



Did U Know?

During the Roman era, Istanbul the venue for tonight's European Champions League final was a city that could be easily defended against external threats coming from the north or from the east against the state. It had been seen in the battle against Licinius that the city was easy to defend. Moreover, it was a borders of the empire, and from where their raids could be stopped. The Sasanis to the east were a considerable danger to the empire and the emperor Valerianus, who had been taken prisoner by the Sasanis king, had been humiliated to the extent of being used as a mounting block by the latter.



Dav Whatmore
(Bangladesh cricket coach)
"The lad is showing that he wants to play and that means a lot. He looks an older head on young shoulders."
On Mushfiqur Rahim.



TEN Sports

French Open
Second Round, Day 3
Live at 3:00 pm
ESPN
Sportscentre
Live at 8:30 pm
UEFA Champions League (Final)
AC Milan vs Liverpool
Live at 12:00 am (Thursday)
STAR Sports
Sportsline
Live at 8:00 pm
Brazilian Football
Paulista vs Cruzeiro
Semifinal Leg
Live at 6:45 am (Thursday)

WOMEN'S HANDBALL

Mariners lift title

SPORTS REPORTER
Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club clinched the Tibet Women's Handball League title with a 27-15 victory over Arambagh Kira Sangha in the last super-three match at the Outer stadium handball court yesterday.
On their way to the maiden title, Mariners dominated the first half 16-5. Dalia and Shahida scored seven goals each for the winners while Nasima was the top scorer for the losers also with seven goals.

A pleasant surprise



AL-AMIN from London

The Bangladesh cricket team has come to England to pull off one or two surprises in their first full series against Michael Vaughan's vaunted side.

But the Tigers were more surprised than the Lions by the events leading up to the first Test starting at Lord's on May 26.

The Bangladesh think-tank drafted 16-year-old Mushfiqur Rahim in the team from outside the 20 probabilities as cover for inseparable wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud, who has rarely missed a match since making his debut in 1995.

But after featuring in two warm-up matches the young lad from Bogra has forced the team management to think of awarding him a Test cap purely as a batsman.

His two innings under pressure - half-century in the second match against Sussex followed by a flawless hundred in the drawn three-day fixture with Northamptonshire were beyond the imagination of not only chief selector Faruque Ahmed but also for the rest of the members of the team.

"I've not seen his fifty against Sussex but I was there when he scored his hundred at Northampton. It was a superb innings and except for one or two false strokes he played after completing his century he batted with ease," Faruque said while talking to this reporter at the lobby of Marriott Hotel on Monday afternoon.

"I was also amazed at his laidback approach. He batted like one of those batsmen trying to give the impression that he was not going to get out any time playing a fancy shot," said the chief selector about a young man with a matured shoulder.

Faruque admitted that Mushfiqur's performances in the practice matches gave them ample food for thought before finalising the squad for the first Test.

It is true that batting against average county bowlers and the likes of Matthew Hoggard, Steve Harmison or a giant Andrew Flintoff is completely a different ball game, but the chief selector wanted to look at the maturity and solidity that Mushfiqur showed.

"He may be too young for anybody's comfort to be thrown against the big boys. But you can not deny his effort when the other established batsmen in the team have failed," said Faruque.

It was not Faruque alone who showered praise for the BKSP student.

"I've seen him from the non-striker's end and he played brilliantly. He even told me not to hit the ball hard and it worked well for me," said left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique, who scored a half-century against Northamptonshire.

Mushfiqur's Under-19 captain and opener Nafees Iqbal also termed his innings 'simply beautiful'.

"He played both his innings under pressure. But I think his hundred was simply outstanding."

But Mushfiqur got the best complement from his idol Mashud. "I like the way he batting both against Sussex and Northamptonshire. But what I liked most was his down to earth attitude. I have seen some young players coming into the team with a lot of promise but then they failed to keep the standard. He is consistent and always tries to improve and is working very hard. Moreover, he is nonchalant about what is happening around him."



LOOK THE SUN IS COMING OUT! Bangladesh spinner Enamul Haque (L) draws the attention of teammates Talha Jubair (C) and Shahriar Nafees to something as they take shelter from rain during a training session at Lord's cricket ground in London on Tuesday.

Rajib clinches Open Rating chess crown

SPORTS REPORTER

International Master Enamul Hossain Rajib won the Open FIDE Rating Chess title with an unbeaten note when he shared points in the ninth and last round game against fellow IM Reefat Bin Sattar at the federation hall room yesterday.

Rajib and another IM Abdullah Al-Rakib finished level on eight points but Rajib was ahead in tie-breaking progressive score.

Rajib became unbeaten runner-up.

Reefat, who has recently gained his third Grand Master norm, ended with 7.5 points to finish third.

In the day's other matches, Rakib beat Elin, Reza beat Parag, Nasir beat Jamal, Ali beat Aminul, Javed beat Shakil, Monir beat Firoz, Maleq beat Arman, Naser beat Mostafa, Mahmood beat Mujib, Labu beat Shamsul, Momin beat Afzal and Sumon beat Khalil.

Lord's waking up



AL-AMIN from London

It was business as usual at Lord's two days before the first Test between Bangladesh and England.

The groundstaff were giving the finishing touches to the picturesque ground known as the 'home of cricket'.

While they are trying to put some pace into it by not cutting every sprouting blade of grass, a billboard just outside the ground reveals the worst kept secret.

"You just have to try and make the batsman play, put the ball in the right area and ask the question" read giant billboard quoting England fast bowler Matthew Hoggard with a picture of an unidentified batsman taking evasive action against a rising short-pitched delivery.

Hoggard and Steve Harmison will certainly keep on coming when the first Test starts on Thursday and the non-performing Bangladesh top-order better get ready for that because the

weatherman forecasts a bright and sunny first two days of the Test.

Chief selector Faruque Ahmed is already worried about his top five not because they are not scoring but for throwing their wicket after getting set in the middle.

"I have seen them batting against Northamptonshire and the way most of them got out was terrible," said Faruque without identifying any particular player.

So far in the three practice matches only opener Javed Omar showed some consistency with the bat apart from the sensational Mushfiqur Rahim lower down the order.

Meanwhile, the Lord's Test has generated little enthusiasm. An advertisement has just been pinned into a notice board with a picture of England captain Michael Vaughan batting and Bangladesh paceman Mashrafe-bin-Mortuza just completing a delivery and that compliments of the UK branch of Sonali Bank, who are selling tickets for the two-Test.

BU hope to end on a high

SPORTS REPORTER



National and Premier League champions Brothers Union will end their maiden campaign in an Asian club football competition today when they host Lebanon's Nejmeh FC in the last Group C match of the AFC Cup.

The match will kick off at 4 pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Nejmeh became the first team to qualify for the quarterfinals with three successive wins, pushing Brothers and Nisa FC of Turkmenistan out of the race.

Although the game has only academic interest, both sides will be keen to achieve certain goals - Nejmeh want to keep their hundred per cent winning record while Brothers will look forward to a second-place finish and stay unbeaten at home.

Brothers, who drew with Nisa in both legs, lost 4-1 in the trip to Lebanon but visiting coach Fadihmad Al Yamani thinks that result does not reflect Brothers' real strength.

"We are not taking them lightly because they played well in Beirut. Conceding two early goals perhaps affected their morale," said Yamani at a press conference at the Bangabandhu Stadium yesterday.

"Although we have qualified for the next stage, we are going to play for a win because it will help us prepare for two important league matches ahead," said Yamani who recently took over from German coach Otto Pfister.

Owned by the Lebanese President, Nejmeh are four points away from retaining their league title. They have also left four national booters behind and the coach informed that they were given rest.

"They have played 14 matches

inside 45 days and needed rest. We still have five internationals in the side."

Brothers Union coach Wajed Gazi, who has helped the Oranges reach the finals of both the local tournaments with success in the Federation Cup, said his side will warm-up for the upcoming Premier League with a decent performance.

"We want to give a creditable home performance against a very good side. They don't have a few national players but still, they are a capable outfit. We have drawn one match here and we will try to utilise home advantages," the veteran coach added.

Brothers, who drew their previous match with Nisa away at Asghabad, will be strengthened by the return of Russian striker Victor Edwards and Moroccan midfielder Hicham Inani, who missed the Turkmenistan trip.

Without any injury problem, the Gopibagh outfit have named a full strength 12-man probable squad.

Alok's Reds win again

SPORTS REPORTER

The two different selections for the trial of Bangladesh A team were forced to play another limited-overs match on a hockey turf due to unplayable ground conditions at BKSP yesterday following rain for the last few days.

And Alok Kapali-led BCB Reds were again the winners against Tushar Imran's BCB Greens in the 45-over-a-side match. Red won by 31 runs. They scored a 38-run victory in the first match.

A three-day game was scheduled to start yesterday but it was restricted to a one-day.

SCORES IN BRIEF
BCB RED: 121-9 in 45 overs (Rahman 3, Faruque 14, Reza 9, Kapali 8, Rana 0, Hasanuzzaman 27, Dhiman 18, Shahin 1, Mosharraf 0, Alamgir 8 n.o., Gazi Alamgir 2 n.o., extras 33, Shahjada 2-13, Mushfiqur 2-38, Raj 2-14, Tareq 1-22, Sakib 1-15).
BCB GREEN: 90 all out in 34.4 overs (Sakib 2, Sahagir 3, Naem 10, Nazim 10, Mushfiqur 0, Tushar 21, Faisal 8, Raj 0, Tareq 15, Shahjada 7 n.o., Shafaq 0, extras 14, Alamgir 2-34, Rana 3-28, Reza 2-11, Mosharraf 1-2).
Result: Reds won by 31 runs.

DIV I SOCCER Mohakhali beat Dhanmondi

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohakhali Ekadash recorded their first win in the First Division Football League defeating Dhanmondi Club by a solitary goal yesterday.

Bipul struck the match-winner in the 77th minute to separate the two sides in the second round match at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamalapur Stadium. It was Dhanmondi's first defeat and both sides are now level on three points.

Rahmatganj MFS will take on Agrani Bank in today's match at the same venue.

