

Reefat's golden opportunity

SPORTS REPORTER

Reefat Bin Sattar will get a perfect opportunity to fulfil his dreams by bagging the desired rating points to become the third Grand Master of the country when the Greenwich University FIDE Rating Chess Competition begins today at the National Sports Council conference room.

The 31-year-old Reefat earned his much-awaited third and final Grand Master norm in last April but he still needs 2500 rating points to fulfil the criteria. He is still eight points short of the mark.

After the tournament, the Bangladesh Chess Federation (BCF) will ask the FIDE Presidential board to approve his Grand Master status reviewing his ratings and norms.

The BCF general secretary Syed Sujauddin Ahmed said at a press conference yesterday that the nine-round Swiss League meet would be a great chance for Reefat to notch the remaining points.

"Actually, it was our target to create an opportunity for Reefat and I hope he can avail it," he said.

A total of one hundred players will play in the tournament split into two groups. Players rated higher than 2150 will compete in Group A which contains GMs Niaz Murshed and Ziaur Rahman. They are expected to fight it out with three International Masters and the FIDE Masters.

On the other hand, the below 2150-rating players will be placed in Group B.

Overseas Study Counseling Limited, the official representative of the British-based the University of Greenwich in Bangladesh, provided Tk 1.20 lakh to sponsor the meet.

"We are eyeing to continue sponsoring the event for at least five years and the amount could be doubled the next year," said Mushfikur Rahman Mohan, the managing director of the local agents.

Premier League now resumes tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

Poor ground condition at the Bangabandhu National Stadium following heavy seasonal rain has forced the Dhaka Metropolitan Football League Committee to delay restarting the Premier Football League for another day.

The league, which was due to resume today after a 14-points break, will now start tomorrow with the much-awaited Abahani-Brothers match.

The extra day will give both title contenders an opportunity to see their key injured players, Brothers defender Masud Rana and Abahani goalkeeper Nizam, regain full fitness.

The gap will also help Abahani, now third in the table with 14 points - two points adrift of holders Brothers - settle their minds on completing the quota of foreign players by recruiting their third import.

Looking for a defender to strengthen their suspect backline, Abahani have to choose between Ghana's Osie Neil, who has already trained with the Sky Blues, and Cameroonian Naga, expected to arrive in the city today.

Mixed delight for Bhupathi, Pierce

AFP, London

India's Mahesh Bhupathi and France's Mary Pierce won the Wimbledon mixed doubles title on Sunday with a 6-4, 6-2 win against Paul Hanley of Australia and Tatiana Perebrynin of the Ukraine.

The 55-minute win on Centre Court brought the curtain down on the 2005 Championships.

The unseeded Bhupathi and Pierce had knocked out third seeds Jonas Bjorkman and Lisa Raymond 7-5, 6-1 in the semifinals earlier in the day while Hanley and Perebrynin beat fourth seeds Kevin Ullyett and Liezel Huber -- the latter having earlier won the womens' doubles -- 6-3, 6-4.

IOC not swayed by glitz 'n' glamour

AFP, Singapore

IOC president Jacques Rogge made it clear Monday he is not impressed with the mass of sports stars being flown into Singapore by cities bidding for the 2012 Olympics.

London's top star is football millionaire David Beckham. New York has Muhammad Ali. France is bringing in basketball star Tony Parker.

They are all hoping the celebrity 'A list' will help sway IOC members when they decide on Wednesday who will win the 2012 Games.

London, New York and Paris are going up against Madrid and Moscow in the most hotly contested Olympic race in history.

