

DIV I HOCKEY
Easy sail
for BSC

SPORTS REPORTER

Leaders Bangladesh Sporting Club (BSC) launched their campaign in the super-four of the Green Delta First Division Hockey League with a 3-0 whitewash of Muktibihanga Tarun Sangha at the Maulana Bhashani National Stadium yesterday.

The winners led the first half 1-0 through a field goal from Azam in the 16th minute.

Veteran Zahid Biswas doubled the margin in the 45th minute while Mohammad Javed completed the Muktibihanga rout with a 57th minute strike.

The victory raised Bangladesh SC's tally to 24 points while Muktabihanga remained glued to their previous collection of 17 points.

MSC cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Wills Little Flower School inflicted a nine-wicket defeat on Mary Gold Child Academy in the Mohammed Dhaka Metropolitan Inter-school Cricket Tournament at the East End Club ground yesterday.

Wills Little Flower raced to 133-1 after they had bowled Mary Gold out for 129.

At the WAPDA ground, Enam Children High School (130-10) managed a 16-run victory over Nabakumar Institute (114-10).

Modhu Bepari High School (161-4) beat Sher-e-Bangla High School (160-10) by six wickets at the COD ground.

Zondeki, Nel
called back

REUTERS, Johannesburg

Monde Zondeki and Andre Nel have been recalled to the South African attack in place of rested strike duo Shaun Pollock and Makhaya Ntini for the second Test against Zimbabwe starting at Centurion on Friday.

Pollock and Ntini will miss the match after a gruelling season in which they shared a heavy workload in the five Tests and seven one-day internationals against England from December to February.

The pair have been South Africa's main strike bowlers for the last three seasons and the selectors have opted to rest them against a Zimbabwe team that was bowled out for 54 in the first innings of the first Test in Cape Town and lost within two days.

Zondeki was recalled to the South African team for the first time in 18 months for the third and final one-day international against Zimbabwe on March 2 and showed enough pace and aggression to earn a second Test call up.

Nel played his last Test in the fifth Test against England at Centurion in January and celebrated his return after an absence of a year by taking six for 81 in the first innings.

Ntini has appeared in every one of South Africa's last 36 Tests, stretching back to the first Test against Australia at the Wanderers in February 2002.

Pollock only bowled five overs in the Zimbabwe second innings last Saturday and South African media manager Gerald de Kock says he was being troubled by an ankle injury.

"It was due to a painful left ankle. He will consult a specialist on Wednesday to determine the extent of the injury," De Kock said on Tuesday.

TEAM

Graeme Smith (captain), AB de Villiers, Jacques Rudolph, Jacques Kallis, Herschelle Gibbs, Ashwell Prince, Mark Boucher, Nicky Boje, Monde Zondeki, Charl Langeveldt, Andre Nel.



Winners of the Rumi Smriti Open Table Tennis Tournament pose for photographs with officials at the NSC Woodenfloor gymnasium yesterday.

'Indian seamers'
show inspires us'



AFP, Mohali

Pakistan cricket coach Bob Woolmer Wednesday took heart from the Indian seamers' performance on a grassy track in the first Test here, saying his side also had fast bowlers to exploit the conditions.

"Of course, I take heart from Indian seamers' performance," said Woolmer.

"They exploited the helpful conditions and we too have three good seamers in Mohammad Sami, Navedul Hasan and Abdul Razzaq."

India's pace trio of Laxmipathy Balaji (5-76), Irfan Pathan (2-68) and Zaheer Khan (1-70) helped their team bowl Pakistan out for 312 on the first day here on Tuesday.

Rain washed out the first two sessions on the second day on Wednesday.

The 56-year-old Woolmer, who played 19 Tests for England in the 1970s and then coached South Africa between 1994-99, said his

team had batted well to recover from early setbacks.

"It was a nice recovery from a precarious position, but I'm still disappointed that we did not score 400 or more," he said.

Pakistan were tottering at 30-2 and then 191-6 after being sent in by India, but left-hander Asim Kamal (91) and captain Inzamamul Haq (57) came to their team's rescue with impressive knocks.

Woolmer described the pitch as "interesting."

"It's very difficult to judge the wicket until both sides bat on it, but it's an interesting pitch. If the conditions remain the same it will continue to help seamers, but may also take turn," he said.

Woolmer, who was born in Kanpur, India in 1948, described the experience of touring India as "incredible."

"It's incredible to have come to your place of birth," he said. "It's a good feeling. It's also different coaching here because there are a lot of expectations. Everyone loves cricket here, speculate on it, so it's an experience."

