



Did U Know?

Australian wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist is named Churchy. The name came into being when a young autograph hunter approached him and said: "Excuse me Eric Gilchrist, can I have your autograph?"



David Lloyd
(Former England cricket coach)
"He's probably painting his name up on the board already."
Suggesting Kevin Pietersen will be eyeing a century should he make his Test debut at Lord's on Thursday.



ESPN
Twenty20 Cup 2005
Somerset v Gloucestershire
Repeated at 6pm
Sportscentre
Live at 8.30pm

Victoria return to Premiership

SPORTS REPORTER

Victoria Sporting Club returned to the Premier Football League when they booked the third and final promotion spot in the First Division Football League yesterday.

Victoria came from a goal down to edge Wari Club 2-1 in their 13th round match at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur to push their collection to 24 points with a match in hand. It dashed Mohakhali XI's hopes to join Rahmatganj and Badda Jagarani, who have already secured their Premiership berth next season.

Layek put Wari ahead after 28 minutes but Victoria sealed their seventh win with goals from Sohag and Surat in the 54 and 58 minutes.

Trescothick the 500th?

REUTERS, Sydney

England opener Marcus Trescothick is the bookmakers' favourite to become Australian bowler Glenn McGrath's 500th wicket when the first Ashes Test begins at Lord's on Thursday.

McGrath is sitting on 499 Test wickets and will become the second pace bowler to achieve the milestone should he take a wicket in the match.

West Indies fast bowler Courtney Walsh retired with 519 Test wickets. British bookmakers William Hill have offered the left-handed Trescothick at 9-4 to become McGrath's 500th victim with fellow opener Andrew Strauss 11-4. England captain Michael Vaughan, who is expected to bat at number three, is third favourite at 7-2.

Australian bookmaker Centrebet had Trescothick at 3.25 Australian dollars, as was Strauss, while Vaughan was paying 4.50 Australian dollars for every dollar invested.

McGrath has dismissed Trescothick and Vaughan four times each in Tests.

MSC Phase 1 winners

SPORTS REPORTER

When the Premier Football League began almost a couple of months earlier, nobody gave Mohammedan Sporting Club a real chance. Holders Brothers Union and Muktiyoddha Sangsad were tipped to be everybody's favourites due to their strength as well as the success they had at the start of the season.

Brothers and Muktiyoddha shared two titles between them to warm up for the country's top league and Mohammedan, eliminated from the semifinal stage on both occasions, were left only to fight for their pride.

They did exactly that and rose from the ashes to top the Premiership table at the end of the first leg.

Mohammedan's premature exit from the Independence Day Gold Cup and the Federation Cup in addition to a humiliating 5-1 defeat to arch-rivals Abahani resulted in a change of coaches. Korean Man

Young Kang was shown the door after just three months in charge and the same happened to his replacement, the coaching pair of Mohammed Panir and Saiful Bari Titu.

And after more in-house drama, some new faces were brought in by the team management and it worked like a charm for the local heavyweights in association with new man Kazi Jashimuddin Joshi.

Before taking charge, Joshi had said that he had no tricks up his sleeve to change the situation overnight. All he wanted was some time before thinking of success. In the end, playing within their limitations and sticking to the task of not losing a single match against the so-called small teams kept them three points ahead of second-placed Brothers.

With other big guns Muktiyoddha Sangsad and Abahani finishing a distant third and fourth with 16 and 15 points respectively, Joshi's charges – the only unbeaten side in the ten-team fray on 23 points with

seven wins and draws against Abahani and Brothers – only have to be careful not to slip up in the second leg in bid to regain the title.

In a high scoring first-leg with an average of three goals-per-match, Mohammedan have scored 20 goals in their nine outings with half the goals shared between Alfaz and Manju. The aggregate, however, looked only better after their 6-1 demolition of Dhaka Wanderers in the ultimate league game.

Mohammedan have been deprived of the services they had expected of the foreign players and also, skipper Alfaz missed four matches in the middle. But heavy buying during the transfer paid rich dividends as a total of ten players found their names on the scoring sheet.

