

HP Squad take 2-0 lead

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board's High Performance (HP) Squad took a 2-0 lead in the five-match one-day series against the visiting England Under-19 team with a four-wicket win at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday.

Number four batsman Mazharuddin smashed an unbeaten half-century as the home side reached 195-6 with seven overs to spare.

Mazhar, who came to the wicket with the score on 54-2 in reply to England U-19s 194 in 47.4 overs, carved 65 off 84 balls featuring seven fours and one six. Opener Golam Rahman's 26 was the second highest scorer for the local boys while Raqibul Hassan (17), Sirajullah Khadem (22), Farhad Reza (15), Nazimuddin (14) and skipper Mahmudullah Riyad (15 not out) were other notable contributors.

Andrew Miller was the pick of the English attack with 3-21 from seven overs. Aaron Shingler, Richard Jones and Moeen Ali took one wicket apiece.

England, vanquished by 28 runs in the first match, elected to bat but apart from Karl Brown, who hit a strokeful 89 off 105 balls, only three batsmen (Ben Wright (23), Hamilton Brown (12) and Chris Thompson (26) - reached double figures.

Brown was eventually dismissed by HP's most successful bowler Rezaul Islam, who captured 3-20 from very tight ten overs. Sirajullah, Shirhan Sharif and Sajidul Islam took one wicket each.

The two teams will meet at the BKSP, Savar in the third match on November 21.

BFF replaces Babu as U-20 manager

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has named former national striker Mohammed Mohsin as manager of the Under-20 national youth team on the recommendation of the National Team Management Committee (NTMC).

The decision was taken at the BFF's executive committee meeting on Thursday night. Mohsin replaces Amirul Islam Babu, who was earlier nominated by BFF president SA Sultan.

The Under-20s, coached by Hasanuzzaman Khan Babloo, will take on Iran in the away match of the Asian Youth Championship qualifiers on November 23. The second leg is due on November 27 in Dhaka.

The BFF also named ex-national midfielder Najir Ahmed Alok as manager of the U-17s which will host Sri Lanka in the first leg match of the Asian Youth Championship qualifiers on November 21. The away match is on November 25 in Colombo.

BFF member Azfaruddin Ahmed Sohrab, who was earlier named manager, will be the team leader.

The changes came after the NTMC emphasised on selecting only ex-footballers as managers of different national teams.

Meanwhile, Ashraffuddin Ahmed Chunnun and Sayeed Hassan Kanan have been retained as team leader and manager for the national football team for next month's SAFF Football Championship in Karachi, Pakistan.

Kumble fit for Lanka Tests

AFP, New Delhi

India's spin lynchpin Anil Kumble said on Thursday he was fully fit from a back injury and was confident of playing in next month's Test series against Sri Lanka.

Kumble, 35, who was left out of the home one-day series against Sri Lanka and South Africa, was confident he will take the field in the first Test against the Sri Lankans at Chennai starting December 2.

"I had a slight niggle in the back but I am fine now," said the 97-Test veteran whose 465 wickets make him the fifth most successful bowler in history.

The leg-spinner will play a first-class Ranji Trophy match here next week to prove his fitness before the selectors meet on November 28 to pick the squad for the first Test.

The Bangalore spinner said he looked forward to joining the 500-wicket club comprising Australians Shane Warne (634 wickets) and Glenn McGrath (529), Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan (568) and West Indian Courtney Walsh (519).

The third and final Test against Sri Lanka in Kanpur will be Kumble's 100th match. Only Sunil Gavaskar, Sachin Tendulkar, Kapil Dev and Dilip Vengsarkar have played more than 100 Tests for India.

Stage fit for kings



AP, London

With Spain and the Czech Republic squeezing through the qualifying playoffs Wednesday, there is a wealth of talent lining up to take soccer's biggest title from the defending World Cup champion.

Seven months before the tournament starts in Germany on June 9, Brazil are an 11-4 favourite to retain the title they won in 2002 in Japan, according to odds-maker William Hill. Argentina are next at 13-2, followed by England (7-1), Germany (8-1), Italy (9-1), the Netherlands (11-1) and France (12-1).

The United States are an 80-1 shot and Mexico 50-1. The two other nations from the region have even higher odds: Costa Rica at 500-1 and first-time qualifiers Trinidad and Tobago at 750-1.

With the 32-nation field complete, FIFA will sit down ahead of the December 9 draw in Leipzig to work out the seedings. The teams will be split into eight groups of four, with the top eight not having to play each other in the early stages.

So far, only hosts Germany and Brazil have been seeded. Under the formula used for the last two tournaments -- a mixture of a nation's current FIFA rankings and its finish at the previous three World Cups -- Spain, Mexico, Italy, Argentina, England and France also would be seeded.

