

Best: Football's Van Gogh

REUTERS, London

George Best, one of the most talented footballers to grace the 'beautiful game', dazzled all too briefly before a painful descent into alcoholism.

Best, who died on Friday aged 59, possessed good looks, wonderful skill and an engaging personality. Dubbed 'football's Van Gogh', he was adored by millions in his prime during the 1960s.

"Georgie" was an integral part of the great Manchester United side which won the European Cup in 1968 and the Belfast-born forward, with his long hair and cheeky smile, epitomised Britain's Swinging Sixties.

On the field his talent lifted him to the level of Pele, Johan Cruyff and Diego Maradona. A wonderful ball player, Best could set games alight with a flash of flair and many fans consider him the most skilful player produced in Britain.

Off it, his life became a blur of beautiful women, fast cars and parties. Dubbed the "Fifth Beatle", Best was the first superstar footballer.

His failure to combine these two lifestyles successfully was a major factor in Best's early retirement from the game. By the age of 27 his love of football had all but dissolved.

He became increasingly disillusioned and distracted, walking out on United in 1972 and again, finally, in 1974.

A saga of retirements and comebacks at clubs in England and the United States followed for the Northern Ireland international, but he never came close to rediscovering the talent that made him European Footballer of the Year in 1968.

An alcoholic, Best was imprisoned for drink-driving in 1984 and in 2002 he needed a liver transplant.

He came close to being a laughing stock in his later years, when he was a television analyst, although he retained the ability to laugh at himself and his problems.

He was spotted playing in a Belfast youth side and when he was 15, Best crossed the Irish Sea to join Manchester United.

He returned, homesick, after only one night away and although he was persuaded back, many at the club doubted that the slight youngster, 1.60 metres tall and weighing only 49 kilos, would ever be strong enough for professional football.

Best filled out and became a first-team regular, appearing in England's

top division when he was 17 and within a year playing his first international for Northern Ireland.

Best's artistry was undeniable. His ball control and balance was bewitching and his frail appearance belied an ability to produce a strong tackle and a powerful shot.

While primarily a creator of chances, his goal tally of 136 in 361 league games for United demonstrated a deadly touch. He once scored six goals in an FA Cup tie against Northampton Town and was United's top scorer five seasons in succession.

Best, England's Bobby Charlton and Scotland's Denis Law -- perhaps the most talented combination in the history of English soccer -- took United to the top of the European game. Best's greatest moments came in European Cup campaigns.

He scored twice in a 5-1 quarterfinal defeat of Benfica at Lisbon's Stadium of Light in March 1966.

Two years later he scored a brilliant solo goal in United's 4-1 victory over Benfica in the final at Wembley which brought Europe's top club prize to

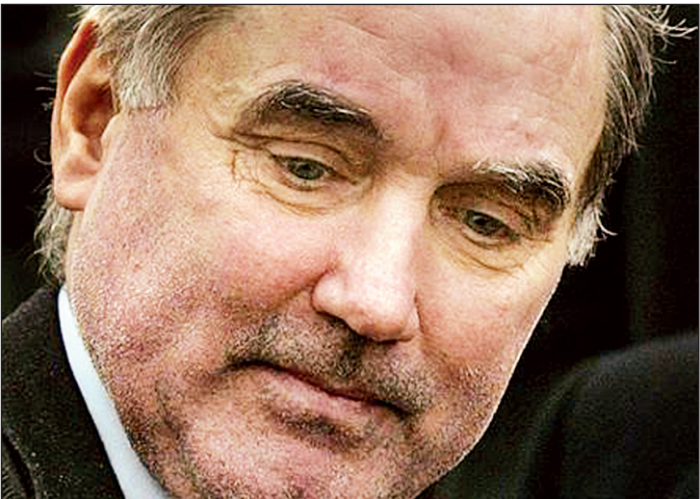
England for the first time.

At that moment Best ruled the soccer world -- he was receiving 10,000 fan letters a week and employed three fulltime staff to answer them. But things quickly began to unravel.

