

Exciting win for Dhanmondi

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhanmondi Club snatched a thrilling win by virtue of losing lesser wickets after their First Division Cricket League match against Lalmatia Club ended as a tie on Monday.

Having bowled Lalmatia out for 198 in 49 overs, Dhanmondi reached 198-9 in the stipulated 50 overs at the Jagannath Hall ground.

In a match dominated by bowlers, Hasu bagged 5-47 and Prince 3-48 for Lalmatia while Mamun was the pick of Dhanmondi attack with 4-42.

In other matches, Rasel's 76 steered Eskaton Sabuj Sangha (236) to a 14-run win over Dhaka Mariner Youngs (222) at the City Club ground while Partex (186-3) recorded their eighth victory when they cruised to a 7-wicket win over Prantick (185) at the Dhaka University ground.

Amir, Majed share lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Amir Hossain and Abdul Majed were sharing the lead in the Metropolis Chess Tournament at the end of the fifth round at the BCF hall-room on Monday.

Amir beat Shahjahan and Majed defeated Zaker in the fifth round to extend their collections to five points.

Nasir, Shahin and Nahid were at second place with 4.5 points.



Did U Know?

China participated in the Athens 2004 Olympic Games with the largest sports delegation that has ever participated in the Olympic Games.

What to WATCH

ESPN
Football Focus
Live at 5:00 pm
Sportscentre
Live at 8:30 pm
STAR Sports
Australia vs South Africa
Second Test, Day Three
Live at 5:30 am (Wednesday)



Malcolm Speed

(ICC chief executive)

"Cricket is an international game which is played by a diverse range of cultures and communities...racist comments have no place in cricket."

DAY'S EVENT	
Fifth Nitol-Tata Nat'l Football League (Super Six)	
Mukijoddha vs Samabesh Club (4:00 pm)	
Venue: Bangabandhu Nat'l Stadium	
Premier Div Cricket League	
Old DOHS vs Agrani Bank	
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium	
Mohammedan vs Indira Road	
Venue: BKSP-2	
Abahani vs Brothers Union	
Venue: Bogra Dist Stadium	
Biman vs Orient SC	
Venue: BKSP-1	
Victoria vs Kalabagan	
Venue: Comilla Dist Stadium	
City Club vs Sonargaon Cricketers	
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium	



PHOTO: STAR

Brothers' Cameroonian midfielder (orange jersey) Gilsun threatens the Mohammedan post during their Super Six match of the Nitol-Tata Fifth National Football League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Monday.

Draw suits both fine!

Brothers 0 Mohammedan 0

SPORTS REPORTER



Brothers Union and Mohammedan Sporting Club produced a dull draw in the opening Super Six match of the Nitol-Tata Fifth National Football League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The clash of the two Dhaka giants might be a spectator's plight, but the goalless draw served both sides' purpose in a bid to secure places in the semifinals.

Defending champions Brothers, who launched the final phase with a four-point cushion that they carried from the previous round, stayed atop the six-team table with five points.

Mohammedan on the other hand, also returned happy after securing the vital point from their lone toughest fixture in the final phase.

The Black and Whites, who began bottom-of-the-table with one point, face two rank-outsiders Bangladesh Army and Samabesh Club of Munshiganj in their remaining matches.

Div II football kicks off today

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The Rahman Foundation Second Division Football League begins tomorrow at the Birsthreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur. LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuyan will inaugurate the 16-team league as chief guest.

Prantik Kirra Chakra face Karwan Bazar Pragati Sangha in the opening match of the league.

The teams are Prantik, Pragati Sangha, Sadharan Bima, Jatrabari KC, Basabo Tarun Sangha, BG Press, East End Club, Bangladesh Boys Club, Little Friends, T & T Club, Police AC, Jurain Janata, PWD SC, Kadamtala Sangsad, Sunrise Sporting Club and Uttar Bardhara Club.

Top two teams of the league will be promoted to the First Division League and two bottom teams will be relegated to the Third Division League.

Although the first big match of the Super Six drew a few thousand fans at the big bowl, it turned into a boring experience for them as both sides without their key players, who are now on national duty, adopted ultra defensive approach throughout the 90 minutes.

