

DAYS TO GO



Did U Know?

Six countries entered the bidding for the first World Cup in 1930. Italy, Hungary, The Netherlands, Sweden, Spain and Uruguay. FIFA awarded the tournament to the tiny South American country (Uruguay) after they offered to pay all expenses for travel and hotels for participating countries.



Steve McClaren
(England manager)
"This is the proudest day of my life...once the opportunity came, there was no way I was going to turn it down."

What to WATCH

ESPN

South Africa v New Zealand

3rd Test, Day Three

Live at 1:30 pm

TEN Sports

West Indies vs Zimbabwe

4th ODI

Live at 7:30 pm

Lara refuses to disregard tourists

REUTERS, Georgetown

West Indies captain Brian Lara declined to write off struggling Zimbabwe ahead of the next two one-day internationals in Georgetown this weekend.

The West Indies won the first two games in the seven-match series by five wickets and 98 runs respectively in Antigua last weekend.

Zimbabwe were also beaten by a University of the West Indies Vice-Chancellor's XI in a tour match in Antigua on Wednesday, but Lara refused to consign the visitors to the scrapheap.

"They are playing decent cricket," Lara told reporters. "I think they've got a couple of very good, talented players in the team and something that they can work on for the future."

"I still think they are an international team, we expect them to compete and that's what they are doing."

Persistent showers in the days leading up to the matches have left ground authorities with a difficult job in trying to get the playing area ready.

The rain abated on Thursday evening, but there were more showers early on Friday and a forecast for scattered weekend thunderstorms were further discouraging signs.

The West Indies had to cancel their Thursday afternoon net session at the Everest Club and Friday's planned training for both teams looked in grave doubt.

The hosts have omitted all-rounders Dwayne Bravo and Ian Bradshaw to bring in uncapped opening batsman Sewnarine Chattergoon, left-arm spinner Dave Mohammed and pace-man Tino Best.

Erratum

Dear Readers,

We apologise for a minor mistake that arose in our World Cup countdown. Logistic trouble resulted in us misplacing the number by a single day. The situation has been duly resolved and there are 33 days as yet to go till the start of the football fiesta in Munich on June 9.

Sports Editor

DHAKA SUNDAY MAY 7, 2006

Weak bid still the winner

Cricket

PTI, New Delhi

Indian Cricket Board on Saturday said the Asian bloc had managed to win the World Cup bid ahead of Australia and New Zealand despite none of the factors being in their favour.

Although BCCI President Sharad Pawar did not say what eventually clinched the deal in Asia's favour, he conceded that they were initially apprehensive of bagging the 2011 World Cup as the Australasian bid was "well prepared" and their own compliance document had missed the ICC deadline.

"I must say our position was weak. Australia and New Zealand had submitted their bid in time and it was well prepared," Pawar said in his first press conference after Asia won the rights to host the mega event.

"They had all the necessary guarantees from the respective governments. In fact, we learnt from them." Pawar also said the ICC had sent letters to the Board about the Compliance Document last year but full details were not known then and the correspondence was lost during the change of regime in the BCCI.

"It was only when we met with the PCB officials in Lahore that we

got to know the full details, and we immediately sent a communication to the ICC," he said.

I S Bindra, former BCCI president, said although it was previously agreed in principle that Asia would host every third World Cup, there was confusion over from when this arrangement would come into play.

The Indian board also announced that it would spend substantial sums to renovate its grounds before co-hosting the 2011 World Cup, its president Sharad Pawar said on Friday.

BCCI is also in early discussions to build a new stadium in the national capital, he told reporters. The government has allotted 30 acres (12.14 hectare) of land for the purpose.

"I have to admit one thing, our stadium standard is not up to the mark," Pawar said.

"We have to improve our grounds, wickets and stadiums."

"Because of the good monetary support the board got, we are going to invest substantially and provide permanent international standard infrastructure in India."

Most Indian venues are owned by the government with poor seating and toilet facilities often making it a nightmare for the cricket-mad public which flocks in for every game involving the national team.

Sehwag calls for rest

CRICINFO, Undated

India's cricketers have joined the debate over player burnout, with Virender Sehwag, the vice-captain, telling reporters that the board (BCCI) had been asked to reduce the number of matches played by the team.

"There is too much cricket," Sehwag said. "Players need a break because they may burn out. They need time for fitness also, time to think about their game and to recharge their batteries. If we want to win the World Cup, we need every player to be fit."

Sehwag added that several players, including Rahul Dravid, the captain, had taken the matter up with the BCCI but had been told that there was nothing the board can do because the cricket calendar had already been fixed. But he said that the board had promised to give the players adequate breaks after the commitments fixed were fulfilled.

He also explained that players needed three or four weeks rest to recover between series. "If a player gets a three to four-month break in a year, it is good for players and good for the BCCI also."

Hattricks hog the day

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

There was a goals galore in the banglalink tiger trophy National School Football Championship matches at different venues across the country yesterday.

Mangalgram High School of Pabna pulled off the biggest margin with a gigantic 10-0 victory against Halsha Secondary School of Kusthia at the Pabna Stadium thanks to three hattricks by Iqbal Hossain, Sujon Hossain and Shwapan Hossain.

At the same venue, Maulanabad Secondary School of Jhenidah rode on two hattricks from Towhidul and Liton Hossain to a massive 7-1 victory against AG Academy of Magura.

At the Nilphamari Stadium the goal fest continued as Shamim Miah struck five goals and Noor Amin scored three as Gaighanta School & College of Rangpur drubbed



ZERO GRAVITY: Mexico's Omar Bravo (C) and Venezuelan Oswaldo Vizcarrondo are airborne during a friendly match at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

STANCHART SCHOOL CRICKET

Final round from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The eight-team knockout round of the Standard Chartered Young Tigers National School Cricket tournament begins at four different venues in the city today.

