

Biman take the lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Biman took solo lead in the Dutch-Bangla Bank First Division Chess League when they blanked Destiny 2000 4-0 in the sixth round at the federation hall room yesterday.

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman, GM Dibyendu Barua, IM Abdullah Al-Rakib, Mehdi Hasan Parag won their respective boards for the national flag carrier team against FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed, FM Taibur Rahman, Mohammad Javed and Minzuddin Ahmed Sagar.

Biman raised their tally to 21.5 points.

Muktijoddha Sangsad slipped to the second position with 20 points despite a 3-1 victory over holders Leonine Chess Club in this round. Leonine remained on third position securing 18.5 points.

In the day's other matches, BJMC beat Shahid Mufti Kashed Daba Dal 3-1, Sonali Bank beat Dolphin Chess Club 3-1, Narayanjang CCC beat Anushillan DKC 3.5-0.5, Farashganj beat Mohakkhali PS 3.5-0.5, Friends CP beat Faith CC 2.5-1.5 and Titus drew with Dhaka University Chess Team 2-2.

Aussie rain bids Lara farewell

AFP, Canberra

West Indies superstar Brian Lara's final appearance in Australia was washed out Friday when a massive storm forced the abandonment of the tourists' match against the Prime Minister's XI in Canberra.

Lara was 13 not out when torrential rain hit Manuka Oval.

The match is expected to be the last on Australian soil for Lara, who last week passed former Australian captain Allan Border's all time Test run scoring record.

The tourists were three wickets down for 174 runs in the 32nd in reply to the Prime Minister's XI innings of 316-4 when rain stopped play in the one-day match.

The PM's XI won the match by six runs under the Duckworth-Lewis system.

It was likely to be Lara's last appearance with a West Indies touring party. The Australians won the Test series 3-0.

Ramaresh Sarwan made 90 for the visitors before being caught on the deep midwicket boundary off Chris Simpson, while Dwayne Bravo remained 54 not out.

West Australian batsman Adam Voges was the top scorer for the PM's XI with 90, while South Australian Callum Ferguson made 70 not out.

Test opener and team captain Justin Langer provided a late innings cameo, blasting 37 runs after coming to the crease with just four and a half overs to go.

MSC-Abahani

FROM PAGE 12 national clearance arrived last night. They will join fellow countrymen Emeka and Peter Odaf.

Captain Shafiqul Islam Manik has taken charge just before the National League and said that despite missing seven booters, he is confident of a win.

"There is always extra pressure in Abahani-Mohammedan matches but I hope the players would be able to cope with it. We have a competitive side," said Manik, who was sacked by Muktijoddha in the middle of the Premier League.

Bond scare for Kiwis

NZ-Australia 1st ODI today

Cricket

AFP, Auckland

New Zealand's hopes of scoring an upset win over Australia in their opening one-day cricket international here Saturday have dimmed with fast bowler Shane Bond likely to be ruled out with injury.

Bond strained his right hamstring during fielding drills on Friday and has also been shaking off the effects of a stomach bug which caused him to miss training the day before. Pace bowler Chris Martin is on standby.

"Because of the doubt over Shane, we are not in a position to determine the final 12 at this time," team manager Lindsay Crocker said.

Bond has battled stress fractures of the back over more than two years but appeared to be getting back into good form after a frustrating series in South Africa. He took 6-23 against the Australians in the 2003 World Cup and is New Zealand's only genuine fast bowler.

While Australia remain secure at the top of the world one-day rankings, New Zealand have slipped to seventh place following their 4-0 drubbing at the hands of South Africa in October and November.

The Kiwis are firm underdogs for the three-match Chappell-Hadlee series but see the absence of Glenn McGrath from Australia's new look bowling attack as a hopeful sign.

Following the Ashes series loss to England earlier in the year, Australia have restored its normal confidence after completing this week a 3-0 Test clean sweep over the West Indies.

The absence of New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming, who is recovering from the removal of a benign tumour from his jaw, has forced some changes at the top of the New Zealand batting order.

Lou Vincent will step in to open the batting with Nathan Astle, a position Vincent has occupied before with mixed results. Hamish Marshall, who was out of touch in the South African one-day series, is likely to bat at three.

Stand-in captain Daniel Vettori says it is essential the misfiring top order batsmen rediscover their scoring form.

