

Brothers thumped in Beirut

INTERNET SOURCE, Beirut



Al Nijmeh opened their 2005 AFC Cup campaign with a comfortable 4-1 win over Bangladesh champions Brothers Union here on Wednesday.

The Lebanese champions were quick off the mark, scoring their first two goals in the first two minutes of the match. Musa Hjeijh and Mohammed Qassas were the early goalscorers.

Qassas then added his side's third and his own second goal in the 13th min.

Brothers closed the margin with a penalty converted by veteran wingback Masud Rana in the 23rd minute. Abbas Atwi then completed the easy win with the game's fifth goal to end the match 4-1 in Nijmeh's favour.

Nijmeh are now in the driving seat of Group C followed by Nisa of Turkmenistan and Brothers.

Brothers, the defending champions of the Dhaka Premier Division and National Football leagues, have one point in the bag after two matches following their 1-1 draw with Nisa FC at home.

Brothers' next assignment is on May 11 against Nisa at Ashgabat in Turkmenistan.



Turkey was the only national football team not to score in the 1996 European Championship held in England.



Michel Platini

(French football great)
"How could they not know? It's not chewing gum, doping is like making love, you need two to do it, the doctor and the athlete."

Expressing his doubts over doping denials at Serie A giants Juventus.



DD Sports & TEN Sports
India v Pakistan
Second Test, Day Three
Live 10 am
ESPN
New Zealand v Australia
Second Test, Day One
Highlights at 7 pm
Sportscentre
Live at 8.30 pm
Here We Go
Same day delay at 10.30 pm
New Zealand v Australia
Second Test, Day Two
Live at 3.30 am (Saturday)
STAR Sports
ATP Indian Wells Masters Series
Quarterfinals
Live at 10.30 am
English Premier League
Liverpool v Blackburn
Repeated at 12.30 pm
English Premier League Preview
Taped version at 7.30 pm
Sportsline
Live at 8 pm



CONTRASTING MOODS: Pakistani batsmen Younis Khan (L) and Yousuf Youhana (C) walk off the ground along with a dejected Indian captain Sourav Ganguly at the tea break on the second day of the second Test in Kolkata yesterday. Younis and Youhana put on 203 runs for the undefeated third wicket.

PHOTO: AFP

Ys lift Pakistan

REUTERS, Kolkata



Pakistan vice-captain Younis Khan and Yousuf Youhana stroked magnificent hundreds to lift their team against India in the second Test on Thursday.

Younis hit an unbeaten 108, his seventh hundred, while the experienced Youhana was 101 not out as Pakistan cruised to 273 for two on a slow Eden Gardens pitch, 134 runs behind India's first innings 407 all out.

Youhana reached his 13th hundred with a four against off-spinner Harbhajan Singh off the day's final delivery. The unbeaten third-wicket partnership of 203 was a record for Pakistan in India.

The 27-year-old Younis lifted Pakistan from 70 for two with powerful shots to all parts of the ground and ran superbly between the wickets with Youhana in energy-sapping humidity.

Younis has hit 14 fours in his 167-ball innings spanning four hours while Youhana's chanceless knock contained 13 fours.

Youhana needed nine runs to reach his hundred in the final over, but he swept Harbhajan for four and picked up a couple before hitting another four to reach three figures.

Both batsmen kept up an excellent scoring rate to force India captain Sourav Ganguly to spread his field, also showing their command against leg-spinner Anil Kumble and Harbhajan.

Younis had made only one fifty in six innings during the recent 3-0 series rout in Australia and managed just nine and one in the drawn first Test in Mohali.

However, he vindicated captain

Inzamamul Haq's decision to retain him at number three with an innings of real authority.

The well-built batsman drove strongly on the off side for his early fours before settling down to play delicate late cuts and drives to frustrate Kumble.

He could have been run out for 68, playing Kumble to short-leg and blindly taking off, but wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik threw wildly with the batsman well short of safety.

Younis pulled and cut Kumble to move into the 90s before edging a pull against Irfan Pathan over slips for four to complete his hundred.

Youhana showed his class at the other end, lofting both spinners for straight fours before playing his trademark cover drives against Pathan to keep pace with his partner.

Shahid Afridi had lashed a 21-ball 29 with all but one of his runs coming in boundaries and left-handed opener Taufeeq Umar made a shaky 18 after he was dropped on nought and one by slip fielders Rahul Dravid and Virender Sehwag.

India, overnight 344 for six, added 63 runs before being all out 30 minutes before lunch.

Harbhajan (27) and last man Kumble (21 not out) added 44 runs after Pakistan's bowlers made quick inroads into the tail.