Tigers' delight

FROM PAGE 13

"Zimbabwe were a depleted side but we have also done well in some other Test matches in Pakistan and the West Indies," said the former Bangladesh player. "I think we are close to establishing ourselves as a team."

But a promising Bangladesh Board President's XI failed to impress on their 'learning tour' of India last month.

The team, without experienced players like captain Habibul Bashar and left-handed all-rounder Mohammad Rafique, lost to East Zone in the Duleep Trophy and then salvaged a draw in a rain-truncated match against Central Zone.

"The players have to learn the difference between wanting to perform and going through the motions," said Whatmore. "People will have to be more patient to see Bangladesh perform well on a regular basis."

Bangladesh have won just one of 36 Tests and lost 31, with the remaining four drawn since gaining Test status in 2000.

In one-dayers, they have managed nine wins in 106 matches, including a victory over Pakistan in the 1999 World Cup.

RUMI SMRITI OPEN TT
A title for
Mostafa
at last

SPORTS REPORTER

Mostafa lifted the men's singles title of the Rumi Smriti Open Table Tennis Competition, which ended at the Woodenfloor gymnasium yesterday.

The veteran paddler celebrated his first title triumph in any domestic competition when he outranked second seed Hamlet in an exciting final that stretched to seven sets.

His 11-8, 11-6, 7-11, 11-6, 9-11, 10-12 and 11-7 points win over Hamlet exacted a sort of family revenge after his younger brother and top seed Mahbub lost to Hamlet in the semifinals.

Earlier, Mostafa romped into final defeating Parag 11-9, 11-9, 11-6, 11-4 in the other semifinal.

Saleha clinched the ladies' singles crown with an 11-6, 11-5, 11-7, 11-4 victory against Jayati.

Saleha reached the final beating Tumpa 4-11, 11-6, 11-7, 11-9, 10-12, 11-9 while Jayati overcame Rumi 10-12, 12-10, 3-11, 11-9, 11-8, 11-6 in the other semi.

The boys singles title went to Rocky of Narail.

Nasima Ahmed, mother of late Masud Ahmed Rumi, distributed the prizes among the winners after the final games.

Khokon rescues

FROM PAGE 13

Khokon, a prolific scorer for Abahani over the last few seasons, was on hand to tap in the rebound from close range.

Nisa coach Boris Grigoryans, who has been associated with the club for ten years said he was happy to return with one point from the away match.

"I am happy that my players held on to a draw despite being very tired. We almost came out with full points but the long journey took its toll," said Grigoryans.

"We had four national players but they could not play their natural game and Brothers proved to be a good side," he added.

Replying to the question why they had brought only 12 footballers, Grigoryans said it was due to the club's financial problems.

Brothers coach Wajed Gazi admitted that the first goal put them on the backfoot.

"It happens in football sometimes and I think Ali was deceived by the bounce and movement of the ball," said Gazi.

He also admitted that his boys could not take the advantage of the exhausted rivals due to lack of quality strikers. Brothers play their next match against Nijmeh FC of Lebanon on March 16 in Beirut.

Yellow cards: Khokon (Brothers) and Nazar, Rasif, Aleksey, Darov (Nisa).

TEAMS

Brothers Union: Ali, Siraji (Monwar, 84th minute), Shuvra, Sujun, Masud Rana, Pranotosh (Liton, 42nd), Inani, Parvez Babu, Edward (Emily, 80th) and Khokon.

Nisa FC: Shamudarov, Nazar, Evgeniye, Vugar, Guvanch, Rasif, Darov, Aleksey, Murad, Artur and Urazov (Kamil, 89th).

Referee: Mombini Hedayet (Iran).

Sehwag sounds

FROM PAGE 13

smashing a quick-fire 95 not out to help India reach 184-1 at stumps on the second day in reply to Pakistan's first-innings total of 312.

"A lot of times, you throw away the initiative by losing your wicket. I remember getting out for 195 in Melbourne (in 2003) which left my team struggling. I don't want a repeat of that."

Sehwag struck one six and 12 fours in his ninth Test half-century to dominate an inexperienced Pakistani attack.

"I batted no differently from the way I usually do," Sehwag said.

"If we bat for another five-six sessions we will be able to exert pressure on Pakistan," he said.

"Bad weather had already snatched a possible win from us against Australia last year," he added referring to India's second Test against Adam Gilchrist's side at Madras, where the hosts were in a winning position before rain came on the final day.