"We've put the emphasis back on the top five or six to put 80 percent of the runs up and hopefully that can get us winning targets," Vettori said.

"Bowling and fielding we were reasonably happy with but if we can get some productivity out of our top order, I think we're a reasonable chance of winning these games."

Australia confirmed their team, with 30-year-old batsman Brad Hodge to make his debut.

Australia also have a new look bowling attack headed by Brett Lee.

Australian captain Ricky Ponting said Lee was poised to cause the same damage to New Zealand's top order as he did in Australia's 5-0 series win here in February, when he broke the 160 kilometre per hour barrier in one of the matches.

"He bowled very, very fast over here last time and bowled very well," Ponting said.

"He made it extremely difficult for their top order. I think these conditions here this time, the ball will probably swing around, which Brett can do at good pace.

The Australian attack includes Stuart Clark who has played just one international and their super sub will be leg spinner Cameron White who has played in three internationals.

TEAMS

New Zealand (from): Daniel Vettori (captain), Nathan Astle, Lou Vincent, Hamish Marshall, James Marshall, Scott Styris, Craig McMillan, Chris Cairns, Jacob Oram, Brendon McCullum, Kyle Mills, James Franklin, Shane Bond, Chris Martin.

Australia: Ricky Ponting (captain), Adam Gilchrist, Simon Katich, Brad Hodge, Andrew Symonds, Michael Clarke, Michael Hussey, Brad Hogg, Brett Lee, Stuart Clark, Nathan Bracken. Super sub: Cameron White.

SERIE A

Juve face Toni test

Football

AFP, Rome

Florentina's lethal striker Luca Toni has been playing down his team's chances of sustaining their excellent form ahead of Sunday's clash at home to Serie A leaders Juventus.

Only seven points separate the two sides but the league's top scorer believes Florentina still have a long way to go before they can be considered genuine title contenders.

"Juventus, AC Milan and Inter Milan are on another level from us," said the 28-year-old Italy international who scored his 16th goal of the season in last Sunday's 1-1 draw at Roma.

"Even Roma, when they find their feet, have more quality in depth. For us it would be a dream to finish in fourth place."

Florentina coach Cesare Prandelli has been equally cautious about his team's lofty league position.

"We should enjoy it, but we must also remember where we've come from," said the 49-year-old former Juventus player.

"The club survived relegation on the final day last season, so we will celebrate when we reach 45 points."

Juventus' striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic has given the reigning champions a welcome boost ahead of Sunday's clash by pledging his loyalty to the club for whom he signed from Ajax last summer.

"After Juve, there's no-one else," said the 24-year-old Swedish striker.

"For me, they are the ultimate and I would like to stay here forever." Ibrahimovic has only scored three goals in Serie A, but Juventus coach Fabio Capello believes the giant Swede has been fundamental to the Turin club's grip on first place.

"He has been decisive for us even when he hasn't been scoring," he said.

Florentina fans have been jumping through hoops to try and buy tickets for the visit of the title-holders with a capacity crowd of 47,000 expected at the Artemio Franchi stadium.

Second-placed AC Milan, who are five points behind Juventus, play away to Chievo on Saturday.

Carlo Ancelotti remains confident his team can close the gap on Juventus.

"Juventus have set a fast pace, but we too are going strong," he said.

"We have more quality than them and that convinces me we can catch them."



Luca Toni

E Bengal coach handcuffed

PTI, Kolkata

East Bengal coach Subhas Bhowmik was arrested on Friday by CBI (anti-corruption branch) sleuths from near a city club allegedly for accepting bribe from a businessman, CBI sources said.

A renowned forward of the Indian soccer team, Bhowmik, who works with the anti-evasion department of Central Excise, was caught red-handed while taking the bribe of Rs 1.50 lakh by the CBI sleuths who laid a trap on a tip-off.

The famed former forward of the Indian soccer team was caught red-handed while accepting the bribe from the businessman who earlier lodged a complaint with the CBI that Bhowmik had demanded the money for favouring him in connection with raid conducted on him (the businessman) on November 30, sources said.

Sources said Bhowmik demanded a sum of Rs four lakh as bribe from the businessman which was finally settled at Rs 1.50 lakh.

