

Army retain inter-service athletics

BSS, Dhaka

The Inter-Service Athletics Competition concluded on Wednesday with one national record being set at the Bangladesh Army Stadium.

Bangladesh Army team with a haul of 19 gold, 17 silver and five bronze medals retained the title and the Bangladesh Navy team became runner-up with three golds, four silvers and 11 bronzes.

Lance Corporal Md Rafiqul Islam and Lance Corporal Md Mujahid Khan of the Bangladesh Army were jointly adjudged best athletes. Rafiq clinched gold in 10,000m and 5000m while Mujahid won gold in 1500m run and 3000m.

The Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Moeen U Ahmed witnessed the final day's events as chief guest and later distributed the prizes among the winners.

GEN YO CUE CULT POOL Danish, Sayem in final

SPORTS REPORTER

Danish and Sayem will play in the final of the Gen Yo Cue Cult Pool Tournament at the Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre on October 1.

In Thursday's semifinals, Danish beat Rezaur and Sayem ousted Sadaf.

A total of 288 players from across the country took part in the competition, which is being organised by mobile phone company CityCell.

World XI think

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the motivation will definitely be there," he said.

"It's not too often you do come to Australia and walk away with the trophy.

"It's an ideal opportunity for some of the guys to experience that, so definitely we're motivated to try to play well and win."

Pollack said the biggest challenge would be getting as a team before Wednesday's opening match at Docklands Stadium, but said given the individual experience it should not be a problem.

"They are professional players who know how to come and be part of a side and how to fit into a role and from talking to them they're very excited about being part of the unit and more than willing to do anything that they can," he said.

The one-day matches will be played on October 5, 7 and 9, with a six-day Test match at the Sydney Cricket Ground starting on October 14.

Bangladesh open

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also proved to be a bogey team for Bangladesh since they have not won against the islanders in a decade.

In the previous SAFF competition, Bangladesh drew both their matches -- in the group and the final -- against Maldives before taking the honours in a penalty shootout.

However, teams like India -- the top ranked among the participants who won the first two editions -- and Nepal -- known for their stubbornness -- will also bid strongly for the two semifinal spots.

The national team has already begun their training under Argentine coach Diego Andres Cruciani and trainer Victor Ariel Colman. The preliminary squad is now at the BKSP in residential camp.

Bangladesh will participate in a four-nation tournament involving China, Sri Lanka and Myanmar next month as part of their preparation.

Gavaskar defends

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"India's got a pretty busy season, we've got 12 one-dayers -- seven against Sri Lanka, five against the South Africans -- and then Sri Lanka come back (for a three-Test series).

"It's a busy season and we're hoping that everything will be okay. I know it's not always easy when you've had a public spat."

"But both are mature people and having spoken to them, the committee believes that they will put their misconceptions behind them and go forward."

Gavaskar said Chappell and Ganguly had both accepted they might have stepped out of line just a bit and would try to work together to take Indian cricket forward.

New Zealander John Wright, who stood down voluntarily as Indian team coach earlier this year, has refused to buy into the raging debate.

Wright, here as World XI coach, has declined to take sides, but said Wednesday the Indian people's passionate love of cricket meant "minor things can become major things very quickly."

"I was very fortunate from the point of view that we always believed what goes on in the changing room stays in the changing room," he told AFP.

"Sometimes as soon as things come into the public area they can take on a momentum all of their own."

No winners at Anfield



AFP, Liverpool

European champions Liverpool earned a crucial point against Premiership champions Chelsea as the all-English Champions League showdown ended in a goalless stalemate at Anfield on Wednesday.

Rafael Benitez emerged the most satisfied of the two managers after a tense encounter of few chances which failed to live up to the pre-match blockbuster billing.

Both clubs, who meet again on Sunday in the Premiership, remain unbeaten after two games in Group G.

Liverpool's Spanish keeper Jose Reina produced the save of the match to deny Arjen Robben although Chelsea were lucky to escape when the referee waved away strong appeals for a penalty after William Gallas appeared to block a goal-bound Jamie Carragher header with his arm.

"It was a definite penalty," Carragher said afterwards. "Every time we play against Chelsea we seem to get a penalty that isn't given. But four points in two games - we are delighted at that."

Despite being crowned European champions, Liverpool finished 37 points behind title-winners Chelsea in the Premiership table last season and they started the fifth meeting between the two clubs of 2005 14 points adrift of their

London opponents.

It was supposed to be a sophisticated European production with a multinational cast.

But there was a predictably English robustness to the clattering challenges that punctured the opening scenes and resulted in early bookings for Xabi Alonso, Liverpool's influential Spanish midfielder, and Chelsea's French midfielder Claude Makelele.

