



England earned a dubious distinction with their 165-run defeat to Pakistan at Karachi on December 15 - their biggest defeat by runs margin, equalling their previous 165-run defeat to West Indies at Amos Vale on March 2 in 1994.



DD Sports
 India vs Sri Lanka
 Third Test, Day One
 Live at 10:00 am

ESPN
 Football Extra
 Live at 9:00 am
 English Premier Football League
 Middlesbrough vs Tottenham Hotspur
 Live at 7:25 pm
 Arsenal vs Chelsea
 Live at 9:55 pm

STAR Sports
 Australia vs South Africa
 First Test, Day Three
 Live at 8:30 am

SuperSport-3
 Primera Liga
 Real Madrid vs Osasuna
 Live at 1:45 am (Monday)

DAY'S EVENT

Premier Div Cricket League
 Old DOHS vs Orient SC
 Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium
 Brothers Union vs Kalabagan KC
 Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium
 Indira Road vs Sonargaon Cricketers
 Venue: BKSP-2
 City Club vs Agani Bank
 Venue: Bogra Dist Stadium
 Victoria SC vs Mohammedan
 Venue: Comilla Dist Stadium
 Biman vs Abahani
 Venue: BKSP-1



Sharad Pawar
(BCCI president)

"As a cricket lover, I am hurt and shocked over the exclusion of (Sourav) Ganguly. In the Delhi Test his performance was satisfactory. Also, he was a victorious captain and we feel proud of him."

V-Day hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Sonali Bank registered their second consecutive win in the Victory Day hockey competition when they handed a 5-1 defeat on Police AC at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

The winners led the first half 2-1.

In the day's other match, Bangladesh Navy managed a solitary goal win against Bangladesh Air Force.

School h'ball starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The 15th school handball tournament (girls and boys) begins at two venues in the city today.

A total of 26 schools, 12 for boys and 14 for girls, will take part in the tournament. Both the boys and girls' teams will split into four groups for the first round.

The top team from each group will qualify for the semifinals.



JOB HALF DONE: India's Mehraj Uddin (R) goes on a celebration lap after scoring the first goal against Bangladesh in the SAFF Championship final at the People's Sports Complex Stadium in Karachi on Saturday.

The City of Football!

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Karachi



A big hoarding that reads the slogan 'Welcome to the Football City' will attract you as you move along the road that leads to the People's Sports Complex Stadium from the heart of Karachi.

Although cricket is the most popular game in Pakistan, the Karachiites are famous for their passion for football. And the People's Sports Complex, the venue of the Fourth SAFF Championship, turned into a sea of football fans just before the start of the final between Bangladesh and India yesterday.

Despite foolproof security measures, the complex became alive hours before the grand finale and even though the Bangladesh-Pakistan semifinal failed to draw a full house at the 25,000-seater, attendance was maximum in the competition.

But apart from the fan-factor, the eight-team tournament, however, would be termed as one of the most disorganised show due to mismanagement. The starts of a few matches were delayed due to late arrival of chief guests which is not

uncommon in these parts of the world. The Bangladesh-Pakistan semifinal began 10 minutes late while the game between Pakistan and Sri Lanka kicked off 20 minutes after schedule.

The AFC (Asian Football Confederation) appointed match referee for the competition Fouad Jaroudi has already showed his discontent over the delayed starts and told that he would submit a report about this to the governing body of Asian football.

"There are things which are not appropriate and should not be done. But these things are beyond my control. I can not stop the championship for this reason. But I will report it to the AFC after the tournament," Jaroudi was quoted by a local newspaper.

The Lebanese was specially irked by a speech by the governor that delayed the Pakistan-Sri Lanka match.

"The ceremony was out of control. The governor came, shook hands with players and officials and surprised everybody by giving a speech. I could not stop him saying that we want to start the game," he told the newspaper.

Nowhere in the world, the start of an international match is allowed a delayed start.

Jaroudi also pointed out that

rules and regulations of international football were breached as all the eight teams were accommodated at the same hotel.

"Only two teams are allowed to stay at one hotel. Two referees are sharing one room. Some referees are being paid but some are not," he complained.

South Asian Football Federation secretary Sirajul Islam Bachchu, who is also the vice-president of Bangladesh Football Federation, dismissed the media report as false.

"I have talked with Jaroudi about this but he has denied saying anything about this to anyone. He is very happy about the venue and with the way we are organising it," said Bachchu defending his organisation and the Pakistan Football Federation.

"I admit that there has been some lack of administrative support which is why referees had to share rooms and could not be paid. But we are trying to bring a successful end to this event," he added.