FIFA's executive committee won't decide until just before the draw on the formula this time around.

"The seeded teams won't just be

dedicated on their FIFA ranking, but also on results obtained in the 1998 and 2002 World Cups," FIFA president Sepp Blatters said.

"With the selection procedures, I think the national teams of Holland and England have reason to be worried. Even Italy may not get a place."

The 2002 World Cup, which was co-hosted by Japan and South Korea, gave the competition a truly global appearance with teams from five confederations making it to the quarterfinals, where the United States lost to Germany 1-0.

With the competition back on European soil, the likelihood is that European and South Americans will dominate. Most of the Brazilian and Argentine stars play for European clubs and are used to facing Italian, Spanish, English, Dutch and French players.

Brazil have the most impressive strike force, with Ronaldo even unsure of a starting spot in Carlos Alberto Parreira's line-up. The coach can field Inter Milan's Adriano and Real Madrid's Robinho up front, with Barcelona's Ronaldinho and AC Milan's Kaka in support.

Argentina also have strength in depth at all positions. Among the Europeans, France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, England, Portugal, Czech Republic and Spain all have the talent to reach the semifinals. Sweden, Croatia, Serbia-Montenegro will be tough to beat, and Ukraine could be a surprise in its debut.

Some of the world's best forwards are headed to the tournament. Ukraine have AC Milan's Andriy Shevchenko, Argentina have Hernan Crespo and Carlos Tevez, England will field Wayne Rooney and Michael Owen, and France feature Thierry

Henry and David Trezeguet.

Italy can choose from at least five top strikers, including Christian Vieri and Alessandro Del Piero; the Netherlands has Ruud van Nistelrooy, Roy Makaay and Dirk Kuyt; and veteran Brian McBride will be chasing World Cup goals for the United States at age 33.

Sweden have Zlatan Ibrahimovich and Henrik Larsson, while the Ivory Coast -- one of four African nations making their debuts -- have Chelsea star Didier Drogba.

With Spain and the Czech Republic now in the field, Real Madrid's Raul Gonzalez and Milan Baros, top scorer at Euro 2004, also will be among the leading forwards.

Mexico, who have never advanced past the quarterfinals, returns for the 13th time. Costa Rica make their third appearance, and Trinidad and Tobago -- with former Manchester United star Dwight Yorke back in the lineup -- have reached their first World Cup.

South Korea reached the semifinals on home turf in 2002 and appear to be the strongest of the Asian teams. The others -- Japan, Iran and Saudi Arabia -- would do well to reach the second round.

Africa have five qualifiers -- Tunisia and newcomers Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo and Angola. Cameroon and Senegal made an impact in the past by reaching the quarterfinals, but that kind of African success seems out of reach this time.

Four respected Dutch coaches will be at the World Cup: Marco van Basten (Netherlands), Dick Advocaat (South Korea), Leo Beenhakker (Trinidad) and Guus Hiddink (Australia).

Ganguly ready for any role

PTI, Kolkata

Deposed Indian cricket skipper Sourav Ganguly on Thursday praised his successor Rahul Dravid and declared that he was prepared to play in any position and perform any role if taken back into the national squad.

"Rahul Dravid is doing a great job as captain," Ganguly told newsmen here after a practice session. Asked how he rated his chances of coming back to the squad in the near future, Ganguly said, "I am playing domestic cricket. I am laying stress on fitness. My past record is also there." Asked if he was eyeing the slot of an all-rounder to make a comeback to the squad, Ganguly said that he was prepared to fit into any role the team desired of him.

"I have taken 14/15 wickets in the Duleep Trophy. I also scored a hundred. I am willing to play at any position. I am prepared to perform any role that the team wants me to," Ganguly said.

Pakistan may drop Shabbir

REUTERS, Faisalabad

Paceman Shabbir Ahmed might not be selected for the second Test against England starting on Sunday.

Shabbir and off-spinner Shoaib Malik were reported for suspect bowling actions by the umpires after the first Test in Multan.

Captain Inzamamul Haq told reporters on Friday. "We have to see how it goes because it is not good for him (Shabbir) or the team to be reported again."

"We might decide not to play him. We don't want to risk damaging his career. He is already feeling the strain." Shabbir, 29, took five wickets in Pakistan's first Test win, twice getting out England's best player Marcus Trescothick who scored 193 and five in the match.

Mohammedan fan club formed

SPORTS REPORTER

Nizamuddin Ahmed has been named convener of a 37-member conveying committee of Mohammedan Fan Club (mFC).

The popular club has taken an attempt to organise its vast fans from different aspects of life.

The committee, which is expected to hold elections of the executive committee by June next year, included sportspersons, sports organisers, journalists, noted artists and members of showbiz.

