

Mukles ton goes awry

SPORTS REPORTER

Seven matches were held across the country on the opening day of the Dhaka Bank Under-19 National Youth cricket tournament yesterday.

This is the 26th edition of the competition and it is taking place after a three-year break.

Mukles hit the first century of the tournament but it went in vain as Natore lost to Rajshahi by two wickets at Bogra. Mukles hit a patient 103 off 151 balls as Natore scored 203. But Rajshahi chased down the target with Arif scoring 65.

In nearby Natore, Naogaon sneaked past Bogra by a single wicket.

Munshiganj defeated Dhaka by three wickets, even though Dhaka leg-spinner Shakil took six for 29 at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium. But Riad's 45 was enough to take Munshiganj past the lowly Dhaka total of 156.

Gazipur also had tensed moments before they won by three wickets against Mymensingh at Faridpur.

Barisal won comfortably by seven wickets against Bhola at Barguna, while Bandarban beat Khagrachari by five wickets at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

Our Correspondent adds: Moulvibazar defeated Habiganj by 22 runs at the Habiganj Stadium.

Moulvibazar batted first and scored 205 runs, with Rahul scoring 57.

Habiganj were then bowled out for 159.

Pathan not interested in ranking

PTI, New Delhi

Irfan Pathan on Wednesday said if he had reached the top of all-rounders' rankings it was because he never bothered to be there.

"I am the number three all-rounder in the world now. If it has happened, it's because I never thought about it," the Indian pace spearhead said.

"I don't believe in rankings and that has helped me perform well. So, I am going to continue that way, I don't want to think about the rankings." Pathan is third in the ODI all-rounders' list, behind Shaun Pollock and Andrew Flintoff, and fourth after Flintoff, Jacques Kallis and Pollock in Tests in the ICC Players' rankings.

Pathan, here on a promotional visit, said he had a similar approach about talks of being the best all-rounder India has ever produced.

"I started as a bowler but even when I was playing first-class cricket and junior cricket, I have always enjoyed my batting. But I always say to myself, consider myself as a bowler (first)," said the 21-year-old Bardoa player.

Whatmore

FROM PAGE 17 selectors sufficiently over the next few months during Academy matches and A team matches to earn their promotion into the top flight. And those players that do earn the promotion will certainly be able to strengthen the team because they will be multi-skilled players," he said.

"So in many ways this is an exciting period for Bangladesh cricket and particularly in the one-day form with which we will be only involved with in the next 12 months leading up to the World Cup," Whatmore continued.

He also argued that it is not case for the present side that they are beaten before start the match.

"I've read in a recent English newspaper article that there's a person who feels that the team is beaten before we start. Well that may have been the case some time ago but that's certainly not the case now. Our team has played against some good opposition over the last couple of years and have pushed and on certain occasions have beaten them. We honestly feel now when we take the field that we have an equal chance of upsetting the opposition and win matches," he explained.

Lagerback pulls

FROM PAGE 20 (Heerenveen), Teddy Lucic (BK Hacken), Olof Melberg (Aston Villa), Karl Svensson (IFK Gothenburg), Mikael Nilsson (Panathinaikos), Fredrik Stenman (Bayer Leverkusen).

Midfielders: Daniel Andersson (Malmö), Niclas Alexandersson (IFK Gothenburg), Kim Källström (Stade Rennes), Tobias Linderoth (FC Copenhagen), Christian Wilhelmsson (Anderlecht), Anders Svensson (Elfsborg), Fredrik Ljungberg (Arsenal).

Forwards: Marcus Allback (FC Copenhagen), Johan Elmander (Brøndby), Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Juventus), Mattias Jonson (Djurgården), Henrik Larsson (Barcelona), Markus Rosenberg (Ajax Amsterdam).



PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lanka spinner Muttiah Muralitharan (2nd L) laughs with teammates before a training session at the Lord's in London on Wednesday prior to their first Test against England.

Sanath set for Test return

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Sanath Jayasuriya met with Ashantha de Mel, Sri Lanka's new chairman of selectors, on Wednesday morning to discuss his possible return to Test cricket during the current tour of England which starts on Thursday at Lord's.

The 36-year-old is now poised for a recall, possibly in time for the second Test at Edgbaston starting on May 24.

Duleep Mendis, Sri Lanka Cricket's chief executive, denied a report appearing in the Daily Mirror that claimed that the decision to send Jayasuriya to England had already been made, saying that he first needed a letter confirming that Jayasuriya had reconsidered his decision to retire.

