

BFF to stage int'l meet in Jan 06

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) will host an international club tournament in January-February next year, confirmed BFF president SA Sultan yesterday.

"We will host the Prime Minister's Cup International Football Tournament in the country from January 21 to February 5," Sultan announced at a press briefing at the BFF Bhaban.

"We will invite 12 foreign clubs who will join four local teams. We are also considering hosting as few first-phase matches outside Dhaka," Sultan said.

The BFF, yet to chalk out the format of the 16-team tournament, is looking forward to inviting teams from Iran, Syria, UAE, Qatar, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, Vietnam, Japan, China, Thailand, Myanmar, India and Maldives.

It will be the first international tournament in the country in six years after the Bangladesh Cup in 2000.

"It will be an invitational tournament and we will bear all the costs. We have been trying to hold a tournament of this stature for long but now we have the consents of the Prime Minister and the Asian Football Confederation," said Sultan.

Sirajul Islam Bachchu, the BFF vice-president who was present, has been named coordinator for the meet.

BFF vice-president Abdul Rahim, general secretary Anwarul Hoque Helal and other officials were present.

Black and Whites sweat for draw

MOHAMMEDAN-0, RUSSEL-0

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club's title hopes received another jolt when they dropped two vital points against Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra in the Premier Football League yesterday.

But the Black and Whites should consider themselves lucky to leave the Bangladesh National Stadium even with one point from an embarrassingly one-sided affair dominated by Abu Yusuf's boys.

Still unbeaten, Mohammedan's third draw in four matches saw them join Brothers at the top on 32 points but the latter, who have a match in hand, could open up a three-point lead if they can beat Farashganj today.

Last year's runners-up Russel, who lost to Mohammedan by a solitary goal in the first leg, remained fifth with 19 points after 14 games.

It was the fourth big match in a row for Russel inside ten days but they did not show signs of exhaustion, going all out from the word go.

They were the better side against Abahani and Brothers in spite of losing 2-1 and 2-0 but proved their worth during a 4-0 thrashing of

Muktijoddha. Once again, failure to convert a dozen chances cost them a certain win.

Majid and Tanvir shot their chances wide in the early minutes before Majid, the Moroccan who returned to the side after a one-match ban for three yellow cards, failed to convert the easiest opportunity of the day in the 20th minute.

Russel's Moroccan captain picked Majid unmarked at the near post with a low cross but the lanky striker's wild shot skied over the stranded goalkeeper Biplab.

Biplab's namesake at the Russel goal then held onto a close-range header by Mohammedan skipper Alfaz two minutes later. He again rescued his side with twin saves on the half-hour when Arman Aziz and Alfaz both failed to take advantage of a corner.

Majid, who has already established himself as a miss-master despite being Russel's top scorer with five goals, placed home a right-side minus from compatriot Rachid six minutes before the short whistle but surprisingly, the assistant referee's flag went up to rule out the goal for offside.

Mohammedan, who ended on top of the table after first-leg but have not been the same force in the second part of the league, created

two openings with Munna providing chances for Alfaz and Donald. But Alfaz placed the ball over the bar while the Sierra Leone forward's powerful drive was brilliantly parried by a diving Biplab.

Mohammedan's brief domination fizzled out soon and Russel were the only team on the pitch with Tanvir giving a heart-warming performance on the left flank. The indefatigable winger dwarfed the rival backline, especially exploiting national defender Nazrul's lack of pace to release a series of dangerous crosses. But his teammates' continuous mistakes and Mohammedan's Nigerian stopper Peter Odaf's clearances frustrated him constantly.

Still, the Black and White fans had their hearts in their mouths when Russel attackers got possession in the penalty area. But Rachid placed the ball wide of the near post from six yards and Bulbul unbelievably headed the ball past a flat-footed Biplab and the far post from a handshaking distance.

Even after a hard day on the muddy and heavy ground, Russel were steaming in the last five minutes

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Mohammedan's ace striker Alfaz tries to skip past a sliding tackle by Aminul of Sheikh Russel during their Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Monday.

PHOTO: STAR

Gatlin gets world title Kluff the heptathlon queen

Athletics

AFP, Helsinki

America's Justin Gatlin earned his mantle among the greats of sprinting as he added the world 100 metres title to the Olympic crown he won last year.

The 23-year-old timed a season's personal best 9.88 seconds on Sunday at the World Championships while Michael Frater of Jamaica took silver with 10.05sec and reigning world champion Kim Collins of St Kitts and Nevis taking bronze with a similar time.

