



STEALING THE SHOW: Abul Hossain (R) of Brothers Union is ecstatic as he starts celebrating his winning goal while dejected Mohammed Nazrul (L) and Mahmudul Hassan look on during the second semifinal of the Independence Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Argentina overcome height factor

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro



Argentina took a huge step closer to the 2006 World Cup by beating Bolivia in La Paz at 3,600 metres above sea level on Saturday while the battle lower down the table intensified with draws in the other two games.

Chile's Milovan Mirosevic made up for one of the misses of the year by scoring the equaliser in the 1-1 draw against Uruguay in Santiago while injury-hit Venezuela were held to a goalless draw at home by Colombia in sweltering Maracaibo.

Colombia and Uruguay have made steady improvements after struggling earlier in the marathon competition and remain in the hunt.

Argentina's win took them on to

25 points from 12 games, five ahead of world champions Brazil who host Peru in Goiania on Sunday.

Ecuador and Paraguay, who complete the weekend's action in Quito in Sunday's other game, both have 16 points. Then come Uruguay (15), Colombia, Chile and Venezuela (14), Peru (13) and Bolivia (10), the only team without a realistic hope of qualifying.

The top four teams qualify directly for Germany and the fifth plays off against the Oceania region winners.

Argentina have always found La Paz hard going and had not won there since 1973.

On that occasion, they formed a so-called "ghost team" of club players who spent one month training in the Argentine Andes especially for the fixture.

On three previous visits in 1979, 1997 and 2001, Argentina sent their regular side and failed to win. This time, coach Jose Pekerman gambled on a young, second-string outfit.

Bolivia, with Ovidio Mesa making his debut as their third coach of the campaign, went ahead when Jose Castillo headed home in the 50th minute.

Argentina turned the game around with two goals in five minutes from Spanish-based Luciano Figueroa, who headed in Maxi Rodriguez's free kick, and Luciano Galletti, who finished off a counter-attack.

In between, Bolivia had a penalty appeal turned down when Leandro Cuffre appeared to punch the ball away.

"Football prevailed over alti-

tude," said a delighted Pekerman. "The secret was to keep the ball and pass it around with tranquility."

Chile, who have found both scoring and winning at home difficult, were in trouble again as Mario Regueiro pounced on a poor clearance to fire Uruguay ahead in the fourth minute.

They should have equalised before halftime but Argentine-based Mirosevic contrived to shoot wide when he only needed to tap Mauricio Pinilla's pass into an empty goal from two metres.

The Racing Club player atoned by equalising two minutes into the second half.

Colombia goalkeeper Miguel Calero earned his team a point with a brilliant late save as he turned away a seemingly goal-bound header from Alejandro Cichero.

Strong display by England, Italy

AP, undated



England scored four goals in a 15-minute span to beat Northern Ireland 4-0 while Italy held off Scotland in a 2-0 victory on Saturday, when 30 qualifiers were played for the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

The Netherlands won 2-0 at Romania, Freddie Ljungberg scored twice as Sweden won 3-0 at Bulgaria, Ireland played a 1-1 tie at Israel and Switzerland gained a 0-0 tie at France. The Czech Republic came back to beat Finland 4-3 and European champion Greece edged Georgia 3-1.

In the North and Central American and Caribbean region, Guatemala routed visiting Trinidad and Tobago 5-1. Costa Rica beat visiting Panama 2-1 in a game played in an empty stadium, a punishment ordered by FIFA because of fan misbehavior during a qualifier against Mexico last month. The United States plays at Mexico on Sunday.

EUROPE

At Manchester, Joe Cole celebrated his first competitive start with England's opening goal in the 46th minute. Michael Owen scored his 29th international goal, Frank Lampard added another and England got an own goal from Chris Baird.

"We had total control of the game," England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson said.