Jaroudi was unavailable for comments.

The media facilities were event worse. On the day of the two semifinals, foreign reporters found out that all desks had been removed from the press box to accommodate VIP guests. And the final was also no exception.

India without Dravid

Final Test against Sri Lanka from today



AFP/BBC, Ahmedabad

India captain Rahul Dravid has been ruled out of the third and final cricket Test against Sri Lanka starting here on Sunday due to a stomach ailment.

Indian team media manager M Baladitya said Saturday that opening batsman Virender Sehwag will lead the side in Dravid's absence. Sehwag has regained fitness after missing the second Test due to a throat infection.

The media manager said Dravid was feeling weak after being admitted to hospital on Friday night for gastroenteritis.

"He (Dravid) has not shown

much improvement. He is still weak and needs another 48 hours to recover," he said.

Dravid, who replaced Sourav Ganguly as captain before the ongoing series, did not take part in practice sessions on Friday and Saturday.

The Indian captain, 32, completed 8,000 Test runs in the second Test at Delhi which his team won by 188 runs to gain a 1-0 lead in the series. The opening Test at Chennai was drawn.

Middle-order batsman Mohammad Kaif is likely to replace Dravid in the playing eleven.

On the other hand, Sri Lanka have also been hit by illness. Pacemen Chaminda vaas and Dilhara Fernando, and captain Marvan Atapattu have flu but should play.

The match is also special for Anil Kumble who will become only the fifth Indian to appear in 100 Tests with his side looking to seal a series triumph.

The leg-spinner's match figures of 10-157 helped set up the victory in Delhi, and took his career total to 478.

"I have no doubt in my mind that Anil is India's greatest bowler ever," star batsman Sachin Tendulkar said.

"He's proved it over the years for the sheer number of matches that he has won for India."

India's preparations for the game have been overshadowed by a furore caused by the decision to leave Dravid's predecessor, Ganguly, out of the squad.

There have been calls for Yuvraj

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Indian parliament will debate Ganguly axing

Dalmiya urges Pawar to take him back



AFP, New Delhi

Sourav Ganguly's omission from the Indian team for the third and final Test against Sri Lanka took a political twist Saturday with parliament preparing to discuss his sacking next week.

Somnath Chatterjee, speaker of the lower house of parliament, said Ganguly had suffered an "injustice" as a result of "politics in the game" and the issue would be discussed next week.

"I have allowed this to be added in the agenda and it will come up for discussion. Such incidents will affect the morale of young players and we must take corrective measures," he was quoted as saying in Indian media Saturday.



SOURAV GANGULY

His dumping triggered a wave of protests, particularly in his home town of Kolkata, as fans, cricketers and politicians condemned the decision of the national selectors.

Ganguly has already received political backing with Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee saying the batsman deserved a place in the Test team.

"I think we should not play politics in cricket or any kind of game," he told Press Trust of India news agency, suggesting that Ganguly was a victim of the Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI) politics.

Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, chief minister of Ganguly's home state of West Bengal, described the decision as unjust as well as insulting to the player and "to all of us".

However, Indian cricket chief

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NFL's Dhaka-leg begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Dhaka-leg of the Fifth Nitol-Tata National Football League begins today with no-hopers Jamalpur Kachari-para Sporting Club taking on Khulna Town Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Bangladesh Television (BTV) will telecast all the Dhaka-leg matches live including the eight final round games to be played at the 'Big Bowl'.

"Now BTV will telecast 20 matches live including eight second round encounters. But unlike prevalent occasions the BTV would not pay us any royalty this time," said Monjur Hossain Malu, secretary of the league committee, at a press conference yesterday.

But Malu was hopeful of earning a lot from sales of tickets with the national booters set to return to club duties after the Asia Cup qualifying matches against Pakistan on December 22 and December 26.

The six-team second round involving top three teams from each group is expected to draw a huge crowd when it kicks off from December 26.

Defending champions Brothers Union led the Group A table with five points from three matches and they will play their last game against Bangladesh Army on December 20.

Army shared the second spot with Munshiganj Samabesh Club with four points from two matches.

Kacharipara and Town Club bagged one point each.

On the other hand, Abahani confirmed their super-six berth securing seven points from three matches from Group B. Muktijoddha followed them with five points and Mohammedan have four points.

Rangamati Mohammedan and Feni Soccer Club are the two bottomers in the group.

Premier Cricket resumes today

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Old DOHS meet lowly Orient Sporting Club at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium as the Premier Division Cricket League resumes today after a two-day break at six different venues across the country.