Gatlin, who joins the likes of Carl Lewis, Donovan Bailey and Maurice Greene as holders of both titles, stormed home metres clear after overcoming a slow start.

"I feel great and to add the world title to my Olympic gold medal is even better," said Gatlin.

"I know a lot of people tipped me to win but I still had to go out there and do it."

The champion admitted that if injured world record holder Asafa Powell had been fit enough to race, the time could have been faster.

Earlier the semifinals had seen Gatlin lay down the gauntlet with a quite stunning run as he went under 10sec and indeed was the only one

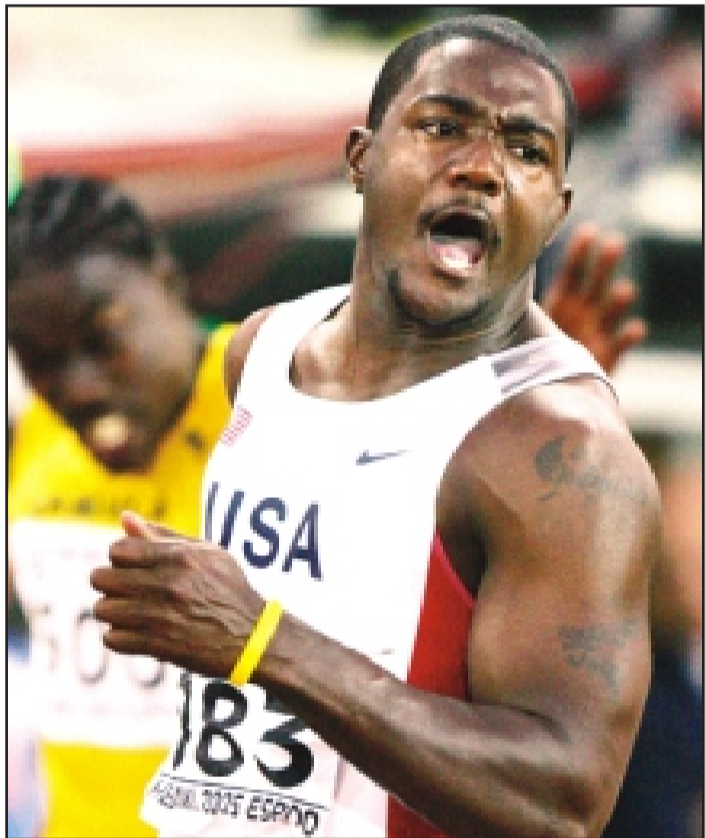


PHOTO: AFP

ALL THAT GLITTERS IS GATLIN: Olympic 100 metres champion Justin Gatlin of USA (R) crosses in front of Jamaica's Mickael Frater in Helsinki on Sunday.

HK cricket fans stumped by TV

AFP, Hong Kong

Thousands of Hong Kong cricket fans were up in arms Monday after a local TV company suddenly dropped its broadcast of England's nail-biting win over Australia in the Ashes series second Test.

TV executives inexplicably switched coverage instead to the lower-ranking and less thrilling New Zealand-Zimbabwe match.

"It makes no sense, switching to the lesser match, many of our members were very upset and I expect it would have really angered other people," said Burji Shroff, captain of the Kowloon Cricket Club, one of

Flintoff is myself: Botham

Cricket

AFP, Birmingham

Ian Botham has said Andrew Flintoff's performance in England's nail-biting two-run second Ashes Test win here were reminiscent of his displays against Australia 24 years ago.

"The highest compliment I can pay 'Freddie' Flintoff is that it was like watching a throwback to the good old days of 1981," legendary England all-rounder Botham wrote in his column in Britain's Daily Mirror tabloid.

"Flintoff has not always appreciated direct comparisons between himself and me, but his performance was magnificent... When I watch Flintoff bat I see a player in my own image."

The 27-year-old Lancashire star, like Botham a hard-hitting batsman and aggressive pace bowler, played a vital role in the closest victory in 128 years of Anglo-Australian cricket.

Man-of-the-match Flintoff returned figures of seven for 131 and made dynamic, six-laden, scores of 68 and 73 as England, just as they had done in 1981, levelled the series at 1-1 after losing the first Test.

Since Botham's heyday in the 1980s many England players, primarily because they were not genuine all-rounders in the sense of being good enough to be picked for Test cricket because of their batting or bowling alone, have found them-

selves burdened with the tag of the 'new Botham'.

It is no surprise then that Flintoff, who like his predecessor is also a fine slip fielder, has fought shy of the label, insisting again at Edgbaston after Sunday's thrilling win: "I'm just me."