Supporters of all ages interested to become a member of the fan club have been requested to collect forms from Mohammedan club tent in Motijheel from 3-8pm everyday.

Hs hammer

FROM PAGE 12

Hayden was facing Test oblivion after a mediocre Ashes campaign before he produced his fighting century at The Oval to gain a stay of execution. Since then he has not stopped amassing runs.

Ponting, who scored centuries in both innings of the Brisbane Test, is chasing his sixth hundred in his five Tests against the West Indies.

The Australians took full advantage of the West Indies' inept first innings 149 to close in on another big victory after thumping Shivnarine Chanderpaul's men by 379 runs in Brisbane last week.

Earlier, light rain prevented any play until 2:00 pm but an extended third session ensured Australia had enough time to pile on the misery for the out-gunned tourists.

Collymore was the best of the West Indian bowlers with 1-34 off 17 overs including eight maidens. Umpires said play will start one hour earlier on each of the scheduled remaining three days in a bid to make up for lost time.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the second Test between Australia and West Indies at Bellerive Oval on Friday:

WEST INDIES:	First Innings	149 (Gayle 56, Chanderpaul 39; McGrath 4-31, MacGill 3-18, Lee 3-32)		
AUSTRALIA:	First Innings (overnight 60-0)			
Hayden c Bravo b Collymore	110			
Hussey not out	116			
Ponting not out	17			
Extras: (lb-2, w-2, nb-9)	13			
Total: (For 1 wkt in 66 overs)	256			
Fall of wicket: 1-231				
To bat: Clarke, Hodge, Gilchrist, Symonds, Warne, Lee, McGrath, MacGill				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Edwards	15	2	73	0
Powell	14	1	67	0
Collymore	17	8	34	1
Bravo	13	1	63	0
Gayle	7	0	17	0

'Favourites at your peril'



AFP, Doha

Brazil should be wary of their status as World Cup favourites for next year and learn from the lessons of the past, legendary star Pele said here on Friday.

The defending champions coasted through to the finals in Germany and can boast an unrivalled galaxy of top players like Ronaldinho, Ronaldo, Adriano and Kaka.

But the country's greatest-ever player said that they still have to prove that they can fuse together as a team when it matters in Germany.

"We have good players and with nine months to go before the World Cup this is the best team," he said while on a visit to Qatar to attend the opening of the Aspire Academy sports complex.

"But just look what happened in 1982 (in Spain). Brazil was the best team, there is no doubt about that, but we did not win."

"And look at Holland with Cruyff, twice they should have won (in 1974 and 1978) but they did not."

Looking back on his own experiences, Pele said that Brazil's 1970 World Cup winning side, widely regarded as the best team ever, were able to play together regularly over the year preceding the final as many of the players, himself included, were domestically based.

The current side, he said are spread mainly throughout clubs in Europe

and because of club commitments it was harder to gather them together in the one place to work as a team.

"Brazil has a good team with great

individual players. There is no doubt about that," he said. "But it is not always the favourites with the best players that win."



Pele signs an official Brazil jersey during his visit to Qatar where he opened the Aspire football academy in Doha on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

PREVIEW: PREMIERSHIP

Mourinho raring to fire



AFP, London

Refreshed by a mini-break in the sunshine of his native Portugal, Jose Mourinho returns to the Premiership fray on Saturday determined to plunge his title rivals into mid-winter gloom.

The international break over the last two weeks denied Mourinho's Chelsea squad the opportunity to quickly purge back-to-back defeats at the hands of Real Betis and Manchester United from their system.

The defeat by United has been interpreted as being particularly significant as it ended a 40-match unbeaten run in the Premiership for the champions and, inevitably, sparked comparisons with Arsenal, whose campaign disintegrated last season after a similar reverse at Old Trafford.

If Mourinho is worried about such a turn of events, he was doing an impressive job of disguising it in the run-up to Saturday's visit of Newcastle to Stamford Bridge.

"I'm not a coach who cries - but one who tries to find solutions," he said.

"That's what I did after the defeat against Real Betis and I will do so again after losing to Manchester United last week."

"There is no shame in defeat because we were champions last season, we are league leaders at the moment and we will be champions again for the second

year running.

"I am with my players. I am not afraid of the future. The defeat at Manchester United was my 50th game in the English league and we had not lost for the last 40. But statistics mean nothing."

Newcastle travel to London on a high after four straight wins that have lifted them from the relegation zone into the top half of the table.

Michael Owen's goals have been instrumental to that rise and Chelsea will do well to contain the England striker, who carried on his rich vein of form with a late double against Argentina last weekend.

Owen will not however be accompanied by Alan Shearer. The Newcastle skipper has not recovered sufficiently from a hernia operation last week to be risked on Saturday.

Manchester United will seek to build on the win over Chelsea when they travel to Charlton.