In the games they had struggled, they managed to score and hang on to the lead and the credit must go to a tight backbone that has conceded just five goals, the lowest so far.

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SRI LANKA TOUR Tigers to be named today

SPORTS REPORTER

The national selectors agreed yesterday to announce a preliminary squad of 20-22 members for Bangladesh's tour of Sri Lanka in September.

It ended speculations that only a 15-member team would be announced for the two Tests and three one-day internationals.

The national selection panel, which had a brief meeting yesterday afternoon, is expected to name the squad today.

NFL relief for Dhaka giants

SPORTS REPORTER

The National Football League (NFL) committee which compromised last year by staging a 12-team final, will stick to the original ten-team final round this year, said NFL tournament committee secretary Manzoor Hossain Malu yesterday.

The chairman of the tournament committee Matlub Ahmed and the secretary had a meeting yesterday with a representative of sponsors Nitol-Tata and discussed ways to make the country's top football competition more attractive.

Nitol-Tata, in the last year of its three-year contract with the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), will provide Tk 60 lakh this year.

"We will form the committee very soon and our first meeting will be on August 2," informed Malu, also the deputy general secretary of BFF.

The six zonal champions will join the last year's NFL champions and runners-up, Dhaka Premier League champions and the Federation Cup winners.

"If one team qualifies from two or more competitions, we will not give the next best team an automatic berth. We will evaluate a team's overall performance and popularity before handing them a place in the final," Malu added.

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Captain Clare Connor bats while and her teammate Rosalie Birch keeps wicket in the London Eye to promote the England Women's Ashes series on Monday. The series kicks off on August 9.

BFF to appoint 8 officials

BDNEWS, Dhaka

In a bid to bring professionalism to football, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is going to recruit eight professionals.

BFF general secretary Anwarul Haque Helal said yesterday that they were going to recruit eight officials for its different departments and the circular for these posts would be made public soon.

The recruitment includes an executive director, marketing manager, professional manager, communication manager, vision Bangladesh manager, finance manager, professional administrative officer and development officer.

The officials are likely to join BFF on September 1, said the BFF secretary. He also informed that the BFF will have to pay about Tk. 2 lakh per month as salary for the eight officials.

Nafees Iqbal finds form

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh A thrived on a hundred from Test opener Nafees Iqbal and a half century by teenaged prodigy Mushfiqur Rahim to post a competitive 249 for six in their one-day tour opener against British Universities at The Parks in Oxford yesterday.

Iqbal, who had a forgettable tour of England in May-June with the senior side made an encouraging return to the country as he held the innings together after captain and namesake Shahriar Nafees Ahmed had departed for a five-ball duck in the very first over. Iqbal went on to share two significant stands of 68 and 79 with number three Tushar Imran (32) and number six

Mushfiqur Rahim (50 off 57; 4x4, 1x6) respectively before finally getting out for 109 (126 balls, 11x4, 2x6). Alok Kapali, who batted at five

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NAFEES...109

2 lifters to get SAF silver medals today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladeshi weightlifters Hamidul Islam and Biddut Kumar Roy will be handed their SAF Games silver medals today in a simple ceremony.

Hamidul and Biddut had bagged bronze medals in the ninth SAF Games in March-April 2004 in Islamabad in the 62kg and 94kg categories. But both of their medals were upgraded after the two Pakistani gold medalists failed dope tests.

Eventually, the gold medals went to India.

The Bangladesh Weightlifting Federation president ASM Shahjahan will award the medals to the Bangladeshi athletes at the BOA this afternoon. They will also get the Tk 75,000 reward money they were each promised by the federation before the Games.

The federation had announced that they would give Tk two lakh, one lakh and 25,000 respectively for winning gold, silver or bronze. Hamidul and Biddut had already received Tk 25,000 and now will be given the rest of the amount.

With the two medals, Bangladesh's Islamabad SAF Games tally now stood at three gold, 13 silver and 24 bronze.

2007 WC cricket schedule to be revealed today

PTI, London

With the five qualifiers having been spotted, the International Cricket Council announces the dates and detailed schedule for the 2007 World Cup today at Trinidad.