Still, Mohammedan looked the likely team to score with their Nigerian recruits Francis and Peter Odaf creating a number of openings in both halves. Francis tested Brothers custodian Ali with a sudden cross in the 13th minute that the diminutive man under the bar tipped over the bar for a corner.

The best chance of the day also fell to Francis halfway through the first half but he blasted his shot wide of the mark after being picked unmarked inside the six-yard box by a long-throw from compatriot Odaf.

While Mohammedan goalkeeper Shakil was not required to make a single save in the first half, his counterpart Ali was under constant threat and fisted away a dipping volley by overlapping defender Hassan in the 42nd minute. The pressure continued and Odaf was unlucky to see his header on a corner by Rony bounced off the sidebar just before the short whistle.

Midfielder Divine also wasted the rebound as his effort missed the mark narrowly.

Both sides substituted their cap-

tains at half-time and Brothers looked more organised with Liton replacing Monwar. But Paul Nwakwuchu lost possession in the Mohammedan penalty area after Felix set him up in the 57th minute.

Manju, who came for Mohammedan skipper Nakib, earned a free-kick five yards out of the Brothers box but Odaf's powerful drive flew inches wide of the target.

Despite being on the defensive, Brothers came close to seal three points in the 67th minute when Paul received a square-pass from Felix on the top of the 18-yard box but his angled drive ran harmlessly across the face of the goal.

Yellow cards: Shuvra (Brothers)

TEAMS

BROTHERS: Ali, Siraji, Pranotosh, Shuvra (Montu), Masud Rana, Aaurp, Monwar (Liton), Hicham, Gilsun, Paul and Felix.

MOHAMMEDAN: Shakil, Rony (Kamal), Hassan, Odaf, Biplab, Mintu, Divine, Asad, Emeka, Nakib (Manju) and Francis.

Referee: Tayab Hassan.

DOHS await another easy day

SPORTS REPORTER

Old DOHS look set to retain the solo lead in the Aktei Premier Cricket League when the defending champions take on lowly Agrani Bank in a sixth round clash at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium today.

While DOHS, the only unbeaten team in the fray, face a rather easy task, it would be hard times for fallen giants like Abahani, Brothers and newcomers Sonargaon Cricketers.

Level on six points, Abahani and Brothers face off at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra. Both have lost two matches each and can ill afford another defeat in their pursuit to remain in the top half and qualify for the Super League.

Big-spending Sonargaon with two wins against three defeats would be under more pressure to win at Fatullah Stadium against runners-up City Club who have six points.

Second-placed Mohammedan Sporting Club, on eight points, would be looking forward to stay hot on DOHS's heels when they travel to BKSP to play second-from-bottom Indira Road KC.

Also at BKSP, Bangladesh Biman, fresh after their exciting two-run victory against Sonargaon on Sunday, meet pointless Orient Sporting Club while Victoria Sporting Club, smarting from their maiden defeat in the previous round after four wins, take on Kalabagan Krira Chakra at Comilla.

UK Sonali Otit in the city

SPORTS REPORTER

Sonali Otit Club of the UK arrived in Dhaka on Monday to play two warm-up matches here before taking part in the Goodwill Football Tournament in Kolkata from January 2-6.

The visitors will play Dhaka Sonali Otit and veteran footballers of Moulvibazar in Sylhet before departing for Kolkata on December 30.

The Dhaka Sonali Otit will also play in the Kolkata meet. Kolkata Veterans' Sports Club are the other participants of the football festival featuring the stars of yesteryears.

Sourav back in the nets

PTI, Kolkata

Two days after his selection in the Test squad for the upcoming tour of Pakistan, star cricketer Sourav Ganguly on Monday resumed practice.

Ganguly spent one-and-a-half hours at the Eden Gardens and the adjoining Pankaj Gupta Indoor Training Centre for a rigorous workout in the gym.

He also had a session in the nets at the PGITC.

Hordes of print and electronic mediapersons were left disappointed as Ganguly refused to speak.

Ponting rides his luck before Nel hits back



AFP, Melbourne

Australian skipper Ricky Ponting cashed in on an early 'life' to amass 1,500 runs in a Test calendar year -- a feat achieved by only two others -- before Australia collapsed against South Africa in the second Test Monday.

Ponting thrilled a festive 71,910 Boxing Day crowd at the Melbourne Cricket Ground with his sixth hundred of the year, his 26th career Test century and his third at the ground.

But combative paceman Andre Nel exposed an uncertain Australian middle-order with a spell of 4-11 in 25 balls to have the home side a

twitchy 239 for eight at the close. Nel finished with 4-58 off 22 overs.

Mike Hussey was unbeaten on 23 with Brett Lee dismissed for four in the last over.

The South Africans' resilient fight-back comes a week after they batted out a draw to deny Australia a win in the first Perth Test.

It is the second time Ponting has accumulated more than 1,500 runs in a calendar year after his 1,503 total in 2003 and he is the only Australian to achieve the feat.

Apart from him, only West Indian Viv Richards with 1,710 runs in 1976 and India's Sunil Gavaskar with 1,555 in 1979 have passed the calendar year milestone of 1,500 runs.

"It was a special innings for me, I

was proud of the way I played today," Ponting said.

"I had a little bit of luck early on when I was dropped in a pretty easy chance. It was difficult batting, I had chosen to bat and it was very satisfying to stay out there that long and bat in difficult conditions."

The Aussie skipper profited from the let-off, joining in a 152-run second-wicket stand with Matthew Hayden after debutant opening batsman Phil Jaques went cheaply.

Ponting has struck a rich scoring vein this southern summer with his 149 and 104 not out against the West Indies in the first Brisbane Test, 56 in the third Adelaide Test and 71 and 53 in the first Perth Test against South Africa last week.

Ponting was out 15 overs from stumps when he was caught by Herschelle Gibbs in the gully off Nel for 117 in 298 minutes with 13 boundaries. He has scored 1,533 runs, with one more innings likely here before year's end.

Ponting's exit triggered a collapse with all-rounder Andrew Symonds out to Nel's next ball, snapped up by wicketkeeper Mark Boucher. The dismissal puts Symonds' fitful Test career in peril.

Out-of-form wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist lasted seven balls before he steered Nel to Gibbs in the gully for two.

Shane Warne smashed nine before he flashed at Nel and gave Nicky Boje a running catch to plunge Australia to 227 for seven with seven overs to go to stumps.

Makhaya Ntini trapped Lee leg before wicket with his first ball of the day's last over.

Hayden had gone just before tea, caught by Graeme Smith at first slip for 65 off Shaun Pollock. Hayden now has 1,243 runs for 2005 and is the only player to score 1,000 runs in five consecutive years.

Debutant Jaques' first Test innings lasted just 12 balls before the rookie left-hander was lightened up by Pollock to be caught at short leg by Jacques Rudolph for two.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 6

'I wanted to end myself'



AFP, Melbourne

Feisty South African paceman Andre Nel said he felt like ending it all after giving Ricky Ponting a massive let-off on the way to the Australian captain's 26th Test century here on Monday.

Nel, who admits to enjoying having the crowd on his back, dropped a clanger when Ponting was on 17 before he went on to make 117 on the grandest day of the Australian cricket calendar.

The 28-year-old firebrand hit back the best way he knew, with a searing spell of 4-11 in 25 balls to scatter the Australians to 239 for eight at stumps on the opening day of the Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

South Africa paid dearly for the dropped Ponting catch, with Nel spilling the straightforward chance at

mid-wicket off the bowling of Jacques Kallis when the Aussie ace was on 17 inside the first hour of play.

"I was a bit disappointed and thought I had let the side down badly, but I thought the best way to get back from my dropped catch was to keep on bowling my heart out for my country," Nel said.

"I thought as a bowling unit and a team we fought back nicely after what happened ... I was so disappointed with myself at lunch that I wanted to end myself."

Nel triggered the Aussie slide when he had Ponting caught by Herschelle Gibbs in the gully 15 overs from stumps to give the South Africans a crack at the exposed brittle Australian middle-order.

Nel removed under-siege all-rounder Andrew Symonds with his next ball, snapped up by wicketkeeper Mark Boucher and out-of-form wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist saw off the hatrick attempt before departing for two, caught by Gibbs.

