

FIRST DIVISION FOOTBALL Rahmatganj pip Wari

SPORTS REPORTER

Table-toppers Rahmatganj Muslim Friends Society returned to winning ways in the First Division Football League defeating Wari Club 2-1 at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

Bashir struck both the goals after the break while Wari pulled off a late consolation goal through Shaker.

Rahmatganj, who suffered their maiden defeat in the previous round, pushed their collection to 25 points with eight wins from ten matches while fifth-placed Wari's tally remained on 11 after the same number of outings.

NEUTRAL UMPFS FOR ODIS

ICC turns down Pakistan offer

PTI, Karachi

International Cricket Council (ICC) has rejected Pakistan's proposal of third country umpires in one-day internationals, a top Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) official said from London.

"ICC's Cricket Committee Management felt that if third country umpires were introduced in one-dayers, it would deny the grooming of young umpires. In addition to this, cost element was also one of the factors," Saleem Altaf, PCB's director operations, who attended the ICC executive meetings held between June 24 and 28 at Lord's, told PTI over telephone.

Pakistan had urged the introduction of third country umpires in one-day internationals while complaining of poor umpiring by home umpires in the one-day series in Australia and then in India.

"We are not really disappointed. It's part of the game. But we will again try to include this issue in the agenda of next meeting," Altaf, a former Test seamer and ex-chairman of selectors' committee, said.

Altaf said Pakistan was keen to take the lead in the introduction of third country umpires in all forms of the game.

English experts assess Pak security

AFP, Karachi

Two English experts on Tuesday began a mission to assess security in Pakistan ahead of England's cricket tour of the country, officials said.

Pakistani officials briefed Andy Allman and Douglas Dick, representing private firm Oliver Security, on the situation in the troubled port city of Karachi, one of the three Test venues for the winter series.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) officials have said the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) had reservations over playing a Test in Karachi, which has witnessed a bloody wave of sectarian attacks in recent weeks.

The England team's provisional schedule from October 25 until December 22 includes three Tests in Karachi, Faisalabad and Lahore.

DAY'S EVENT

Premier Football League
Dhaka Wanderers vs Dipali Sangha
(5:00 pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

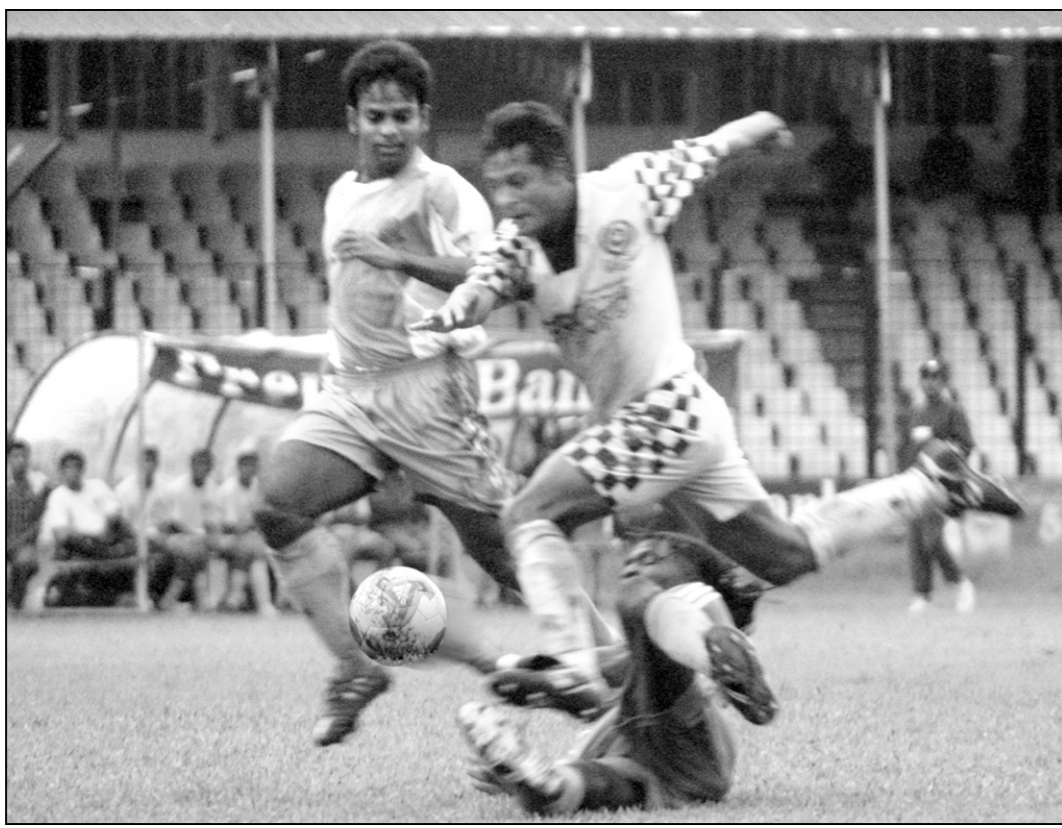


PHOTO: STAR

Mohammedan forward Manju races past Farashganj defenders Scylla and Faisal (L) during their Premier Bank premier Football League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Odaf saves MSC's day