Equally predictably, it was the artistry of Robben which interrupted the frenzied pattern of the early exchanges and brought the best chance of the first half.

After Dietmar Hamann had carelessly conceded possession in front of the main stand, the Dutch international danced past Sami Hyypia as though the Finland defender did not exist before forcing Reina, who had earlier done well to keep out Frank Lampard's sixth minute free-kick, into a terrific finger-tip save.

Although five-times European champions Liverpool enjoyed plenty of possession before the interval and had more shots before half-time, it was Chelsea who looked more likely to break the deadlock in a high-tempo contest which was not for the faint hearted.

Liverpool made four changes to the side which started against Birmingham last Saturday yet even the revitalised legs of eight-goal Djibril Cisse failed to ask enough questions of the well-marshalled Chelsea defence.

This was Steven Gerrard's first

outing against Chelsea since they failed in a 32-million-pound attempt to lure the Liverpool captain to Stamford Bridge in the summer.

Yet the midfield talisman struggled to reach peak form as Chelsea goalkeeper Petr Cech was rarely troubled.

Liverpool's best spell came at the start of the second-half. Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho had taunted his rivals on the eve of the game by reiterating his claim that Luis Garcia's decisive goal which eliminated Chelsea at the semi-final stage last season should not have been allowed.

Garcia went close to haunting Mourinho again as he broke free inside the penalty area only to lose his composure at the crucial moment.

Liverpool then had a strong appeal for a penalty waved away by Italian referee Massimo De Santis when a Carragher header struck the outstretched arm of Gallas.

As the game headed for a goalless conclusion, Chelsea struggled to contain their frustration. Mourinho had spent much of the first half getting increasingly animated on the touchline while Robben and Terry were each shown yellow cards.

Mourinho responded by taking Robben out of the firing line but even his replacement Shaun Wright-Phillips failed to unlock Liverpool's defence which now boasts eight clean sheets in 14 competitive European and domestic games this season.

Generous Milan



AFP, Schalke

AC Milan threw away a three-goal lead in last season's Champions League final defeat by Liverpool and the problem does not seem to be solved with Schalke 04 twice coming from behind to secure a 2-2 draw in Wednesday's Champions League Group E match.

Six-time European champions Milan took the lead in Germany after just 22 seconds through Clarence Seedorf but Soren Larsen equalised on three minutes in a frantic opening.

European Player of the Year Andrei Shevchenko then put Milan ahead again on 59 minutes with a bullet header, but substitute Hamit Altintop, on the pitch for just two minutes, levelled in the 70th minute.

"The draw was a fair result," concluded Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti. "I am pleased with my team although losing the lead twice is not something you want to happen too often."

"It's a point gained rather than two lost. This is a difficult group."

However his opinion of Schalke's defender Christian Poulsen - the

Danish player who was spat at by Francesco Totti in Euro 2004 - was less than flattering.

"He's a coward because he was playing his own game when the referee wasn't looking."

It was Schalke's first point in this season's Champions League and in truth they could have taken all three had Brazilian goalkeeper Dida not made a brilliant late save from Larsen.

"It is a shame because we had a chance to win this game," said Schalke handler Ralf Rangnick. "But when you go behind after 22 seconds and then concede again when we were on top of our game you have to be content with a point."

Milan have four points after an opening 3-1 win over Fenerbahce but cannot afford such defensive mistakes in their next match with PSV Eindhoven on October 18.

All looked so rosy for Milan when Seedorf, the only player to win the Champions League with three different clubs, scored after a mere 22 seconds.

The Dutch midfielder drilled an optimistic shot from 25 metres that caught goalkeeper Frank Rost off guard and he let the ball squirm under his body.

It was a nightmare start for Schalke, making their first appear-

ance in this competition since the 2001/02 season, but they responded quickly.

In the third minute Brazilian midfielder Lincoln saw his cross deflected and Larsen equalised with his head to stun Milan.

With 32 minutes gone German international Kevin Kuranyi then went close showing great control to take down a high ball but his shot went metres wide of Dida's post.

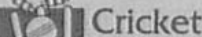
"We played well and created chances but did not have that bit of luck tonight," said Kuranyi. "I certainly had chances to score but the ball would not go in."

In the second half Schalke probed through Lincoln, who put Milan competitor Kaka in the shade, as the visitors became increasingly dependent on counter attacks.

But on 59 minutes veteran Paolo Maldini rampaged down the left flank and produced a perfect cross for Ukraine star Shevchenko, anonymous until this point, who powered a header past Rost to put Milan in front for the second time in the match.

