

CCL sets off season

SPORTS REPORTER

The curtain of this year's domestic cricket goes up today with the launching of the Corporate Cricket League at three different venues.

But the one-day competition involving 12 corporate houses that replaced Damal Smriti as the season's opening competition three years ago will seek to salvage some credibility among the cricket fans as well as five new entrants.

Araf Apparel, winners of the first edition in 2003, will take on Epyllion at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium. Gazi Tank meet new face Banglat at the BKSP while Bangladesh Biman face another debutant Metro Real Estate at Fatullah Stadium in the opening day's fixture.

The good news for the fans is that the competition has been reverted to a 50-over-a-side contest after the experiment with the Twenty20 format last season which only appeared to satisfy the wishes of the Bangladesh Cricket Board.

After a mundane transfers last month, the lack of enthusiasm from established corporate houses left the event suffering some serious image

crisis and BCB vice-president and chairman of the CCL Shah Nurul Kabir Shahin was understandably disappointed.

"It is unfortunate that we are yet to give the tournament a real shape in three years. We will not mind if the number of participating teams is reduced. Our main target is to make it a quality tournament and a corporate house should commit itself for at least three to four years in future," said Shaheen at a press conference yesterday.

Shaheen, who was recently involved in a much publicised war of words with his general secretary Mahabubul Anam following the non-appearance of some corporate houses in the transfers, once again blamed the mismanagement on Mahbub.

"The tournament committee does not look into technical issues like the national pool. I think those who announced the national pool did not follow a standard which created dissatisfaction in the participating teams," he added.

The board had introduced the CCL in an effort to ensure permanent jobs for the players and Shaheen said that goal was being fulfilled.

"Maybe there are still areas we need to sort out but as far as I know a good number of players have already got job

in different corporate houses since the start of the CCL."

Ali Hossain, secretary of the CCL, informed that the board was expecting to make a profit of over Tk 12 lakhs from the competition.

He said that GrameenPhone had already paid Tk 25 lakh as title sponsors. Besides, the CCL received Tk 4 lakhs in entry and registration fees.

GrameenPhone, who took part in the first two editions of the competition, are not involved this time around.

"We fielded teams in the last two meets but this time we want to focus on sponsoring the event only. There was another reason. We wanted to encourage other corporate houses to come forward and play," said Kafil HS Muiyed, director of marketing of GrameenPhone.

Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Grameen-Phone Erik Aas also spoke on the occasion. Twelve teams split into two groups will take part in the first phase and then the two top finishers from each group will qualify for semifinals.

TEAMS
Group A: Araf, Gazi Tank, Epyllion, Isphani, Banglatcat and Security Air Express.

Group B: Biman, Beximco, Acme, Jamuna, Metro Real and Orion Group.



NOT INDOMITABLE, NOT SUPER: (L) Cameroon's Rigobert Song (C) cries at the end of the match against Egypt at Yaounde after the Indomitable Lions missed on qualification. (R) Nigeria's Christian Obodo is desolate following the Super Eagles' failure to book a World Cup ticket.



PHOTOS: AFP

Now comes PM

Gold Cup

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

After a gap of five years international football returns to the country in the shape of the Prime Minister Gold Cup. Formerly it was known as the Bangabandhu Gold Cup.

A total of eight foreign teams and four local clubs are expected to participate in the January 21-February 5 event to be staged at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. Club sides from Asian soccer powerhouses South Korea, Japan, Qatar and Syria are expected to join outfits from Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Sri Lanka or Nepal for the 12-team festival.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has allocated an estimated four-crore taka. Besides, the local governing body is almost ready to announce formation of an organising committee.

BFF president SA Sultan, general secretary Anwarul Hoque Helal,

deputy general secretary Manzoor Hossain Malu and other high-ups visited the State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman yesterday to discuss different issues about the proposed tournament.

"We have requested the sports minister to find an influential chairman for the organising committee because we require huge funds at our disposal to host a tournament of this magnitude. He has assured us of all-out support to make the event a success," Malu said on Sunday.

"As the tournament is named after the Prime Minister, we can't have any title sponsors. But instead we will go for co-sponsors however the organising committee will have to arrange the fund. We also discussed about increasing facilities for the VIP lounge, media and the pavilions and also improve ground condition."

It is likely that Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman will be requested to become chairman of the organising committee.

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New order in Africa



AFP, Yaounde

A hurricane of change swept through African football Saturday with Angola, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Togo reaching the World Cup finals for the first time.

Tunisia were the only established powerhouse to make it, coming from behind twice to draw 2-2 with Morocco, who had Aziz Ben Askar sent off 11 minutes from full-time in a fiery North African showdown.

