

Mashrafee to be back today

SPORTS REPORTER

Ace paceman Mashrafee-Bin Mortaza returns to competitive cricket today after a four-month lay-off when Bangladesh play their first limited-overs match against visiting United Arab Emirates at the Khulna Divisional Stadium.

The right-arm Narail quick had to return home from Sri Lanka in September last year without playing any match due to a back injury and also missed domestic competitions.

Middle-order batsman Rajin Saleh will lead the strong second-string Bangladesh side, who will play another game at the same venue on Friday.

UAE team had earlier lost both their limited-overs games against Bangladesh Under-19 team at Bogra.

AFC team due here on Feb 8

BIDNEWS, Dhaka

A four-member delegation from the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) will arrive here on February 8 to discuss the sponsorship and other issues for the upcoming AFC Challenge Cup.

The AFC will directly rope in the sponsor for the tournament which will take place in Bangladesh and Nepal.

"They have already identified six to seven leading companies. Besides, they will also discuss many other things during their five-day visit," said BFF general secretary Anwarul Haque Hejal yesterday.

The Group B and Group C matches of the newly-introduced tournament will be held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium from March 5 to April 9 while the Group A and Group D matches will be held in Nepal.

Bangladesh have been placed in Group C along with Palestine, Cambodia and Guam while the Group B comprises Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and Brunei.

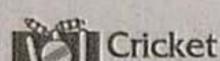
India, Chinese Taipei, Philippines and Afghanistan have been drawn in Group A while Group D includes Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Macao.



PHOTO: AFP

ANOTHER NEAR MISS: Pakistan's Younis Khan sweeps one on his way to scoring 194 on the fifth and final day of the second Test against India at the Iqbal Stadium in Faisalabad on Wednesday. He was run out on 199 in the first Lahore Test.

Younis misses 200 again as Test ends in a draw



APP, Faisalabad

Younis Khan scored a brilliant 194 and Mohammad Younis hit 126 in another Pakistan run feast before the second Test against India petered out in a draw here on Wednesday.

Younis and Younis put on 242 runs for the third wicket before Pakistan lost their last five wickets in the space of two runs to finally bring smiles to the faces of bowlers.

Pakistan crashed from 488-3 to 490-8 when the innings ended with captain Inzamamul Haq unable to bat because of a back injury and Shoib Malik mourning the death of his father early Wednesday.

India were 21-0 in their second innings when stumps were drawn on the high-scoring stalemate where Pakistan made 588 in their first innings and India replied with 603.

With the series locked 0-0, the rivals will have everything to play for in the third and final Test starting in Karachi on Sunday.

Inzamam and his Indian counterpart Rahul Dravid hoped they would get a result-oriented wicket for the decider.

"These have not been easy conditions for bowlers because the wicket was so heavily loaded in favour of batsmen," said Dravid.

"A draw seemed evident early in the match. Hopefully we will get conditions to force a result in Karachi."

Inzamam said he looked forward to playing the final Test on a sporting wicket.

"There was no way a result could be had here but I am confident we will get a sporting wicket in Karachi which will produce a result."

Younis, leading Pakistan in Inzamam's absence, hit 32 fours and a six during his 11th Test century and his fourth in as many Tests against India.

He scored 147 and 267 in India last year and made 199 in the first Test of the current series in Lahore to aggregate 984 runs in only five Tests against the arch-rivals.

Younis found a useful ally in

Yousuf who posted his 16th Test century after Pakistan had lost Kamran Akmal for 78 in the morning session.

Younis, 64 overnight, hit off-spinner Harbhajan Singh for his 14th boundary to bring up his century.

Akmal, who resumed at 59, fell to a miscued drive off paceman Irfan Pathan which was caught by Anil Kumble at gully.

Akmal, who scored a century in the first Test, hit 13 boundaries during his 152-ball knock and helped Younis add 129 for the second wicket.

Pakistan could have been in trouble had Kumble not spilled a two-handed chance off a miscued drive from Younis off paceman Rudra Pratap Singh when the batsman was on four.

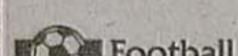
Yousuf, who scored 173 in Lahore, reached his century with a flick for two off Pathan before being run out in the second over after tea.

Yousuf compiled 11 boundaries and four sixes during his 179-ball knock and also completed 1,000 runs against India in 11 Tests.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 6

Cruciani talks of fitness

Nat'l camp now starts from Jan 31



SPORTS REPORTER

After enjoying holidays for more than three weeks, Bangladesh's Argentine football coach Andres Cruciani returned to Dhaka on Tuesday night to prepare his charges for busy international assignments.

Bangladesh football team will feature in the Asian Cup qualifying matches against Uzbekistan, Qatar and Hong Kong and in the AFC Challenge Cup Trophy at home from March to November.