And Flintoff, who has called Botham a "legend" would be the first to say he has still got some way to go before matching his hero's feats.

Back in 1981, in what was then the third Test of the series Botham, having resigned the captaincy after the drawn second match at Lord's where he bagged a pair following England's four-wicket first Test defeat at Trent Bridge, helped turn the tide of the series with an astonishing display at Headingley.

First Botham, more of an orthodox swing bowler than Flintoff, who relies on bounce generated from his 6ft 4" frame and reverse swing, took six for 95 as Australia made 401 for nine declared.

He then made 50 in England's meagre 174 and, with the hosts following on, rescued the team from what seemed a likely innings defeat with a barnstorming 149 not out before fast bowler Bob Willis took eight for 43 as Australia, chasing 130 to win, were dismissed for 111 to give England a win by 18 runs.

In the next Test, at Edgbaston, Botham's spell of five wickets for one run in 28 balls, saw England pull off another 'miracle' win, this time

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Zimbabwe suffer 2-day rout

REUTERS/AFP, Harare

New Zealand celebrated a record innings and 294 runs victory over Zimbabwe on the second day of the first Test on Monday.

Zimbabwe, out for 59 in the first innings, followed on 393 runs behind, and were then dismissed for 99.

It was New Zealand's biggest win in their Test history, surpassing the innings and 185 runs success against Pakistan in Hamilton in 2000-01.

New Zealand declared their first innings on their overnight score of 452 for nine and dismissed Zimbabwe first time round just after lunch.

It was Zimbabwe's second lowest total, beating by five the 54 they were bowled out for by South Africa in Cape Town in March.

The home side were then dismissed for a second time with eight

overs remaining in the day's play.

It was only the second time in Test history that a team has been bowled out twice in one day, following the 58 and 82 India made against England in Manchester in 1952.

New Zealand's left-arm spinner Daniel Vettori went into the match with 196 wickets and took four for 28 to become the third New Zealander after Richard Hadlee and Chris Cairns to reach 200 Test wickets.

Left-arm fast bowler James Franklin took three for 11 in Zimbabwe's first innings, claiming his three wickets in the space of four deliveries. Medium pacer Chris Martin took three for 21.

The Zimbabweans were undone by the sharp pace of Franklin and his new-ball partner, Shane Bond, who is playing his first Test after two years on the sidelines because of injury.

Opener Brendan Taylor scored 10 and Stuart Carlisle was 20 not out, but the rest failed to reach double figures.

The home side played with more circumspection in their second innings and reached tea on 37 for two only to collapse after the interval to lose their last eight wickets for 46 runs.

Hamilton Masakadza made an attractive 42, which stuck out amid the debris of an innings in which debutant Neil Ferreira's 16 off 90 balls was the only other noteworthy score.

Health Streak became Vettori's 200th victim when he was trapped in front for three to make it 90 or seven.

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British press hails win Aussie media question Kasper dismissal

Cricket

AFP/REUTERS, undated

Britain's press hailed England's nail-biting victory over Australia and even took the rare step of plastering it all over the front pages Monday.

Cricket is scarcely seen near the front end of a British newspaper but after England's white-knuckle ride two-run victory over the old enemy, newspapers could not resist lauding England's thrilling win.

"England yesterday hailed a new sporting superhero -- cricketer extraordinary Andrew 'Freddie' Flintoff," the Daily Mirror said.

The all-rounder scored 141 runs, took seven wickets and held two catches in a masterful display as England levelled the five-match Ashes series 1-1 against the world's best, sparking hopes of winning the

Ashes for the first time since 1986-87.

The tabloid's front page pictured Flintoff as muscle-bound cartoon film superhero Mr. Incredible, wielding a cricket bat.

Flintoff "sealed a place in the game's history in a heart-stopping two-run win" at Edgbaston in Birmingham.

"Quite simply it was the closest finish in Ashes history and the greatest Test match of all time."

In its editorial, the Mirror said: "Cricket isn't usually the sort of game that has you jumping around the living room."

"It was yesterday, though."

"England's breathtaking win over Australia was as exciting as sport gets."

The newspaper ran a two-page spread on Flintoff, with a picture showing the now-muscular "Freddie" as an angelic, grinning child with curly blond hair.

Half of the Guardian's front page featured a picture of England's fielders hugging in celebration after beating the Aussies with the Ashes still up for grabs -- a sight not seen since 1997.

"England's ecstasy," the broadsheet wrote, with its sports pull-out featuring Flintoff with arms aloft and the caption, "In Affectionate Celebration of English Cricket, which was reborn at Edgbaston on August 7, 2005."