He was sent off for fighting in a

showcase match against South American champions Estudiantes of Argentina and the retirement of United manager Matt Busby unsettled him.

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GEORGE BEST



PHOTO: AFP

YOU WILL BE REMEMBERED: An unidentified fan adds a bunch of flowers to a makeshift floral tribute for George Best outside the Cromwell Hospital in London on Friday prior to hearing the news of the footballer's death.

Best of George

AGENCIES, London

Football legend George Best, who died aged 59 in a west London hospital on Friday, was well known for his quips and asides, especially on his party-going lifestyle.

Here are some of the former Manchester United and Northern Ireland winger's more memorable quotes:

"I spent a lot of my money on booze, birds (women) and fast cars -- the rest I just squandered."

"I was born with a great gift and sometimes with that comes a destructive streak," Best said.

"Just as I wanted to outdo everyone when I played, I had to outdo everyone when we were out on the town."

"They say I slept with seven Miss

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Tribute to the great

FACTBOX

REUTERS, London

Following is a factbox on George Best who died on Friday.

Born: May 22, 1946 Belfast, Northern Ireland

Playing career: 1963-1974 Manchester United (361 league appearances; 136 league goals); 1975 Stockport County, Los Angeles Aztecs, Cork Celtic; 1976 Fulham; 1978 Fort Lauderdale Strikers; 1979 Hibernian; 1980 San Jose Earthquakes; 1983-1984 Bournemouth.

Honours: European Cup (Manchester United 1968), League championship (Manchester United 1964-65, 1966-67), English Footballer of the Year (1968), European Footballer of the Year (1968) Northern Ireland: 37 c a p s

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Football

AFP, London

George Best's family made an emotional statement outside the hospital, read out by Best's sister Barbara McNarry, after the football legend died here yesterday.

"As you can imagine this is a very difficult time so you will understand if we are a bit emotional," she said.

"I would like to say on behalf of the family, a huge thank you to everyone who has supported George and us through this traumatic time."

The family thanked the medical staff who looked after Best throughout his illness.

NAT'L FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Army edge Kacharipara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A 64th minute strike by Mizanur Rahman enabled Bangladesh Army to a solitary goal victory over Jamalpur Kacharipara Sporting Club in the Nitol-Tata Fifth National Football League final round at the Khulna Stadium yesterday.

The first big match of the Khulna-leg will take place today when two powerhouses Mohammedan Sporting Club and Muktijoddha Sangsad lock horns at the same venue in the Group-B clash.

In the day's Group-A match, the first half failed to produce any outcome as both the sides played defensive football. Milon and Atiqul however were closed to break the deadlock in the session but Jamalpur custodian Zia foiled two Army attempts.

After the breather Army launched a series of attacks and Mizanur Rahman found the net to confirm three points. Mizanur dribbled past two defenders outside the box before unleashing a right-footer that was too hot to handle for Zia.

Earlier, Sony played a right-footer which narrowly missed the target in the early minutes of the second half.

The Jamalpur outfit, however, left the ground with some consolation as striker Jalaluddin was adjudged best player of the match.

HP dominate Eng U-19

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) High Performance Squad completed a whitewash of the England Under-19s team, when the home boys scored a six-wicket victory over the visitors in the fifth and final game at the Khulna Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Promising batsman Farhad Reza hit an unbeaten 56 as the HP Squad raced to 222 for 4 in 45.1 overs, in reply to the England Under-19s 219 for 9 in the fixed 48 overs.

The right-hander smashed six

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Tendulkar most capped

REUTERS, Kolkata

Indian batsman Sachin Tendulkar became the most capped one-day player on Friday after making his 357th appearance in the fourth game



SACHIN TENDULKAR

against South Africa at Eden Gardens.

Tendulkar surpassed former Pakistan all-rounder Wasim Akram. The 32-year-old Mumbai batsman has also scored the most one-day runs (13,877) and hundreds (38).