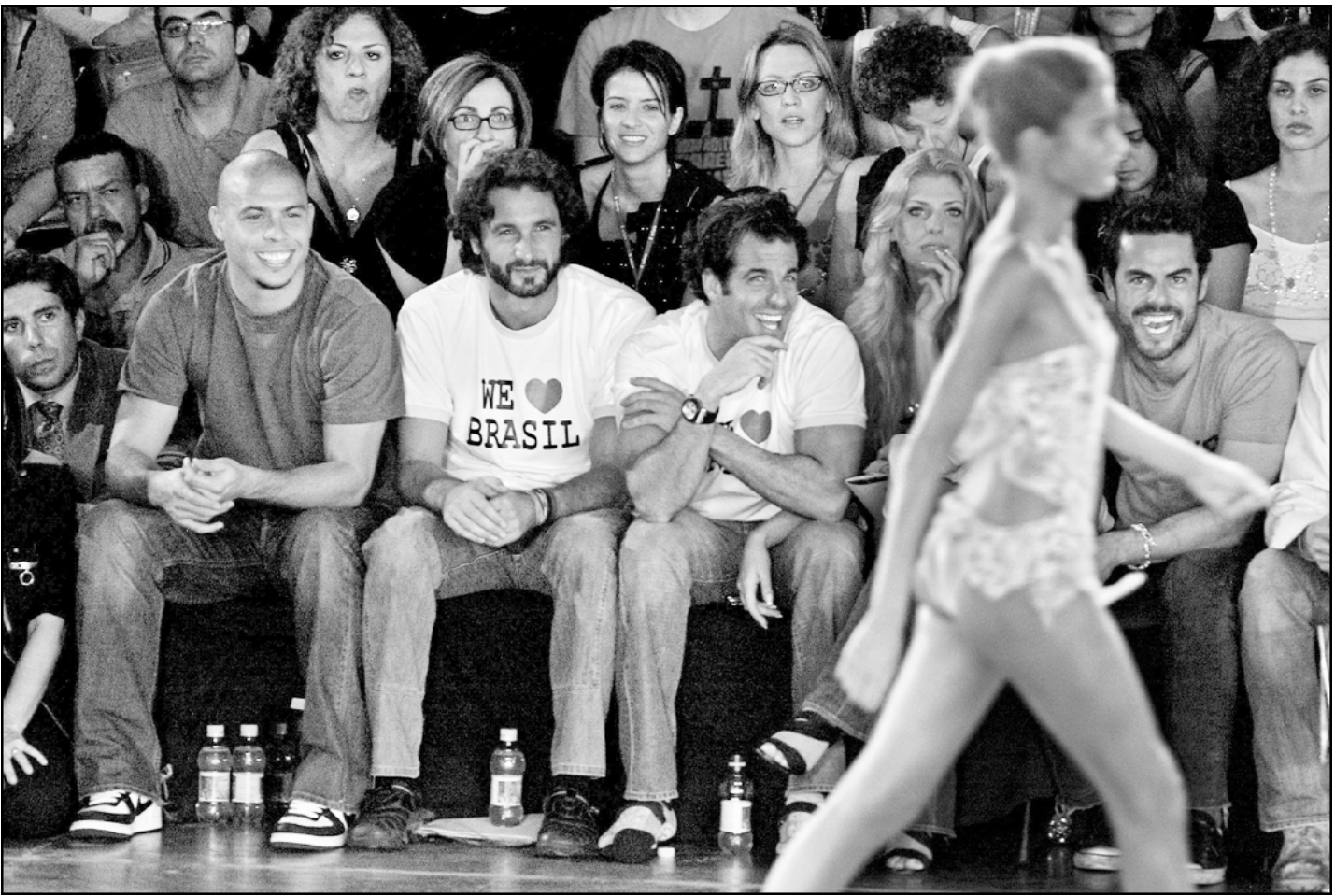


PHOTO: AFP

SEARCHING FOR A LIFE-PARTNER? Brazilian superstar Ronaldo (L) looks at a model wearing an outfit by Brazilian designer Amir Slama for Rosa Cha during the 2006 Spring-Summer collection of the Sao Paulo Fashion Week, in Sao Paulo on Sunday.

Liverpool losing Gerrard?

Football

AFP, London

Steven Gerrard may be on the verge of leaving Liverpool after a reported training-ground bust-up with manager Rafael Benitez.

The England midfielder is unhappy Liverpool have yet to make him an improved offer following last season's UEFA Champions League success, opening up the possibility of a big-money move to Chelsea or Real Madrid.

He has two years of his current deal to run but it has been rumoured that he is unhappy because the Reds did not open talks as quickly as he had hoped.

