowler Mohammad Sami succeeded in finding the edge of Sehwag's bat on 15 but Taufeeq Umar dropped a regulation catch at third slip.

Pakistan were left to rue this missed opportunity as Sehwag continued to attack the bowling, racing to his ninth Test half-century off just 49 balls with one six and seven fours.

Sehwag offered another chance on 82 but was dropped again by Younis Khan fielding at slip to leg-spinner Danish Kaneria.

Throughout his innings and apart from these two lapses Sehwag timed the ball well and found plenty of gaps in the field to pile the pressure on the Pakistani bowlers and fielders.

There was no respite for Pakistan as Gambhir provided valuable support from the other end. The opener stroked the ball fluently during his 78 minutes at the crease before losing his patience.

The left-hander tried to loft Kaneria over mid-on, but did not time the shot properly and was caught by Navedul Hasan. His 113-run stand with Sehwag came off just 17.1 overs.

The dominance of the Indian

openers was reflected in the figures of the Pakistani bowlers with key quick Sami being struck for 55 in eight overs and Naved going for 49 off his 10.

Sehwag ploughed on even after the dismissal of his opening partner. Razzaq was at the receiving end in the closing session when he was hit for three fours in an over by Sehwag, who had earlier cut Naved over slips for the lone six of the day.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the opening Test between India and Pakistan at Mohali on Wednesday:

PAKISTAN: First innings 312 (Kamal 91, Inzamam 57, Umar 44; Balaji 5-76, Pathan 2-68, Kumble 2-76)

INDIA: First innings Gambhir c Naved b Kaneria 41, Sehwag not out 95, Dravid not out 39, Extras: (b-1, lb-1, nb-7) 9

Total: (For 1 wkt in 40 overs) 184

Fall of wicket: 1-113

To bat: Ganguly, Tendulkar, Laxman, Karthik, Pathan, Zaheer, Kumble, Balaji.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Sami	8	1	55	0
Naved	10	1	49	0
Razzaq	9	0	41	0
Kaneria	13	2	37	1

Khokon rescues Brothers

SPORTS REPORTER



An 85th minute strike by Saiful Islam Khokon helped Brothers Union salvage something in a dour 1-1 draw in their AFC Cup debut against

Turkmenistan's Nisa FC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Competitive football returned to the premier venue of the country after one and a half years with the Group C match but hardly a thousand fans turned up. The quality of football was another big let down especially for those who have been privileged enough to watch the Champions League classic between Barcelona and Chelsea and the wizardry of the incomparable Ronaldinho the night before.

Nisa, who had only reached Dhaka on Tuesday afternoon with just 12 players, were more interested in holding on to an early lead from captain and Turkmenistan international Urazov Gylych. Despite dominating the first half, their tired legs began to tell after the breather and they should be the happier of the two sides at the end of the match as Brothers fluffed the opportunity to earn full points with a missed penalty in the second half.

The first chance fell to Nisa when Urazov raced past Brothers fullback Masud Rana in the third minute but placed the ball wide of keeper Ali. But Urazov made no mistake as he pounced on a gaffe by Brothers goalkeeper Mohammed Ali 14 minutes later.

The diminutive Ali hesitated to come forward to intercept a high ball from winger Murad from mid-pitch and allowed the ball to take a wicked bounce and fall to the feet of an unmarked Urazov who helped it into the open net.

Brothers' young right fullback Siraji tested Shamudarov with a

long range shot on the half-hour but Nisa goalie Shamudarov dived full stretch to his right to parry the shot for a corner.

The Gopibag outfit pressed hard but their Russian striker Edward was denied a single shot on goal by a tight rival defence. However Brothers' relentless pressure in the second half was almost rewarded six minutes from time. Nisa defender Evgeniye tripped Masud Rana inside the box and the referee awarded a penalty. But

Shamudarov spectacularly tipped Moroccan recruit Inani's rising shot from the spot over the bar.

Brothers coach Wazed Gazi sent midfielder Monwar on for Siraji with the seconds ticking away. It proved an inspirational substitution. Just after the missed penalty, Monwar tested Shamudarov with a rasping volley with his first touch on the ball. Shamudarov half blocked the attempt but Brothers' newcomer

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PHOTO: STAR

Brothers Union striker Khokon (C) is being sandwiched between two Nisa FC booters during their AFC Cup's first-round clash at the BNS yesterday.



PHOTO: AFP

PICTURE CAN BE DECEIVING: Indian opener Virender Sehwag is in a spot of bother while evading a bouncer. But this was one of the rare moments of unease for the dashing right-hander who plundered 95 by close of Day Two in the first Test against Pakistan at Mohali yesterday.