Rangnick threw on Altintop in the 68th minute and it proved an inspired move with the Turkish midfielder rifling in the equaliser 120 seconds later to leave Milan coach Ancelotti tearing his hair out.

Warne demands privacy



AFP, Melbourne

Champion Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne arrived home Thursday pleading for the media to respect his privacy as he attempts to save his failed marriage.

Warne, who was outstanding in a beaten Australian side in the Ashes series loss to England earlier this month, told reporters at the airport here that he is seeking a reconciliation with his estranged wife Simone.

Warne separated from Simone, the mother of his three children, following a string of lurid tabloid newspaper revelations.

The Test spinner asked the Australian media to give him and his family space while he tried to settle his personal issues.

Warne said he had spoken to his wife and children at least twice a day since they returned to Australia.

"It's not an easy situation to be in. It's something I haven't experienced before in my life," Warne said.

"I tried to concentrate as hard as I could when I was at the cricket ground but away from that there were some tough times."

"There were nights when you would sit in your hotel room and think about all the different things."

Warne said he had never wanted to separate from his wife and would try hard to repair the marriage.

"It's not the way I wanted it to be," he said.



SHANE WARNE

"We're still friends, we still speak all the time, but we've just got to work out what we both want, which way we're going to go and which road we go down."

"That's on the agenda -- we've got lots of things to talk about."

Warne said the Australian media hounded him and urged them to give his family privacy.

"Hopefully, you guys (reporters) will respect that and leave us alone, not following us and camping outside our house but I doubt it," he said.

"I doubt whether you guys will, so that will probably make it harder."

Warne said lurid stories about him in the British tabloids were lies, rubbish and fabrication.

"I'm not going to sit and defend myself every time some silly person makes up lies and talks rubbish," he said.

"What am I supposed to do, call a press conference? You've got to live your life."

"The public are not dumb, the public understand what is absolute lies and rubbish when it happens. They know exactly what the truth is," Warne said.

Warne hinted he was nearing the end of his international career, saying the constant travel was beginning to tire him.

"I enjoyed living in England but I have to weigh up the whole package, the travel and so on."

Warne, the only man to take 600 Test wickets, took 40 wickets and scored 249 runs in the Ashes series, which Australia lost 2-1.

Warne will make a rare club appearance with St Kilda this weekend before playing in October's one-off Super Series Test match against a World XI in Sydney.

almost being left to regret their first half misses until Soldado struck with his head.

Beckham again sent a long pass into the area and Soldado's first header was parried away by Nikopolidis but his double-fisted punch sent the ball straight back to Soldado and the 20-year-old striker didn't miss a second time.

The gloss of Real's win was slightly dulled by Sergio Ramos getting a red card in injury time, his second sending off in four games.

The central defender was hacked down by Ioannis Okkas but

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

AFP, Paris

Collated Champions League results on Wednesday:

Group E

At Gelsenkirchen, Germany
Schalke 04 (GER) 2 (Larsen 3, Altintop 70) AC Milan (ITA) 2 (Seedorf 1, Shevchenko 59)
At Istanbul
Fenerbahce (TUR) 3 (Alex 40-pen, 68, Appiah 90) PSV Eindhoven (NED) 0

Group F

At Trondheim, Norway
Rosenborg (NOR) 0 Lyon (FRA) 1 (Cris 45)
At Madrid
Real Madrid (ESP) 2 (Raul 9, Soldado 86) Olympiakos (GRE) 1 (Kafes 47)

Group G

At Liverpool, England
Liverpool (ENG) 0 Chelsea (ENG) 0
At Brussels
Anderlecht (BEL) 0 Real Betis (ESP) 1 (Oliveira 69)

Group H

At Milan
Inter Milan (ITA) 1 (Pizarro 49) Rangers (SCO) 0
At Oporto, Portugal
FC Porto (POR) 2 (Gonzalez 31, Diego 39) Armedia Bratislava (SVK) 3 (Petras 45, Kozak 53, Borbely 73)

Mukti camp

SPORTS REPORTER

Runners-up Mukti Joddha Sangsad will begin their camp for the fifth Nitol-Tata National Football League today.

All players of the club have been requested to join training at their residential camp at 4pm.

SHEIKH RUSSEL SOCCER Hazaribagh reach final

SPORTS REPORTER

Goals by Shakib and Jummon steered Hazaribagh into the final of the Sheikh Russel Under-14 Football Tournament with a 2-0 win over Mirpur in the second semifinal at the Dhanmondi playground on Thursday.

Jummon was adjudged man-of-the-match for Hazaribagh, who will take on Shyampani in the October 3 final.