SPORTS REPORTER



Mohammedan Sporting Club survived a second-half assault from Farashganj Sporting Club to escape with full points from yesterday's Premier Football League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Nigerian centre-back Peter Odaf's match winner from a freekick early in the game not only bailed out Mohammedan but also kept the Black and Whites on top of the table with 17 points from seven outings.

The Premiership's surprise package Farashganj, who also started the match with a chance to go top, now lie in fourth place with 13 points following their second defeat in the league.

Mohammedan struggled in the absence of their first choice striking pair of skipper Alfaz and Sierra Leone's Donald but showed enough steel at the back to hang on to a slim

lead on a rain-soaked pitch.

They however almost took the lead when Manju headed the ball just over the bar after Kaiser had crossed from the right only in the second minute.

Farashganj then tested Mohammedan five minutes later when Kabir's volley skimmed the upright from the top of the box.

Odaf, playing his second match in the black and white shirt, then separated the two sides in the 13th minute when the tall defender's 30-yard freekick flew into the left hand post of a bemused goalkeeper Zia.

The Farashganj keeper, however, made a brilliant save four minutes after the break when he blocked Kaiser's drive at the near post. That was the last time Mohammedan really threatened to score before going back to an ultra-defensive for the rest of the game.

With Nigerian duo Adafa and Felix working hard, Farashganj - who won four out of their last six games - enjoyed superior ball possession and attacked relentlessly. But goalkeeper Biplab held

two long range efforts by Felix and Rony and also calmly negotiated a series of corners.

The best chances to equalise fell to Walid in the last quarter of the match but first the Farashganj captain's swerving left-footer from the edge of the penalty area missed the sidebar and then his placing shot from a scramble was cleared by Mohammedan fullback Kamal from the goalmouth.

Yellow cards: Arman Aziz, Manju (Mohammedan) and Adafa, Scylla (Farashganj)

TEAMS

MOHAMMEDAN: Biplab, Nazrul, Peter, Hassan, Kaiser (Mintu), Arman Aziz, Munna (Sentu), Asad, Kamal, Faisal and Manju (Zahid).

FARASHGANJ: Zia, Khaled, Faisal, Scylla, Arup (Apu), Johnny (Rony), Adafa, Kabir, Amirul (Palash), Felix and Walid.

Referee: Abdul Hannan.

Warne again!

PTI, London

Australia's ace spinner Shane Warne, who has just separated from wife Simone, has been caught cheating with another woman when he was also trying to save his marriage, a London tabloid claimed on Tuesday.

Warne had sex with Kerrie Collimore, 31, on the bonnet of his BMW and sent her filthy texts as he tried to save his marriage, Mirror reported.

The 35-year-old bowler assured the blonde that he had separated from his wife and bombarded her with filthy texts in a two-month fling.

A friend found 48 messages from Warne on Kerrie's phone which the sales managers had left lying around.

Warne, father of Brooke, Jackson and Summer, split last weekend from Simone after ten years' marriage.

The last straw came when student Laura Sayers, 25, claimed the cricketer begged her to have sex in a London hotel.

Warne, who is lying low in Spain, could not be contacted. His manager Michael Cohen told the tabloid: "We have no comment to make."

WI dispute worries SL



REUTERS, Colombo

The Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) has expressed concerns over the prospect of an under-strength West Indies squad being sent to tour the island next month because of an ongoing player contract dispute.

Due to start on July 13, the series has been thrown into doubt as negotiations between the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) and the West Indies Players Association to recruit first-choice squad members have stalled.

Only three players in the original 13-man squad selected for the tour - Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Darren Powell and uncapped wicketkeeper Dinesh Ramdin - have signed team contracts.

"We would obviously be very disappointed if the West Indies were unable to send a full-strength side," Sri Lanka cricket board member Adel Hassim told Reuters.

"The likes of Brian Lara and the other West Indies players are a

huge attraction amongst the cricket-loving public in Sri Lanka and we all want to see the full team here," he added.

Sri Lanka's cricket board has thus far stopped short of issuing the WICB an ultimatum to confirm their ability to tour although they will meet later this week to discuss the issue.