Dhaka Metro Zone champions Kalindi High School, runners-up BKSP, Chittagong Government High School, Blue Bird High School (Syhet), Mushata School (Rajshahi), Manikganj Government High School (Dhaka), Udyan High School (Barisal) and Khulna Zilla School (Khulna) will compete in the quarterfinals today.

The semifinals are scheduled for May 9 and the final will be take place at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium on May 11.

Meanwhile, a total of 328 schools from 40 districts took part in the preliminary round.

BCB BRAC BANK ACADEMY CUP

Khadem brings back Navy Blue

SPORTS REPORTER

Navy Blue were brought back to the game by a superb hundred by one-drop Sirajullah Khadem in the second day of the three-day match against Light Blue in the BCB BRAC Bank Academy Cup cricket tournament at the Mirpur Stadium yesterday.

Khadem hit 101 off 131 balls, studded with 17 boundaries as Navy Blue, 244 for 6, gained a 165-run lead at stumps. He also picked up four wickets in the Light Blue first innings.

Light Blue were bowled out for 210 runs as Dhiman Ghosh offered resistance with a steady half-century.

Resuming at 140 for 6, Arafat Sunny scored 35 but his dismissal sparked a collapse as they were bowled out in only the 28th over of the day.

Light Blue were replying to a low first innings effort by Navy Blue, who were bowled out for just 131.

Ntini hungry for more

AFP, Johannesburg

Makhaya Ntini ripped through the New Zealand batting as South Africa grabbed a commanding position on the first day of the third and final Test against New Zealand at the Wanderers on Friday.

Ntini went on to claim his fourth five-wicket haul of the home season, taking his total of wickets to 38 in six matches, but warned he hadn't yet reached his peak.

Fast bowler Ntini took five for 35 as New Zealand were bowled out for 119 after being sent in to bat.

Ntini had good support from new ball partner Dale Steyn, who took three for 43, as New Zealand were bowled out shortly before tea on a pitch which offered bounce and extravagant seam movement.

Ronaldo not envious of Ronaldinho



AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Real Madrid star Ronaldo said he was not envious that Ronaldinho was considered the best player in the world and also predicted Brazil would win their sixth World Cup title, Veja magazine reported on Saturday.

Ronaldo could eclipse Barcelona's Ronaldinho in one respect at the June 9 to July finals in Germany however.

He needs only three more goals to become the World Cup finals' top scorer of all time. He currently has 12, level with the legendary Pele, but needs to get 15 to overhaul the record of 14 by Germany's Gerd Muller.

When asked if he was envious of Ronaldinho, Ronaldo, who just recently scored his 100th goal for Real Madrid against Real Sociedad, said: "No, because each of us does our own thing. Whatever he does does not detract from me as a player and vice-versa. But I am proud to be able to call him a friend and I hope he has learned from me in terms of

'I can adjust'

INTERNET, undated

Michael Owen insists he can adjust his game to accommodate whoever is selected alongside him at the World Cup. With Wayne Rooney extremely unlikely to feature, Owen said: "I don't think it matters what type of style I play with. If you have quality enough to play in an international team, you should be able to adapt to whoever is playing alongside you."



Mexico down Venezuela

REUTERS, Pasadena

A second-half penalty by striker Omar Bravo earned Mexico a comfortable 1-0 win over Venezuela in a World Cup warm-up match at the Rosebowl on Friday.

Bravo beat Venezuela goalkeeper Renny Vega in the 58th minute after fellow striker Jesus Arellano had been brought down as he ran on to a well-timed pass from midfielder Antonio Naelson.

Mexico, whose best World Cup performances were quarterfinal appearances at the 1970 and 1986 events they hosted, dominated a match that attracted a crowd of 58,147.

The closest Venezuela came to scoring was in the 71st minute when a close-range shot from midfielder Jesus Gomez was superbly saved by diving goalkeeper Oswaldo Sanchez.

Mexico, who play Iran in Nuremberg in their opening Group D match at the World Cup finals on June 11, ended their U.S. tour with four wins and one defeat.

Their victories came against Norway, Ghana, Paraguay and Venezuela with the sole loss inflicted by South Korea.

The Mexicans have two more

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Cricket

AFP, Johannesburg

A five-wicket haul by fast bowler Chris Martin and an improved second innings batting performance brought New Zealand back into contention on the second day of the third and final Test against South Africa at the Wanderers Stadium Saturday.

Martin took five for 37 as South Africa were bowled out for 186 in reply to New Zealand's first innings total of 119. New Zealand were 148 for three in their second innings at tea, a lead of 81.

South African all-rounder Jacques Kallis took two wickets, taking his Test career total to 200. Kallis and former West Indian great Garfield Sobers are the only players to have scored 8000 runs and taken 200 wickets in Tests.

New Zealand quickly lost Jamie How at the start of their second innings and were 40 for two when Kallis dismissed Michael Papps in the last over before lunch.

But captain Stephen Fleming (37), Scott Styris (32 not out) and Nathan Astle (37 not out) took New Zealand ahead with determined batting on a pitch which continued to help the bowlers, although playing easier than it had in the morning.

Fleming was the only man out in the afternoon. He became Kallis' 200th victim when he edged an attempted drive to second slip.

South Africa started the day in a strong position at 133 for four but

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PHOTO: AFP

South Africa batsman Dale Steyn ducks away from the ball during the second day of the third Test against New Zealand in Johannesburg on Saturday.