CBI officials said Bhowmik slapped an officer of the investigating agency while being taken into custody.

The accused was immediately whisked into CBI custody for interrogation, sources said, adding that he would be produced in Court tomorrow.

According to the sources, CBI teams had been sent to conduct raids at Bhowmik's three residences at Alipore, Belur and Bolpur.

DIV I CRICKET Ruben show in vain

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite Tareq Ahmed Ruben's unbeaten 158, Partex Sporting Club suffered a four-wicket defeat to Rupali Bank in the First Division Cricket League at the City Club ground yesterday.

The Bankers thrived on three half centuries by Sumon (86), Kamrul (79) and Alamgir (52) to stage a brilliant run-chase as they raced to 299-6 in 49.1 overs in reply to 297-5 in 50 overs.

Ruben smashed 13 boundaries and eight sixes in his 131-ball innings.

In the day's other matches, Kathalbagan GCC (167-10) defeated Dhanmondi Club (141-10) by 26 runs at BKSP and Lalmita Club (231-6) beat Eskaton SS (192-10) by 39 runs at the Dhaka University ground.

UEFA CUP Holders CSKA in trouble

AFP, Undated

Defending UEFA Cup champions CSKA Moscow slumped to a 1-0 defeat at Dinamo Bucharest on Thursday to leave their hopes of making it through to the next round hanging in the balance.

The defeat left the Russian side in fourth spot in Group F with four points having completed their schedule.

With only three teams going through to the next knockout round, CSKA will now have to hope that French side Marseille beat the Romanians in the final round of matches next week.

Vlad Munteanu scored the only goal of the game midway through the second half on Thursday after Ianis Zicu had struck a shot back off the crossbar.

It was Dinamo's first win in the group and the winning margin could have been greater had George Galamaz, Adrian Cristea and Zicu all not spurred early chances.

Daniel Carvalho wasted the Russians' best opportunity just before Munteanu struck for the home side.

Kaneria 4 1 13 0

Toss: England

Umpires: Darrell Hair (AUS) and Rudi Koertzen (RSA)

TV umpire: Zameer Haider (PAK)

Match referee: Roshan Mahanama (SRI)

Milestones

FROM PAGE 12 against England with earlier scores of 53, 72, 109 and 100 not out.

Inzamam was disappointed at missing out on a third hundred of the series but said the mix-up with Rana Naved that led to his run-out was part of the game.

"We were looking for quick runs and there was a misunderstanding and it is not the first time it has happened to me," he said.

Inzamam said he was happy that his side, 1-0 up and with a huge first innings lead, would be dictating terms to England on the final day of the series.

"Before the series started a lot of people didn't believe we could beat England owing to the Ashes series hype," he said. "But we were always quietly confident we could do it as we had played two good series ourselves."

Inzamam admitted that bowling out England a second time on the Lahore pitch would not be easy as there was nothing in it for the spinners.

"We got a total of 636 on it so you can imagine how good it is for batting," he said.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hoggard	23	4	106	2
Flintoff	36	8	111	1
Harrison	43	3	154	1
Plunkett	28.2	1	125	2
Udal	18	1	92	1
Collingwood	6	0	22	0
Bell	2	0	9	0
ENGLAND: Second innings				
Trescothick l/bw b Akhtar			0	
Vaughan c and b Akhtar			13	
Bell not out			60	
Collingwood not out			37	
Extras: (b-5, lb-2, nb-3, w-1)			11	
Total: (For two wickets in 36 overs)			121	
Fall of wks: 1-0, 2-12, 3-68, 4-180, 5-247, 6-516, 7-546, 8-636.				

PREMIERSHIP

Old Trafford prepared for last bow to Best

Football

AFP, London

George Best will get a standing ovation from the Old Trafford crowd for one last time on Saturday when Manchester United take on Portsmouth, hours after the former United great is laid to rest in his native Belfast.

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson and Portsmouth chairman Milan Mandaric, a personal friend of Best's, will both arrive at the early evening match after flying back from the funeral in Northern Ireland, where up to half a million people are expected to turn out in honour of the province's greatest ever player.

Having held a sombre one-minute silence before their League Cup win over West Brom in mid-week, United hope to cultivate a more celebratory atmosphere at Saturday's game, which will be preceded by a minute's applause.