Shane Warne smashed nine before he flashed at Nel and gave Nicky Boje a running catch with seven overs to go to stumps.

Nel, playing in his 17th Test match before almost 72,000 roaring Australians, said he thrived playing in hostile foreign environments.

"That's just my character. I like it when people abuse me and put me down. I like to prove them wrong, it's just my character and nature," Nel told reporters.

"I was fired up and I wanted to do well after that dropped catch."

"The crowds are always going to come after me because I am always aggressive and talk to people on the field."

"I play for my country and play with my heart, so I am always going to get abused. I am expecting it, so I might as well turn that into a positive energy to get myself going."



PHOTO: AFP

Former India cricket captain Sourav Ganguly holds his daughter Sana while stepping into his car in front of his Behala residence in south Kolkata on Sunday.

It puts pressure on him: Moin

PTI, Karachi

Former captain Moin Khan on Monday said the controversy surrounding Sourav Ganguly's comeback could put him under undue pressure against Pakistan who are better prepared to take on India this time around.

Moin said Pakistan were a "more mature and united" unit now under Inzamamul Haq and the win against England had boosted their confidence for the upcoming three-Test series against the arch-rivals.

In such a scenario, he said, it was imperative for the Indian cricketers to stay focussed on the game rather than bother about off-field controversies.

"This is obviously not the right beginning of what is certainly a big tour for the Indian cricket team. On such a huge tour, the players want to be relaxed and like to be in the comfortable zone so that they can concentrate and stay focussed rather being left pondering if they had been included in the side through the back door," said the 34-year-old veteran of 69 Tests.

"This is certainly not good for

SEE PAGE 13 COL 8

Ganguly goes AWOL



AFP/PTI, undated

India's chief cricket selector Kiran More on Monday denounced former captain Sourav Ganguly for skipping domestic cricket before next month's tour of Pakistan.

Ganguly, a controversial selection for the tour, missed Bengal's two first-class Ranji Trophy matches against Karnataka and Gujarat despite being asked to play by More.

"I am surprised and shocked that Sourav is not playing against Gujarat." More said after the four-day game began in Surat on Sunday while Ganguly spent Christmas with his family in Kolkata.

"This was the ideal time to get some match practice before the Pakistan tour. I demand an explanation because he missed the previous match against Karnataka as well."

More said he had asked Bengal selector Pranob Roy and team coach Paras Mhambrey to ensure Ganguly played first-class cricket after being dropped from the third Test against Sri Lanka in Ahmedabad.

"I was told they were unable to

contact Ganguly and then I learnt he had asked not to be considered for the two matches," More said.

Five other players selected for Pakistan -- Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Zaheer Khan, Venkatsai Laxman and Wasim Jaffer -- are turning out for their respective state teams in the latest round of Ranji Trophy matches.

Other Team India players, including captain Rahul Dravid and Sachin Tendulkar, were asked to rest by the team management after the busy home schedule.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), however, overruled its chief selector and said Ganguly will not be asked to explain his absence.

"We are not going to ask for an explanation," said BCCI secretary Niranjan Shah. "What can we do if he does not play?"

More could not be contacted on the issue.

Ganguly, who was embroiled in a row with coach Greg Chappell on the Zimbabwe tour in September, was sacked as captain in October and dropped from the home one-dayers against Sri Lanka and South Africa.

The left-hander was brought

back for the first two Tests against Sri Lanka before being dumped again for the third Test, a move that created a public outcry across India.

When Ganguly was picked in the 16-man squad for the Pakistan tour on Saturday, local media speculated that BCCI president Sharad Pawar had forced the selectors to include him in a bid to cool tempers.

Pawar, who defeated the powerful Jagmohan Dalmiya faction in last month's board election, held separate meetings with Ganguly, More, Chappell and senior pro Tendulkar before the selectors met in Mumbai.

Ganguly, India's most successful Test captain with 21 wins, led India to victory in both the Test and one-day series on the last tour of Pakistan in March-April 2004.

Pakistan, who toured India earlier this year, drew the Test series 1-1 and won the one-dayers 4-2.

The selectors said Ganguly, who has scored 5,150 runs in 86 Tests, was picked for Pakistan because of his experience.