

Girls h'ball

SPORTS REPORTER

Sunnydale thrashed Mohammadpur Preparatory School by 13-1 in the Maple Leaf Second Girls Mini Handball tournament at the Dhanmondi Women's Sports Complex yesterday.

Green Herald also registered an emphatic 9-0 victory over Dhanmondi Tutorial while sponsors Maple Leaf International School overwhelmed BIS 8-0.

In the day's other matches, Dhanmondi Qumrunnessa defeated South Point 12-4, Lake Circus Girl's High School blanked YWCA 4-0, Summer Field managed a hard-fought 3-2 victory over Radiant International School and St Jude's International School drew 3-3 with The Aga Khan School.

BTI CUP GOLF

Shafiquzzaman, Kang champions

SPORTS REPORTER

Brig Gen Shafiquzzaman won the men's title of the BTI Cup Golf Tournament at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

The ladies' title of the two-day meet went to HB Kang.

Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury gave away the prizes.

Fleming ponders Zim boycott



AFP, Wellington

New Zealand cricket captain Stephen Fleming said Thursday he is prepared to boycott the tour of Zimbabwe later this year if he feels it will make a difference.

But he said the decision will not be a hasty one and there were three months to consider the moral issues.

"If the information that I read suggests it's probably not wise to go and that will make a difference, then that's something I'll consider," Fleming said after leading New Zealand to an innings and 38-run victory over Sri Lanka in the second Test here.

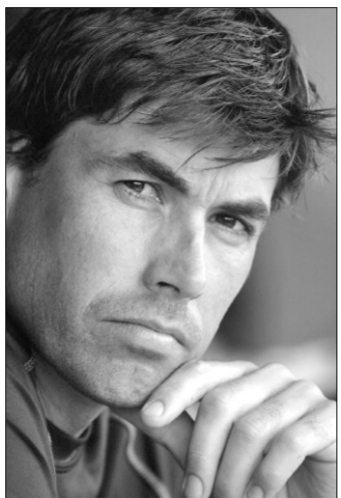
"Like the other players I'll be reading a lot, watching the situation closely and trying to educate myself on what impact the tour will have.

"The players will take a lot of care over the decision and make sure it's the right one in their mind for the right reasons."

New Zealand Cricket (NZC) chief executive Martin Snedden has said no players would be penalised if they individually decided not to tour

as a protest against President Robert Mugabe's government.

Mugabe, who has been in power since Zimbabwe's independence from Britain in 1980, won a sweep-



STEPHEN FLEMING

ing victory in the March 31 election, but foreign critics led by the United States and the European Union dismissed the poll as a sham.

Prime Minister Helen Clark has

said she is personally opposed to the tour and the leader of a minor party in the coalition government has written to the players urging them to pull out.

Fleming said he had received his letter but had not opened it yet, and said there had not been any team discussion.

"The players have to get educated, it's naive for them to make a decision without being educated.

"There's going to be a lot of material that will give them an opportunity to make a decision on whether they want to go for moral reasons.

"Safety will be discussed by NZC and that'll be their decision."

Fleming, who leaves for England on Sunday to take up his county contract as captain of Nottinghamshire, said he would talk to Zimbabwe players to help his decision.

Last year, England's tour of Zimbabwe was in doubt after Zimbabwean authorities imposed a media ban on 13 British journalists.

After a two-day delay, England's cricketers finally flew out when the ban was lifted, but cut short their itinerary.

Milan declared winners

AFP, Paris

European football's governing body UEFA has confirmed AC Milan as winners of their abandoned quarter-final against Inter.

UEFA has marked the six-times champions down for an April 26 semi-final first leg against Dutch side PSV Eindhoven at the San Siro. The return is on May 4.

Milan's quarter-final second leg was abandoned 17 minutes from time with Milan leading 1-0 after Inter fans threw dozens of flares onto the pitch.

Inter, who were ordered to play two European home matches away from the San Siro and fined 75,000 Swiss francs after similar crowd trouble at their UEFA Cup tie with Spanish side Alaves in 2001, could be barred from the competition next season.

But a five-match ground ban -- which could cost the club 12 million euro in gate receipts and TV revenue -- looks the likeliest outcome when UEFA's disciplinary committee meets on Friday.