Holland, Bermuda, Canada, Ireland and Scotland are the five minnows who along with Kenya would get to play against the 10 Test playing countries in the 16-nation competition in the Caribbean.

Scotland's reward for winning the ICC Trophy is a place alongside Australia, Holland and South Africa in Pool 1 in the matches of which will be played in St. Kitts.

Ireland has been placed in Pool 4 with hosts West Indies, Pakistan and Zimbabwe.

Bermuda is grouped in Pool 2 with Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh (matches to be played in Trinidad and Tobago) while Canada is in Pool 3 with New Zealand, England and Kenya.

Akram's first-class recipe

Cricket

BSS, Dhaka

Former national captain Akram Khan is convinced that the lack of a strong first-class base is the reason behind Bangladesh's slow improvement in Test cricket.

Akram, whose last Test cap was against South Africa in 2003, elaborated the reasons for the Tigers having won only one Test out of 38 matches in the last five years.

"A strong first-class base is indispensable to raise our Test standard. We have some players who have played more Tests than first-class matches as the country has only one first-class tournament," Akram said yesterday.

He said: "If the players don't play at least 15 to 20 first-class innings in a year, they will find it difficult to construct a long innings in Test cricket. I have noticed most of our celebrated batsmen in the national team are playing Test matches as if

they were one-day matches."

The popular Chittagong right-hander believed that while Bangladesh did reasonably well in the tri-series when they humbled world champions Australia thanks to a magnificent maiden one-day century by Mohammad Ashraf, however, their performance in both Test matches against England was poor to say the least.

Referring to the country's present cricketing infrastructure, the 36-year-old former Bangladesh captain said: "The only first class competition is the National League, which is participated by six divisional teams. But the number of participating teams is not sufficient."

"The League must be expanded so that players have the opportunity to play in the longer-version. This is the only way for them to step up to Test level," he added.

Akram also called upon the Bangladesh Cricket Board to introduce longer version competitions for age-group levels.

Afro-Asian Cup begins Aug 17

CRICINFO, undated

Jagmohan Dalmiya, the Afro-Asian Cricket Cooperation Chairman, has announced that the first of the three-match Afro-Asian Cup between Asia XI and Africa XI will take place at Supersport Park, Centurion, in South Africa, on August 17.

The second and third matches are scheduled to be held on August 20 and 21 at Durban.

The selection panels for the two teams will comprise a representative from each of the participating nations. The Asia XI selection panel includes Majid Khan (Pakistan), Ravi Shastri (India) and Sidath Wettimuny (Sri Lanka).

Bangladesh Cricket Board has proposed Shafiqul Haque Heera's, the former Bangladesh captain, name at its representative on the panel.

Mike Proctor (South Africa), Psyche Nkala (Zimbabwe) and Tom Tikolo (Kenya) are the selectors for the Africa XI.

It was learnt that Bangladesh batsmen Mohammad Ashraf, Aftab Ahmed and fast bowler Mashrafe-bin-Mortuza were in line to be picked for the Asian side.

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HARBHAJAN 'TIGER' SINGH! India off-spinner Harbhajan Singh tries a golfing shot during a practice session at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore on Monday.

Dravid named captain

India bring in two rookies for SL tri-series

Cricket

AFP, Bangalore

Indian selectors Monday named two newcomers in a squad of 15 for an upcoming tri-series in Sri Lanka also featuring the West Indies.

All-rounder Suresh Raina and middle-order batsman Venugopal Rao were the uncapped players in the team. As expected, Rahul Dravid was named skipper in the absence of Sourav Ganguly, who is serving a six-match ban.

"Dravid has been named captain and (Virender) Sehwag will be his deputy," secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India Karunakaran Nair announced in Bangalore.

"But Ganguly will be included in the team if the ban is lifted by the ICC (International Cricket Council)," he added.

A decision by South Africa's Justice Albie Sachs over Ganguly's ban may not be announced before the team's departure on July 23. The tournament will be played from July

30 to August 9.