"At this stage I have not

received a letter," Mendis said. "When I do, the selection committee will have to meet to confirm and then his selection would have to be ratified with the sports ministry. Only then could arrangements be made for him to join the England



SANATH JAYASURIYA

tour."

Jayasuriya retired from Test cricket in April, midway through a home series against Pakistan, when the previous selection committee, headed by Lalith Kaluperuma, communicated their plans to blood new openers during the England Test series. Jayasuriya was offered the chance of a dignified farewell Test or an unceremonious sacking.

But de Mel, appointed last week, made it clear that he wanted Jayasuriya to reconsider his decision to retire: "When the selectors knew that Marvan (Atapattu) is not going to make it to England with his back problem they should have continued with Jayasuriya. He just played a county season in England last year and is the only Sri Lankan to have scored a double hundred in England. What more credentials do you want?"

Young England at Lord's

Cricket

AFP, London

England head into the first Test against Sri Lanka without the injured quintet of skipper Michael Vaughan, left-arm spinner Ashley Giles and pace bowlers Stephen Harmison, Simon Jones and James Anderson.

Up until recently, such a sick list would have been the cause for near-total gloom and despondency.

But it is a measure of the renewed confidence coursing through English cricket following last year's Ashes victory that the prevailing mood is instead one of bold optimism at the prospect of several fresh faces taking a bow at Lord's for the opening match of a three-Test series.

Indeed come Thursday's toss England could be fielding as many as five players who are making their home Test debut in batsman Alastair Cook, left-arm spinner Monty Panesar and the pace bowling trio of Sajid Mahmood, Liam Plunkett and Jon Lewis.

And if recent England debuts are anything to go by, hopes for the 'newboys' are high, especially under the encouraging leadership of stand-in captain and key all-rounder Andrew Flintoff, who proved himself a fine skipper during the 1-1 drawn Test series away to India earlier this year.

Alaister Cook, 21, made a century on Test debut against India in the first Test in Nagpur in March in his more familiar role as an opener.

And later in the series Panesar snared batting great Sachin Tendulkar and the gifted Rahul Dravid with guile and turn.

However, in what will be the earliest Test ever to be staged in England, it is pace bowling that is likely to be decisive with the pitch set to assist the seamers.

Not that Sri Lanka's pace attack is negligible with experienced left-armers Chaminda Vaas, Nuwan Zoysa and Lasith Malinga, with his distinctive round-arm action, all capable of generating pace and bounce.

But the bigger worry for the side is their batting.

No-one managed a fifty against England A and the team, in the absence of injured captain Marvan Atapattu, will be looking to the likes of replacement skipper Mahela Jayawardene and combative wicketkeeper Kumar Sangakkara for runs.

But at least off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran, Sri Lanka's greatest cricketer with a mammoth 611 Test wickets from 103 matches, has returned to England following the funeral of his aunt.

"He's very comfortable. His preparation is meticulous," said Moody.

Not that England's batting tryo was unduly overawed by the prospect of facing Murali for the first time.

"I've watched him on TV, so I know what he does," said Cook. "Obviously it's a different perspective when you face him, but it gives you an idea."

Truly, there's nothing quite like the confidence of a 21-year-old.

TEAMS
ENGLAND (from): Andrew Flintoff (captain), Ian Bell, Paul Collingwood, Alastair Cook, Matthew Hoggard, Geraint Jones, Jon Lewis, Sajid Mahmood, Monty Panesar, Kevin Pietersen, Liam Plunkett, Andrew Strauss, Marcus Trescothick.

SRI LANKA (from): Mahela Jayawardene (captain), Upul Tharanga, Michael Vandort, Kumar Sangakkara, Thilan Samaraweera, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Chamara Kapugedera, Prasanna Jayawardene, Farveez Maharoof, Chaminda Vaas, Malinga Bandara, Muttiah Muralidaran, Nuwan Zoysa, Lasith Malinga, Nuwan Kulasekara,

Jehan Mubarak.

BFF announces

FROM PAGE 17 "The camp will continue till last week of June and after that the final team will be announced. The federation is planning to send the final squad to Bangkok for one month's training," said secretary of the team management committee Sayeed Hassan Kanan.

SQUAD GOALKEEPERS: SM Shakil (Arambagh), Atiqul Islam Tareq (Brothers) and Mazharul Islam Himel (Badda).

DEFENDERS: Ariful Islam (Youngmen's), Shoab Hossain Sunny (Rahmatganj), Arafat Ali Ronny (Mohammedan), Abul Kashem (Victoria), Zahurul Islam (Farashganj), Siraji (Brothers), Wali Faisal (Abahani), Ripon Khan (Youngmen's) and Atiqur Rahman (Sheikh Russel).