Refreshing Rahim



AL-AMIN from London

It was around eight in the morning and it was typical English weather with clouds hanging over the restaurant of the Marriott Hotel at Maida Vale.

You might hate the conditions sensing that the first training of Bangladesh cricket team at Lord's is likely to be spoiled before the all-important showdown starting on May 26.

But then you can easily forget the pall of gloom seeing a 16-year-old walking up the stairs with a boyish smile on his face.

"How are you? When did you arrive here?" were the first few questions the two reporters were confronted with when they

approached his breakfast table.

One might get the feeling that the hell the boy is doing here. But those who know him are excited to have a few words with Mushfiqur Rahim, who is now hottest topic of discussion after his pleasant knock of fifty and hundred against Sussex and Northamptonshire respectively.

"A lot of people are talking about you now. You must be feeling very excited that the selectors are planning to include you in the first Test?" was the first question thrown at him.

But the young batsman from Bogra looked calm like the way he batted in the last two three-dayers.

"Yes, I'm excited but not surprised. It was surprising when the selectors picked me for the Bangladesh team last month," said Mushfiqur while having the first course of breakfast, milk mixed with popcorn.

Harmison feels good



BBC ONLINE, London

England paceman Steve Harmison admits they will be in a "no-win situation" in the two-Test series against Bangladesh.

"If we win in two or three days then we're expected to. If it goes to four or five then we're not playing well - that's what will probably be written."

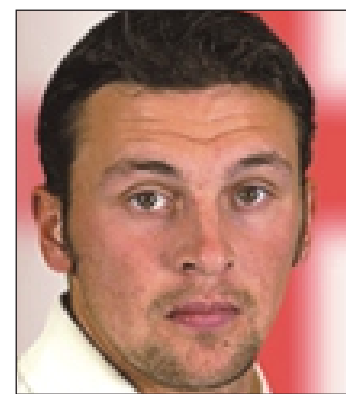
"But we have to go out there to try and get our confidence up," he said.

"Bangladesh are a Test nation, they've got a win under their belts. It's a difficult time to come to England, but hopefully it will be a good spectacle."

The bookies are doubtful, however, with the odds on a Bangladesh victory at Lord's ranging from 40/1 to 66/1.

Harmison is pleased with his preparations ahead of the Test summer, having captured 27 wickets in four matches during Durham's impres-

sive start to the season. "It's gone well, all the lads are fighting fit and it's been great to be



STEVE HARMISON

involved," he said. The giant paceman is also satisfied with his rhythm, which went awry during a difficult tour of South Africa in

the winter.

"Since the first game at Leicester I've been getting better and better and hopefully that will continue," he said.

Harmison was speaking to the BBC from a school in East London, where 85 per cent of the children are of Bangladeshi descent.

"The kids are very enthusiastic, they're all running round chasing tennis balls and it's good to see," he said.

"At the moment the England team is doing very well and the more young cricketers we can get wanting to be the next Andrew Flintoff the better for English cricket."

"You look at the Rugby World Cup, how big Jonny Wilkinson went."

"Every kid in the playground wanted to be the next Jonny Wilkinson which was great for English rugby and hopefully come September we'll have the next Andrew Flintoff or Michael Vaughan if we win the Ashes."



PHOTO: AFP

JUST WAIT TILL I GET MY HANDS ON YOU! Liverpool's Finnish defender Sami Hypia looks at the European Cup at the Ataturk Olympic Stadium in Istanbul on Tuesday.

FINAL PREVIEW: MILAN V LIVERPOOL

Odds favour Italians, heart English

REUTERS, Istanbul



Liverpool will need to display the cunning and conviction that defined their European golden age if they are to upset predictions and beat a more accomplished AC Milan side in Wednesday's Champions League final.

The English club, four-times winners between 1977 and 1984, revived memories of those heady European nights in seeing off Bayer Leverkusen, Juventus and Chelsea in the knockout rounds to reach their first final in the competition in 20 years.

This clash with Milan, who won the European Cup for the sixth time in 2003, presents a still greater challenge for a Liverpool side with a threadbare look compared to Carlo Ancelotti's team.

Live on ESPN from 12:00am BST (Thursday)

"We know we're not the favourites going into the game," Liverpool's Spanish coach Rafael Benitez recognised. "But we deserve to be in the final and now we're here we have nothing to lose."

"Everything is possible." Surprisingly, Wednesday's game

at the Ataturk Olympic Stadium will be the first UEFA competition meeting of two sides who have racked up 504 European matches between them and appeared in 21 finals.

It comes in the 50th final since the competition began in the 1955-56 season.

For Milan it will be a fifth final since 1993; for Liverpool a first since the tragedy of 1985, when the English club's rioting fans caused a wall to collapse at the Heysel Stadium, causing the deaths of 39 people, mostly Juventus fans.

Liverpool, in their first season under Benitez, finished fifth in England's Premier League and will be playing in the lesser UEFA Cup next season unless they win on

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PHOTO: AFP

SMILE OF CONFIDENCE: AC Milan star Cafu flashes a trademark smile on arriving in Istanbul on Monday.