



Did U Know?

During the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, the procession of athletes is always led by the Greek team, followed by all the other teams in alphabetical order (in the language of the hosting country), except for the last team which is always the team of the hosting country.



Brian Lara

(West Indies batting superstar)
"I would love to get past Don Bradman. He got 12 double centuries, I have eight."
While revealing his only remaining goal left in Test cricket.



DD Sports

India v Sri Lanka
First Test, Day One
Live at 10:00 am

TEN Sports

Pakistan v England
Third Test, Day Four
Live at 11:00 am

ESPN

Sportscenter India
Live at 8:30 pm
New Zealand v Australia
First ODI
Live at 7:00 am (Saturday)

STAR Sports

Sportscenter Update
Live at 9:00 pm and 10:30 pm



Tri-nation U-19 Cricket
Sri Lanka vs England
Venue: Fatulla Stadium (9:00am)
Nitol-Tata National Football League
Bangladesh Army vs Khulna Town Club
Venue: Rangpur Stadium (3:00pm)

Baaz might spoil Test

AFP, Chennai

A severe cyclonic storm building in the Bay of Bengal has threatened to curtail the first cricket Test between India and Sri Lanka here from Friday.

Cyclone Baaz is expected to hit the southeastern coast of India later on Thursday amidst fears of heavy rain in this cricket-mad metropolis already reeling under bad weather over the past month.

"Everything is possible. The storm may weaken or it may acquire greater intensity," said local Met official S Sridharan. "I am afraid the cricket will be affected."

India expect Sehwag to be fit

REUTERS, Chennai

India are hopeful that opening batsman Virender Sehwag will recover from a shoulder strain and play in the first Test against Sri Lanka starting on Friday.

"He has a slight strain in his left shoulder, we hope it is nothing serious," skipper Rahul Dravid told reporters on Thursday.

Sehwag has not batted in the nets the last two days.

Mukti win in 2nd half

MUKTIJODDHA-3, FENI SC-0



SPORTS REPORTER

Muktijoddha Sangsad crushed Feni Soccer Club 3-0 for their first victory in the Nitol-Tata Fifth National Football League yesterday.

After a barren first half at the Rangpur Stadium, the title contenders from Dhaka finally opened up the rival defence with goals from Jeremiah, Amin Rana and Tanvir to secure three points.

Muktijoddha appeared in their second Group-A tie after a 0-0 draw with Mohammedan Sporting Club in Khulna, where the Feni outfit suffered 5-1 thrashing by Abahani.

Soccer Club, who dominated the early part of their Khulna-fixture, also made a fine start but Ritu fired his 20-yard drive just wide of the bar after five minutes. The boys from Feni threatened to score again in the 11th minute but fullback Juku's close-range shot was parried by Reds goalkeeper Titu.

Muktijoddha reasserted soon and Moroccan recruit Rachid Bisahi squandered two chances inside one minute halfway through the first half. Nigerian striker Jeremiah also came close but his efforts missed the mark shortly before the break.

Muktijoddha, trained by former national coach George Kottan, unfolded their real strength after the break with a series of raids. Rachid set up Jeremiah to break the deadlock in the 50th minute with a fine throughpass.

Feni hit back with Juku and Kabir both forcing superb saves by rival custodian Titu in the next ten minutes.

However, the worries were over for Kottan's men when Amin Rana utilised a 70-minute freekick by Rachid to double the lead. The Muktis survived more scares before left-winger Tanvir, a guest player from Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra, made it 3-0 four minutes from time after receiving a pass from Nigerian midfielder Odafa.

Feni captain Jahangir Alam was adjudged man-of-the-match.

Muktijoddha skipper Moni was satisfied after their day's performance.

"We missed a lot of chances against Mohammedan and the players were under pressure to produce early goals. I think we have improved than our first game," said Moni, who has returned to competitive football after a long lay off due to injury, which kept him out of the national squad.