The hard-hitting opener, dropped on 15 and 82, capitalised on the chances to demoralise the Pakistani attack, much to the delight of nearly 20,000 spectators.

"Those were good balls but you get your chances in matches and it's up to you to capitalise on them. I did precisely that," he said. Sehwag said he did not believe that the Pakistani bowling was weak in the absence of express paceman Shoaib Akhtar, who did not make the tour due to a hamstring injury.

"They (Pakistan) have a good bowling attack, but they did not put the ball in right areas," said Sehwag.

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq conceded letting off Sehwag twice affected his team's chances of putting pressure on India.

"We should have held those catches and giving Sehwag two chances put paid to our good efforts," said Inzamam.

'Pom-mel the Convicts'



AFP/BBC, undated

Ian Botham, England's greatest Aussie basher, has urged England to thrash the 'convicts' and win the Ashes this summer.

The legendary all-rounder, who inspired England to victory in the epic 1981 Ashes series and was also a member of the last England team to beat the Aussies back in 1986-87, believes Michael Vaughan's men can end a generation of Australian dominance.

"A few years ago England would have struggled to beat the Eskimos," Botham told the Sun.

"Now they've a chance of beating Australia."

"Anyone who has played against them will tell you there is no better feeling than beating the convicts -- they are a great sporting nation."

But Botham fears Shane Warne could still decide the outcome.

"There is not much between the teams in terms of batting," he said.

"Whichever side bowls best as a pack will win the series. England certainly have a chance."

Botham said leg-spin wizard Warne, banned for a year for failing a drugs test after the last Ashes series, was expecting a tough scrap with the Poms.

"I can assure you Shane Warne is worried -- well, certainly wary, keyed up and expecting a fight," he said.

"The Aussies are expecting a bigger battle than they have had for a long time. It's our best chance in almost 20 years."



IAN BOTHAM

"Warne is still the major factor for them. He's the best leg-spinner that ever lived."

Botham insists England must pick new batting sensation Kevin Pietersen from the start of the summer after he hammered three centuries in the recent one-day series against South Africa.

Pietersen is yet to play Test

cricket but Beefy believes he must face Bangladesh in a two-Test series in the early summer as England crank up their Ashes preparations.

"Pietersen has to play in the Ashes. I don't know how the selectors will fit him in but they have to," he said.

"He and Andrew Flintoff will empty the bars when they bat this summer. No one will want to miss them batting together."

The hard-hitting Pietersen however, admits the Australian Test team that England will attempt to beat this coming summer in the Ashes series are an awesome prospect to face.

He said: "They are an amazing side. And it's not just the 11 on the field -- they've got 13, 14, 15 match-winners."

"But we've got match-winners too and we are prepared to sweat blood to beat them and we'll all be up for it."

Pietersen, who will play for new county Hampshire from April, added: "Australia can be beaten."

"We showed that in the ICC Champions Trophy (in September 2004) they can be beaten so hopefully we can put that in the bag."

"Every single one of us is up for the challenge. There is so much togetherness in the England team."

Lee likely to comeback
Trans-Tasman Test series from today



REUTERS, Wellington

Australia are considering bringing back express paceman Brett Lee for the first Test against New Zealand in Christchurch which starts on Thursday.

Lee has not played a Test in more than 14 months but is poised to return after terrorising the Kiwis in the recent one-day series.

Captain Ricky Ponting told reporters on Wednesday that the team would not be finalised until the morning of the match. However, he said Lee's form in the one-day series, which Australia won 5-0, was a compelling reason to include him.

"I think at the moment that Brett's got a bit of a psychological edge over some of the New Zealand batsmen," said Ponting.

With Shane Warne the lone spinner and fast bowlers Glenn McGrath and Jason Gillespie almost assured of their places, Lee is vying with Michael Kasprowicz for the third paceman's role.

Kasprowicz has kept his place over the past year with a series of strong performances but Lee's superior form in the one-day arena is expected to sway the selectors.

"Brett's been outstanding on this tour," Ponting said. "I know if I was in their (New Zealand's) side and in their shoes and looked at a team sheet and saw his name wasn't on it, I think I would be reasonably relieved."

Favourites Australia are at full-strength for the three-match series, with opening batsman Matthew Hayden cleared to play after injuring

his shoulder in the one-dayers.

New Zealand have several players out through injury and discarded paceman Daryl Tuffey facing a misconduct charge over an off-the-field incident.