The following are the ten most-capped ODI players:

Sachin Tendulkar (India)	357
Wasim Akram (Pakistan)	356
Inzamamul Haq (Pakistan)	347
Sanath Jayasuriya (Sri Lanka)	345
M Azharuddin (India)	334
Steve Waugh (Australia)	325
Aravinda de Silva (Sri Lanka)	308
Saleem Malik (Pakistan)	283
Saurav Ganguly (India)	279
Rahul Dravid (India)	273

BD in AFC U-17 soccer finals

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh qualified for the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Under-17 Championship finals despite losing 1-0 to Sri Lanka in the return-leg match yesterday.

Bangladesh sealed their place in the final round, to be played in Singapore next year, with a 3-1 aggregate win after their 3-0 thrashing of Sri Lanka at home last Monday.

Bipul Vander separated the two sides in the second leg match at the Rugby and Football ground in Colombo with a 75-minute goal.

Bangladesh will return home tomorrow.

Lara poised for record



REUTERS, Adelaide

West Indian batsman Brian Lara silenced his critics with an unbeaten double-century in the third and final Test against Australia on Friday.

Lara made 202 not out, to help his struggling team end the first day at the Adelaide Oval on 352 for seven. He needs just 12 more runs to pass Allan Border's world record of 11,174 for the most Test runs.

The 36-year-old left-hander, who had been under fire after a string of moderate scores in the two previous Tests, with critics claiming his best days were behind him, responded in magnificent fashion.

Speaking at a news conference, Lara said "I've been working hard all series without much success, but I was still feeling good. I was making starts and getting to double figures but just not going on it with it, but I knew it was just around the corner."

Lara, who made the first of his 31 test hundreds against Australia in

Sydney in 1993 with a memorable 277, said he had targeted the final Test in Adelaide as his chance for another huge score.

He began Friday's innings cautiously as a mark of respect to the Australian bowling attack of Shane Warne, Glenn McGrath, Brett Lee and Stuart MacGill but exploded after lunch to end the day with 20 boundaries to his credit.

"We're not going to be playing Test cricket for three months so I was really looking forward to this particular test match," Lara said.

"I know I'm playing against a world class so I had to build a foundation. I know that they're capable of getting me out but there comes a time when you have to pick the momentum up and dictate to them."

"You give them their hour but once you know the pace and the bounce of the pitch and what the bowlers have got to offer, you have to go out there and not be intimidated."

MacGill, who captured the wickets of Dwayne Bravo and Dwayne Smith, said it was difficult to bowl to Lara

when he was in that sort of mood.

"It was a bit of a challenge for all the bowlers today," MacGill said. "Most of us knew this was just around the corner so I'm not going to say that it was a surprise because it certainly wasn't."

"You're definitely tempted to try and contain someone of that class and in that form but I think can be a mistake. You still have to attack and be looking for a wicket."

West Indies finished the day with their highest score of the series but Lara was still wary about his team's prospects.

"Five years ago we were in the same situation and we lost the match quite comfortably, so I'm quite aware of exactly what we've got to do tomorrow," Lara said.

MacGill said he also believed the match was in the balance, but could hinge on how many more runs Lara made.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the opening day of