Abdul Razzaq trapped Harbhajan leg before to finish with best figures of three for 62 with both leg-spinner Danish Kaneria and Afridi picking up three wickets.

Dravid top-scored with 110, his 19th hundred, and opener Sehwag made an aggressive 81 on Wednesday after Ganguly chose to bat. Sachin Tendulkar added 52, becoming only the fifth batsman to pass 10,000 runs in Test cricket.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the second Test between India and Pakistan at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata on Thursday:
INDIA: First innings (overnight 344-6)

Sehwag c Inzamam b Afridi	81
Gambhir lbw b Kaneria	29
Dravid c Akmal b Kaneria	110
Tendulkar c Akmal b Afridi	52
Ganguly c Akmal b Razzaq	12
Laxman lbw b Razzaq	0
Karthik run out	28
Pathan c Younis b Kaneria	8
Balaji b Afridi	3
Harbhajan lbw b Razzaq	27
Kumble not out	21
Extras: (b-1, lb-8, nb-16, w-6)	36
Total: (All out in 111.1 overs)	407
Fall of wickets: 1-80, 2-156, 3-278, 4-298, 5-298, 6-344, 7-345, 8-357, 9-363	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Sami	22	3	76	0
Khalil	11	3	39	0
Kaneria	35	1	136	3
Razzaq	22.1	4	62	3
Afridi	21	0	80	3

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Pathan	16	3	73	1
Balaji	13	1	55	1
Kumble	20	2	72	0
Ganguly	2	0	12	0
Harbhajan	15	1	52	0

Ctg's walking wounded

SPORTS REPORTER

Chittagong's struggle to field a team continued as they prepare for the sixth round of the National Cricket League which starts tomorrow.

Chittagong, who lost pole position after the previous round, had only eight players to bat against Dhaka in a top-of-the-table clash as Azam Iqbal, Nafees Iqbal and Nazimuddin got injured during the match.

All three players will be unavailable as well as Aftab Ahmed, the Test cap who has been suffering from a groin strain, fast bowler Wayaskarani Palash and Tareq Aziz when they travel to Khulna.

Wayaskarani is injured and Tareq, who has returned from India following the tour of BCB XI, is busy for his exams. Akram Khan also has opted out of the first-class competition and will only play in the one-dayers which leaves the side with a very weak squad.

The Chittagong team officials have applied for a substitute player - Arif Ahmed - considering that Azam Iqbal will be out for two more weeks and Nafees Iqbal looks uncertain for the rest of the tournament.

The national selectors who allotted the players to the six teams initially ignored Arif, the elder brother of Aftab who has two centuries in the National League.

Chittagong were yet to get the nod for Arif but will have Wasel Uddin and Dhiman Ghosh back from Zimbabwe.

It was confirmed that the selectors have allowed Sanwar Hossain, who returned home after Bangladesh A team's tour of Zimbabwe, to play for Dhaka.

Sanwar was allotted to Rajshahi but league leaders Dhaka, who have been missing Naimur Rahman, Mohammed Rafiq and Javed Omar due to injury, applied for Sanwar's inclusion.

Akhtar again?

AFP, Kolkata

Pakistan's fiery pace bowler Shoaib Akhtar is likely to return for a one-day series in India after missing Test matches due to a hamstring injury, a Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) official said here Thursday.

"Akhtar's fitness is being assessed by physiotherapist Grant Compton who is in constant touch with coach Bob Woolmer. He has a good chance to feature in the one-day series," PCB spokesman Subhan Ahmed told AFP.

The 29-year-old paceman injured his hamstring during Pakistan's tour of Australia in January this year and was forced to skip the ongoing three-Test series in India.

The Tests will be followed by six one-dayers, the first starting at Cochin on April 2.

Akhtar, nicknamed the "Rawalpindi Express" for his express pace, started bowling indoors in Lahore last week but felt pain in his right leg.

"If Akhtar regains full fitness before we announce the squad for the one-day series next week, he will be considered for selection," said Ahmed.

Another fast bowler, Shabbir Ahmed, was however ruled out of the one-dayers due to a knee injury.

Season's first big show

Independence Day Gold Cup from today



SPORTS REPORTER

The big guns of local football will be in action in the first competitive tournament of the season when the Independence Gold Cup kicks off today.

Mohammedan Sporting Club, who have built the strongest team on paper in a bid to restore their pride following a trophy-less season, will take on Arambagh Krira Sangha in the opening match at 4 pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is expected to distribute trophies after the March 30 final.

