



PHOTO: STAR

WILL YOU TAKE ME IN? Bangladesh booters stretch while a tiny tot sitting in the middle looks on during their practice session at the KMC ground in Karachi on Sunday.

SAFF CHAMPIONSHIP Afghans leave on high note

SPORTS REPORTER from Karachi

Hosts Pakistan and last year's runners-up Maldives produced the first draw of the Fourth SAFF Championship when they failed to break the deadlock in their last Group A match here yesterday.

The two semifinalists finished level on seven points but the goalless draw at the floodlit People's Sports Complex Stadium saw Maldives emerge group champions with a superior goal difference.

Meanwhile, the Afghan booters will return home holding their heads high after registering their first ever victory in the regional competition earlier in the day.

Afghanistan, who made their SAFF debut in Dhaka in 2003, were humiliated 9-1 by Maldives in their opening match but shocked Sri Lanka 2-1 in their last group encounter to bow out on a winning note.

Hafizullah Qadami fired the ball into the roof of the net from the SEE PAGE 13 COL 1

Leonine keep crown

SPORTS REPORTER

Leonine Chess Club retained the Dutch-Bangla Bank First Division League title with unbeaten note when they won their last board against Sonali Bank 4-0 at the federation hall room yesterday.

With the 15th round victory, Leonine completed their tally with 53.5 points. Leonine won their first league title in 1997.

Country's first Grand Master Niaz Mureshed along with Indian GM RB Ramesh, GM Uldachev Saidali of Uzbekistan led the Leonine victory.

Bangladesh Biman and Muktiyoddha Sangsad became SEE PAGE 13 COL 1

Stakes not high in today's Bangladesh-India clash

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Karachi



Having already confirmed semifinal berths in the SAFF Championship, Bangladesh and India go into their Group B decider today without any pressure to win.

On top of group with better goal difference, Bangladesh need a draw to emerge group champions. But position in the group would not matter much because they will have to face either in-form Maldives or hosts Pakistan in the semifinal.

Both the Group A teams are considered tough opponents and Bangladesh coach Diego Cruciani was more eager about watching yesterday's match between Pakistan and Maldives to have an idea about their opponents in the last four.

"The four best teams have reached the semis. So whoever we play are dangerous," Cruciani told on the eve of the Bangladesh-India game.

And it looked certain that with five Bangladeshi players already being

cautioned, the Argentine coach would field most of his reserves against India to avoid any suspension in the semis.

"I need to see the Pakistan-Maldives match and I will wait till

tomorrow to announce the eleven. Yes, there would be changes in the team but I guarantee that tomorrow we will not relax," said Cruciani, who took Team Bangladesh for a

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DATE	SCORELINE	EVENT	VENUE
14.12.1978	Bang 0: India 3	Asian Games	Bangkok
21.11.1982	Bang 0: India 2	Asian Games	India
30.3.1985	Bang 1: India 2	WC qualifier	Dhaka
12.4.1985	Bang 1: India 2	WC qualifier	Kolkata
25.12.1985	Bang 1: India 1	SAF Games final	Dhaka
	(Bd lost 4-1 on penalties)		
6.2.1988	Bang 1: India 1	SAF Games	UAE
23.10.1989	Bang 1: India 1	SAF Games	Islamabad
26.12.1991	Bang 2: India 1	SAF Games	Colombo
12.9.1994	Bang 2: India 4	Independence Cup	Qatar
31.3.1995	Bang 0: India 0	Saarc Gold Cup	Colombo
	(Bd lost 4-2 on penalties)		
27.12.1995	Bang 0: India 1	SAF Games final	Madras
7.9.1997	Bang 0: India 3	SAFF Championship	Kathmandu
22.4.1999	Bang 0: India 0	SAFF Championship	Goa
1.5.1999	Bang 0: India 2	SAFF Championship final	Goa
2.10.1999	Bang 1: India 0	SAF Games	Kathmandu
29.11.1999	Bang 2: India 2	SAF Games	UAE
2.5.2000	Bang 1: India 1	Jubilee Cup	Male
29.7.2000	Bang 0: India 1	Friendly	London
18.1.2003	Bang 2: India 1	SAFF Championship	Dhaka
	(after extra time)		

Delhi in Murali, Kumble spin



AFP, New Delhi

Anil Kumble led India's fightback with four quick wickets after Sri Lanka's fellow spinner Muttiah Muralitharan had demolished the hosts with a seven-wicket haul in the second Test here on Sunday.

Sri Lanka were strongly placed at 175-2 in their first innings in reply to India's modest 290 before floundering against leg-spinner Kumble to finish the second day on 198-6.

India had looked set to post a big total when they resumed on 245-3 but collapsed dramatically against

veteran off-spinner Muralitharan, who claimed five of the seven wickets to finish with 7-100.