Cruciani, who took a flight back home straight from the Zia International Airport after the SAFF Championship in Karachi

last month, was scheduled to announce the squad today. But he was not in a mood to talk with the reporters after embarking on a gruelling 36-hour trip.

Cruciani however had an extensive meeting with the National Team Management Committee at the BFF Bhaban and said that 'fitness' was his priority number one before his charges start kicking on January 30.

But the bad news for him that Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) was still struggling to find a place to start the residential camp, which was scheduled to start on January 27.

"The main problem for us at the moment is to find a place for the residential camp after BKSP was unavailable till February 12 for two

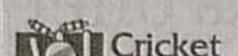
tournaments and renovation works," said Syed Hasan Kanan, secretary of NTMC.

"Cruciani is desperately looking for a place equipped with gym so that he could work on regaining his charges' fitness level after a long break. That's why we are planning to start the camp at the Army Stadium," Kanan said, adding that the national camp will now start on January 30.

He also informed that Cruciani wanted to announce a 22-member team instead of BFF's desired for 28-member probable.

"He was not interested to make a long list as he has only 17 days to prepare his side for Bangladesh's opening Asian Cup qualifying match against Uzbekistan on February 18," Kanan added.

Aus-SL return tie today



APP, Adelaide

Australia has dropped bowlers Brett Dorey and James Hopes for their return tri-series clash with Sri Lanka here Thursday after the pair were clobbered around the ground in their last encounter.

Instead they will bring in spinner Brad Hogg and install pace bowler Stuart Clark as super-sub for the crucial fixture.

Exactly halfway into the competition and after playing four matches apiece, Australia, on 10 points, are one clear of Sri Lanka with South Africa one point further adrift. Each side has beaten the other two.

In Sydney last Sunday, Sri Lanka humbled the world champions by 51 runs.

In that match, veteran opener Sanath Jayasuriya, who had arrived

in Australia just two days earlier after recovering from a shoulder injury, carved up the Australian attack in tandem with Kumar Sangakkara.

Hopes and Dorey, who was playing in his second one-day international, paid the heaviest price. Hopes was carted for 65 runs off six overs while Australian captain Ricky Ponting substituted Dorey after just four overs. He had been belted for 35 runs.

The Australians did not use veteran pace bowler Glenn McGrath, who was being rested under the selectors' policy of giving senior players a break.

On Thursday it will be Ponting's turn to take a rest and he will be replaced as skipper by wicket-keeper-opener Adam Gilchrist, who comes back after a week off.

The policy has drawn criticism from some former players, including former captain Steve Waugh, but Gilchrist defended it staunchly

SEE PAGE 13 COL 5

Mamun invited or not?

SPORTS REPORTER

When the much-talked about executive committee meeting of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) takes place at city's five-star hotel on Saturday, mercury will go up for obvious reasons.

The third meeting of Ali Asghar-led new elected body convened following media uproar would be an acid test for the president and his general secretary Mahabubul Anam with the EC members set to raise a few burning issues including the breaching of the constitution.

As per the board's 2003 constitution the executive committee was bound to hold at least one meeting in every three months but they failed to meet the deadline since the last meeting took place on October 20 last year.

It is understood that the board meeting was held back since the sensational disclosure of a secret deal between Asghar and Malaysia-based Aston Moore over the future TV and sponsorship rights that led to the resignation of the board's joint-secretary Reazuddin Al Mamun.

Although the board president overcame a rash of mistakes and ended Hingis' impressive comeback run at the Australian Open, winning 6-3, 2-6, 6-4 to reach the semifinals and take over the No. 1 ranking.

"It's been a long time since I played her," Clijsters said after Hingis, a three-time champion here, exited Rod Laver Arena to a loud ovation. "She's improved a lot since she was at her best."

But that was when the power surge in women's tennis was just picking up momentum. While Hingis showed that she wasn't overmatched from the baseline, her weak serve let her down, setting up easy winners for Clijsters.

Asked if she learned anything, Hingis said: "Speed is important."

Despite the loss, she said she was satisfied with her first Grand Slam event in three years.

"I think I can be proud of myself," Hingis said. "You just can't think you're going to go out there and win everything. Losing to Kim today still gives me so much to look forward to. I just have to work harder. I have to start believing."

The victory guaranteed that reigning US Open champion Clijsters will take over the top ranking from Lindsay Davenport, who lost in the quarterfinals.

"After the year I had last year, this is the cherry on the cake," she said. "It was never a goal. Keep working hard and good things happen."

She next plays No. 3 Amelie Mauresmo, who reeled off the last nine straight games in 6-3, 6-0 quarterfinal win over No. 7 Patty Schnyder of Switzerland.