"It is going to be a great occasion," Ferguson predicted. "The fans are going to applaud and I do not think anyone will have heard applause like it anywhere in the world."

United's last two performances, a convincing win over Charlton last weekend and the midweek stroll against West Brom, have been encouraging for Ferguson.

And the Scot will be hoping to get Saturday's encounter wrapped up equally efficiently to ensure he can spare some of his key performers a full 90 minutes with Wednesday's make-or-break Champions League away match against Benfica at the forefront of his thinking.

Still managerless after being rebuffed by Neil Warnock this week, Pompey will do well to avoid defeat

and Mandaric will be painfully aware that whoever eventually takes over is likely to be inheriting a side marooned in the relegation zone.

Liverpool's win over Sunderland in midweek has given the top of the Premiership table a familiar look, with only Chelsea, United and Arsenal now above Rafael Benitez's side, who will be looking for a sixth straight win at home to near neighbours Wigan.

Chelsea however continue to enjoy a significant margin for error in the form of the ten-point gap that cushions them from nearest rivals United, albeit having played a game more.

Middlesbrough are the visitors to Stamford Bridge on Saturday and Steve McClaren's side will be hoping they continue to benefit from Mark Viduka's rejuvenation in the wake of Australia's qualification for the World Cup finals.

The Aussie striker slammed in a spectacular 25-metre shot and then made the winner as Boro overcame Crystal Palace in midweek, intensifying the competition for places at a club that also has former Chelsea striker Jimmy-Floyd Hasselbaink and Nigerian Aiyegbeni Yakubu to call upon.

"Mark's finish on Wednesday was no surprise to anyone here because he does that kind of thing every day in training," said McClaren's assistant, Steve Round. "He has always had that hunger and drive but this is undoubtedly a big year for him because he's going to the World Cup."

"You are always striving for competition for places and we have got three strikers at the moment who are providing exactly that kind of competition."

Arsenal face a testing trip to Bolton on Saturday with Arsene Wenger's side anxious to retain their recent momentum in the build-up to

their meeting with Chelsea at Highbury on December 17.

Belarus midfielder Alexander Hleb is nearing full fitness again but is unlikely to be thrown into the mix at the Reebok stadium. Youngsters Robin van Persie and Jose Antonio Reyes both found the net in a mid-week 3-0 win over Reading, giving Wenger a dilemma over whether to restore Dennis Bergkamp to the starting line-up alongside Thierry Henry.

Everton, seeking to build on Sunday's win over Newcastle, will be without suspended Australian midfielder Tim Cahill for the short trip to Blackburn while the meeting of Newcastle and Aston Villa at St James' Park will be a high-stakes affair for both managers.

Villa's David O'Leary is currently the favourite to be the next Premiership boss to be sacked. Should his side win on Saturday however he could easily be replaced at the head of that particular race by Graeme Souness.

FIXTURES

From the English premier league

Saturday

Liverpool v Wigan Athletic (12.45 GMT), Blackburn v Everton, Bolton v Arsenal, Chelsea v Middlesbrough, Newcastle v Aston Villa, Tottenham v Sunderland, West Brom v Fulham, Man Utd v Portsmouth (17.15 GMT)

Sunday

Charlton v Manchester City (16.00 GMT)

PRIMERA LIGA

Barca no scare for Villarreal

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

The paths of the two form teams in Spain, Barcelona and Villarreal, cross for the first time this season at the Madrigal on Sunday.

A 10-match unbeaten run, which included a 3-0 drubbing of Real Madrid, has taken the Catalans to the top of the table while Villarreal are five points behind in third spot after going nine games without losing.

Both made a sluggish start to the season, Villarreal not managing a victory until their fifth outing and Barca winning just two of their first five games. They hit form in October, however.

With their devastating attacking trio of Ronaldinho, Samuel Eto'o and Lionel Messi, Barca have fired in 20 goals in a dazzling six-game winning streak.

Meanwhile a well-oiled Villarreal, marshalled by the ice-cool Juan Roman Riquelme, have been using their patient passing game to put their opponents to the sword with brutal efficiency.

Although Barca have heavily outscored Villarreal, Manuel Pellegrini's side have had to make do without last season's leading scorer

Diego Forlan for the last month because of a hamstring injury.