England (4-0-1) leads Europe Group Six with 13 points, one more than Poland (4-1), which routed

visiting Azerbaijan 8-0. Austria (2-1-2), which topped Wales 2-0, is third with eight points. The eight European group winners qualify along with the top two second-place teams, while the other second-place teams go to playoffs.

Tomas Frankowski scored a hat trick for Poland, and Marek Saganowski had two goals. Kamil Kosowski and Jacek Krzynowek also scored, and Azerbaijan's Aftandil Hadzhiev put in an own goal. Austria got late goals from Ivica Vastic and Martin Stranzl.

At Milan, Andrea Pirlo scored off free kicks in the 35th and 85th minutes for Italy (4-1), which leads Group Five. Scotland (0-2-2) has only a remote chance of qualifying for the 32-nation field.

Scotland's defense was confused on the first goal when Pirlo took the free kick from the top of the penalty arc instead of Francesco Totti, who also was lined up. Pirlo put a curving shot through the defensive wall and past goalkeeper Rob Douglas.

"The goalkeeper didn't know who was going to shoot. It worked well," Pirlo said.

At Tel Aviv, substitute Abas Suan beat goalkeeper Shay Given with a 25-yard shot one minute into second-half injury time for Israel. Clinton Morrison had put the Irish ahead in the fourth minute off a pass from Damien Duff. Morrison twisted around defender Shimon Gershon to curl the ball into the net at an acute angle. Ireland, Israel and France are all 2-0-3 in Group Four.

France coach Raymond Domenech believes his team can still

earn a World Cup berth despite being held to by Switzerland.

"We are still in the race," Domenech said. "But now, we know that we will have to win away to qualify. The penultimate match against the Swiss in Basel will be decisive."

It was the third home draw for the French in the qualifying campaign, a result which leaves them level on nine points with Ireland and Israel after five matches in Group Four.

"We can be disappointed with tonight's outcome as we created a load of chances to score while the Swiss only had a couple of chances," he added. "But we failed again to find the net."

"We must not let ourselves get upset, though."

Domenech said the 1-1 draw between Israel and Ireland in Tel Aviv was good news for France.

"Teams are taking points off each other and I'm certain it will remain a very tight group until the very end," he added.

On Wednesday, Switzerland welcome Cyprus to Zurich for their next match while France travel to play Israel in Tel Aviv.

At Bucharest, Philip Cocu and Ryan Babel scored to keep the Netherlands (4-0-1) in first place in Group One with 13 points, three ahead of Romania (3-2-1).

The Czech Republic (4-1), one point behind the Dutch, needed an 87th-minute goal from Vratislav Lokvenec to beat Finland at Teplice. Milan Baros, Tomas Rosicky and Jan Polak also scored for the Czechs.

NORTH & CENTRAL AMERICA

At Guatemala City, Carlos Ruiz and Dwight Pezzarosi each scored twice after Guillermo Ramirez got the opening goal for Guatemala (1-0-1). Trinidad and Tobago (0-2) scored on a distant shot from nearly midfield by Carlos Edwards that Guatemala's Nestor Martinez accidentally knocked in.

At San Jose, Wayne Wilson converted a penalty kick for in the 39th minute for Costa Rica, which played a man short after Jose Luis Lopez was ejected in the 46th for receiving his second yellow card. Roberto Brown tied the score with a penalty kick in the 58th for Panama (0-1-1).

AFRICA

In Africa, World Cup quarterfinalist Senegal crushed Liberia 6-1 as two-time African player of the year El Hadji Diouf scored twice, and South Africa beat Uganda 2-1. Only the five African group winners qualify.

FRIENDLIES

In an exhibition game, Germany won 1-0 at Slovenia on a 28th-minute goal by 19-year-old Lukas Podolski. Fifty German fans were arrested, 38 downtown during a pregame riot and 12 at the match. Portugal beat visiting Canada 4-1 at Barcelos on goals by Manuel Fernandes, Pedro Pauleta, Helder Postiga and Nuno Gomes. At Salamanca, Spain warmed up for next week's qualifier against Serbia & Montenegro with a comfortable 3-0 win over China in a rain-soaked friendly.