"It is virtually impossible to overstate the significance of this result to England and to English cricket as a whole," wrote Richard Williams.

The Times' front page also featured England's cricketers running around the pitch in jubilation.

"Such sweet agony!" Christopher Martin-Jenkins wrote.

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Tri-series final today Sri Lanka wary of resurgent India

AFP, Colombo



Sri Lanka captain Marvan Atapattu has warned his team to raise their performance to prevent an Indian resurgence in the triangular one-day

cricket series final here on Tuesday.

"They (India) are a tough side and can come back strongly. They have a very experienced batting line-up," Atapattu told reporters on Monday ahead of the day-night final at the Premadasa Stadium.

Sri Lanka defeated India twice and the West Indies once to top the league. India won two matches, both against a depleted West Indies.

"Results of the previous games do not count. In one-dayers, whoever makes fewer mistakes on the day will win," Atapattu said.

Sri Lanka will field a full-strength

side for the first time in the tournament as key fast bowler Chaminda Vaas returns from a hamstring strain sustained in last month's Test series against the West Indies.

The left-arm seamer, with 323 wickets in 250 one-dayers, will lend depth to the home team along with veteran opener Sanath Jayasuriya, who needs 10 runs to join India's Sachin Tendulkar and Sourav Ganguly and Pakistan's Inzamamul Haq in the 10,000-run bracket in one-dayers.

Jayasuriya is set to open the innings with his regular partner Atapattu, who missed Saturday's shock defeat against the West Indies due to fever.

India are sweating over the fitness of Ganguly, who was taken to hospital on Sunday after being hit on the left arm by a rising ball from West Indies paceman Daren Powell.

A final decision on the former Indian captain will be made on

Tuesday morning.

Indian skipper captain Rahul Dravid was also worried about his team's bowling resources.

"We have to watch out as we have allowed the lower order to bat a bit long in a couple of games," said Dravid.

India reduced Sri Lanka to 95-6 after scoring 220 in Dambulla last week, but still lost by four wickets as Upul Chandana (45 not out) and Mahela Jayawardene (94 not out) shared a match-winning stand.

The story was nearly repeated on Sunday.

The West Indies, needing 263 to win, were struggling at 112-6 before lower-order batsman Denesh Ramdin (74 not out) brought his team closer to a win. The West Indies finished at 255-9 to lose by seven runs.

"It is something we are aware of

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Emphatic BD A victory

Birthday joy for Rajib

SPORTS REPORTER

Fast bowler Kazi Shahadat Hossain Rajib celebrated his 19th birthday in perfect style as he ran through the Durham batting to give Bangladesh A an emphatic 86 run victory in a one day game at Chester-le-Street yesterday.

Shahadat, the country's quickest bowler, picked up four wickets giving away just 34 runs in 9.2 overs as Durham folded for 213 chasing an imposing Bangladesh A total of 299 for six inspired by a hurricane 133-ball 147 from captain Shahriar Nafees Ahmed.

Durham's reply never got going once their three batsmen with most first-class experience, Nicky Peng, Gavin Hamilton and Gary Pratt, mustered just 20 between them as the side slipped to 92 for six.

With the new one-day international rules applying, Bangladesh A then brought on their substitute Mushfiqur Rahman and Australian Callum Thorp took a liking to his medium pace.

Thorp, a swing bowler recommended by Durham skipper Mike Hussey, has yet to make a County Championship appearance but looked as likely a candidate as anyone as he took two for 50 and hit 5

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Eng unchanged

AFP, Birmingham

England announced an unchanged squad for Thursday's third Test at Old Trafford following Sunday's nail-biting two-run win against Australia that levelled the five-match series at 1-1.

Uncapped Hampshire pace bowler Chris Tremlett is retained in the 12-man party in addition to the 11 players who took the field during the second Test against Australia here at Edgbaston.

SQUAD Marcusrescothick, Andrew Strauss, Michael Vaughan (captain), Ian Bell, Kevin Pieterse, Andrew Flintoff, Geraint Jones, Ashley Giles, Matthew Hoggard, Stephen Harmison, Simon Jones, Chris Tremlett.



Sri Lankan cricket coach Tom Moody (C) demonstrates some stretching exercises in front of his players in Colombo on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

What to WATCH

TEN Sports Indian Oil Cup Final Sri Lanka v India Live at 2.30pm

DAY'S EVENT Premier Football League Brothers Union v Farashganj (5pm) Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium.