



Did U Know?

Women's hockey was not included in the Olympic Games until 1980.



Shoab Akhtar

(Pakistan fast bowler)
 "He said I looked like Tarzan, and wondered how I could bowl fast looking like that."
 While revealing how England's Andrew Flintoff inadvertently boosted his will to win.



Narrow wins for Torun, Lalmatia

SPORTS REPORTER

Surjo Torun and Lalmatia Club snatched close battles in Thursday's First Division Cricket League in the city.

Surjo Torun defended a moderate total of 199-7 when they bowled out Azad Sporting Club for 190 in a 9-run victory at the City Club ground while Lalmatia, who made 223-9, restricted CCS to 193 to win by 12 runs at the Dhaka University ground.

In other matches, Rupali Bank (223-9) comfortably defeated Young Pegasus B (162) by 61 runs and Prantic KC (160-3) handed a seven-wicket defeat on Dhanmondi Club (159) at BKSP grounds. At the Fatullah Stadium, Kathalagan GCC (170) were declared winners by six runs against Dhaka Mariners (116-5) according to Duckworth/Lewis Method.

JFA CUP Ashrafuzzaman slams treble

SPORTS REPORTER

Ashrafuzzaman slammed a hat-trick as Gaibandha blanked Dinajpur 4-0 in the JFA Cup Under-16 football championship first phase at the Gaibandha Stadium on Thursday. Ashrafuzzaman, who opened the account in the 13th minute and added his second five minutes later, completed his treble on the hour. Koreshi slotted the other goal.

In other matches, two-goal Sajib and Sohel helped BKSP brush aside Natore 5-0 at Kurigram, Comilla blanked Laxmipur 3-0 at Rangamati. Shariatpur beat Gopalganj 3-1 at Manikganj, Chuadanga thrashed Kushtia 4-0 at Satkhira, Mymensingh defeated Sherpur 2-0 at Tangail and Jhalokathi edged Patuakhali 1-0 at Bagerhat.

All seven winners have moved into the zonal semifinals.

Independence Day hockey final today

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Army and Sonali Bank SRC will play the Independence Day Hockey tournament final today at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

In Thursday's matches, Bangladesh Army thrashed Bangladesh Air Force 6-0 and Bangladesh Navy defeated Police 3-2.

Bangladesh held

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

The tiredness and mental blockage that cost Bangladesh the SAFF Championship against India five days ago in Karachi was evident when they drew goalless with Pakistan at home in the Asia Cup pre-qualifier yesterday.

Bangladesh, who edged Pakistan 1-0 in the SAFF Championship semifinal on December 14, dominated the show before a 5,000-strong crowd at the Bangabandhu National Stadium but lost clues against an eight-pack defence that hardly made a mistake.

Diego Cruciani's boys will have to shrug off the hangover before their Monday's return-leg match in Karachi to reach the qualifiers.

However, the way the Argentine coach reacted after the final whistle and launched himself against Indian referee Rizwan Ul Haq, it has already cast doubts whether the Bangladesh coach would be permitted to sit on the bench during the next match.

Cruciani entered the ground after the match and argued with the referee before being calmed down by his colleagues.

"I am very, very sorry for what I have done today. It was a very bad example for a coach but I am a man under pressure," said Cruciani after the match apologising for his behaviour.

"I am unhappy about today's refereeing. There were many decisions - offsides, fouls - that went against us. The referee even invented two fouls in the injury time. He not only ignored the delays made by the Pakistanis during the game but also the extra time given and played was not adequate," complained Cruciani, who looked like not recovering from the team's defeat in the SAFF Championship.

"The match was a fair-play and I knew they would be planning to defend. They have achieved their target. But I still believe when we will play the next 90 minutes in Pakistan, we would win," the coach added.

Bangladesh enjoyed superior ball possession and almost went ahead from their first corner in the third minute. However, Pakistan skipper and goalkeeper Jaffar Khan held Rajani's header on an Arman corner on the line.

Pakistan, who relied on two fast strikers Essa and Imran Hossain on counter attacks, threatened to score in

the 27th minute when the latter, who missed the SAFF semifinal due to suspension, sliced two defenders with a through from Farooq. But goalkeeper Aminul rushed out to block the attack six yards out of his goal.

Bangladesh, who earned half a dozen corners either side of the break, saw Alfaz create space at the right flank. But the home side wasted their best chance in the first-half injury time when Kanchan, set up by Joy on another Arman flag-kick, chose to head the ball, which was inches above the ground, wide.

Aminul was tested during Pakistan's only corner-kick of the game when he held Tanveer's header in the 50th minute and his Pakistan counterpart Jaffar was equally brilliant to foil Joy's powerful header seven minutes later. Jaffar spent nervous moments but gripped Titu's scorching drive from 40 yards and the Pakistani custodian was relieved

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Bangladesh striker Rokonuzzaman Kanchan (R) fights for possession with Pakistan defender Mohammad Imran during their Asia Cup pre-qualifier at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Thursday.

BD-SL series likely to be brought ahead

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's coming home series against Sri Lanka starting in February might be hastened by a week if the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) accepts a proposal by the Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC).

The SLC has proposed to the BCB to start the series a week before schedule following the postponement of the Asia Cup in Pakistan. Sri Lanka were due to arrive in Dhaka from Pakistan on February 27 for two Tests and three one-dayers.

"The two boards are talking on this. There is an opportunity to bring the tour ahead as the Asia Cup has been postponed. I hope we would be able to settle the issue within a few days," said BCB general secretary Mahub Anam yesterday.

The only problem the hosts could face is in preparing venues in time. Apart from the MA Aziz Stadium and the Divisional Stadium in Chittagong, no other venue has ICC's recognition as Test venue. In case the Mirpur Stadium is not prepared, both the Test could be held in Chittagong.

England rue Multan failure

Cricket

REUTERS, Rawalpindi

Pakistani administrators were celebrating on Thursday the conclusion of a successful and trouble-free Test and one-day series against England.

But Marcus Trescothick and his men left for home wondering what might have been if England had won the first Test in Multan.

For Pakistan the tour was more significant than just a series win which has helped push Ashes heroes England down to third in the Test rankings, ahead of Pakistan but behind Australia and India.

"For the last four years we have had to cajole and implore teams to visit Pakistan and play at our venues. Most of them have shunned Karachi for security reasons," said Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Shaharyar Khan.

"The way people have responded to the England team and the smooth manner in which the tour has been conducted should now convince everyone Pakistan is a good and safe host."

The only glitch was the gas cylinder explosion which marked the second Test in Faisalabad but that was not a security issue.

On the playing side, Trescothick, filling in as captain for Michael Vaughan, said: "It has not been an easy tour for us. But if we had won that first Test it could have been so much different."

England failed to chase down just 198 for victory in Multan to lose by 22 runs. In the third Test in Lahore the last eight wickets tumbled for 43 in an innings and 100 runs-defeat.

Trescothick said: "We just didn't perform well enough with the bat. It put pressure on us. We need to sit down and put the right people into the right places."

Pakistan captain Inzamamul

Haq felt England had lost because they were not prepared for the tour.

"I just thought we had done our homework better on them. They didn't appear well prepared despite their Ashes series win," he said.

A number of factors contributed to England's disappointing tour. One was the freak knee injury that captain Vaughan suffered in the tour match at Lahore before the Test series.

He played in the second and third Tests but was never comfortable and left before the one-day series which Pakistan won 3-2.

Left arm spinner Ashley Giles also carried a hip injury in the first two Tests and then did not play.

Giles' failure proved to be a major setback since on the last tour to Pakistan in 2000 he had finished with 17 wickets.

Pakistan's masterplan to prepare pitches which were slow and down and put the right people into the right places."

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NITOL-TATA 5TH NFL Army reach Super Six

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Army came from behind to confirm a super-six berth in the Nitol-Tata Fifth National Football League with a 2-1 victory over Munsiganj Samabesh Club in their last Group-A match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Thursday.

Army secured seven points from four outings, three points ahead of Samabesh Club, who need only a draw against Jamalpur Kacharipara SC in their last match to join Brothers Union and Army in the final stage of their group.

Monir Hossain put Samabesh Club ahead in the tenth minute from a goalmouth melee while Anwar Hossain struck home a rebound to restore parity in the 32nd minute.

Striker Rashedul Hasan Sonny scored the match-winner for Army on the hour with a curving freekick.

Ratul strikes 190 not out

SPORTS REPORTER

Asif A Ratul smashed 190 not out as Old DOHS recorded a thumping 149-run victory against Mohammedan Sporting Club in the Development Cricket Tournament (Under-13 Young Tiger) at the RMS ground in Dhaka yesterday.

Ratul clubbed 20 fours and four sixes in his 145-ball explosive knock that helped DOHS pile up 231-4 in 50 overs. Mohammedan were bundled out for 163 in reply.

In Khulna, Satkhira (125-7) beat Bagerhat (124) by three wickets in Young Tiger Elite District Under-13 competition.

Scholastica retain handball title

SPORTS REPORTER

Scholastica clinched their second successive handball title defeating 12-time winners Vigarunnissa Noon School 13-7 in the girls' final of the 15th Bata School handball tournament at the Dhanmondi Sports Complex yesterday.

Scholastica, who dethroned Vigarunnissa last year, led the first half 7-4.

In the boys' final, Narinda Government High School who finished runners-up in the last two years, lifted their maiden title with a 15-11 win over Bhashantek High School.

Scholastica's Salman Sayeed (boys') and Anushe (girls') were named players of the tournament.

Bangladesh carrom team runners-up

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Bangladesh became runners-up beating Sri Lanka in the First Asian Carrom Championship in Maldives capital Male on Wednesday.

India retained their title at the conclusion of the six-nation meet.

Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Malaysia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka participated in the December 18-21 tournament.

India spin to big win

Football

AFP, Ahmedabad

Harbhajan Singh finished with 10 wickets as India thrashed Sri Lanka by 259 runs in the third Test Thursday to clinch the series 2-0.

The wily off-spinner finished the match with 10-141 as Sri Lanka, chasing an improbable 509-run target, were bowled out for 249 in their second innings after resuming at 235-6.

This was Harbhajan's fourth haul of 10 or more wickets in a Test.

The series win lifted India to second place behind Australia in the International Cricket Council's official world rankings.

The hosts needed just 7.3 overs to seal the win, with Harbhajan and leg-spinner Anil Kumble claiming two wickets apiece in the morning

session of the fifth and final day here.

Kumble, who took three wickets on Wednesday, finished with 5-89 for his 31st haul of five or more scalps in a Test innings in 100 matches.

"It's a great feeling as it was a special Test for me," said Kumble, who was named man-of-the-series for taking 20 wickets in three matches.

Kumble started the day with the wicket of Farveez Maharoof (two) and finished the match when he had Malinga Bandara (11) caught by stand-in skipper Virender Sehwag in the gully.

Sehwag led the team in the absence of ailing Rahul Dravid.

Harbhajan, who bagged seven wickets in the first innings and one on Wednesday, had Jehan Mubarak (18) caught by close-in fielder Venkatsai Laxman before dismiss-

ing Muttiah Muralitharan (three).

"It is always a great pleasure bowling with Kumble. He is a great bowler. I always enjoy bowling with him and he did a very good job," said Harbhajan, named man-of-the-match in his 50th Test.

Sri Lanka captain Marvan Atapattu praised the Indian spin duo.

"We came against two very good spinners and both bowled very well in favourable conditions," he said.

"I think we have not done ourselves justice. We had our chances but failed to capitalise on them. We had them struggling (97-5) in the first innings, but (Venkatsai) Laxman and (Irfan) Pathan then batted well."

Laxman scored 104 and Pathan

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Arjuna angry with Shane

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Former Sri Lanka captain Arjuna Ranatunga on Thursday slammed record-breaking spinner Shane Warne for suggesting that rivals like Muttiah Muralitharan benefited by taking "cheap" wickets.

"Shane tries to be larger than the game and life and expects a lot of credit for his performances. He thinks there's no better bowler than him," Ranatunga told AFP.

The Australian leg-spinner said earlier this week that his world record tallies of 651 career wickets and 87 in a calendar year will not last long because other bowlers got a lot of wickets against weaker oppo-

nents. Without naming Sri Lankan Muralitharan, his nearest rival with 584 wickets, Warne said: "There's a lot more cricket being played these days and you have teams like Zimbabwe and Bangladesh in there, with some teams playing them a lot more (than others)."

"I've never played a Test against Bangladesh and only one against Zimbabwe, but there are some teams out there that play them a lot."

"Some blokes bowl at one end all day against those sort of countries and take lots of wickets. I'm sure that whoever those people are, they might get the record."

The Australian newspaper, which quoted Warne, said: "It doesn't take a sudoku expert or a Da Vinci Code sleuth to work out who 'those people' are."

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Maradona arrested at Rio

REUTERS, Sao Paulo

Argentine soccer legend Diego Maradona was detained at Rio de Janeiro's international airport on Thursday morning after causing a disturbance in the terminal, police said.

Maradona had played a game outside Rio organised by ex-Brazilian star Zico on Wednesday night.

Police arrested him at the airport terminal as he was about to return to Buenos Aires. He arrived late for the flight and tried to force his way on board, police said.

"He is being detained at the airport. There was a problem with TAM (airline) staff, it turned nasty and the police were called. It got worse with the police and he was detained for resisting arrest," a police spokesman said.

He will be tested to see if he was under the influence of drugs or alcohol, local media reported.

Maradona, 45, is considered one of the greatest players of all time but since his retirement he has been plagued by health problems, including cocaine addiction, alcohol abuse and obesity.



A security officer escorts Diego Maradona into the playing field before the start of a charitable friendly at the Zico Sport Stadium in Rio de Janeiro on Wednesday.



Harbhajan Singh (2nd from L) and Anil Kumble (2nd from R) leave the field after leading India to victory over Sri Lanka on the fifth and final day of the third Test in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

Veeru ready for Pakistan

Cricket

AGENCIES, Ahmedabad

India batsman Virender Sehwag on Thursday sounded a warning to Pakistan, saying his team were well-prepared to win the second successive Test series there on their upcoming tour.

"If they give us bouncy and seaming tracks they will struggle against our attack because their batsmen are not technically sound," Sehwag said after leading the hosts to victory in the third and final Test against Sri Lanka here.

India won the match by 259 runs to clinch the series 2-0 against Marvan Atapattu's Sri Lankans.

India now tour Pakistan next month for three Tests and five one-day internationals, the third series between the arch-rivals in two years.

India defeated Pakistan 2-1 in the Test series and 3-2 in one-dayers on their last tour in 2004.

Pakistan returned the compliment with a 4-2 one-day win in India earlier this year after forcing the hosts to a 1-1 draw in the Test series.

"They (Pakistan) gave us flat tracks last time and we won both the Test and one-day series there," said

Sehwag. "If pitches there support fast bowlers we will play three seamers, and if they don't we will include two spinners and two pacemen. It all depends on the conditions," he said.

Sehwag said India had the batsmen to cope with the Pakistani attack, which did well against Ashes-winning England in the



VIRENDER SEHWAG

and one-day series (3-2) on their tour of Pakistan which ended on Wednesday.

"We have worked hard on our game and it shows in the results," said Sehwag, who became the first Indian to smash a Test triple-century in the opening match against Pakistan at Multan last year.

The Indian vice-captain was however untroubled by his run of low scores before the high-profile tour.

"I think I am in good nick," the opener told reporters after the third Test.

"I am getting 20s and 30s, only I have not been converting them to big hundreds," he said.

The 27-year-old batsman from Delhi, known for his aggressive approach, has not scored a Test century since the 201 against Pakistan in the home series.

He scored 36 in the first Test against Sri Lanka, missed the second in New Delhi because of illness and made 20 and nought in the third.

"I am working hard on my batting. I want to stay in the middle for as long as possible," the batsman said.

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