Bangladesh Army will take on Khulna Town Club in today's match.

Yellow cards: Jeremiah (Muktijoddha) and Pradeep Barua (Feni Soccer Club).

TEAMS

MUKTIJODDHA: Titu, Ghansah, Arman (Saiful), Deen Mohammed, Enamul, Odafa, Rachid, Amin Rana (Rony), Tanvir, Jeremiah and Moni.

FENI SOCCER CLUB: Piru, Ramjan, Mostafizur, Pradeep, Jahangir, Jhontu, Kabir, Juku, Hanif (Nazmul), Shakil and Yusuf.

Referee: Abdul Hannan.

FIFA okays 2nd 'Goal Project'

SPORTS REPORTER

FIFA has officially approved the second 'Goal Project' for Bangladesh, said Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president SA Sultan yesterday.

Returning from the development committee meeting of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) in Kuala Lumpur, Sultan also said that FIFA president Sepp Blatter's official letter has also arrived at the federation.

"We got the news in Kuala Lumpur. They have allotted four lakh dollars for the purpose," said Sultan.

BFF submitted a 5.1-lakh-dollar budget for a training academy in Gazipur. The football governing body of the country built its own building, the BFF Bhaban, under the first 'Goal Project'. The BFF had to spend an additional one lakh dollars beside the allotted four lakh from world's football governing body for the Bhaban.

"We have also appealed to the AFC to increase its monthly aid for us to meet the demand of a foreign coach. We have also sought help from them to introduce professional league in Bangladesh," said Sultan.

"It now looks sure that we can not launch a professional league in January due to lack of infrastructure. So we cannot go according to the suggestions of Vision Bangladesh. The AFC accepted that we would need some time to implement all the recommendations of Vision Bangladesh."

U-19 CRICKET TOURNEY

Sri Lanka meet England today

SPORTS REPORTER

A high-flying Sri Lanka will open their campaign in the tri-nation under-19 one-day cricket tournament against England today.

The second match of the competition will be held at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

Sri Lanka join the tournament after finishing runners-up in the recently concluded Afro-Asian U-19 cricket in India. A battered England on the other hand will seek a vastly improved performance after six straight defeats in Bangladesh including a five-wicket thrashing by the hosts in the opening match at BKSP on Wednesday. The English youth suffered five defeats in the warm-up series against Bangladesh High Performance Squad.

Div I cricket

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Young Pegasus, Gazi Tank and Surjo Torun won their respective matches in the First Division Cricket League on Thursday.

Pegasus defeated their B side by 51 runs at BKSP. In reply to the seniors' 192-9, Pegasus B were bundled out for 141 in 45.1 overs.

At the Dhaka University ground, Gazi Tank beat Azad SC by seven wickets. Gazi Tank reached the target losing only three wickets after bowling out Azad for 139 in 39.4 overs.

Surjo Torun handed Uttara SC a 32-run defeat at the City Club ground. Uttara managed to score 211 before being all out in 48 overs while chasing Surjo Torun's 243 all out.

Ganguly a question mark

First Indo-Lanka Test begins today



AFP, Chennai

India go into Friday's first Test against Sri Lanka here unsettled by the return of former captain Sourav Ganguly, who was thrust on a reluctant team management by the selectors.

Ganguly, axed as captain and dropped from the one-day side, was recalled in the 15-man squad for the first Test as an "all-rounder" after failing to find a place among the seven specialist batting slots.

Two top-order batsmen, probably the in-form Yuvraj Singh and Mohammad Kaif, will be omitted to accommodate Ganguly at number six behind openers Virender Sehwag and Gautam Gambhir, skipper Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar and Venkatsai Laxman.

If either Yuvraj or Kaif is played as the seventh batsman ahead of wicketkeeper Mahendra Dhoni, India will be forced to include just three regular bowlers on the traditionally spin-friendly Chennai wicket.