The home side lost their last seven wickets for 36 runs as Muralitharan completed his 48th haul of five or more wickets in a Test innings.

"I think what is going to be crucial on this pitch is who will be batting fourth. That way I think we have the disadvantage and Kumble also has a chance to bag more wickets than me," Muralitharan said.

"We will try to take the lead or at least get close to India's total. If we can manage that it will be fine, but I don't think a lead of 20 or 25 runs to either team will mean much."

Sri Lanka then got a dose of their own medicine when Kumble (4-54)

shattered their hopes of a healthy lead with four wickets in seven overs.

The visitors looked in control as skipper Marvan Atapattu (88) and Mahela Jayawardene (60) batted comfortably against both pace and spin to add 113 for the third wicket.

The experienced Indian spinner broke the stand in the closing session when he trapped well-set Jayawardene leg-before and then accounted for Thilan Samaraweera and Tillakaratne Dilshan off successive deliveries.

Jayawardene, who scored a solid 71 in the rain-hit drawn first Test at Chennai, batted fluently during his 103-ball knock before SEE PAGE 13 COL 2



PHOTO: AFP

SEVEN-STAR MURALI: Sri Lankan master spinner Muttiah Muralitharan celebrates the dismissal of Sachin Tendulkar (not in picture) on the second day of the second Test against India at the Ferozeshah Kotla ground in New Delhi on Sunday.

Referee being too harsh!

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Karachi

Five bookings in a match for a team that had committed very little fouls is really harsh.

Five key Bangladeshi players were shown yellow cards by Yemeni referee Al Yurimi Mukhtar during Saturday's SAFF Championship match against Nepal, but many felt the man in charge was over cautious, if not over reacted.

Striker Farhad received the first booking for showing discontent over a decision against him but the referee's red eyes followed Aminul, Titu and Kanchan who were booked for delaying in the field.

Goalkeeper Aminul was seconds late to take a goalkick, fullback Titu was waiting to find a teammate to throw the ball in while forward Kanchan, just after scoring his second goal of the match, was walking to the lines to be substituted when the card was flashed.

Central defender Rajani was the only one among the lot to be cautioned for a tackle late in the match.

"I don't like to speak against referees but I think he was showing too much sensibility about some yellow cards. Titu or Aminul did not deserve cards. May be Kanchan was a bit slow during his return but Farhad was also wrongly cautioned. Some referees think differently and I am more interested to think about our performance," commented Bangladesh's Argentine coach Diego Cruciani.

"We wanted to lodge an official complaint but later decided against it. I smell something foul and may be, people want to weaken our strength ahead of the semifinals," added manager Sayeed Hasan Khan.

"Nepal played rough but we were clean. And I am not happy the way we received five yellow cards. We should be more careful in our next game against India," said Bangladesh captain Arif Khan Joy.

U-19 CRICKET MEET Hosts' winning streak snapped

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's morale suffered a setback going into tomorrow's tri-nation under-19 cricket tournament final as Sri Lanka handed them a 14-run defeat in the last league match at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

The defeat also snapped Bangladesh's five-match winning streak in the competition as the hosts won all three matches against a hapless England and two against the islanders.

The final will be held at the BKSP in Savar.

Left-handed opener Tamim Iqbal continued his fiery form with a 45-ball 55 and Sakib Al Hasan contributed a strokeful 77 off just 76 balls, but it was not enough for the home side to topple their opponents' total of 240.

Bangladesh lost their last four wickets for only 39 runs to be bundled out for 226 in 46.5 overs. Pushpakumara caused the main damage claiming four wickets for 39.

Tamim smashed eight fours and a six while Sakib his seven boundaries. Sirajullah Khadem was the other notable scorer with 32 off 54 balls.

Earlier, Sri Lanka put up the challenging total for the loss of 8 SEE PAGE 13 COL 5

Set to see many firsts Premier Division League from today



SPORTS REPORTER

The Premier Division Cricket League will see a lot of firsts when the most colourful domestic competition involving twelve Dhaka clubs kicks off today.

The championship for the first time will be held all over the country instead of being staged at some selected venues of the capital. The League will also see colour clothing and white ball in lieu of a traditional white dress and a red ball. Recently introduced power play in international one-day matches and super-sub will also be effective in the 50-overs-a-side contest.

Unfortunately, the other first in this year's tournament is that the Premier League will commence without a sponsor. But for cricket lovers who like to see a title sponsor's name before the Premier Division Cricket League they can this time call it the 'CCDM Premier Division Cricket League'.

But apart from the sponsorship debacle the League this year promises to get its vibrant soul back with the return of national cricketers in the competition after missing it for

the last couple of years due to international commitments.