MIDFIELDERS: Aman Aziz (Mohammedan), Shahriar Abdullah Rintu (Arambagh), Rashed Ahmed Pappu (Muktijoddha), Zahed Parvez Chowdhury (Abahani), Mehdi Hasan Ujjal (Abahani), Abdullah Al Parvez (Abahani), Zahid Hossain (Mohammedan), Nasirul Islam (Badda), Maruf Ahmed (Sheikh Russel) and Faisal (Arambagh).

STRIKERS: Zahid Hasan Emily (Brothers), Mehedi Hasan Tapu (Brothers), Abu Mursheed (Arambagh), Mohammad Robin (Youngmen's) and Mithun Chowdhury (Victoria).

BCCI denies Sehwaq gag

BBC ONLINE, undated

India's cricket board has denied giving opening batsman Virender Sehwaq a rap across the knuckles for making public comments about the team.

Earlier this week, Sehwaq said he hoped former captain Sourav Ganguly would regain his place in the national squad.

"It's not as sensational as it's being made out to be.

"It was not a warning, just our advice to him. There is no question of taking action against Sehwaq," said Niranjan Shah, secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

"Sehwaq called me to seek permission to take his wife on the West Indies tour and I agreed. I also told him not to speak to the media on selection and policy matters."

Ganguly was dropped from the Test and one-day squads earlier this year following a public dispute with national team coach Greg Chappell.

His continued omission continues to divide opinion among pundits and fans.

Former Test players Chetan Chauhan and Erapalli Prasanna have criticised the BCCI for trying to gag Sehwaq.

But ex-captain Gundappa Viswanath said contentious issues should not be discussed in the media.

"These matters have to be settled directly between the players and the board."

The selectors, meanwhile, will name the squad for four Tests which follow next month after the third one-day on May 23.

Murali plots Freddie fall

BBC ONLINE, undated

Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralidaran plans to spoil close friend Andrew Flintoff's first home Test as England captain. The pair will be on opposite sides at Lord's on Thursday after playing together in the past for Lancashire and an ICC World XI.

"Friendship will count for nothing during the match as we will both be batting for our country," said Muralidaran.

"He will be the most important wicket for us because when he gets going it is very difficult to stop him."

Muralidaran missed Sri Lanka's 10-wicket defeat by England A at Worcester after returning home for an aunt's funeral.

"We have quite a young team and we can't expect too much of them. It's a talented group of players and they will gain great experience on this trip."

"There are four or five in particular who could impress some of you who have not seen our newcomers in the team," said Muralidaran.

Muralidaran has never played a Test at Lord's before but is confident he will do well.

"I took nine wickets on the ground for Kent against Middlesex in 2003 and I have played three one-day internationals there, and I took five wickets in one of those so at least the signs are good for me," he added.

Cahill selection

FROM PAGE 17 Australia's top players, who are mostly based in Europe, have often found themselves caught in a tug-of-war between the Australian federation and their European paymasters.

Clubs have been reluctant to allow the footballers to return home during the season, sparking a series of bitter rows with Australia.

Cahill himself went against the wishes of Everton by making himself available for two friendlies last year but Arnold said he did not expect any problems about Australia's decision to choose Cahill for the World Cup.

"Those days of club versus country are gone," Arnold said.

"Logistically we haven't changed, we're still Australia, we still live so far away from the rest of the world in football terms and it's normal that the premier league managers are going to worry about their players when they pay them so much money."

"But we have no concerns about Tim and he'll be at the World Cup."

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Mark Schwarzer (Middlesbrough), Zeljko Kalac (AC Milan), Ante Covic (Hammarby).

Defenders: Michael Beauchamp (Central Coast), Craig Moore (Newcastle United), Lucas Neill (Blackburn Rovers), Tony Popovic (Crystal Palace), Mark Milligan (Sydney FC).

Midfielders: Marco Bresciano (Parma), Tim Cahill (Everton), Scott Chipperfield (Basel), Jason Culina (PSV Eindhoven), Brett Emerton (Blackburn Rovers), Vince Grella (Parma), Stan Lazaridis (free agent), Josip Skoko (Stoke City on loan from Wigan Athletic), Mile Sterjovski (Basel), Luke Wilkshire (Bristol City).