Left-hander Ganguly, who has scored 5,066 runs in 84 Tests with 12 centuries, has never been regarded as a genuine all-rounder after claiming just 25 wickets at an embarrassing average of 52.47.

All three pro-Ganguly selectors - Pranob Roy, Gopal Sharma and Yashpal Sharma - were on Tuesday sacked from the five-man panel after political heavyweight Sharad Pawar wrested control of the cricket board from Jagmohan Dalmiya.

With coach Greg Chappell and chief selector Kiran More having opposed Ganguly's return, it will not be known till Friday morning if the former skipper finds a place in the XI.

"It's a tough call, but we will look at the conditions and the wicket before taking a decision," said More.

Chappell, whose public spat with Ganguly rocked Indian cricket in

September, was unusually coy when asked at a press conference if the left-hander's inclusion would benefit the team.

"If he is in the team," Chappell stressed, "Sourav's experience will be very useful and important to the team."

"But gentlemen, you will have to wait till Friday to know what we have planned. Don't expect us to leak out secrets."

India, who won eight of the 11 home one-day internationals

against Sri Lanka and South Africa over the past month, need to quickly adjust to the five-day game to translate that success into the Test arena.

"Our last one-dayer was on Monday but that is part and parcel of international cricket these days," skipper Dravid said. "Professional cricketers are expected to make a quick change."

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NOT EVEN IN TALKING TERMS? Former Indian captain Sourav Ganguly (L) walks past coach Greg Chappell during a practice session at the Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Thursday.

Taibu for City Club



SPORTS REPORTER

Former Zimbabwe cricket captain Tatenda Taibu will play for City Club in the Premier Cricket League which starts in Dhaka on December 19.

Last year's runners-up City Club's president Reazuddin Al Mamun confirmed yesterday that he had had talks with Taibu about his services.

"I have talked with him and made sure that he would be available for the entire league," Mamun told reporters.

"We have already recruited Pakistani cricketer Yasir Arafat, but when we learned that the all-rounder won't be available in December for commitment in a Bank League in Pakistan, we were looking for an alternative. After hearing that Taibu was free, I contacted him over phone," said Mamun, who resigned as BCB joint-secretary last month.

AFP adds from London: Tatenda Taibu, who resigned the national captaincy last week in protest at the alleged mal-administration of Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) chairman

Peter Chingoka and managing director Ozias Bvute, is due to leave Zimbabwe on Sunday for Dhaka to resume his cricketing career.

The 22-year-old wicketkeeper also told that he would return to international cricket provided certain changes were made.

"It would not take long if the right people are put in place, because some players who left are willing to come back if Bvute and Chingoka leave. I would be glad to come back and play."

Taibu has called for the removal of Bvute and Chingoka "because they are trying to bring in people like Themba Mliswa (the man who allegedly made threats against Taibu) and Tavengwa Mukuhani (another of their supporters) onto the board, and we all understand that they are wrong for Zimbabwe Cricket."

Taibu added he was proud of the stand taken by teammates in speaking out against the current administration, while hinting that substantial changes could be on the way.

He stressed that without change the future was bleak for cricket in Zimbabwe.

know that it will die.

"That effectively means we won't be able to field a team in the West Indies (Zimbabwe's next scheduled tour is to the Caribbean in May)."

But despite his commitments in Bangladesh, Taibu said he'd no intention of following other former players into permanent exile.

"I love my country and the only time I will leave is when I am going to play cricket," he said.

Taibu who is little under five feet and arguably Zimbabwe cricket's most successful black player, became international cricket's youngest captain at 20 in April last year after he was thrust into the captaincy following a race row that led to the axing of former skipper Heath Streak.

Recently sacked Zimbabwe national coach Phil Simmons, the former West Indies batsman, and a friend of Taibu's has arranged for the keeper to go to England next year to play club cricket.

Taibu has played 24 Tests for Zimbabwe, scoring 1,273 runs at an average of 29.6 with 52 dismissals, and 84 one-day internationals, making 1,410 runs at 25.17.



