



Did U Know?

Mark Waugh of Australia became the only batsman to hit three centuries in one World Cup (1996).

What to WATCH

TEN Sports

West Indies vs South Africa
Fourth Test, Day One
Live at 8:00 pm

ESPN

Sportscentre
Live at 8:30 pm
STAR Sports
Sportsline
Live at 8:00 pm



TALK TURKEY



Robinho

(Brazilian sensation)
"Robinho is a player who can't be compared to anyone else. He has always scored goals, he has always decided matches. I've still got a lot to learn in football."

On comparison with Romario.

DAY'S EVENT

Federation Cup Football
First Semifinal
Muktijoddha vs Mohammedan (5:00 pm)
Venue: BNS

PCB sends tour plan to ECB

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistan will avoid scheduling matches against England in Peshawar and Quetta, cities close to the Afghan border, later this year, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) sources said on Thursday.

England are due to tour Pakistan from October 25 to play three Tests, five one-day internationals and two three-day tour games. The schedule proposed the tour to end on December 22.

The PCB has provisionally scheduled the Tests for Karachi, Lahore and Faisalabad, with two one-dayers in Karachi and two in Lahore, a PCB source said. Rawalpindi has been picked as the venue for the other ODI.

The northwestern city of Peshawar has not hosted visiting teams since the September 11 attacks amid security concerns.

Quetta, in the south west, boasts a recently completed cricket stadium but the city has seen a surge in violence in recent months by autonomy-seeking tribal militants.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has not yet made any special requests but is expected to carry out further security checks.

PCB director of operations Saleem Altaf said: "We've sent a letter to ECB chairman David Morgan proposing tentative venues for the matches but the itinerary is yet to be finalised."

"So far, they have not raised any concerns about any venue."

West Indies and Australia refused to tour Pakistan in 2002 because of security concerns. The New Zealanders returned home in May that year without playing the second Test after a suicide bomb attack outside their Karachi hotel killed 14 people.

New Zealand and South Africa declined to play in Karachi and

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MSC's trial by Reds' fire

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club, under serious pressure to regroup from their worst defeat ever in domestic football, take on defending champions Muktijoddha Sangsad in the first semifinal of the Tibet 20th Federation Cup today.

The eagerly anticipated match kicks off at the Bangabandhu National Stadium at 5pm.

Smarting from a 5-1 loss to Abahani in their last group match, Mohammedan will take the field under new coach Kazi Jashimuddin Joshi who took charge only two days ago. But the former Black and White left-winger acknowledged that there was no quick-fix to Mohammedan's problems.

The Black and Whites management had a team meeting to motivate the players yesterday but Joshi believes it would be a hard task.

"I am not a magician and can't change the state of the team overnight," admitted Joshi, a former national winger famous for his speedy runs down the left flank.

"Our side is weak compared to

Muktijoddha and Brothers. In the past, we had a lot of Bangladesh internationals playing for us but now those teams have the advantage. Still, our focus is tomorrow's match and we will try to correct the mistakes the players had made during the match against Abahani," Joshi added.

Mohammedan, who miss injured midfielder Faisal Mahmud, will field their two foreign players, striker Dolley and defender Scylla despite their moderate show in the tournament so far.

Muktijoddha's experienced coach Shafiqul Islam Manik, however, refused to admit that his boys hold the advantage despite being in tremendous form.

The Reds, still unbeaten this season in the domestic scene, have already lifted the Independence Day Gold Cup and look clear favourites to make another final.

"We have prepared ourselves to meet a big team. Mohammedan are a crowd-pulling side and they will be tough to beat. Their recent result does not change anything," said Manik.

Muktijoddha have beaten Mohammedan 3-1 in their first meeting this season in the

Independence Cup but Manik said it was foolish to predict winners in this match.

"Sheikh Russel had a very good match against us a few days ago but still we won that game. So, you have to take your chances."

The Muktijoddha defence looked vulnerable in recent times and it has conceded at least one goal in each of the team's last four encounters.

Talking on that point, Manik told that neither of his two fullbacks -- Hassan Al Mamun and Feroze Mahmud Titu -- are fully fit.