PREVIEW: FA CUP SEMIS MU's last bite at glory

AFP, London

FA Cup holders Manchester United may be playing Newcastle in the semi-finals of this season's competition at the Millennium Stadium on Sunday but suggestions that a successful defence of their title will redeem the club's season have few supporters at Old Trafford.

United, who beat Championship side Millwall last year to lift the Cup for a record 11th time, have never retained the trophy.

Arsenal, who have scored 100 goals in all competitions so far this season, will be firm favourites to reach their fourth FA Cup final in five years when they take on Blackburn Rovers in Saturday's second semi-final.

Parma, Alkmaar in last four, Magpies out



AP, London

Two-time UEFA Cup champion Parma and 1981 finalist AZ Alkmaar reached the semifinals of this year's competition with ties on Thursday.

Parma, the 1995 and '99 winner, held visiting Austria Vienna to a scoreless tie and advanced on away goals after a 1-1 tie in the first leg. AZ tied 1-1 against Villarreal and advanced 3-2 on aggregate.

Sporting Lisbon and CSKA Moscow also advanced to the last four. Sporting scored four straight goals to beat Newcastle 4-1 and 4-2 on aggregate, while CSKA lost to Auxerre 2-0 but still moved on with a 4-2 aggregate win.

Shoaib eyes WI return

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar said Thursday he hoped to play a lead role on the team's tour of the West Indies next month after missing the current series against India due to injury.

"I will regret missing the series against India for the rest of my career," Akhtar, who pulled out of the India tour at the last minute due to a hamstring problem, told AFP.

"But I am fully fit now and raring to go for the West Indies tour. I want to play a lead role," said Akhtar, who has played four domestic matches in the last three weeks to prove his fitness.

Vintage Liverpool PSV overcome Lyon



REUTERS, London

Former European champions Liverpool and PSV Eindhoven turned the clock back Wednesday as they clinched places in the Champions League semi-finals.

Liverpool, European champions four times between 1977 and 1984, defended superbly for 90 minutes to earn a 0-0 draw with Juventus in their quarter-final second leg.

They advanced 2-1 on aggregate and now meet Chelsea in the first all-English semi-final in the competition's 50-year history after the London side knocked out Bayern Munich 6-5 on aggregate Tuesday.

PSV, European champions in 1988 under current boss Guss Hiddink, drew 1-1 at home with Olympique Lyon of France leaving the tie all-square at 2-2 on aggregate at the end of 90 minutes.

With extra time failing to produce a winner, the tie became the first in the history of the Champions League knockout stages to be decided on penalties. PSV won the shootout 4-2 and will now meet AC Milan in their semi-final.

Those matches are scheduled for April 26 and 27 with the second legs on May 3 and 4. The final is in Istanbul on May 25.

Liverpool not only had to see off Juve in their first match in Turin since the Heysel Stadium disaster of 1985 when a charge by their fans led to the death of 39 mostly Italian supporters but they also had to keep their nerve in a hostile environment.

A huge police presence prevented any major incidents although eight Juventus fans were arrested after an attack on a Liverpool supporter earlier Wednesday and there was some crowd trouble before the kickoff inside and outside the stadium.

But Juve fans had more reason to rue the events of the night rather than the tragedy of 20 years ago as their team failed to break down Liverpool's solid rearguard in which Sami Hyypia was outstanding as his side reached the last four for the first time since 1985.

Liverpool now face Chelsea who have beaten them three times this season -- 1-0 at home and away in the Premier League and 3-2 in the English League Cup final at the end of February.

It will be the fourth time Chelsea have played another English team in European competition dating back to 1971 and they have won three of those four games and drawn the other.

In 1971 Chelsea knocked Manchester City out of the European Cup Winners' Cup 2-0 on aggregate and last season they beat Arsenal 3-2 on aggregate in the quarter-final of this competition.

Liverpool have played English

teams six times before -- losing to Leeds United 1-0 on aggregate in the Inter Cities Fairs Cup semi-final in 1971, beating Tottenham Hotspur on away goals in the UEFA Cup semi-final in 1973 and losing 2-0 to Nottingham Forest in the first round of the European Cup in 1978 when they were the defending champions.

The all-English tie will see a fascinating clash between Chelsea's Portuguese coach Jose Mourinho and Liverpool's Spanish boss Rafael Benitez.

Mourinho won the UEFA Cup with Porto in 2003 before lifting the European Cup with them the following year and he is now attempting to claim the trophy again this time at Chelsea.