ENGLAND TORMENTORS: Pakistan wicketkeeper-batsman Kamran Akmal (R) acknowledges the crowd's applause upon reaching his hundred while Mohammad Yousuf, batting on 183, appreciates his efforts on the third day of the final Test against England in Lahore on Thursday.

Yousuf & Akmal's day



AFP, Lahore

Mohammad Yousuf and Kamran Akmal slammed impressive centuries Thursday in a record partnership for Pakistan as the hosts tightened the screws on England in the third and final Test in Lahore.

Yousuf scored an unbeaten 183 and Akmal a career-best 115 not out to help Pakistan to a massive 446-5 in their first innings at stumps on the third day in reply to England's modest 288.

The pair added 199 for the unfinished sixth wicket, a Pakistan record in Tests against England. The previous highest was 145 between Mushaq Mohammad and Intikhab Alam at Hyderabad in 1972-73.

With Pakistan leading by 158 runs and only two days remaining in the match, England are in danger of losing their first-ever Test series in two-and-a-half years under Michael Vaughan's captaincy.

Pakistan lead 1-0 following their 22-run win in the opening Test at Multan. The second match ended in a draw.

It was a demoralising day for Ashes-winning England who could take just one wicket, that of night-watchman Shoaib Akhtar.

Yousuf, 31, played a big role in putting his team in a commanding position as in-form skipper Inzamam-ul-Haq had retired hurt on Wednesday after being struck on the right wrist by a rising ball from paceman Steve Harmison.

The middle-order batsman has so far smashed 21 fours and a six in his

335-ball knock on his home ground. Wicketkeeper Akmal, whose previous best was 109 against India at Mohali early this year, has so far struck 10 fours in his second Test century in 18 matches.

England failed to break the Yousuf-Akmal stand even after taking the second new ball after 80 overs at 267-5.

Instead, Akmal greeted fast bowler Matthew Hoggard with two fours and Yousuf meted out the same treatment to Harmison at the other end.

The Pakistani wicketkeeper, also playing on his home ground, hit paceman Liam Plunkett for his ninth boundary to reach his century off 178 balls.

Akmal said he was under pressure to score big in this match.

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Fletcher afraid of defeat



AFP, Lahore

England cricket coach Duncan Fletcher conceded Thursday his Ashes-winning team was in danger of losing the Test series on "a mentally tough tour of Pakistan."

"It's mentally a tough tour as most of the time we are stuck in our hotels and it has got to the players a little bit," Fletcher said after England conceded a big lead on the third day of the third and final Test here.

"But at the end of the day we have to come here if we want to progress in our rankings."

England are currently ranked

second behind Australia in the ICC (International Cricket Council) Test rankings.

Pakistan posted a massive 446-5 in their first innings at stumps in reply to England's 288. They are now 158 runs ahead with five wickets in hand.

The hosts are leading 1-0 in the series following their 22-run win in the first Test at Multan. The second match ended in a draw at Faisalabad.

"We had a difficult day today and realistically we can't win it (the match). Now we just have to make sure to go out and get stuck in and bat out whatever time is left for us," Fletcher said.

"We didn't knuckle down and

show the patience that was required in the first Test and then lost the toss in the second. From there on we realised we are not firing on all cylinders."

Fletcher said his team had squandered the advantage on the first day itself after winning the toss on a good batting pitch.

"They (Marcus Trescothick and Michael Vaughan) gave us a fantastic start in the first two hours when the ball swung a lot. We should have taken the advantage and posted 450-500," said the England coach.

England were 101 without loss before being bowled out for a modest 288 in the first innings.



IS YOUR TEAM THERE? German youths have their faces painted with the national flags of different countries, who will be taking part in the 2006 World Cup, assemble in Berlin during a press briefing of the artist team on Thursday. The artists will perform during a gala opening ceremony on June 7, two days before the start of the World Cup.

PHOTO: AFP