Wanderers to probe relegation

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Dhaka Wanderers Club formed a two-member inquiry committee to investigate why the one-time giants were relegated to First Division from the Premier League this year. The decision was taken at an executive committee meeting held on Tuesday.

The members of the committee are vice-president of the club Mohammad Mohon and hockey secretary Mohammad Kamrul Islam Kismat. The committee has been advised to submit their report within 14 days.

B'baria cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Surjo Tarun Cricket Club defeated Progoti Cricket Club by 18 runs in the Shaheed Freedom Fighter Rango Mia Cup Cricket Tournament at the Shahjadpur Junior High School playground here yesterday.

Surjo Tarun won the toss and they made 98 all out in 35 overs.

Rajon gave an all-round performance top-scoring with 51 and claiming three wickets. He was declared man-of-the-match.

In reply, Progoti were dismissed the 34th over still 18 runs short of their target.

Sourav rather

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case Ganguly opts out, the official said.

Ganguly, 33, has been at the centre of storm in recent weeks over a damaging rift with Indian coach Greg Chappell, who wanted the left-hander to stand down as captain because of his poor batting form.

India's cricket chiefs worked out a truce between the warring duo on Tuesday and asked them to mend their differences for the sake of the national team.

Ganguly, India's most successful Test captain with 21 wins, has scored 5,066 runs from 84 Tests and 10,123 runs in 279 one-dayers.

But a laboured six-hour century against a weakened Zimbabwe earlier this month was Ganguly's first international hundred since November, 2003.

India's cricket selectors, who named Ganguly captain only for the Zimbabwe tour, will pick the skipper for the one-day series against Sri Lanka after the Challenger tournament.

Dravid and swashbuckling opener Virender Sehwag are the only two Indians in the world teams for the Super Series which features three one-dayers in Melbourne from October 5-9 and a six-day Test in Sydney from October 14.

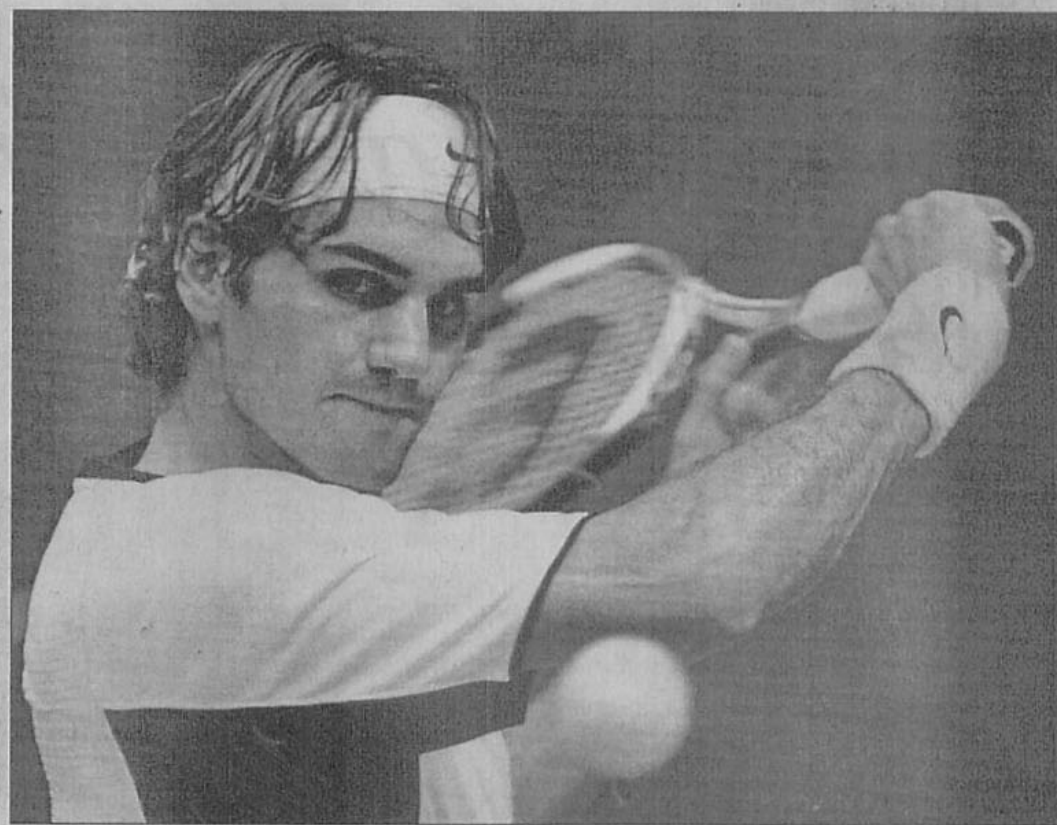
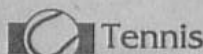


PHOTO: AFP

World number one Roger Federer hits a backhand return to Germany's Denis Gremelmayr during the Thailand Open in Bangkok on Thursday.