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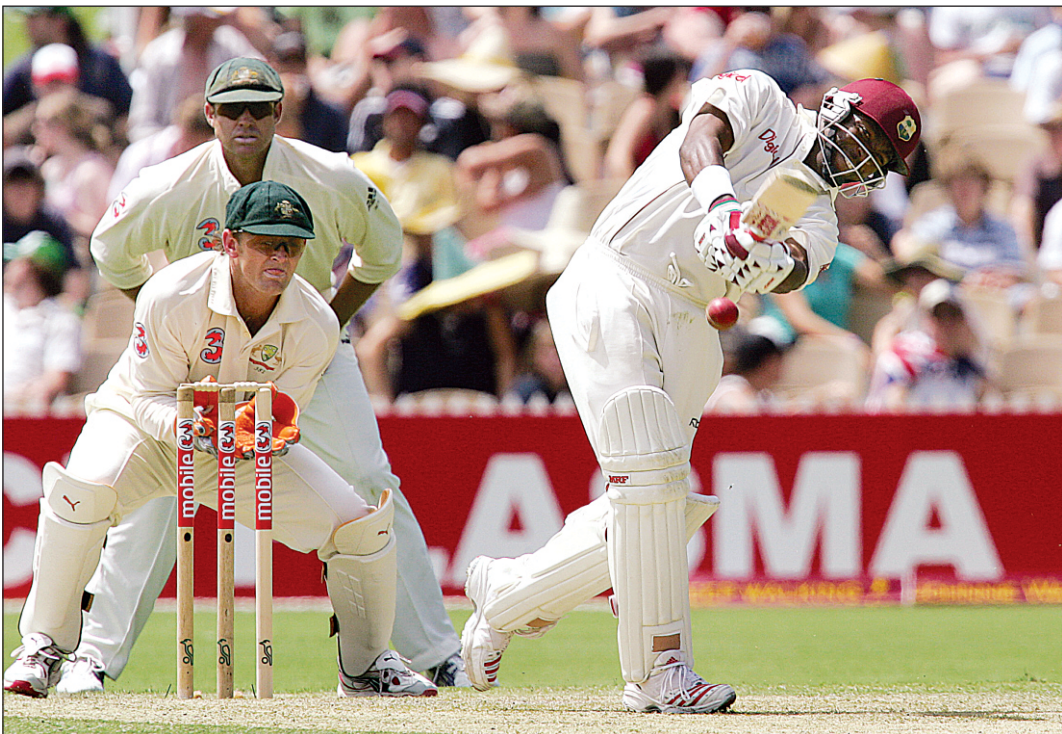


PHOTO: AFP

THE KING IS BACK: West Indies' Brian Lara drives the ball on way to a double century as Australian wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist (M) and Matthew Hayden (L) watch on the first day of the third Test in Adelaide on Friday.

NCL 2nd round begins today



SPORTS REPORTER

The visitors will desperately try to turn fortune in their favour when the second round of the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea Seventh National Cricket League begins today, at three different venues across the country.

All the host sides -- Dhaka, Chittagong and Rajshahi -- had double delights in the first round as they bagged six full points by outright wins in the opening four-day fixtures, after winning their respective one-day matches.

They are bound to enjoy a home advantage again in the second round. Star-studded Dhaka led by ace batsman Mohammad Ashraful will entertain his national teammate Shahrir Nafees-led Barisal at the Dhamondi Cricket Stadium.

The national captain and vice-captain will also lock horns at the

Rajshahi Divisional Stadium when Habibul Bashar's Khulna travel to Rajshahi to play against his deputy, while Chittagong will host Sylhet at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

Meanwhile the six divisional team captains are keen to stop playing in the country's lone first-class competition after this round, so as to allow them the opportunity to prepare together for their respective clubs for the upcoming Premier Division Cricket League.

"As per the schedule, the National League will take a break after the third round. That means we will get only a day's break before the Premier League, as it is scheduled to start on December 9. It will be a really difficult task for some cricketers, which is why we have decided to request the board to stop the national league after the second round," said Bashar.

Dhaka captain Mohammad Ashraful also echoed this sentiment. "It is too hectic a timetable and we are not familiar with these kinds of schedules," said Ashraful.

BD U-19s end on high note

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh outplayed South Africa by eight wickets, to finish their campaign in the Afro-Asian Under-19 cricket tournament with a high note at Vishakhapatnam yesterday.

After two consecutive defeats against India and Sri Lanka, the Bangladeshi boys bounced back with a nine-wicket victory against Zimbabwe, following which, they pulled off an exciting one-wicket win over Pakistan.