Marouane Chamakh put Morocco ahead twice in the first half with Jose Clayton cancelling the first via a penalty kick and Talal al-Karkouri conceding an own goal midway through the second half of the top-of-the-table Group 5 clash.

Angola scored with 10 minutes left to win 1-0 in Rwanda and pip Nigeria, who crushed Zimbabwe 5-1 at home. The teams finished on 21 points each in Group 4, but the Angolans boasted a superior head-to-head record.

Ghana made it to the showcase of international football in style, winning 4-0 on the Cape Verde Islands while

closest Group 2 challengers Democratic Republic of Congo drew 2-2 in South Africa.

Cote d'Ivoire triumphed 3-1 in Sudan thanks to goals from Aruna Dindane (two) and Kanga Akale, but still needed a chunk of luck as Pierre Wome of Cameroon struck a post with a stoppage-time penalty against Egypt in a 1-1 draw.

Had the veteran scored, Cameroon would have won before a capacity 40,000 crowd in Yaounde, stayed top of Group 3, and gone to the World Cup quarter-finalists Senegal out in the cold.

Long-time Group 1 pacesetter Togo came from behind twice to win 3-2 in Congo and finish first in Group 1, leaving shock 2002 World Cup quarter-finalists Senegal out in the cold.

Another African giant not going to Germany next June is South Africa, who could manage only third place behind Ghana and DR Congo in Group 2 under English coach Stuart Baxter.

Qatar-based striker Fabrice 'Akwa' Maieco was the Angolan hero, heading a deep cross from substitute Ze Kalanga into the net as his anxious team-mates struggled to break down lively bottom-of-the-table Rwanda in Kigali.

It was a remarkable achievement

by an oil-rich southern Africa country slowly recovering from almost three decades of civil war and where basketball is the most popular sport.

Akwa enthused: 'I don't know what to say.'

"It's amazing to qualify for the first time and I don't know how to express my emotions. It's fantastic, not just because of my goal, but because we did great."

Obafemi Martins struck twice as Nigeria raised their goal tally to 10 from two qualifiers, but the 'Super Eagles' paid dearly for being held at home by Angola last June.

Ghana have finally made it to the World Cup after winning four African Nations Cup titles and producing greats like three-time African Footballer of the Year Abedi 'Pele' Ayew and Anthony Yeboah.

Chelsea midfielder Michael Essien is best known of the present squad, who were ahead within five minutes against Cape Verde, led 2-0 at half-time and sealed success with a couple of late goals in Praia.

Ze Pigita diverted a Sulley Muntari shot into his own net to give Ghana a dream start. Muntari got the second, and Asamoah and Gyan

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PHOTO: STAR

Shah Nurul Kabir Shahin (2nd from R), chairman of the GrameenPhone Corporate Cricket League tournament committee, addresses a press conference at the China-Bangladesh Friendship Conference Centre on Sunday. GrameenPhone CEO and Managing Director Erik Aas (2nd from L) was also present.



Sania Mirza

(India's tennis star)
"It's always good to have a crowd behind you. It certainly pumps you up. I'm sorry if I let them down, but I'll be back and hope to do better."

After losing in the Japan Open semifinals.

An Aussie whitewash



AFP, Melbourne

Brett Lee and Shane Watson decimated the World XI's elite batting line-up to power Australia to a 156-run victory and a Super Series one-day clean sweep at Docklands stadium here on Sunday.

Lee claimed 4-30 off nine overs and Watson 4-39 off 7.5 overs as the World XI capitulated for just 137 off 27.5 overs in the all-stars' worst batting performance of the three-match series.

Australia, with their ears ringing in condemnation after losing the Ashes to England last month, hit back in the best possible way, confirming their unchallenged status as the world's best ODI team.

The Australians, fuelled by their 293 for five off 50 overs with Michael Hussey, Ricky Ponting and Shane Watson all notching half-centuries, had the match well in their grasp inside 18 overs, reducing the World XI

to 99 for six. Lee put the skids under the World XI with three wickets in his first four overs to have them tottering at 27 for 4 in the seventh over, while Watson finished with man-of-the-match honours with four wickets and an unbeaten 66.

Lee sent Chris Gayle's off-stump crashing with the second ball of the innings before new-ball partner Glenn McGrath induced Sri Lankan Kumar Sangakkara to sky a catch to Damien Martyn at mid-off for 13 in the fourth over.

Lee was on a hat-trick after Jacques Kallis attempted to pull only to lob a catch to Hussey at square-leg for two.