Raul questions Owen's commitment

INTERNET SOURCE

Raul has told Michael Owen to quit Real Madrid if he's not totally committed to the club.

England striker Owen has scored 10 goals for the Spanish giants since his summer move from Liverpool. But his failure to dislodge Raul and Ronaldo from the starting line-up has frustrated him.

With Owen spending so much time on the Real Madrid bench, English clubs have been linked with a move for the 25-year-old.

Raul told the Sunday Mirror: "I know Michael Owen has been linked with a return to England but all I can say is that Real Madrid has to have players who really want to play for this club."

"If anyone is unhappy here I think it's best that they leave. And that means anyone, including Michael Owen. We only need people here who are desperate to represent Real Madrid."

INDEPENDENCE DAY HOCKEY

Blistering Old Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER

The star-studded Old Dhaka Hockey Development Board inflicted a crushing 15-1 defeat on Barnak Samaj but the other title contenders Blue Berry Travels were held 2-2 by Bangladesh Air Force in yesterday's Independence Day Hockey Tournament fixtures at the Maulana Bhashani National Hockey Stadium.

Captain and former national striker Rafiqul Islam Kamal slammed in six goals while Maksud Alam Habul netted four for the Old Dhaka outfit who led 7-0 at the break. Russel Mahmud Jimmy hit three goals.

In the day's second match, Air Force twice came from behind to snatch one point from the mighty Blue Berry.

Moksed put Blue Berry two ahead but Russel and Masud levelled the scores for Air Force. All four goals were scored inside the first 19 minutes.

DU CRICKET

Marketing beat Library Science

SPORTS REPORTER

Marketing beat Library Science by 40 runs in the Dhaka University inter-department cricket competition at the Jagannath Hall ground yesterday.

Batting first Marketing scored 116 and restricted their opponents to 76.

Sumon of Library Science hit the highest 34 runs in the match.

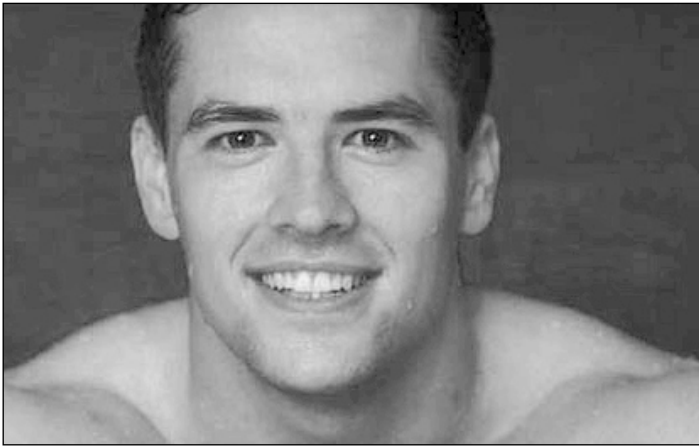
AIUB CUP CRICKET

AUB reach semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Asian University of Bangladesh (AUB) moved into the quarterfinals of the Fourth AIUB Cup inter private university cricket tournament with a 89-run thrashing of University of Dental College at BKSP yesterday. Batting first AUB scored 192 all out in 39.4 overs with man of the match Imu making the highest 62.

In reply, University of Dental College were bundled out for 103 in 32.5 overs.



MICHAEL OWEN

Bangalore Test

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his opening over.