Benitez lifted the UEFA Cup last term with Valencia and is now attempting to emulate Mourinho's feat by winning the European Cup the following season.

In the night's other quarter-final Sylvain Wittord gave Lyon the lead after 10 minutes in Eindhoven, their 28th goal of the competition, but it proved to be their last.

Alex equalized for PSV early in the second half and neither side could find their way through to score again.

Brazilian substitute Robert hit the winning penalty after his compatriot and goalkeeper Gomes had saved penalties by Lyon's Ghanaian midfielder Mickael Essien and Eric Abidal.

PREVIEW: SERIE A

Let's get it right



AFP, Rome

Serie A will be looking to make the headlines for all the right reasons after a week of crowd violence dragged the reputation of Italian football through the mud.

The Champions League quarter-finals involving Italian clubs in mid-week were both marred by crowd violence, while domestically there were major disturbances after last Sunday's Serie A match between Lazio and Livorno.

Potential flashpoints this weekend include the Bergamo derby between Brescia and Atalanta, who are both fighting to stay up, and the Tuscan derby between Livorno and Fiorentina.

AC Milan and Juventus, joint leaders of Serie A on 67 points with eight games left, play on Sunday.

Milan, the only Italian team left in the Champions League, visit third-from-bottom Siena, while Juve host 10th-placed Lecce.

Juventus striker Alessandro Del Piero believes his team's Champions League exit at the hands of Liverpool on Tuesday will have a positive effect on their championship challenge.

"We will use our disappointment at being eliminated as extra motivation for the fight for the title," said the Juve captain.

"Like every great team, we have to react well to a setback and make sure we get the points we need to be league champions."

Tuesday's Champions League quarter-final, second leg between AC Milan and Inter Milan was abandoned

in the 72nd minute after Inter fans threw dozens of flares onto the pitch, one of which struck and burned Milan keeper Nelson Dida.

And Wednesday's clash between Juventus and Liverpool, their first meeting in Italy since the Heysel disaster 20 years ago, was overshadowed by crowd trouble before the match which forced anti-riot police to use tear gas.

FIXTURES

(all 1400 GMT kick-off unless stated)
Saturday: Messina v Udinese (1700), Roma v Reggina (1930), Sampdoria v Palermo (1930)
Sunday: Bologna v Lazio, Brescia v Atalanta, Chievo v Parma, Inter Milan v Cagliari, Juventus v Lecce, Livorno v Fiorentina, Siena v AC Milan

PREVIEW: PREMIERSHIP

Barca look ahead



AFP, Madrid

League leaders Barcelona's confidence was severely jolted by losing 4-2 at bitter rivals Real Madrid in the Santiago Bernabeu last weekend but they are bidding to bounce against Getafe on Sunday.

The Catalans still top the Spanish first division by six points from Real but this week there has been long faces and serious expressions on the training field in Barcelona, rather than the jovial atmosphere of recent months.

Losing at Real has reminded Barca fans of the 1981-82 season, when they had a five point lead with seven games to go but collapsed down the home straight and were piped at the post by Real Sociedad.

Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard made his feelings about the situation abundantly clear this week.

"There are some players who, perhaps think they are already cham-

pions. They should be a bit more humble and keep concentrating," said the Dutch coach.

"We've got to put the match against Real out of our minds and concentrate on winning all the rest of the games," said Barcelona superstar Ronaldinho, the World Player of the Year.

Perhaps part of the reason for Barcelona's decline in form during the second half of the season, despite being in pole position, has been the fact that Rijkaard has rarely been able to field the same back four.

His latest set back is the suspension of club captain Carles Puyol and Brazilian wing back Belletti against Getafe, who have won only one away game all season.

Rijkaard will also be without the Spanish first division's top scorer Samuel Eto'o, who injured his right knee against Real and will be out for another week.

With Swedish striker Henrik Larsson still injured, Ronaldinho is likely to be pushed into an unfamiliar role of being the main target man

rather than the principal service provider.

Real Madrid have been on a high since last Sunday's marvellous victory, when they produced some of their best football of the season.

They will be looking to keep up the pressure on Barca with a good performance against struggling Levante, who they thrashed 5-0 in the Bernabeu earlier this season.