Charlton have been buoyed by the recovery of Russian midfielder Alexei Smerdin from a groin strain, although the club may be unsettled by signs that manager Alan Curbishley could be preparing for a move to Scotland, where he is the favourite to succeed Alex McLeish as Rangers manager.

Curbishley has been at The Valley for a decade and a half and has never made any secret of his desire to move on, should the right challenge arise, and it was intriguing that he declined to totally rule out the possibility of a move north.

Second-placed Wigan's phenomenal start to the season gets put to the test when Arsenal visit the Premiership newcomers for a lunchtime encounter on Saturday.

The Gunners have shown signs of a revival of late and manager Arsene Wenger is determined to break the pattern of defeats for his side which followed international breaks in August (Chelsea), September (Middlesbrough) and October.

With both Ashley Cole and Gael Clichy sidelined by injuries, Wenger is set to deploy Pascal Cygan as a stand-in left-back.

Liverpool, who entertain Portsmouth at Anfield, are hoping to reap the benefits of Australia's qualification for the World Cup finals, which their winger Harry Kewell believes could represent a turning point in a career that was rapidly going nowhere at Anfield.

FIXTURES

Fixtures (1500 GMT unless stated)
Saturday: Wigan Athletic v Arsenal (1245 GMT), Charlton v Manchester Utd, Chelsea v Newcastle, Liverpool v Portsmouth, Manchester City v Blackburn, Sunderland v Aston Villa, West Brom v Everton (1715 GMT)
Sunday: Tottenham v West Ham (1300 GMT), Middlesbrough v Fulham (1600 GMT)
Monday: Birmingham v Bolton (2000 GMT)

Adieus United



AFP, Manchester

Roy Keane's glorious 12-year career at Manchester United came to an abrupt end on Friday when it was announced that the club captain was leaving with immediate effect.

In a statement, United said the move was designed to allow the Ireland international midfielder to sign a long-term deal with another club.

Scottish giants Celtic, the club he has supported since he was a boy, are seen as his most likely future employers.

A United statement said: "Manchester United has today reached agreement with Roy Keane for Roy to leave the Club with immediate effect."

"The agreement allows Roy to sign a long term deal with another club to enable him to secure his playing career beyond what would have been the end of his contract at United in the summer."

Although Keane had already declared his intention to leave Old Trafford at the end of this season, his sudden departure will nevertheless come as a shock to the United fans, among whom the fiercely-driven Irishman is an adored icon, synonymous with the most successful period in the club's history.

His exit will inevitably link to his recent outburst in an interview with the club's television channel, during which he reportedly savaged the performances of five of his team-mates.

United did not allow the interview to

be broadcast although it was subsequently shown to the players in a clear-the-air meeting with Keane.

On Friday however, everyone at the club was anxious to stress that the parting of the ways had been amical, with Keane's contribution set to be rewarded with a testimonial match.

Manager Alex Ferguson paid a glowing tribute to the player he has described as the best he has ever worked with.

"Roy Keane has been a fantastic servant for Manchester United," Ferguson said.

"The best midfielder player in the world of his generation, he is already one of the

Keane said: "It has been a great honour and privilege for me to play for Manchester United for over 12 years."

"During my time at the Club I have been fortunate to play alongside some of the best players in the game and in front of the best supporters in the world. At all times I have endeavoured to do my best for the management and the team."

"Whilst it is a sad day for me to leave such a great club and manager I believe that the time has now come for me to move on. After so many years, I will miss everyone at the Club."

"I send my best wishes for the future to the management, players, staff and supporters of the club."

Giles doubtful for ODI series

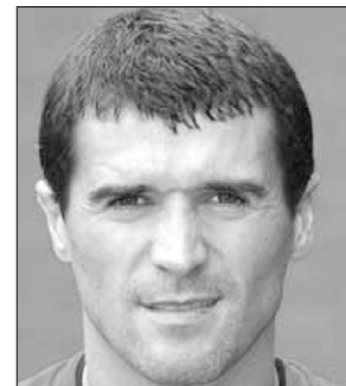
REUTERS, Faisalabad

England may send left arm spinner Ashley Giles home early after the three-Test series against Pakistan because he is struggling with a hip problem.

England coach Duncan Fletcher said Giles was not in doubt for the two remaining Tests but his condition was being monitored.

"There is a chance we might send him back early but if his problem is fine after the two Tests we will continue with him for the one-dayers," he said.

England play five one-day internationals from December 10 after the Test series.



ROY KEANE

great figures in our club's illustrious history. Roy has been central to the success of the club in the last 12 and a half years and everyone at Old Trafford wishes him well in the rest of his career and beyond."



Participants of the Olympic Day Run in the city on Friday.

PHOTO: STAR