Hingis quit the tour in 2002 due to persistent foot and heel injuries. Ranked No. 349 and playing on a wild-card entry, she returned to competitive tennis on January 2 and was 7-2 coming into the match.

But the best player that she had

Clijsters halts Hingis

Australian Open

AP, Melbourne

Martina Hingis found out she can still slug it out with the best of 'em. She also knows she has a lot of work to do.

Second-seeded Kim Clijsters overcame a rash of mistakes and ended Hingis' impressive comeback run at the Australian Open, winning 6-3, 2-6, 6-4 to reach the semifinals and take over the No. 1 ranking.

"It's been a long time since I played her," Clijsters said after Hingis, a three-time champion here, exited Rod Laver Arena to a loud ovation. "She's improved a lot since she was at her best."

But that was when the power surge in women's tennis was just picking up momentum. While Hingis showed that she wasn't overmatched from the baseline, her weak serve let her down, setting up easy winners for Clijsters.

Asked if she learned anything, Hingis said: "Speed is important."

Despite the loss, she said she was satisfied with her first Grand Slam event in three years.

"I think I can be proud of myself," Hingis said. "You just can't think you're going to go out there and win everything. Losing to Kim today still gives me so much to look forward to. I just have to work harder. I have to start believing."

The victory guaranteed that reigning US Open champion Clijsters will take over the top ranking from Lindsay Davenport, who lost in the quarterfinals.

"After the year I had last year, this is the cherry on the cake," she said. "It was never a goal. Keep working hard and good things happen."

She next plays No. 3 Amelie Mauresmo, who reeled off the last nine straight games in 6-3, 6-0 quarterfinal win over No. 7 Patty Schnyder of Switzerland.

Hingis quit the tour in 2002 due to persistent foot and heel injuries. Ranked No. 349 and playing on a wild-card entry, she returned to competitive tennis on January 2 and was 7-2 coming into the match.

But the best player that she had

beaten here was 30th-seeded Vera Zvonareva in the first round, and everyone was eagerly waiting to see what would happen when she faced a top player like Clijsters.

Clijsters was picking up easy points off her serve and pouncing on Hingis' weak serves, which often were 20 mph slower.

Although she faltered early and often found herself lunging for stinging groundstrokes deep in the corners, Hingis stayed in the match with her defence.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 8

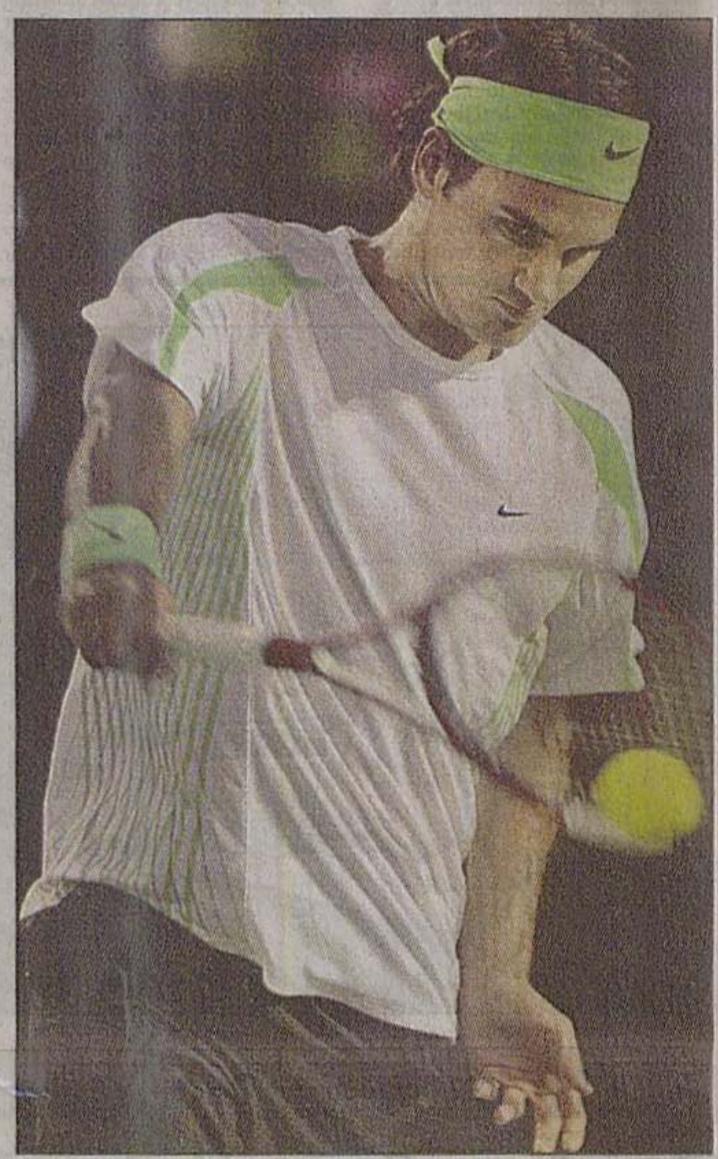


PHOTO: AFP

World number one Roger Federer of Switzerland plays a backhand against Nikolay Davydenko of Russia in the quarterfinals of the Australian Open in Melbourne on Wednesday.