Coach John Bracewell resisted the temptation to name two spinners on a pitch likely to turn when he overlooked Paul Wiseman for paceman Iain O'Brien, one of two uncapped players in the team.

Craig Cumming will also make his Test debut, opening the batting with skipper Stephen Fleming, who has promoted himself up the order from number three.

"I think when the team needs it most, the captain should stand up," Fleming said.

Bracewell admitted he was concerned about the mental state of his team after their poor form in Tests over the past year and the one-day drubbing they took from Australia.

"There's no denying we have to shift our focus on Test match cricket because it hasn't been up to scratch for a while now," Bracewell said.

"The guys are all accepting of trying something different to almost shock them back into Test match mode from the rush of one-day cricket."

There has been no lack of animosity between the two teams.

Bracewell set the tone for the series when he accused Lee of deliberately bowling waste-high full tosses as a way of unsettling his batsmen and Warne increased the tension with a scathing attack on New Zealand's coach.

"New Zealand are a very good side and they're very well led by (captain) Stephen Fleming...but I

won't say well led by their coach," Warne said.

"I'm not sure how the players are getting along with John Bracewell but I wouldn't be listening to him."

TEAMS

NEW ZEALAND: Stephen Fleming (captain), Craig Cumming, Hamish Marshall, Lou Vincent, Nathan Astle, Craig McMillan, Brendon McCullum, Daniel Vettori, James Franklin, Iain O'Brien, Chris Martin.

AUSTRALIA (probable): Ricky Ponting (captain), Matthew Hayden, Justin Langer, Damien Martyn, Michael Clarke, Simon Katich, Adam Gilchrist, Shane Warne, Brett Lee, Jason Gillespie, Glenn McGrath.

PEPSI HANDBALL
BJMC, Ansar
reach final

SPORTS REPORTER

BJMC and Bangladesh Ansar romped into the final of the Pepsi 17th National Women's Handball Championship beating their respective rivals at the Dampara Police Line ground in Chittagong yesterday.

BJMC crushed Narail 22-2 in the first semifinal after dominating the first half 12-0 while Ansar routed Madaripur 24-6 in the second semis after leading the first session 13-5.

The final and third-place deciding match will take place at the same venue today.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Smile broadly

5 Toss into the mix

8 Calamine target

12 Language of Pakistan

13 Maui memento

14 Leak slowly

15 "While you were out" stack

17 Sketch

18 Air-monitoring org.

19 Wire-bending tool

21 Cross swords

24 Hoodlum

25 Leeway

26 Abated

30 Rushmore face

31 Actress Claire

32 Historic period

DOWN

1 Hobo

2 Earlier than

3 Billboards

4 Field-trip

5 Plankton component

6 Scottish river

7 Arranger

8 Antiseptic

9 Speed off

10 Despair

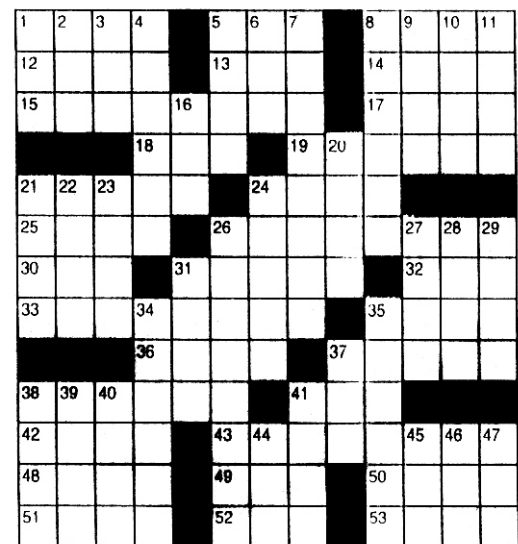
11 Chops

16 Gorilla

20 Privation

Solution time: 21 mins.

AMY DEMOSTRATING EXALTED TOURGUIDE APHRODISIA HELMET SOFT NOIR B RIND DOG FILM MEDOC PADUON SPAS NINETEY SELECT AGO URI HORSEHIDE END EMITS COVDOE SADAT EWE



JREQIH GNX GEQUS U AUI

TPEX TUO GPP ARBN

BPSPHIX Q OXSSXJ "PJPE

QI GNX BPREGI"

Yesterday's Cryptogram: OUR EMPLOYMENT AGENCY HAS ADOPTED A NEW SLOGAN: "WE PUT PEOPLE IN THEIR PLACES!"

Today's Cryptogram Clue: P equals Q

The Cryptogram is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.