Ganguly was penalised by match referee Chris Broad during a one-day series against Pakistan at home in April, a decision upheld by the ICC's appeals' commissioner Michael Beloff.

But after an appeal by the Indian board over technicalities, the ICC named Justice Sachs as arbitrator.

Ganguly, who served out two matches of the ban during that series, was also banned last November for two Tests for a similar offence before successfully appealing the ruling.

Since star batsman Sachin Tendulkar had already been ruled out because of an elbow injury, the selectors decided to pick experi-

enced batsman Venkatsai Laxman, a regular for Tests but not in the one-day squad.

Leg-spinner Anil Kumble too found a place as an additional bowling option along with the four pacemen -- Irfan Pathan, Zaheer Khan, Ashish Nehra and Laxmipathy Balaji.

As well as welcoming newcomers Raina and Rao, the selectors decided to give another chance to all-rounder Jai Prakash Yadav, who played two one-dayers at home against the West Indies in 2002.

Raina, 18, a left-handed batsman and off-spinner, plays for Uttar Pradesh in India's domestic competition. Rao, 23, has been a prolific scorer for the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

Yadav, who turns out for the Institutional Railways team, is a seamer and hard-hitting batsman.

Ajit Agarkar, Dinesh Mongia and Murali Kartik were the notable exclusions from the squad.

The tri-series will be Australian coach Greg Chappell's first international assignment with the Indian team.

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SQUAD

Rahul Dravid (captain), Virender Sehwag (vice-captain), Venkatsai Laxman, Yuvraj Singh, Mohammad Kaif, Jai Prakash Yadav, Suresh Raina, Venugopal Rao, Mahender Dhoni, Anil Kumble, Harbhajan Singh, Irfan Pathan, Zaheer Khan, Ashish Nehra, Laxmipathy Balaji, Sourav Ganguly -- 16th member.

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Bob Woolmer, the Pakistan coach, has asked England to target Adam Gilchrist and prevent him from taking the game away with his aggressive batting in the upcoming Ashes series.

"Someone must bowl as if Gilchrist is their bunny," Woolmer told the Herald Sun. "England should be targeting Gilchrist. He scores quickly and almost inevitably turns the game around."

Woolmer, who was the coach when Pakistan toured Australia early in his year, saw his team thrashed 3-0 largely due to the efforts of Gilchrist, who averaged 76.66 and rescued his team on several occasions.

"They are so dangerous because they have a top seven who are all capable of taking the game away from you, but Gilchrist is the

most destructive batsman in the world and will be the key," Woolmer insisted.

"We had Australia in trouble a few times when he came in and changed the game. My feeling is there are two ways to trouble him: take the pace off the ball and try and swing it and make him come at you, maybe through Mathew Hoggard. The other way is with genuine pace."

"Tell Steve Harmison to bounce him early and get stuck into him and try to rush him in his strokes. I don't think teams bowl enough short stuff at him and it's something England should be looking to do. They have to find a way of unsettling him. Harmison's pace and bounce could make it more difficult for him to hook and pull. And once you can knock him over, you can get through the tail."

Woolmer, who represented England in Ashes series back in the 1970s, also offered some advice to Michael Vaughan. "Australia are like the West Indies of the Eighties: they try to bully you and you have to

stand up to it. Teams become over-awed by them. Michael Vaughan's team have to make them feel unwelcome in England instead of being all pally, pally," he continued. "The captains who have succeeded over the years have usually been aggressive: Jardine, Illingworth, Gating, they were all hard men."

Woolmer also noticed that Shane Warne wasn't quite the same dominating force he was once. "I say this in all humility, but I don't think he's the bowler he used to be," Woolmer said. "He's still a very fine bowler, but he bowls you more bad balls than he has in the past. Watching him against us, he didn't seem to have that fizz. Our blokes played him pretty well."

Pointing out certain weaknesses in Australia's batting, Woolmer said, "There are ways to trouble them if the bowlers have the skill to put the ball in the right areas: Ricky Ponting can be vulnerable to the ball coming back into him; Damien Martyn plays

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