"I have two good rightsbacks in them but no one at the left side. I have to field one of them at the left and this compromise has weakened the strength of the backline. I have played Saiful at right and often, this has proved to be our Achilles' heel. Also, Aminul, who is an excellent goalkeeper, has made a few mistakes."

Injury to midfielder Biddut remains his only worry and Manik said that Pappu or Iqbal will start in case he does not recover. He also Manik hinted that either Titu or Saiful will play at the right.

World teams to be named May 9

BBC ONLINE, undated

The squads for the ICC World teams to take on Australia in a six-day Test and three one-day internationals will be revealed in India on May 9.

Selectors Sunil Gavaskar, Mike Atherton, Richard Hadlee, Clive Lloyd, Jonty Rhodes and Aravinda de Silva will announce two 30-man squads.

"It's a fantastic brief to be able to pick from the greatest players in world cricket," said Gavaskar, who is the chairman on the selection panel.

"I'm sure that every cricket fan would love to be in the selectors' position."

Following announcement of the initial squads of 30, the selectors will meet again to reduce these down to squads of 20 in early July.

The inaugural Johnnie Walker ICC Super Series -- the name given to the four matches -- will take place in Melbourne's Telstra Dome and the Sydney Cricket Ground in October.

Despite a campaign from Test Match Special statistician Bill Frindall, all the matches will have official status.



HOLD IT THIS WAY IF YOU'RE TO BOWL FAST: Coach Dav Whatmore shows batsman Mohammad Ashraful, who is a part-time leg-break bowler, some bowling techniques during their practice session at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium on Thursday.

Romario's last dance

Football

AP, Sao Paulo

Veteran striker Romario scored his last goal and played his final 39 minutes for Brazil's national team on Wednesday, helping the five-time world champions beat Guatemala 3-0 in a friendly at Sao Paulo.

It was Romario's last official match with Brazil, ending the career of one of Brazil's greatest soccer idols.

"It's a very special moment," Romario told reporters. "I've been very proud to be able to wear the Brazilian jersey all these years. I've always played with a lot of heart, always trying to make the Brazilian people happy."

Romario, who shed tears before the match as Brazil's national anthem was played, netted with a header from about eight meters (yards) in the 16th minute - his 71st goal in 84 matches wearing Brazil's

famed yellow jersey. He then received the last yellow card of his international career for removing the jersey to celebrate.

Romario was substituted in the 39th, and the match was stopped for almost five minutes as he left the field with close to 35,000 fans at Pacaembu stadium chanting his name.

"I've been extremely happy for all that I've accomplished," Romario said. "I want to thank the fans for everything."

Romario, 39, raced around the field waving his jersey, applauded by fans, players and coaches.

Corinthians defender Anderson had put Brazil ahead with a header in the fourth minute, and Sao Paulo striker Grafite closed the scoring with a shot from the top of the area in the 64th.

Brazil's top stars were not released by their European clubs, and coach Carlos Alberto Parreira used a 20-man squad from Brazilian

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PHOTO: AFP

THE LAST TIME I CRIED! Brazilian superstar Romario in tears as he listens to his national anthem at the beginning of a friendly match, his last international, against Guatemala at the Pacaembu Stadium in Sao Paulo on April 27.

Blatter coming to Dhaka

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

FIFA president Sepp Blatter is expected to spend 24 hours in Dhaka next month during his South Asia tour.

The FIFA boss, who is scheduled to visit Nepal and Bhutan on May 13 and 15, is likely to arrive in Dhaka on May 16, informed Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president SA Sultan yesterday after an executive committee meeting.

"It will be a goodwill visit by Blatter. There is also a slight chance that he could be arriving as early as May 12 if his travel plans change," Sultan said at a press briefing.

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) president Mohammed Bin Hammam, who was in Dhaka only a couple of weeks ago, is also expected to accompany the FIFA boss.

This will be Blatter's second visit to Bangladesh following his trip with then FIFA chief Joao Havelange way back in 1983.

Sultan said the BFF was thinking of ways to make the visit an occa-

sion to remember.

"We are planning something out of the ordinary to welcome him but we want to keep that a secret. He will visit the National Mausoleum at Savar and meet either the President or the Prime Minister. He will also see the newly constructed BFF House," added Sultan.