He then sent Brian Lara on his way next ball with one that moved away off the pitch to find an edge for wicket-keeper Adam Gilchrist for a duck.

In three innings in the Super Series, Lara's scores were 0, 5, 0.

Andrew Flintoff, cleared by X-rays of a fractured wrist after attempting a difficult reflex caught and bowled chance from Ponting during the Australian innings, saw off the hat-trick.

England's Ashes hero batted for 21

off 25 balls with four fours before he was bowled going for a big swing at Watson, leaving the World XI punch-drunk at 87 for five in the 14th over.

Watson brought off a brilliant run out of Virender Sehwag (37) off his own bowling, swooping on his follow-through and diving full length to throw down the stumps one-handed with Sehwag well out of his ground. That left the world team sinking at 99 for six.

Lee struck again in his eighth over with Rahul Dravid failing to fully connect with an attempted pull, holing out to Martyn at mid-off for 16 off 38 balls.

Daniel Vettori went for a five-ball duck, skipper Shaun Pollock was out to Watson for eight and Shahid Afridi went down swinging for 16, giving Watson his fourth wicket.

Hussey and Watson earlier combined in an unfinished 145-run sixth-wicket partnership off 135 balls to take the Australians almost to the 300-mark.

Hussey further enhanced his blossoming reputation as a finisher at the end of Australia's innings,

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BCB HP squad suffer huge defeat

SPORTS REPORTER

Saqib Al Hasan and Shamsur Rahman scored half-centuries but it was not enough to stave off a massive 202-run defeat for Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) High Performance Squad against their Sri Lankan counterparts at Colts Cricket Club ground yesterday.

Resuming the fourth and final day on 196-6 the visitors were dismissed for 229 before lunch in pursuit of an improbable target of 432.

Opener Saqib top scored with 68 while Rahman added 65 and captain Mushfiqur Rahim 40 as the Bangladesh side improved in the second essay after being bundled out for 161 in the first innings.

New-ball bowler Gunasinghe did the damage claiming four for 14 in 7.4 overs while Siriwardene captured three wickets conceding 56 runs in 22 overs.

On Saturday, the home side, which made 344 in the first innings, took their overnight 53-4 to 248-7 declared, which gave them a handsome 431-run lead.

The second and final four-day game will start on October 12. The visiting side will then play three limited-overs games.

Polytan to lay new hockey turf

SPORTS REPORTER

German firm Polytan has won the bid to lay a new synthetic turf for the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

The evaluation committee of the National Sports Council on Sunday selected Polytan as the lowest bidder among five final contestants including Dutch and US companies. Originally, there were six bidders but one was disqualified.

"We have had several meetings and as per rules and regulations, we have recommended Polytan as the lowest bidder. Their bid was

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His captaincy at stake

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Indian cricket captain Sourav Ganguly may be forgiven for thinking fate is against him. Dogged by bad form and a spat with his coach, he now has to overcome injury before answering his critics.

Laid low with a tennis elbow, it will now be all the more difficult for him to save his captaincy as well as his place in the side, and the 33-year-old admits he has a battle on his hands.

"I just want to work harder and get fitter," he said.

"I am trying to get into shape for the Sri Lanka series" which starts on October 25, he said.

Ganguly has been dogged by form and fitness problems in recent months. He contributed just 48 in three home Tests against Pakistan early this year.

He scored a century against Zimbabwe in the opening Test at Bulawayo last month, but his pain-taking six-hour knock against the weakest attack in international cricket

did not satisfy all his critics.

Ganguly and coach Greg Chappell were involved in a public spat last month with the coach saying in a leaked e-mail to BCCI chiefs that the captain was unfit to lead the team.

Ganguly, the most successful India captain with 21 Test victories, is only the fourth batsman in one-day cricket to complete 10,000 runs after compatriot Sachin Tendulkar, Sri Lankan Sanath Jayasuriya and Pakistan's Inzamam-ul-Haq.

The left-hander was given a chance to regain form before the

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PHOTO: AFP

WORLD BEATERS! Australian skipper Ricky Ponting and his teammates pose with the Super Series trophy after completing a 3-0 sweep in the ODIs over the World XI at Melbourne on Sunday.



TEN Sports

FIFA WC Qualifiers

Bolivia vs Brazil

Repeat at 9:30 am

Argentina vs Peru

Repeat at 2:30 pm

ESPN

Sportscentre

Live at 8:30 pm



GP Corporate Cricket League

Araf Apparels vs Epyllion Group

Venue: DCS

Bangla Cat vs Gazi Tank Cricketers

Venue: BKSP

Metro Real Estate vs Biman

Venue: FCS