"We are watching the situation very closely and the interim committee will discuss the issue at its meeting later this week, but we hope that an amicable solution is reached," Hassim added.

Sri Lanka could face serious financial implications due to lost sponsorship and television revenue if the WICB is unable to reach a settlement with the players.

If the West Indies are unable to fulfil their commitment to tour then they face a possible fine of up to \$2 million under current International Cricket Council regulations.

The Sri Lanka squad have yet to sign new contracts after their existing ones expired in February, although officials have insisted they will do so shortly.

Bashar remains serious



AL AMIN from Canterbury

Bangladesh's final game in the NatWest Series against Australia tomorrow might be of academic interest, but the Tigers skipper Habibul Bashar said that their mission was not over yet.

"We may be out of the tournament, but that doesn't mean we will have a laid back approach. Rather we will try to give some of the players who did not play much in this tournament a chance. We will field the best possible side and try to emulate the feat we achieved against the world champions at Cardiff," said Bashar after the morning's training at the Canterbury Cricket Club ground on Tuesday.

Australia, whom Bangladesh stunned by five wickets at the

Sophia Gardens on June 18, have already confirmed the July 2 final at Lord's against hosts England.

Bangladesh, however, lost their second match against Ricky Ponting and company by ten wickets at Manchester on June 25.

Bashar informed that the team would be picked after the final training session on Wednesday.

"There is still a lot of grass left on the wicket. Besides, the practice wickets, which normally give an indication how the main wicket will behave, offered bounce and pace. So, I'm not sure whether we would play two spinners," said the Bangladesh captain.

The cricketers enjoyed a lively three-hour training despite the absence of their coach Dav Whatmore, who is now in Melbourne at the bedside of his gravely ill father.

"We had a pretty good session

today. It was fairly short and sharp as we have been doing for the last eight weeks," said Stuart Karppinen.

The Australian fitness trainer also said that he was enjoying the additional role of coaching, especially bowling in the nets, the team in Whatmore's absence.

Karppinen, who has had the misfortune of his name mis-spelt more often than once, is however considered as a very good bowler on the team. And even an English newspaper branded him as the second best bowler in the Bangladesh team behind Masrafeeb-bin-Mortuza.

"It's very easy to bowl in the nets," said Karppinen, wearing a broad smile on his face, after testing left-arm spinner Manzarul Islam with a good short-pitched delivery that the batsman ducked awkwardly before falling on the

ground.

"They (the pace bowlers) are very young. Masrafeeb is only 21 and Nazmul (Hossain) is 19 while Tapash Baisya is just over 22, but they are definitely developing. They are not bowling a consistent line which is giving the opponents one and a half chances in every six deliveries," he said.

"We have struggled to take wickets on the whole tour which surprised me. In the last game when we bowled against England that was probably the best first 10 overs on the whole tour.

"We also drew Marcus Trescothick to play some false shots for the first time. He skied one and it was probably a half-chance and Andrew Strauss pulled quite a few deliveries that could have gone anywhere. It was not that we bowled badly, we just have not been getting the rewards we should have got."

Grounds of joy

AL-AMIN from Canterbury

Canterbury is not far away from London. It takes approximately two hours on the National Express train from the capital to reach the tranquil city.

Once you step out of the train you are bound to discover a laid-back town in contrast to the bustling London where people never walk but run.

The small town will give you the same impressions as any other city across England would - a cathedral, a city centre, some bustling pubs and restaurants, some Victorian houses on both sides of roads and boulevards and off-course those unmistakable Indian curry houses run by Bangladeshis and with two significant words written on the signboard - "fully licensed".

But the most striking thing has been the feature of the cricket grounds (they call them ground what we usually refer to as stadium) in England. And the KCC ground, home of English county Kent where former Pakistan captain Asif Iqbal is a most revered foreign player, is no exception.

It has a members stand and a few thousand seating arrangements for the spectators. But the beauty of the ground is that it looks like a meadow with lush greenery and you would never feel bored watching the game sitting on the grass even.

Besides, at every county ground starting from the Lord's to the nondescript Derbyshire Cricket ground you will obviously get the basic infrastructure for cricketers - beautiful practice wickets just outside the ground, a modern gymnasium and indoor practice facilities. Apart from that, every county has a strong tie to history and has a library inside the main building with all the records and history duly preserved. This is something our cricketers can only dream about.

"Cricket has now become more physical than pure technique. If you are not strongly built you stand little chance to survive in modern cricket. To be physically strong you need a gym which unfortunately we don't have at any ground in our country," lamented Khaled Mahmud when asked to compare the facilities available in England to what he has back home.

Owen a Blues?

AFP, London

Michael Owen has again been linked with a move to Chelsea after the England striker spent Monday house-hunting in southern England with his wife Louise just three days after their wedding.

Owen insists he wants to remain with Real Madrid unless they decide to sell him but newspaper reports Tuesday said the former Liverpool star could be partnering Hernan Crespo at Chelsea next season.

Hotels keep haunting 'em



AL-AMIN from Canterbury

Arriving after six-and-a-half hours journey from Leeds, the Bangladesh cricket team's first impressions of Falstaff Inn on Monday was that the red brick structure was a peculiar admixture of a ghostly feeling of Redworth Hall in Durham and the searing heat of Nottingham's Hilton Hotel.

The famous inn at the foot of Canterbury's monumental Westgate, built long ago in 1405, was known as White Heart. It was regarded as the home for those pilgrims came unstuck after the Westgate was closed at nightfall to keep the Cathedral city 'pure'.

The English still love this hotel, which has now got a few extended

blocks to fulfill the growing demands of the tourists.

"A lot of people come to this place to have a feel of the past and except for an American I've never heard anyone complaining about the non-availability of air-conditioning in the rooms," said a blond-haired female receptionist in her 20s.

But members of the Bangladesh team looked very disturbed at the facilities available at the hotel.

It was not only that the hotel known as 'famous coaches inn' does not have air-conditioning facilities like at Hilton Hotel at Nottingham, it also does not have a gym and swimming pool.

Those staying at 'Shakespeare suites' can easily feel the ghostly atmosphere that they had experienced at the Redworth Hall in Durham.

With less than sufficient lighting

in the corridors whenever someone walks on the wooden-floors it would give someone inside the room the eerie feeling that a ghost was near.

Bangladesh team manager MA Latif, who has reportedly spent a sleepless night at Red Worth Hall in Durham, was furious and immediately complained to the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB).

The ECB however agreed to shift the cricket team to a more convenient place where Australia would be staying. But the manager after consulting with the players rejected it when it was learnt that the other hotel was 40 miles away from the ground.

"We have travelled a lot in the last eight weeks and we can't accept this any longer. But we have decided to stay here despite all the difficulties," said Latif.

Sharapova in semis



AFP, London

Title-holder Maria Sharapova will take on a rejuvenated Venus Williams and top seed Lindsay Davenport plays Amelie Mauresmo on Thursday in two enticing Wimbledon women's singles semifinals.

The second-seeded Sharapova reached the last four with a 7-6, 6-3

win over fellow Russian Nadia Petrova in Tuesday's quarterfinals, while Williams held on to defeat France's Mary Pierce 6-0, 7/6 (12/10).

Davenport proved too strong for Svetlana Kuznetsova winning 7-6 (7/1), 6-3 and third seed Mauresmo coasted past another Russian Anastasia Myskina 6-3, 6-4.

In winning her 22nd straight game on grass, Sharapova overcame her first serious test of the Wimbledon fortnight against Petrova, a player she had played

only once before.

The 18-year-old had cruised through the first four rounds without dropping a set but Petrova, the eighth seed, matched the champion blow for blow in a 55-minute first set.

The set went into a tie-break which saw Sharapova, sporting her 18-carat gold-studded shoes, turn up her trademark decibel level to stamp her authority on her third set point and Petrova's chance had gone.

"Finishing off the match gave me shivers down my body," said Sharapova.

"Nadia has a big serve and a big game and she's always dangerous. But I got through and I was ready for every shot."

Oldest of the semifinals was the bruising Centre Court encounter between the 25-year-old former champion Venus Williams and the 30-year-old veteran Pierce.

Williams, whose career had gone into a tailspin over the last few months, had not dropped a single set in her four previous ties, and she had said that younger sister Serena's early exit had given her added motivation.

The 2000 and 2001 champion caught Pierce cold in an astounding first set and she then hung on grimly as the 12th seed found her range to claw her way through saving five set points in the second set tie-break.

"That was an unbelievable tie-break. She just kept hitting winners but somehow I stayed in there," said Williams.

"I am an experienced player and I have been in the last four so many times. I know what I am doing."



PHOTO: AP

Russia's Maria Sharapova celebrates after beating compatriot Nadia Petrova at the Wimbledon Championships yesterday.

Celebrate football

FROM PAGE 12

He will be asking for one final sacrifice from his four regular forwards, Ronaldinho, Kaka, Robinho and Adriano, if the latter is fit.

"He was taken off as a precaution," doctor Jose Luiz Runcio said of a player who also scored a great goal in Brazil's opening 3-0 win over Greece. "I don't believe he's a doubt for Wednesday.

"We'll use ice on the left ankle and he should be able to resume training on Tuesday."

Pekerman will be forced into one change, with Javier Saviola suspended after picking up a red card in the semi-final. Carlos Tevez should return in his place.

The coach can recall centre-back Walter Samuel after he was suspended for the semi-final, but Gabriel Milito performed well enough in his absence and could keep his place.

Most of the previous games between Brazil and Argentina have come in friendly internationals, World Cup qualifiers and the Copa America.

They have met four times in the World Cup finals, three of them in Europe.

1982, an explosive 3-1 success that is remembered for a red card shown to Diego Maradona.

Argentina gained revenge in 1990 when they beat Brazil 1-0 in the round of 16.

Brazil and Argentina are the two most successful teams in FIFA competition history. Brazil boast a total of 16 titles, including a record five World Cups, while Argentina have eight, including two World Cups.

Brazil are also looking to become the second country after France to win the competition twice after their victory in the inaugural competition in 1997. Argentina won the forerunner, the FIFA International Championship in 1992.

They also ran

FROM PAGE 12

are sixth in the world rankings and have already proved their quality here.

The Bayern Munich keeper will be keen to turn in a good display with Timo Hildebrand and Jens Lehmann pressing him for the number one jersey.

Pride is at stake for both sides but the match is merely an appetiser for the Brazil-Argentina final in Frankfurt on the same day.

KEY BRAZIL V ARGENTINA MATCHES SINCE 1974

FROM PAGE 12

Alex stunned Argentina with an early goal and Vampeta scored either side of halftime with Matias Almeyda replying in between.

The win provided brief respite for Brazil coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo. His side had lost 2-1 in Paraguay the week before and crashed 3-0 away to Chile in their next qualifier.

September 5, 2001 - BUENOS AIRES: ARGENTINA 2 BRAZIL 1 Argentina, already through to the 2002 World Cup, scored twice in the last 15 minutes to win 2-1 at the River Plate stadium and, incredibly, leave Brazil struggling to qualify.

Brazil went ahead after three minutes with a bizarre wind-assisted own goal by Roberto Ayala but paid for an over-cautious approach.

Midfielder Marcelo Gallardo equalised in the 77th minute and defender Cris headed into his own net with five minutes left.

Brazil coach Luiz Felipe Scolari, who had outraged public opinion back home by saying he would be happy to settle for a draw, criticised his players for not doing enough time-wasting.

June 2, 2004 - BELO HORIZONTE, Brazil: BRAZIL 3 ARGENTINA 1 Ronaldo won and converted a hat-

trick of penalties while Juan Pablo Sorin, Argentina's Confederations Cup captain, pulled a goal back with a header in the 79th minute.

The Real Madrid striker put the world champions ahead in the first half with a twice-taken penalty after being upended by Gabriel Heinze.

Ronaldo stroked home his second in the 67th minute after being tripped by Javier Mascherano and completed his treble deep into injury time after falling over goalkeeper Pablo Cavallero's clumsy dive for the ball.

July 25, 2004 - LIMA: BRAZIL 2 ARGENTINA 2 Less than two months after the Belo Horizonte game, Argentina outplayed Brazil for most of the Copa America final in Peru and led twice but conceded equalisers in the dying seconds of each half and ended up losing on penalties.

Kily Gonzalez put Argentina ahead with a penalty in the 20th minute but the world champions levelled through Luisao in first-half injury time.

Having scored what looked like a fine winner though Cesar Delgado with three minutes to go, Adriano equalised with the last kick of the game to pull off an unlikely 2-2 draw.

June 8, 2005 - BUENOS AIRES: ARGENTINA 3 BRAZIL 1 Argentina, who had lost 2-0 away to Ecuador four days earlier, were brilliant in the first half and scored three times before the break.

Two goals by Hernan Crespo either side of a fine strike by playmaker Juan Roman Riquelme stunned the world champions who, after thumping Paraguay 4-1 three days earlier, produced a toothless first-half performance in which they had no answer to Argentina's biting tackles and swift passing.

Brazil were a different team in the second half after surviving an early let-off when Dida parried a Kily Gonzalez shot and Roberto Carlos reduced the arrears in the 71st minute when he rifled in a 25-metre free kick.

*** Note:** Should Wednesday's final go to penalties it will have been after the first periods of extra time ever played in a match between Argentina and Brazil.

There is no extra time in the Copa America, in which the arch-rivals have reached three shootouts in the last 12 years.

Brazil came out on top in the 1995 quarter-final in Uruguay and last year's final in Peru after losing in their 1993 quarter-final in Ecuador.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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