Leg-spinner Danish Kaneria grabbed two of the four wickets to fall on Sunday to finish with 5-127, his 10th haul of five or more wickets in an innings in 26 Tests.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the fourth day of the third and final Test between India and Pakistan at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore on Sunday:

PAKISTAN: First innings 570 (Younis 267, Inzamam 184; Harbhajan 6-152)

INDIA: First innings (overnight 379-6)

| | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Gambhir c Younis b Sami | 24 | | | |
| Sehwag c and b Kaneria | 201 | | | |
| Dravid lbw b Kaneria | 22 | | | |
| Tendulkar c Younis b Afridi | 41 | | | |
| Laxman not out | 79 | | | |
| Ganguly st Akmal b Kaneria | 1 | | | |
| Karthik c Kamal b Sami | 10 | | | |
| Pathan c Youhana b Sami | 5 | | | |
| Harbhajan c Razzaq b Kaneria | 1 | | | |
| Balaji c Akmal b Kaneria | 2 | | | |
| Kumble b Afridi | 22 | | | |
| Extras: (b-5, lb-17, nb-18, w-1) | 41 | | | |
| Total: (All out in 128.4 overs) | 449 | | | |
| Fall of wickets: 1-98, 2-172, 3-257, 4-337, 5-343, 6-374, 7-386, 8-388 | | | | |
| Bowler | O | M | R | W |
| Samir | 34 | 5 | 106 | 3 |
| Razzaq | 17 | 0 | 77 | 0 |
| Kaneria | 39 | 7 | 127 | 5 |
| Arshad | 28 | 3 | 87 | 0 |

Rajshahi extend

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at the Barisal Stadium.

Khuina cruised to 130-2 in 27.1 overs thanks to a solid 75-run opening stand between Shafail Alam, who was undefeated on 55, and Nazmus Sadat (35).

Earlier, left-arm pacer Monjurul Islam with three for 18 and Mashrafe-Bin-Mortuza and left-arm spinner Abdur Razzaq claimed two wickets to knock over the home side.

CORES IN BRIEF

RAJSHAHI-CHITTAGONG

RAJSHAH: 199 all out in 49.1 overs (Reza 25, Farhad 31, Mashud 40, extras 34; Hasan 2-24, Sabbir 3-31).

CHITTAGONG: 182 all out in 47.5 overs (Salahuddin 46, Nazim 29, Sadat 24; Shafaq 2-33, Farhad 2-40, Reza 2-24).

Result: Rajshahi won by 17 runs.

SYLHET-DHAKA

SYLHET: 206 for 9 in 50 overs (Imtiaz 41, Mowla 49 not out, Ejaz 29, extras 24; Anwar 2-22, Mahmud 2-31, Mehrab Jr 2-35, Ashrafur 2-42).

DHAKA: 177 all out in 47.2 overs (Javed 30, Mahmud 44, Riyad 38, extras 20; Tapash 2-22, Enamul 4-27, Kapali 2-31).

Result: Sylhet won by 29 runs.

KHULNA-BARISAL

BARISAL: 127 all out in 47 overs (Shahin 25, Towhid 33, Arman 37, extras 13; Mashrafe 2-15, Manjurul 3-18, Raj 2-24).

KHULNA: 130 for 2 in 27.5 overs (Sadat 35, Shafail 55 not out, extras 4).

Result: Khuina won by eight wickets.

Afridi 10.4 3 30 2

PAKISTAN: Second innings

Hameed lbw b Kumble 76

Afridi st Karthik b Tendulkar 58

Younis not out 84

Inzamam not out 31

Extras: (b-5, nb-2, w-5) 12

Total: (For 2 wks dead in 6 overs) 261

Fall of wickets: 1-91, 2-183

Bowler

Pathan 5 0 45 0

Balaji 3 0 26 0

Kumble 21 1 88 1

Tendulkar 15 1 62 1

Harbhajan 6 0 35 0

INDIA: Second innings

Gambhir not out 19

Sehwag not out 6

Total: (For no wkt in 6 overs) 25

Bowler

Samir 3 0 18 0

Razzaq 3 0 7 0

Warne in fresh text-message controversy

BBC ONLINE, undated

Shane Warne is at the centre of another text-message controversy after a source reportedly offered to sell a story to a New Zealand tabloid newspaper.

The player's lawyers acted swiftly to warn the Sunday News against printing an article on the alleged sending of texts in Wellington this year.