Forlan returned to training on Wednesday, but Pellegrini is unlikely to risk him before next week's decisive Champions League match against Lille.

Barca will be taking nothing for granted, though, as the last time they visited Villarreal they were dealt a shattering 3-0 defeat with their former player Riquelme running the show at the Madrigal.

Villarreal striker Luciano Figueroa, who is likely to start in place of Forlan up front, is hoping the team can cash in on its present form.

"We aren't scared of anyone at the moment," said the Argentine. "The club is going through a great period. We're on a run, we're playing well and we want to take advantage to beat Barcelona."

Barca's arch-rivals Real Madrid, who scrambled a 2-2 draw at Real Sociedad last week thanks to two last-gasp strikes from Raul Bravo and Zinedine Zidane, entertain neighbours Getafe at the Bernabeu on Saturday.

With the contract renewals of goalkeeper Iker Casillas and defender Ivan Helguera taking some of the attention away from their recent poor performances, Real will be looking to pull rank on

their modest opponents from the south of the city.

Ronaldo should reappear after missing out last week because of a recurrence of an ankle injury, but Zidane is a doubt once again after suffering a minor groin strain in training.

Getafe, who are coached by former Real Madrid player Bernd Schuster and contain a host of players from the Real youth-team ranks, are hoping to avenge their undervalued 2-0 defeat at the Bernabeu last season.

Second-place Osasuna, who are level on points with Barcelona at the top of the table, face a tricky trip to Malaga on Sunday.

FIXTURES

Primera Liga Fixtures

Saturday

Celta Vigo v Real Betis, Real Madrid v Getafe, Athletic Bilbao v Atletico Madrid

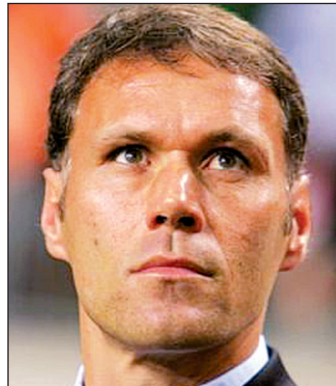
Sunday

Alaves v Mallorca, Cadiz v Real Zaragoza, Espanyol v Valencia, Racing Santander v Real Sociedad, Malaga v Osasuna, Villarreal v Barcelona, Sevilla v Deportivo La Coruna



Did U Know?

India registered their 18th win in 50 ODIs against South Africa. India have lost 30 and the remaining two could not produce results.



Marco van Basten

(Dutch football legend) "He deserves this Ballon d'or. He animates the game and people love watching him when he's playing." On Ronaldinho.

Three new faces

FROM PAGE 12

gone through ultrasonogram to confirm his injury is not serious.

"It would have been better if we could give him a week's rest for full cure but with the tournament nearing, it's not possible. The captain is very important," assistant coach Nipu said.

There were good news too as Rajani, who captained Bangladesh to the SAFF Championship triumph at home three years ago, has returned to his best and will partner Sujan in the central defence.

"Sujan is the best defender we have and Rajani has put behind his mental problems to return to form," added Nipu.

"Hassan Al Mamun and Titu are our first-choice fullbacks and we have kept Parvez Babu as their backup. He was chosen ahead of Wali because of his experience. Titu can play at both sides so we think we are covered in this area," Nipu said adding that Titu and Hassan have both recovered from minor injuries.

"Overall, the team's fitness level is satisfactory. They are gradually improving and it was proved after beating Abahani 3-2 after falling two goals behind (in the exhibition match). We just made the delay to declare the team to be certain about every one's condition."

After spending a day's break on Friday, the team will resume training today at BKSP. They will have their final training session at the

Bangabandhu National Stadium on December 5.

Holders Bangladesh, pitted against Bhutan, Nepal and India in Group-A, leave Dhaka on December 6. They will begin their campaign against underdogs Bhutan on December 8.

First day

FROM PAGE 13 Cyclone Baaz, which is building in the Bay of Bengal, was expected to hit the southeastern coast of India within the next 24 hours amid fears of more rain in this cricket-mad city.

"You can't predict when the match will start till the rain stops," umpire Harper said. "It does not look too good at the moment, does it?"

Chennai has already seen its last three international matches fall by the wayside due to bad weather.

India's one-day internationals against New Zealand in 200