A fierce fight on the field is also on the cards after six clubs including debutants Sonargaon Cricketers spend a lot to make a balanced team.

Cricket fans however might find it very difficult to follow the hectic schedule with record six matches to be played on a single day.

Besides three Dhaka venues, League matches will also be held in Bogra and Comilla.

Former Bangladesh captain Akram Khan will lead the title-

defence of Old DOHS against Sonargaon Cricketers at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium. The game has created enormous interest due to a star-studded Sonargaon line-up that includes Mohammad Ashraf, ace left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique and dashing opener Al-Shahriar.

While Sonargaon will bank on an all-local line-up for a dream Premier League debut, DOHS will enjoy the services of Kenyan batsman Steve Tikolo, who switched to the new town outfit from Mohammedan this year.

National top-order batsman Tushar Imran will lead last year's runners-up City Club against Kalabagan Krira Chakra. The match at the Fatullah Stadium will also mark the Dhaka debut of former Zimbabwe skipper Tatenda Taibu for City Club.

Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar will lead formidable Mohammedan Sporting Club against Agrani Bank at the BKSP. With his deputy Khaled Mashud, who led Victoria Club to title glory twice, alongside him Bashar is set to make his second attempt to bring back the title to the tent of the popular Motijheel outfit who has SEE PAGE 13 COL 5

PARTIAL FIXTURE

Dec 12: DOHS v Sonargaon (DCS), City v Kalabagan (FCS), Victoria v Orient (BKSP), Biman v Brothers (Comilla), Abahani v Indira Road (Bogra), Mohammedan v Agrani (BKSP).

Dec 15: DOHS v Kalabagan (Bogra), Orient v Sonargaon (Comilla), City v Brothers (DCS), Victoria v Indira (BKSP), Biman v Agrani (BKSP), Abahani v Mohammedan (FCS).

Dec 18: DOHS v Orient (FCS), Brothers v Kalabagan (DCS), Indira v Sonargaon (BKSP), City v Agrani (Bogra), Victoria v Mohammedan (Comilla), Biman v Abahani (BKSP).



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh U-19 batsman Tamim Iqbal sweeps in their last group match against Sri Lanka at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium on Sunday.



'Go on and on'



AFP, New Delhi

India's Sachin Tendulkar will not rest on his world-record 35th Test century but will go on to become the first batsman to score 100 international hundreds, according to Sunil Gavaskar.

Tendulkar made history on Saturday when he smashed compatriot Gavaskar's world mark of 34 Test hundreds on the opening day of the second Test against Sri Lanka at the Ferozeshah Kotla ground here.

Indian President Abdul Kamal led the nation in greeting Tendulkar, saying in a message he wished the batsman "success and strength" to achieve many more such feats.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh also sent congratulations.

"The nation hopes you will continue to delight us with your sporting talents in the years ahead. We look forward to witnessing many more records being written in your name in your sporting career," Singh said.

Gavaskar, in his column in the Hindustan Times on Sunday, said he was sure Tendulkar would go on to score many more centuries.

"He is only 32 and should be able to play for another six years at least, if not eight. He could well finish with

50 centuries in Tests and be the first to score 100 international centuries."

Tendulkar has already amassed 73 hundreds in international cricket - 35 in Tests and 38 in one-dayers. He is also the leading run-getter in the shorter version of the game with 13,909 in 358 matches.

"Make no mistake, he is not going to stop at 35 (Test hundreds), but will score many more and give pleasure to cricket lovers all over the world," said Gavaskar, a legendary former opener who quit Test cricket in 1987.

"When a record is taken away from you, there is a tinge of sadness but when it is broken by a talent as prodigious as Sachin - and a fellow Indian - that sadness is forgotten in a trice and one rejoices at a new benchmark being set."

Gavaskar said Tendulkar was the "closest thing to batting perfection" with the ability to succeed in all conditions.

Former Pakistani batting great Hanif Mohammad said height had been the key to Tendulkar's success.

"While there may be many theories on why he has done well, I think it is all because of his height,"

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What to WATCH

DD Sports

India vs Sri Lanka
Second Test, Day Three
Live at 10:00 am

TEN Sports

Pakistan vs England
Second ODI
Live at 11:45 am

ESPN

Sportscentre
Live at 8:30 pm
English Premier Football League
Tottenham vs Portsmouth
Live at 1:45 am (Tuesday)



Premier Div Cricket League

Old DOHS vs Sonargaon Cricketers
Venue: DCS
City Club vs Kalabagan KC
Venue: FCS
Victoria SC vs Orient SC
Venue: BKSP-2
Biman vs Brothers Union
Venue: Comilla Dist Stadium
Abahani vs Indira Road
Venue: Bogra Dist Stadium
Mohammedan vs Agrani Bank
Venue: BKSP-1