Federer sails through



REUTERS, Bangkok

Roger Federer recovered his poise on Thursday, beating Germany's Denis Gremelmayr 6-3, 6-2 to ease through to the quarterfinals of the Thailand Open.

The Swiss world number one has now won 74 matches this year, matching Spaniard Rafael Nadal, and looked far more comfortable than in his opening match.

Federer's frustration boiled over on Wednesday as he struggled to overcome Brazilian Marcos Daniel and he threw an uncharacteristic temper tantrum by slamming his racket to the ground.

"A different day, a different opponent. It changes everything," said the Wimbledon and US Open champion, who next faces Andy Roddick's US Open conqueror Gilles Muller.

The fluid strokes and aggressive shot-making were back in abundance against Gremelmayr, after Federer held off three break points

in the opening game and then broke the left-hander for 2-0.

But although he was never seriously threatened, Federer faced some tense moments as Gremelmayr settled and held a point to break back at 4-2.

Federer escaped when Gremelmayr netted a forehand, and after sealing the first set he broke to love to start the second.

Gremelmayr continued to challenge, hitting some blistering shots from the baseline, and Federer had to fight off three break points in the second game before breaking again to lead 4-1.

"I was in control and didn't have to push 100 per cent all the time," said Federer.

"But he didn't play too bad you know. I really had to play good tennis to come through."

Briton Andy Murray, meanwhile, realised his ambition of a place in the world top 100 by beating Swedish fifth seed Robin Soderling 7-6, 7-6.

The 18-year-old Scot, who was ranked 41th at the end of last sea-

son, demonstrated impressive speed around the court to reach his first ATP quarter-final.

"It's a pretty big deal for me, getting to the top 100 when I'm 18," he said.

"I said at the start of the year that's my goal. After the first couple of months a lot of people told me I should have kept quiet, but I'm pretty happy with myself now."

Murray dropped just three points in the first set tiebreak but Soderling broke to lead 4-3 in the second.

Murray reacted positively, forcing an error at the net to level at 4-4 before going on to take the second tiebreak 7-5.

"I wasn't feeling that great towards the end of the first set," said Murray. "But I took a timeout and got some medication from the doctor. I had a really sore head. I don't know why."

"I thought I played a pretty clever match. I used my slice pretty well and I didn't give him so much pace which I think he likes."

Murray's next opponent is third seed and US Open semifinalist Robby Ginepri.

Senior mates back Ponting



AFP, Sydney

Senior players Matthew Hayden and Shane Warne Thursday went into bat for criticised Australian skipper Ricky Ponting ahead of next week's one-day cricket series against a World XI.

Ponting has been largely blamed for Australia's 2-1 Ashes series loss to England earlier this month with influential past players Ian Chappell and Dennis Lillee calling for Shane Warne to replace him as captain.

"One billion per cent (backing Ponting). Ricky Ponting is a fantastic little leader," Hayden told reporters in Brisbane.

"To be quite honest I'm sick and tired of even thinking about even reading anything about it. It's just ridiculous."

"He's won a World Cup, (and) he's won series away from home in Sri Lanka and India."

Warne, who arrived home Thursday, said he also stood fully behind Ponting.

"He is his own man and he's

done a pretty good job," Warne said. "I'm sure he will become better and I'm sure we all will."

Amid calls that Warne was a better tactician than Ponting, Hayden said: "I don't think Shane Warne would be better."

"Four Tests and suddenly now you want change. I don't think so. I don't agree with that."

Warne said he agreed with Ponting that Australia had not lost its standing as the best team in the world because it had lost the Ashes Test series.

"There are two ways of looking at it, like a heavyweight title fight if Bangladesh beat Australia in a one-day game they'd be the best side in the world," Warne said.

"You can't really look at it like that. It's over a period of time in home and away games when you play against most countries, that's when you become the best in the world."

"You've got to, over a period of time, prove that. You can't just have one good series."

"I think everybody will acknowledge that we have been the best team for a long period of time. Hopefully, it's just a hiccup."

Hayden, who responded to pressure for his Test opening position by scoring 138 in the first innings of the fifth Test at The Oval, has been dropped for the three-match one-day series against the World XI, starting in Melbourne next week.

Hayden said he had been told by the national selectors they wanted to take a new approach for the 2007 World Cup in