Gerrard indicated his desire to stay at Anfield in the immediate aftermath of Liverpool's stunning European Cup triumph over AC Milan in May and thought the issue

would be dealt with almost instantly.

Instead, just nine days away from Benitez's men beginning the defence of their trophy against Welsh minnows Total Network Solutions, Gerrard looks further away than ever from agreeing a new deal.

Chief executive Rick Parry knows unless his future is resolved one way or another this summer, his vast market value will begin to plummet.

Liverpool spokesman Ian Cotton insisted Sunday the Merseyside giants do not want to lose their talisman.

"Our position is very clear," he said. "We want Gerrard to stay at the club."

Gerrard has received no improved pay offer from Liverpool and no more talks are planned, according to The Sun, who report Gerrard had a stand-up row with Benitez on Saturday.

The Daily Mirror reports Gerrard has broken off all contract talks and also claims an "angry exchange" between the player and his manager at Melwood training ground.

Chelsea will now launch a British transfer record bid in excess of 30 million pounds for Gerrard, according to the Daily Star, while the Daily Express report Gerrard's patience snapped as the Anfield club dragged their feet over a new deal.

But last week Spanish reports claimed that Gerrard had admitted to Benitez his interest in a move to Real Madrid, who are said to be willing to more than double his wages to over 8 million pounds a year.

The Daily Mail also say Gerrard's long association with Liverpool is drawing to a close and that Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho has been alerted.

Paris, London

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"No one has gone over the line. If anyone had, I would have intervened," Rogge said.

Elsewhere the public relations campaign of all five cities' bids kicked into overdrive with Blair grabbing most of the headlines as he undertook a hectic series of meetings.

Blair refused to say which IOC members he had met, or even the number, because of campaigning rules, but his spokesman conceded later that he had "as packed a diary as I have seen" for the next 48 hours.

"The basis of the bid is the strength of the bid. What I can do is make it clear that the bid has complete and total political support," Blair told reporters during a brief break from his lobbying.

Among the sporting celebrities in Singapore to lobby for various cities are Australian swimming champion Ian Thorpe, and former Romanian gymnast queen Nadia Comaneci, who are both backing New York.

For Spain, football star Raul, cycling legend Miguel Indurain and basketballer Pau Gasol were all in town. At the national level, Spanish Queen Sofia was also already in Singapore while Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero was due to arrive on Tuesday.

English football captain David Beckham was expected to arrive in Singapore later Monday to lobby for London, as was New York's trump card, boxing great Muhammad Ali.

With US President George W. Bush not coming to Singapore, New York Senator and former first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton will provide her city's political muscle. Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov was also on his way for Moscow.

Ganguly set for quick India trip

BBC ONLINE/PTI, undated

Glamorgan county face the prospect of losing Sourav Ganguly later in July as the Indian captain prepares to join a training camp in Bangalore.

Ganguly is expected to join his Indian teammates on July 13 following a demand from coach Greg Chappell.

But Glamorgan, who have no cricket between July 12 and 16, hope he will not miss any games for them.

Press Trust of India quoted an Indian official as saying: "The coach wants him to be there for a few days."

The camp began on June 27 with an eight-day programme for the pacemen and does not end until July 22.

Top 15 fast bowlers will be joined here today by another group of probables for the twin physical conditioning and skills camps, ahead of the cricket tri-series in Sri Lanka starting July 30.

The speedsters completed a week-long camp, which focused on their fitness, at the National Cricket Academy.

From Tuesday till July 12, they will continue with their physical conditioning along with new entrants Virender Sehwag, Rahul Dravid, Mohammed Kaif, Yuvraj Singh, VVS Laxman, Gautam Gambhir, Suresh Raina, Venugopala Rao, Neeraj Patel, Dheeraj Jadhav, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Dinesh Kaarthick, Parthiv Patel, Anil Kumble, Murali Kartik, Sridharan Sriram and Hemang Badani.

Ganguly, Dinesh Mongia, Harbhajan Singh and Irfan Pathan, who are busy playing county cricket, are slated to join this expanded group on July 13 when the final phase commences focusing on cricket skills.

Prior given Eng ODI call-up

CRICINFO, undated

Matt Prior has been named in England's 15-man squad for the three-match NatWest Challenge against Australia, which starts at Headingley on Thursday.

He replaces Kabir Ali from the NatWest Series squad and will provide Duncan Fletcher with more flexibility when it comes to choosing a substitute as per the new regulations in one-day internationals.

Chris Tremlett, who was called up as cover for Simon Jones, retains his place.

David Graveney, the chairman of selectors, said: "We were delighted with the team's strong performances during The NatWest Series and have made only one change to the squad for the NatWest Challenge."

SQUAD

Michael Vaughan (captain), Paul Collingwood, Andrew Flintoff, Ashley Giles, Darren Gough, Steve Harmison, Geraint Jones, Simon Jones, Jon Lewis, Kevin Pietersen, Matt Prior, Vikram Solanki, Andrew Strauss, Chris Tremlett, Marcus Trescothick.

Scholastica girls h'ball team in Italy

SPORTS REPORTER

Scholastica and Viqarunnissa Noon school handball teams will participate in the 33rd Interamnia World Cup to be held in Teramo, Italy from July 4-10.

Scholastica, who left Dhaka on Saturday with a 15-member team, will take part in the Under-16 group featuring 31 teams. Viqarunnissa will compete with 21 teams in the Under-14 group.

Steamy secrets revealed

Football

AFP, London

English league footballers admit they could have a different girl every night in their celebrity lifestyles.

"It wasn't as often as a different girl every night, but it could have been," Scotland striker Frank McAvennie, who moved to London in 1985 when West Ham signed him from St Mirren, recounts in a new book, *Playing Away - The A-Z of Soccer Sex Scandals*.

The book has England icon David Beckham on its cover possibly to generate even more interest considering the share of sex scandals involving the Real Madrid superstar over the last couple of years.

"Frank was mobbed wherever he went, even in Marks and Spencer," Anita, his girlfriend at the time, said. "We used to go on holiday to places like Ibiza and there would be one topless girl after another coming to talk to him as if I wasn't there."

Former Portsmouth and Newcastle striker Micky Quinn was another Eighties star with a regular supply of goals and girls.

"Women would throw themselves at me," he says.

"I felt like Rod Stewart. When I was at Portsmouth I actually had four birds on the go at one time. They were all barmaids, which says a lot about the life I was leading."

Dwight Yorke was sold to Blackburn Rovers when Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson finally lost patience with the strikers socialising.

Shortly after moving to Old Trafford in 1998, the Trinidad and Tobago international teamed up with Mark Bosnich, his former Aston Villa colleague, for an orgy with four women that he videoed.

Lee in trouble again

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Brett Lee's tendency to bowl beamers has again landed him in the spotlight after he unleashed one early on in Saturday's NatWest Series final, leading to a severe reprimand from David Shepherd, the umpire, and another defence from his captain, Ricky Ponting.

Lee was slammed after bowling a beamer to New Zealand's Brendon McCullum earlier in the year and, although he apologised after sending Marcus Trescothick sprawling early on in England's innings, questions were again raised.

There is no doubt that Lee did not intend bowling such a dangerous delivery - he was attempting a yorker but got his bearings wrong. And, indeed, rather than unsettling the English batsman, according to Ponting the ball appeared to have more effect on Lee.

"It knocks the confidence out of him straight away," Ponting said. "If you look at him after that beamer that he bowled, he's holding back and (bowling) within himself immediately after that because he just can't keep his front foot (from slipping). That's why he moved around the wicket. It's just a really difficult thing for Brett. Someone that's running in that fast and trying to bowl that fast, if you can't keep your front foot then I guess it's going to happen every now and again."

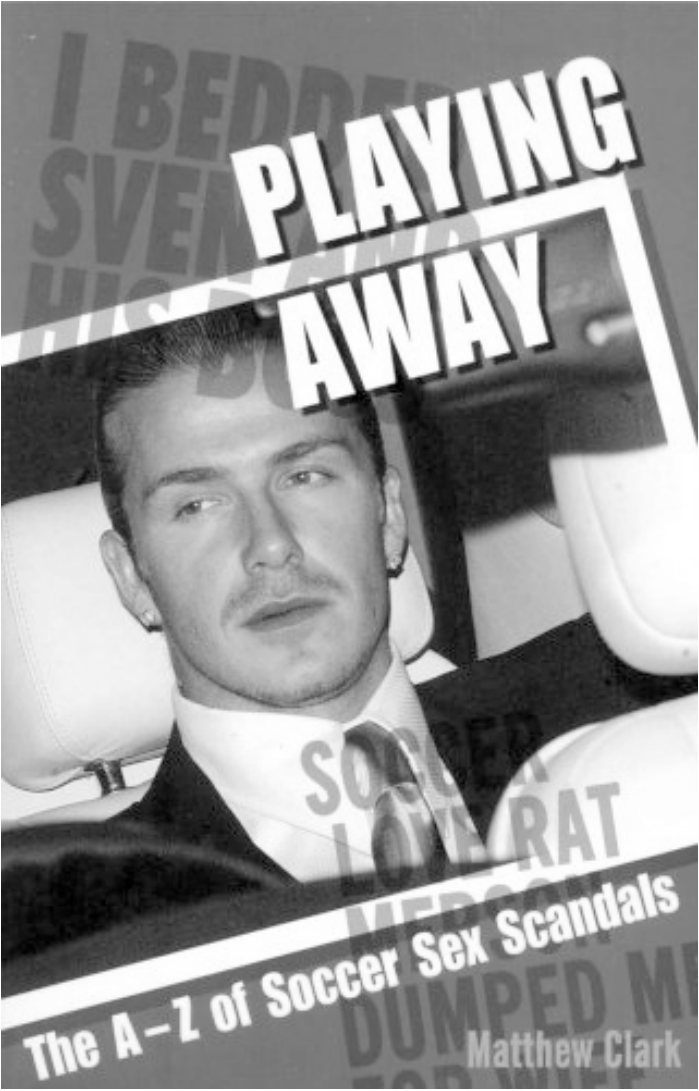
"I'm not trying to defend it or anything, but if you could slow it down and have a look at his front foot you'd understand he's slipping a lot. There didn't seem to be any hard feelings out on the ground. Trescothick accepted the apology and everyone got on with it from

Anxious to avoid detection, he threw the tape into his rubbish bin but it still ended up in the hands of a national newspaper, which printed a picture on its front page.

But Yorke was not known to everyone. He convinced one of his

nightclub conquests that he was a postman named Brian.

"People were coming past and saying hello to him and he said it was because he delivered their letters. I believed him. He seemed a lovely bloke," she said.



Women's kabaddi team leaves for India today

BDNEWS, Dhaka

A 14-member national women's kabaddi team including four officials will leave Dhaka today for Hyderabad, India, to take part in the first Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship.

The 3-day meet begins on July 8.

A total of eight countries are taking part in the meet. They are: Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Japan, Iran, Malaysia, Thailand and hosts India.

Tigers' camp

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eye on the progress of certain players who are travelling to England next week with the Bangladesh A side. "We will definitely consider the performances of the Bangladesh A players."

The chief selector said that left-handed opener Shahriar Nafees Ahmed, Nafees Iqbal, Tushar Imran and Aftab Ahmed, who all returned home from England on Sunday, would join the ongoing Bangladesh A camp at the BKSP for just two days before the team leaves Dhaka on July 15.

In the absence of coach Shaun Williams, who is now in Australia on a personal visit, newly appointed Bangladesh Under-19 coach Allister de Winter was looking after the camp. Former Bangladesh opener Nurul Abedin Nobel has been appointed assistant coach to Williams who is expected back on July 9.

The Bangladesh A team will play five three-day and four limited over games against different English county opponents during their tour.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues and solutions.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers.

CRYPTOQUIP
G T G P X S B Y Z F ' L T L R X
J M Z N G F D L R S O G M F T V R R O T .
G E G F N L I M P Y R P X S M L M S B
I R V V G L - E R J P G F D .
Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF YOU'RE UNABLE TO FIND YOUR SINGING PARTNER, YOU'LL PROBABLY BE A DUET-YOURSELF.
Today's Cryptquip Clue: R equals O
The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.