Also in Group A, Federation Cup champions Muktijoddha Sangsad are pitted against Dhaka Premier League runners-ups Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra at 6 pm.

National and Dhaka Premier League winners Brothers Union, Abahani and First Division champions and runners-up Farashganj Sporting Club and Youngmen's Club Fakirerpool are drawn in Group B.

Each team will be able to field two foreign players-per-match.

The winners of the tournament will receive an eight lakh taka cup made of 600 grams of gold and Taka

two lakh in cash, speakers at a press conference told yesterday.

State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Prof Rezaul Karim, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) general secretary Anwarul Hoque

Helal, tournament committee chairman Shah Alam and secretary Manzoor Hossain Malu were present.

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PHOTO: STAR

State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Prof Rezaul Karim addresses a press briefing in connection with the Independence Gold Cup starting at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

'Job not even half done'

AFP, Kolkata



Pakistan's century-makers Younis Khan and Yousuf Youhana on Thursday vowed to keep India under pressure in the second Test here, saying their task was not finished yet.

"We would like to continue on Day Three because we feel the job is not even half-done," said vice-captain Younis, who scored an unbeaten 108 on the second day for his seventh Test century.

Younis was involved in a 203-run stand for the unbroken third wicket with Youhana, who was unbeaten on 101 for his 13th Test hundred.

The duo helped Pakistan post an impressive 273-2 at stumps in reply to India's first innings total of 407.

"We need to go on like this and if we get a lead of 250-plus it will help

us force a win," said Youhana.

Pakistan looked set to gain a handsome lead as they were just 134 runs behind with eight wickets in hand.

"When Youhana came to bat we decided we would support each other. I am happy that we did that for our team's cause," said Younis, who took over the vice-captaincy from Youhana for this tour.

"We aimed at quick running between wickets to unnerv the bowlers and fielders."

Younis said he was under no pressure despite failing in both innings in the drawn opening Test at Mohali last week.

"I was not under pressure because of my batting, the pressure was there because of my poor catching," Younis said, referring to the three catches he put down in Mohali.

"I owe a lot to my captain who had confidence in me despite the

batting failures and I am happy to live up to his expectations."

Younis reached his hundred with a miscued pull over the slips off seamer Irfan Pathan for his 13th boundary after a 213-minute stay at the crease.

Youhana, who had made a half-century at Mohali, continued in the same vein and reached his hundred off the day's last ball, lofting off-spinner Harbhajan Singh over mid-wicket for his 13th four.

"I was in control right from the start. It was comfortable batting out there because the ball was coming on to the bat nicely," said Youhana.

The Pakistani duo agreed the Eden Gardens pitch had little to offer to the bowlers on the second day.

"This pitch is not a paradise for bowlers and if you bat with caution

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PHOTO: AFP

NO KNOCKOUTS YET: An Indian fan displays a poster of Indian captain Sourav Ganguly and his Pakistan counterpart Imzamamul Haq at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata yesterday.

Aussies going for the kill



AFP, Wellington

Australia named an unchanged team Thursday for the second cricket Test against New Zealand as they attempt to compound the misery of their hosts by taking an unassailable lead in the three-Test series.

Australian captain Ricky Ponting said speedster Brett Lee -- a star in the 5-0 one day series -- would again be left out of the action for the match starting Friday at Wellington's Basin Reserve.

New Zealand delayed naming its side until Friday morning with captain Stephen Fleming saying spinner Paul Wiseman may be included,

leaving spots for only two pace bowlers.

"We're thinking about Paul very seriously, he's bowling extremely well and he was very close in the last game to playing," Fleming said.

New Zealand has to regroup after the first Test in Christchurch, where they suffered a nine-wicket drubbing after collapsing for 131 in the second innings.

Rain is forecast for the opening day and the Basin Reserve is also renowned for the gusty winds which can make life hard for the players, especially the bowlers. Wiseman could be seen as a better bet bowling into the wind than a pace bowler.

The prospect of rain disrupting the early part of the Test would not stop Australia's attempt on a seventh straight Test victory, Ponting

said.

"If we do lose a fair bit of time, we'll obviously still be going full steam ahead to win the game. That's the way we play our cricket and probably the way we play our best cricket, as well, when we're aggressive and trying to make things happen all the time," he said.

The second innings collapse in Christchurch was a familiar scenario for the home side and Fleming said it must be remedied if New Zealand is going to succeed.

"That's been the biggest hurdle for this Test side, it hasn't been competing in the first couple of days, it's been getting in a position where there's an outcome involved and we've just tanked it."

Fleming had a one-hour session

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