Strikers: John Aloisi (Alaves), Harry Kewell (Liverpool), Archie Thompson (PSV Eindhoven), Mark Viduka (Middlesbrough), Josh Kennedy (Dinamo Dresden)

Nadal keeps moving

Tennis

AFP, Rome

Second seed Rafael Nadal began the defence of his Rome Masters title with a hard-fought 6-1, 2-6, 6-2 first round win over fellow Spaniard and practice partner Carlos Moya here on Tuesday.

Victory for Nadal, the reigning French Open champion, took his head-to-head score with Moya to 3-2 and kept him on course to break the all-time record for consecutive claycourt victories, currently held by

Guillermo Vilas.

World number two Nadal now has 48 straight wins on his preferred surface, five less than Argentine Vilas whose record was set in 1977. If he retains the title here, Nadal will equal Vilas' record.

Last beaten on clay in April, 2005 when he lost to Igor Andreiev in the Valencia quarterfinals, Nadal next faces Italian Filippo Volandri, who defeated British number one Andy Murray 6-4, 6-4.

Nadal admitted Moya, the 2004 Rome champion, was a very awkward opponent.

"The first set was easier than I thought, but the second set was



PHOTO: AFP

World No.2 Rafael Nadal makes a forehand return against fellow Spaniard Carlos Moya during the first round match of the Rome Masters on Tuesday.



BITS AND BOBS

FROM PAGE 20

already won and then...it was a lesson, just like Euro 2004," he said.

At Euro 2004 hosts Portugal beat Spain, England and Holland but ended up losing twice to eventual winners, lowly-ranked Greece.

Striking worry for Zico

REUTERS, Tokyo

Japan coach Zico has often struggled to explain why his trigger-shy strikers seem to vanish into thin air during matches.

Frequently in the Brazilian's four years in charge, it has appeared as if his strike force had been sucked into another vortex or the victims of a body-snatching raid from space.

Zico was cursing his misfortune again after Tuesday's 2-1 defeat by Bulgaria in a friendly in Osaka, but he could hardly put the blame on supernatural forces.

Japan's forwards, Keiji Tamada and Seichiro Maki, both had solid games.

Maki scored a second-half equaliser to boost his claims for inclusion in the World Cup squad while Tamada's lightning pace was a constant threat.

But Japan's lack of a cutting edge in front of goal will be giving Zico serious concern just over a month before they take on Australia in their World Cup opener on June 12.

Substitute Hristo Yanev's injury-time free kick gave the Bulgarians all three points in the first game of the three-team Kirin Cup tournament.

"That was a slap in the face right at the end," said Zico. "We didn't deserve that. But we didn't take our chances and they punished us."

The Asian champions play Scotland on Saturday in their last home game before leaving for Germany May 26. Another defeat could seriously damage morale.

Though Zico is a keen tinkerer, keeping faith with Maki and Tamada in Saitama looks the best option.

Maki celebrated his third goal in eight Japan appearances with a sheepish grin after substitute Alex's shot had ricocheted in off his ball but it may have earned him a ticket to Germany.

Japan are drawn alongside holders Brazil, Croatia and Australia in Group F at the World Cup and Maki's height and physical presence could offer Zico something different.

With former Sampdoria striker Atsushi Yanagisawa recovering from a broken metatarsal and Yokohama's Tatsuhiko Kubo another worry, Maki's emergence could be a real silver lining.

Sven defends Hargreaves selection

INTERNET, undated

Sven-Goran Eriksson has defended his decision to take Owen Hargreaves to the World Cup.

Hargreaves has not played international football since England's

1-0 defeat in Northern Ireland in September. He was forced to miss the last three squads with a groin injury, which needed surgery in February but is back in action for Bayern Munich. Eriksson watched the versatile midfielder last week and it was enough to earn him a place in his World Cup squad of 23.

The England boss said: "After his injury, he's now played the last 11 matches for Bayern. I went over to see him last week against Stuttgart and he was one of the best on the pitch, playing as a sitting midfielder. He is also versatile."

When fit, Hargreaves has never failed to make an Eriksson squad since his first call-up for the friendly against Australia in 2003.

The England boss sees him as someone who can help close a game, coming on for a more attack-minded midfielder when the team are protecting a lead.

Hargreaves has won 22 of his 29 caps as a substitute. He can also offer cover as an emergency right-back.

Eriksson crammed his World Cup squad with nine midfielders, opting to risk one less defender than normal and take only four strikers, despite fitness doubts over Michael Owen and Wayne Rooney.

175,000 for Scholl inclusion

AFP, Frankfurt

The clamour to include Bayern Munich midfielder Mehmet Scholl in Germany's final World Cup squad continues to grow with 175,000 Germans signing a petition for his inclusion.