Federer, Kiefer in semis

Australian Open

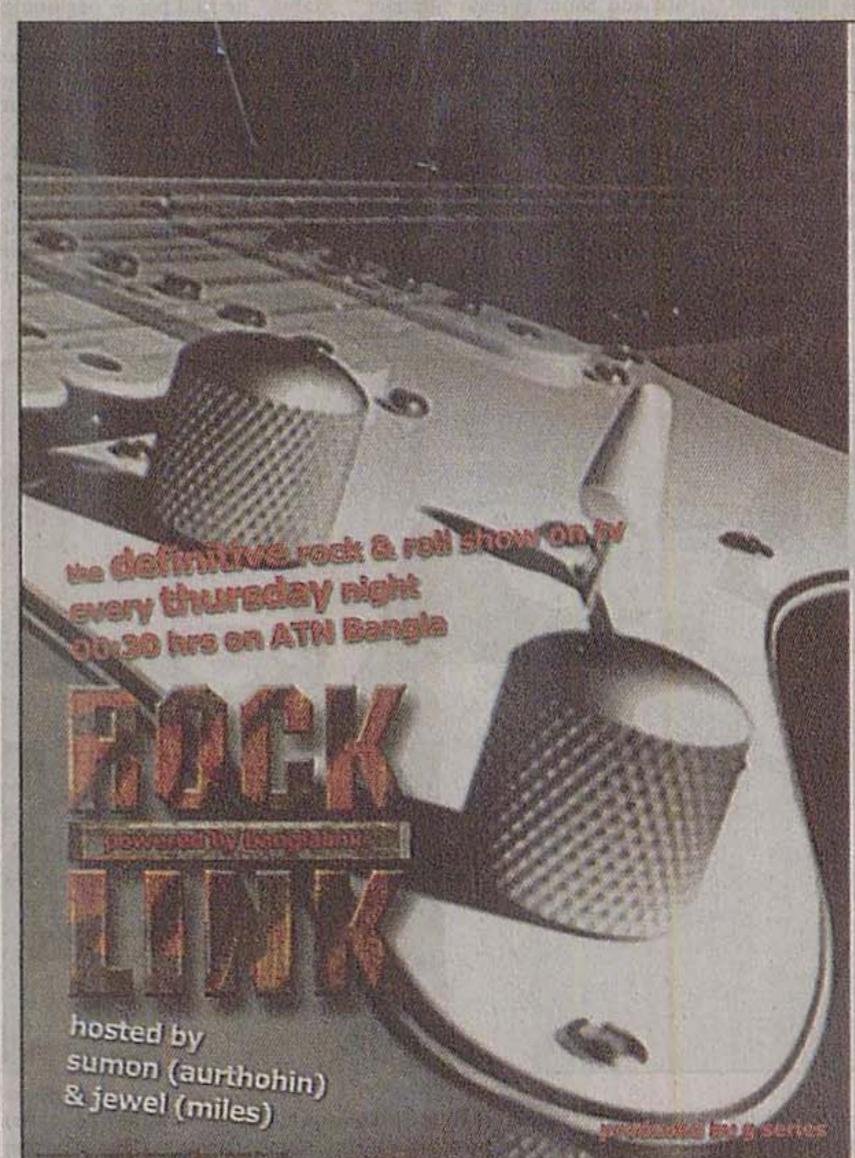
AP, Melbourne

breakers to finish off the gritty Russian, whose tactics of slowing down the play forced Federer out of his rhythm.

"I always have tough matches against Nikolay and tonight was the same. He plays well on this surface and he definitely pushed me tonight," said Federer, who made an uncharacteristically high 52 unforced errors to Davydenko's 48.

Kiefer clinched his first Grand Slam semifinal appearance with an epic five-set win over Frenchman Sébastien Grosjean, 6-3, 0-6, 6-4, 6-7, 8-6, in the longest match here in 15 years at 4hr 48min.

But Federer needed two tie-



bangalalink

www.bangalalink.com

Lindsay Davenport (American tennis star)

"I'm not going to argue that I deserve to be number one. I don't want to disrespect it by saying it's low on the priority, but it's not up in my priority list."

After being knocked out of the Australian Open quarterfinals.

What to WATCH

ESPN