FIXTURES

Saturday (kick off times GMT): Sevilla v Osasuna (1800), Atletico Madrid v Espanyol (1800), Real Sociedad v Deportivo La Coruna (2000)
Sunday: Albacete v Malaga (1500), Real Mallorca v Valencia (1500), Racing Santander v Athletic Bilbao (1500), Villarreal v Real Betis (1500), Real Zaragoza v Numancia (1500), Levante v Real Madrid (1700), Barcelona v Getafe (1900)

Happy ending

FROM PAGE 12

that was missing from his armoury in the first innings and struck in the 11th over of the day getting Atapattu to edge the ball straight to Stephen Fleming at first slip.

He bagged Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara after lunch to have Sri Lanka's top order back in the pavilion, and wrapped up the game with the wicket of Chaminda Vaas for 38 to have figures of four for 71 of 24 overs.



Did U Know?

Marvan Atapattu, playing in his 140th innings recorded his 22nd duck in Test cricket. He equalled the record for most duck by a genuine batsman, held by Steve Waugh (22 in 260).



Thierry Henry

(Arsenal striker)
"For me, he was the complete striker. I grew up watching him on television and he could do everything with the ball and even without it."
On Marco van Basten.

Ganguly to fight on

FROM PAGE 12

Ganguly told reporters in Kolkata that 'I have absolutely no idea. It is the selectors' decision. Whatever the Board asks me to do, I will do.'

In his appeal against the six-match suspension, Ganguly will be assisted by legal luminary and former West Bengal Chief Minister Siddharth Shankar Ray who said the cricketer has a strong case.

Ray had successfully defended Ganguly earlier when the player was banned for two Tests by ICC match referee Clive Lloyd for the team's slow over rate in the BCCI platinum jubilee match against Pakistan in Kolkata in November last year.

Ganguly meanwhile told Outlook magazine in an interview that he has no doubts about his return to international cricket.

"I'll be back. I have no doubt about that. I will remain mentally strong," he said.

Asked about some people writing the obituary of his playing career, Ganguly said "each time people

have written me off, I've come back. I have always found strength from within, from my team mates, from the (cricket) Board and from my family."

Meanwhile, stand-in skipper Dravid said yesterday in Kanpur that Ganguly alone was not to be blamed for India's slow over rate and the players needed to address the problem urgently to avoid its repetition.

"It's a responsibility of the whole team. It's an area in which we've to do a lot better. It's not just the captain alone but the bowlers and fielders too have to be responsible," Dravid said.

"We have identified a couple of reasons (for slow over rate) and we'll discuss it in team meetings and make sure it does not happen again," he said.

Ganguly also found support from Indian Sports Minister and film actor Sunil Dutt who said he felt sorry for the cricketer. Ganguly, Dutt said,

was an able captain who brought Indian cricket to the forefront of international stage and "I hope he returns to the game soon."

Agencies add: The ICC on Friday has appointed the chairman of its code of conduct commission to hear Ganguly's appeal.

Prominent English sports lawyer Michael Beloff QC will announce his findings within the next seven days.

The other members on the commission's panel that includes former Australia captain and veteran broadcaster Richie Benaud are Oliver Popplewell of England, Gamin Marapana (Sri Lanka), Albie Sachs (South Africa), Anthony Lucky (West Indies) and Clive Barnes (Zimbabwe).

Beloff has been a Member of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) since 1996. He was on the CAS's ad-hoc panel for dispute-resolution during the last three Summer Olympics and the last two Commonwealth Games.

Reefat GM

FROM PAGE 12

I started my chess at the same time as Zia, I'm still happy," said Reefat, who began playing at the age of seven.

Zia was equally delighted by his success and thought it will open a vista for the country's budding chess talents.

"Reefat's success will hopefully change the picture of Bangladesh chess. In the past we had to rely on foreign GMs to arrange a Grand Master tournament. Now we can arrange much more tournaments in the country as a country needs at least three GMs to organise a GM event," said Zia.

Indian Grand Master Surya Shekhar Ganguly, who became champion in the tournament, branded Reefat as one of the sharp-sharp players of this generation.

"He is a very attacking player and that's why sometimes he loses some games. But that flare is his strength also. He deserved the laurel."

Meanwhile, another Bangladeshi International Master Enamul Hossain Rajib failed to earn his second norm as he lost to Russian GM Alexander Fominyh in the last round.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Participants of the BTI Cup Golf Tournament pose with the Chief of Army Staff and president of the Kurmitola Golf Club Lt Gen Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury (fifth from left) at the KGC course on Friday.