India inviting Musharraf

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India on Wednesday said it would be happy if Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf came to this country to watch any of the matches of the current series.

"It is a friendly visit... Every visit does not have to become state visit," Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's media advisor Sanjaya Baru said. He said India would be happy to host Musharraf for witnessing any of the matches and external affairs ministry had been asked to check with Islamabad for his visit to enable the government make necessary arrangements including security.

Baru recalled that late Pakistan president Ziaul Haq had come to India to watch one of the cricket matches between the two countries.

"All our neighbours should feel free to come to India any time they want," he said.

Baru's remarks came a day after Indian cricket board president Ranbir Singh Mahendra had expressed desire to invite the Pakistan president to watch one of the matches.

He said that the Indian board had written to sports ministry conveying its desire to invite Musharraf and urging to get in touch with the external affairs ministry to explore the possibility for this.

Tigers' delight in Zim plight



AFP, New Delhi

Calls to strip Zimbabwe of Test status may finally have taken the pressure off Bangladesh, who yearn to gain respect as a cricket team.

For long the wooden spooners of Test cricket, Bangladesh may have just turned the corner, leaving Zimbabwe to fill their shoes as the most pitiable team in the world.

Zimbabwe's two-day rout by South Africa in a recent Test match after being skittled for 54 in the first innings follows a long row between administrators and players.

Bangladesh, on the other hand, are settling down after defeating Zimbabwe in both the Test and one-day series at home following a creditable one-day win against India last December.

Coach Dav Whatmore, watching over his young wards taking part in India's first-class Duleep Trophy tournament, felt Bangladesh had finally broken the shackles.

"Beating India was fabulous and a big boost for our players," said the Australian, who took over as Bangladesh's national coach in 2003.

"They now believe in themselves."

Bangladesh beat India by 15

runs in the second match of a one-day series in December to keep the series alive, a rarity for them, before going down 2-1.

As for Tests, Bangladesh had lost 31 of their 34 Tests and drawn the remaining three before clinching a two-Test series against Zimbabwe 1-0.

"The Zimbabwe series victory was historic," said Whatmore. "But for me, salvaging a draw in the second Test was more important than winning the first as we had to bat out a considerable amount of time."

"The batsmen have learnt to value their wickets and avoid repeating mistakes."

Whatmore, preparing for Bangladesh's maiden visit to England in May, felt the team could fight it out better in the coming years.

"Some years from now, Bangladesh should be able to make an impact," said Whatmore, who guided Sri Lanka to World Cup triumph in 1996.

Bangladesh selector Athar Ali Khan too was positive.

"I think our team is heading in the right direction," he said. "The players are improving and we should be at par with other teams in the coming years."

Athar, however, conceded the team needed to be more consistent.

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East Bengal survive Mukti fright

PTI, Kolkata

East Bengal survived anxious moments before finishing goalless with Muktiuddha Sangsad of Bangladesh in their opening AFC Cup match here today.

The woodwork saved the blushes for the local outfit once while their defenders effected two goalline saves during the later stages of the opening half as the visitors planned their attacks around the throwing prowess of midfielder Belal Ahmed.

Belal repeatedly caused terror in the East Bengal box with his deep and measured throws, with Muktiuddha strikers Saiful Islam Saif and Rokonuzzaman Kanchan going for the follow up header.

In the 29th minute, one of Belal's throws from the left caught the East Bengal defence napping and Kanchan took a quick header which hit the post, much to the relief of the spectators.

Belal again showed his mastery in the 41st minute when a deep throw from the left was met with a header by Saif but East Bengal central defender Selwyn Fernandes made a goalline save. Muktiuddha players, however, claimed that the ball had crossed the goalline but referee Chynybekov Kadypbek of Kyrgyzstan did not oblige.

More trouble was in store for the home side as Belal's measured throw from the right two minutes later reached Kanchan who took a low header but Climax Lawrence returned the ball from near the goalline before Chandan Das made the final clearance.

The flood-lit encounter at the Salt Lake stadium saw East Bengal

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Zia keeps nat'l title

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman retained his national chess title when he beat Hasan Imam in the 12th round at the NSC Conference Room yesterday.

Zia confirmed the title with one game in hand in the Mercantile Bank 31st National Chess Championship as his nearest rival International Master Reefat Bin Sattar remained two points behind after the penultimate round.

Zia stretched his collection to an unassailable 11 points while Reefat, who beat IM Enamul Hossain Rajib, improved his tally to nine points.

Country's first GM Niaz Murshed lost his 12th round board to FIDE Master Abu Sufian Shakil to share the third spot with IM Abdullah Al Rakib, who defeated Mainuddin Ahmed. Both are level on 8.5 points.



ZIAUR RAHMAN