The petition is entitled 'Scholl for Germany' and the two students behind the idea, Frank Enders and Sebastian Glemser will hand the list of 175,000 signatures over to national coach Jurgen Klinsmann on Friday.

Klinsmann will name his final 23-man World Cup squad three days later on May 15 - the FIFA deadline for all squads.

The 35-year-old Scholl is not expected to be included as just a month ago Klinsmann said there was no place for the Bayern playmaker.

Scholl, the first player of Turkish descent to represent Germany, won 36 caps for the national team before retiring in 2002.

This season he has turned back the clock with some stellar substitute displays to win a record eighth Bundesliga title with Bayern.

However, last month Scholl was omitted from a provisional 30-man squad named by Klinsmann and the German team boss said at the time: "We are delighted by Mehmet's performances at Bayern over the last few weeks."

"But our main focus is the tight group of 28 to 30 players. These have the priority."

much more difficult as he knows how to play me," said the 19-year-old Mallorca.

"When you practice with somebody every day it's inevitable that he's going to have an idea what to expect. I've practised with him since I was 14.

"Carlos is one of the best clay players in the world. He came here unseeded and I am number two, so this was the worst first round match I could possibly have."

Nadal said he was sure Moya would not hold a grudge against him.

"On the court we both want to win, but outside of the court we are good friends."

Argentine number four seed David Nalbandian, whose win at Estoril last week lifted him to third in the world rankings, needed a third set to shake off Spain's Fernando Vicente, while American fifth seed Andy Roddick crushed Romanian Victor Hanesescu 6-1, 6-0.

Roddick's victory gave him the chance to avenge his surprise defeat in the Australian Open against Marcos Baghdatis, who defeated Belgium's Olivier Rochus in straight sets to earn his second round place.

Roddick said he was relishing the prospect of facing the 20-year-old Cypriot.

"It's a different match-up than in Australia. He kind of came out of nowhere there and played really well. So I'm excited to get a chance to try to turn it around this time."

Russian sixth seed Nikolay Davydenko defeated Serbian Boris Pashanki 6-1, 6-4, while Argentina fared badly with eighth seed Gaston Gaudio and ninth seed Guillermo Coria both crashing out.

Former French Open champion Gaudio lost to Belgium's Xavier Malisse, and Coria, beaten here by Nadal in last year's final, was sent packing by Spanish qualifier Ruben Ramirez.

Great Britain's Tim Henman left the home crowd disappointed by defeating Italian Alessio Di Mauro, while the Czech Republic enjoyed a trouble-free day with 14th seed Radek Stepanek overcoming Feliciano Lopez and Tomas Berdych beating Thailand's Paradorn Srichaphan.

Fearless Crespo

FROM PAGE 20

"I'm very proud of this season," he said. "It has been difficult for me to live in England but I'm very proud because we won the trophy and we have great fans and a great group of players."

"When you have this combination you normally win something and we won the league. When you win something you want to keep on winning things and I see no reason why I can't carry on at the World Cup."

Crespo, though, was unsure whether he would be staying at Chelsea.

"I don't know what will happen next season but I was very happy there," he said.

Party tricks

FROM PAGE 17

September 2004.

The 21-year-old's deft dribbling, lightning acceleration and neat passing opens up defenses and thrills crowds. But in a test of his versatility, he has had to juggle divergent demands for Man U and with the national side.

With Portugal, he is a second striker, supporting center-forward Pauleta.

Ronaldo can still look inexperienced. Europe's soccer governing body gave him a one-match ban for using an obscene gesture in a Champions League game last December after his patience was tested by jeering Portuguese fans throughout the match.

Ronaldo's father died on the eve of a World Cup qualifying game in Moscow and he played anyway. Then in October, he was arrested by British police after allegations he sexually assaulted a woman at a London hotel. He did not face charges due to insufficient evidence.

Sirajganj school

FROM PAGE 17

of Jamalpur 3-2 at the Sirajganj Stadium yesterday.

Younus, Bari and Mukter scored one goal each for the winners while Milon and Nazrul netted for the losing side.

In the day's other matches, Kanial Khata High School of Nilphamari blanked Bangladesh Railway CP High School of Lalmarinhat 3-0. Alifdanga AZ Pilot High School of Faridpur drew 1-1 with Madaripur Public Institute 1-1 and Maulanabad Secondary School of Jhenidah ended 1-1 with Mangalgram High School of Pabna to confirm their berths in the zonal finals.

Mamun Sharif slammed a hattrick as AG Academy of Magura outplayed Halsa Secondary School of Kushtia 4-0 at the Pabna Stadium.