In reply to another question,

development programmes, will be held on schedule even if it coincides with Blatter's visit.

The BFF chief also confirmed that the federation had struck a 80-lakh Taka deal with a local firm Antar Show Biz to organise the concert which will feature Indian Idol Avijit Sawant and fellow Idol finalists Rahul Vaidya and Projukta Sukre.

Antar will be responsible for raising funds and will also control the entry rights through package offers. No tickets will be on sale for the event.

BFF general secretary Anwarul Hoque Helal, who was also present at the media conference, informed that the executive committee had decided to send the national team to a four-nation tournament in Myanmar in July.

"Our footballers hardly get international exposure and we don't want lose this chance. The problem is that the tour clashes with the Premier Football League. So, we will ask the National Team Management Committee to look into this matter," said Helal. The Premier League is due to start from May 15.

He also announced that the National Football League (NFL)

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SEPP BLATTER

Sultan said that the BFF's May 12 concert at the Bangabandhu National Stadium to raise funds for

Final Test starts today

Proteas to show Windies no mercy

Cricket

AFP, ST. JOHN'S

South Africa, with the series already wrapped up, will look to pile on more misery for the West Indies in the fourth and final Test starting here on Friday.

South Africa closed out the series with an innings and 86-run triumph in the third Test at Bridgetown to take an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the series, and reclaim the Sir Vivian Richards Trophy.

The first Test at Georgetown ended in a draw, and South Africa won the second Test at Port of Spain by eight wickets.

The way the South Africans have risen to the challenge in the previous two Tests, they may be forgiven if they relax for this Test, but Proteas' captain Graeme Smith is adamant that his side will be focussed on winning the final Test.

"One thing we learnt from the eight or nine months of tough times is that we cannot afford to take a Test match win, Test match form or personal form for granted, so we will be looking to perform well out there every single day of the match," he said.

"Some people may look back at our victories in Trinidad and in Barbados, and may consider them easy, but there were far from being easy wins. We have worked very

hard for our two victories under some trying conditions.

"There are times when a team can produce some good performances that are very satisfying, but we have to move on and keep moving forward, and make sure that we keep improving as a team.

"We should never be satisfied with our position, and we should look to take our game up a level or two each time."

For South Africa, they have only one selection question ahead of the Test, and the answer seems rhetorical.

Veteran all-rounder Shaun Pollock seems likely to be the only change, and could take place of

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STANCHART CRICKET Rajshahi, Sylhet win easily

SPORTS REPORTER

Both the teams from the capital lost their opening day's matches of the Phase-2 (divisional level) of the Standard Chartered Young Tigers School Cricket Under-17 competition yesterday.

Rajshahi recorded a massive 126-run win over Dhaka Metro Blues at the Uttara Friends Club ground. Mayskur Rahman's run-a-ball 106 helped Rajshahi amass 278-9 in 50 overs. Later, they shot out Dhaka Blues for 152.

At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, Sylhet (162-5) defeated Dhaka Metro Greens (160) by five wickets. Nabayjoti Das was Sylhet's hero, capturing five wickets for 20 runs.

In a second round U-13 match, Saddam Khan's 93 steered West Zone-4 (206-6) to a four-wicket win over South Zone-2 (203) at the Gulshan Youth Club ground.

5-ball Flintoff shakes off setback

AFP, London

Andrew Flintoff remains positive about his return to action despite being out for a duck on his county championship comeback for Lancashire against Worcestershire.

England's premier all-rounder, making his maiden first-class appearance since an operation on his left ankle in January, lasted only five balls on Wednesday before edging Kabir Ali to slip as Lancashire slipped to 196 all out.

But Flintoff refused to be disheartened by the setback.

"The ankle feels fine," he said.

"I was probably a little eager and went after one I could have left. It's been a while since I've played, apart from Sunday, and I've been desperate to play some cricket again. I've

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PHOTO: AFP

WAR PLANNERS: Chelsea's manager Jose Mourinho (R) gestures while Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez follows the action on the field during their Champions League semifinal first leg match at Stamford Bridge in London on April 27.