The Bangladeshi spin trio of Sohrawardi Shuvo, Mehrab Hossain Jr and Nabil Samad laid the foundation for a massive victory as South Africa were sent into bat first by captain Mushfiqur Rahim, and bundled out the South Africans for 92 in 34.3 overs.

Shuvo, who has enhanced the game with a brilliant all-round performance in the competition, claimed three wickets, conceding only six runs in his 5.3 over spell. Mehrab captured three for 7 in 7 overs and Nabil took two for 13 in 6 overs.

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What to WATCH

ESPN

English Premier Football League

Man City vs Liverpool

Live at 8:55 pm

Portsmouth vs Chelsea

Live at 11:10 pm

STAR Sports

Australia vs West Indies

Third Test, Day Two

Live at 6:30 am

English Premier Football League

Arsenal vs Blackburn Rovers

Live at 8:55 pm

SuperSport-3

Primera Liga

Valencia vs Celta

Live at 1:45 am (Sunday)

DAY'S EVENT

Nat'l Cricket League (One-Day)
Dhaka Vs Barisal
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium
Rajshahi vs Khulna
Venue: Rajshahi Div Stadium
Chittagong vs Sylhet
Venue: Chittagong Div Stadium

Proteas rule Eden



SPORTS REPORTER

South Africa took a 2-1 lead in the five-match series when they routed India by ten wickets at Eden Gardens in Kolkata in the fourth match yesterday.

Skipper Graeme Smith smashed an unbeaten 134 off 124 balls -- the highest individual ODI score at this venue -- as the visitors stormed to 189 without loss in 35.5 overs in reply to India's paltry 188. Andrew Hall was 48 not out.

Reuters adds: Earlier, South Africa paceman Shaun Pollock provided three early blows to help bowl out India cheaply. He struck in the first over when opener Irfan Pathan played a wide ball onto his stumps for nought.

Sachin Tendulkar failed on his world record 357th one-day appearance, scoring just two runs from 15 deliveries before edging behind a Pollock delivery which straightened after pitching.

The all-rounder grabbed three for 25 on a mildly seam-friendly pitch to vindicate captain Graeme Smith's decision to bowl first.

Pollock also forced opener Gautam Gambhir (11) to edge to slip a pitched-up delivery, which seamed away late.

Virendra Sehwag hit a fluent 30 with six fours, the last of which was a flick over midwicket against Hall. However, the bowler struck the next ball when the

attacking batsman edged a wide ball to wicket-keeper Mark Boucher.

India, reeling at 71 for five at one stage, made a mild recovery but pace-man Andrew Hall struck twice in one over, to end the innings with 4.1 overs left.

He finished with three for 36.

Yuvraj Singh hit seven fours during his top-score of 53, his 20th one-day



POLLOCK... 3 for 25

fifty. He lent some respectability to the total by adding 81 runs for the sixth wicket with Mohammed Kaif, who scored 46.

Off-spinner Johan Botha trapped the left-hander leg before with a straight delivery in the 36th over, to dash Indian hopes of a big score.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of India innings in the fourth one-day international against South Africa at the Eden Gardens on Friday:

INDIA				
Gambhir c Smith b Pollock	11			
Pathan b Pollock	0			
Tendulkar c Boucher b Pollock	2			
Sehwag c Boucher b Hall	30			
Dravid b Langeveldt	6			
Yuvraj lbw b Botha	53			
Kaif c Smith b Nel	46			
Dhoni c Botha b Hall	14			
Agarkar b Kallis	11			
Harbhajan lbw b Hall	0			
Rudranot out	1			
Extras: (lb-5, w-8, nb-1)	14			
Total: (All out in 45.5 overs)	188			
Fall of wkts: 1-2, 2-14, 3-23, 4-49, 5-71, 6-152, 7-167, 8-187, 9-187.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Pollock	10	4	25	3
Nel	10	1	35	1
Hall	6.5	0	36	3
Langeveldt	8	1	33	1
Kallis	4	0	20	1
Botha	5	0	21	1
Morkel	2	0	13	0