Aussie officials held talks with Warne after play in Auckland on Saturday.

"There is an apparent situation involving Warne's private life," Cricket Australia's Peter Young said.

"We are not in a position to speak about the issue tonight. We will deal with the situation more tomorrow."



Did U Know?

The first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens, Greece in 1896. There were 311 male but no female competitors.



Virender Sehwag

(India's star batsman)

"I score against all teams, not just Pakistan. I only know one way to play. I don't change my game in Tests and one-day cricket...when you're successful you don't need to."

After scoring 201 against Pakistan in the Bangalore Test.



Ispahani Nat'l Cricket League
(Four-day, Day One)
Dhaka vs Sylhet
Venue: Sylhet Stadium
Chittagong vs Rajshahi
Venue: CDVS
Barisal vs Khuina
Venue: Barisal Stadium

Cricket

REUTERS, Wellington

A dashing century by captain Ricky Ponting helped Australia score 219 for four on the second day of the third and final Test against New Zealand in Auckland on Sunday.

Ponting smacked 105 off 110 balls as his team trailed the Kiwis by 73 runs at the close of play at Eden Park.

The Kiwis, 1-0 down in the series, were earlier bowled out in their first innings for 292 after resuming at 199 for five, losing their last five wickets for 64 runs.

Paceman Glenn McGrath and leg-spinner Shane Warne collected two wickets apiece to finish with three each. Daniel Vettori propped up the tail with an unbeaten 41 off 50 deliveries.

Australia made a shaky start to their reply, losing Justin Langer (six

Ponting propels Aussies

and Matthew Hayden (38) before Test. Ponting put them back in control, however, with his 22nd Test century.

The skipper showed no mercy against the bowlers, belting 13 fours and four sixes before he was caught down the leg side by wicketkeeper Brendon McCullum off part-time spinner Nathan Astle.

Paul Wiseman captured a fourth wicket for New Zealand when he bowled Damien Martyn for 38 with a ball that turned sharply, leaving Michael Clarke (18) and nightwatchman Jason Gillespie (one) unbeaten at stumps.

New Zealand's innings had ended on the stroke of lunch.

Astle was caught by third slip Langer off McGrath for 19 and McCullum (25) nicked one behind to Adam Gilchrist, who held a low catch to give McGrath his 495th Test wicket.

Warne removed James Franklin for three when he presented Simon

Katich with a simple catch at bat-pad. The spinner also added the scalp of Wiseman for eight when he ran out of patience and skied the ball to Gillespie at mid-off.

Chris Martin, yet to reach double figures in 28 Test innings, fell to Michael Kasprovicz for a second-ball duck.

Franklin then gave the Kiwis cause for optimism when he dismissed the two Australian openers, Langer departing in the second over after playing the ball on to his wicket.

Hayden and Ponting put on 76 runs in 15 overs before Hayden was trapped lbw by Franklin with the total on 84.

BRIEF SCORES

NEW ZEALAND: First innings 292 (H Marshall 76, Fleming 65, Vettori 41; McGrath 3-49, Warne 3-63)

AUSTRALIA: First innings 219 for 4 (Ponting 105, Hayden 38, Martyn 38; Franklin 2-49)

'Don't read newspapers'

AFP, Bangalore



Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq has found a novel method of avoiding pressure during his team's high-profile

cricket tour of India -- keep away from newspapers.

"I'm not reading newspapers at all on this tour. This is the best way to avoid pressure on a tough tour like that of India," Inzamam told this news agency on Sunday.

"You need to avoid all off-field pressure and I do it by keeping myself away from newspapers."

Inzamam said he had been following the advice of his former teammate Saeed Anwar, a left-handed opening batsman who told the current Pakistani cricketers not to read newspapers on the India tour.

"I succeeded in avoiding extra pressure by not reading newspapers on Pakistan's tour of India in 1999. I'd advise this team to do the same," Anwar told the players before their departure for India last month