DOHS won their previous two matches to lead the table along with Mohammedan, Brothers and Victoria while runners-up City Club, Biman, Abahani and newcomers Sonargaon Cricketers won one match each.

In the day's other matches, Mohammedan take on Victoria at Comilla Stadium, Biman face Abahani at BKSP, Brothers play Kalabagan at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, Sonargaon meet Indira Road at BKSP and City Club face Agrani Bank at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra.

We can win WC, says Vaughan

BBC ONLINE, undated

Michael Vaughan says England are still in a position to win the next World Cup in the West Indies in 15 months' time, despite the recent defeats in Pakistan.

"It's a difficult tour of Pakistan. Will the conditions in the West Indies be similar to that? I doubt that.

"We do need to improve in the one-day game if we're going to win the World Cup," Vaughan told BBC Radio Five Live.

"But there are some exciting players in and around the squad which should give us an opportunity to do well."

With Vaughan back at home recovering from knee surgery, England equalled the record for their worst ever defeat on Thursday, falling to Pakistan by 165 runs.

"It's an area we need to look at because we haven't won an overseas tournament for a long time," he admitted.

"But the last major tournament was the ICC [Champions] Trophy and we got to the final.

"Over the last two years there's been some good strides made in the one-day team, we played some good one-day cricket against Australia in the summer."

England won two of seven limited-overs games against their Ashes rivals, fought out a thrilling tie in the NatWest Series final at Lord's and saw one match washed out.

They have not beaten a major opponent in a series away from home since overturning India, Pakistan and West Indies in Sharjah in 1997-98.

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It was one of those rare off-days: Cruciani

SPORTS REPORTER from Karachi



There was pin-drop silence in the Bangladesh dressing room after they lost the Fourth SAFF Championship final 2-0 to India on Saturday.

The fun and celebration that were prevalent in the Bangladesh dressing room after their previous four matches were replaced by doom and gloom. It looked like as if the white angles were attending a funeral. The boys of Diego Cruciani were upset not only because they lost the final badly but also for disappointing millions of football fans back home, who watched the match live on various television channels.

Not a single player was crying

but their ice-cool faces showed the agony of not achieving the glory in a memorable month after coming so close.

Cruciani, the Argentine coach who taught the players to dream about this glory, however, held his nerve and told that his boys had just a bad day and it cost them the title.

"It was a surprise for me because we could not play like the other matches today. Our team contained themselves and did not play good football. They did not move well or passed properly. They also did not show the intelligence in the field," said Cruciani.

"It was like a nervous breakdown and the team suddenly were not in their usual self. Some day you play good, some day you don't. It was just like one of those rare off-days. It is very bad luck for us."

"India got over us because we let

them play. But I don't take the credit off them because they won as the better team in the final. They have matured players and got more speed and skill. They controlled the ball more and that is the reason behind their success."Although Baichung and Mehraj scored in the game for India, Cruciani pointed out that Baichung looked dangerous in the last minutes when Bangladesh desperately tried to attack and left space for the Indian striker, whose second goal took him to join compatriot IM Vijayan as the top scorer in the history of SAFF Championships with nine goals.

"I think the whole Indian midfield played superbly today. That's where we lost the game. There defence was also very tight. They marked our strikers who were not effective at all."

Even going after Day 2



AFP, Perth

The see-sawing first Test between Australia and South Africa hung in the balance Saturday despite a cameo performance from brilliant leg-spinner Shane Warne, who claimed yet another world record.

On the second day at the WACA ground, South Africa edged to a 38-run first innings lead, largely due to a dogged stand by wicketkeeper Mark Boucher and pace bowler Shaun Pollock.

The pair put on 77 for the seventh wicket as South Africa clawed their way to 296 in reply to Australia's 258.

Australia then suffered an early setback when opener Matthew Hayden fell for just 20 just before stumps. The hosts finished on 38 for one.

Justin Langer was unbeaten on 15 with night-watchman Brett Lee yet to score. Langer had survived both a dropped slips catch and a close lbw appeal.

But it was the flamboyant Warne who again grabbed the limelight, becoming the first Test bowler to take more than 85 wickets in a calendar year when he trapped Ashwell Prince in front for 28.

It was a questionable decision, with the ball pitching well wide and appearing destined to miss down the leg side.

But a vigorous appeal from Warne saw umpire Steve Bucknor eventually raise his finger, bringing a roar from the crowd and a flurry of air punches from the 36-year-old

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PHOTO: AFP

I'M THE BEST: Australia's master leg-spinner Shane Warne punches the air in jubilation after setting a world record for most wickets in a calendar year on the second day of the first Test against South Africa in Perth on Saturday.