

NCL prizes handed over

SPORTS REPORTER

The prize distribution ceremony of the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea Seventh National Cricket League took place at a local hotel yesterday.

Long-serving national wicket-keeper Khaled Mashud highlighted the lively programme most as he lifted both four-day and one-day trophies as Rajshahi skipper.

Rajshahi had double delights in the seventh version of the country's lone first-class competition which concluded last March with Chittagong finishing runners-up in the longer-version and Dhaka as one-day runners-up.

The programme, held more than five months after the tournament's conclusion, was graced by host of players including national caps, coach Dav Whatmore, selectors and organisers.

The players discarded from the national team dominated the ceremony as Ehsanul Haque received the man of the series trophy as the highest run getter in the first-class competition (955).

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OLYMPIC FOOTBALL Bangladesh drawn against Hong Kong

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will play Hong Kong in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games football pre-qualifiers in February 2007.

The preliminary round draw for the 20 teams was held yesterday at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur.

Bangladesh will travel to Hong Kong to play the first leg match on February 7 before hosting the second leg a week later.

The ten winners will join the top 14 seeded teams for the second round for which the draw will be held on September 16 in Singapore. China have automatic qualification to the tournament as hosts. Iraq, South Korea, Japan, Bahrain, Iran, Oman, Kuwait, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Malaysia, North Korea, Syria and Qatar play directly in the second round.

The preliminary round pairings: Myanmar v India, Jordan v Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan v Thailand, Vietnam v Afghanistan, Uzbekistan v Tajikistan, Singapore v Pakistan, Hong Kong v Bangladesh, Yemen v Palestine, Indonesia v Maldives, Australia v Chinese Taipei.



Did U Know?

The most French Open women's singles titles (seven) won by an individual is Chris Evert (USA) in 1974, 1975, 1979, 1980, 1983, 1985, and 1986.



TEN Sports

US Open

Day 11

Live at 9:00 pm



Ronaldinho

(Brazilian star footballer) "A professional footballer has to 'kill a lion' every day to prove themselves worthy of being kept in the team. I am here to do my best for Brazil and show I want to be in the national team for as long as possible."



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh wicketkeeper batsman Khaled Mashud (R) receives the National League trophy from State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman (2nd-L) during a prize awarding ceremony at a local hotel yesterday. Mashud led Rajshahi to win both the first-class and one-day versions of the Ispahani Mirzapore National Cricket League for the season 2005-06.

More surprise for Nafees



SPORTS REPORTER

It has been a week of surprises for Shahriar Nafees. First, it was the vice-captaincy and now, being chosen as one of the contenders to win the Emerging Player of the Year of the International Cricket Council (ICC) Awards that was announced yesterday.

The young left-handed opener was nominated alongside English left-arm spinner Monty Panesar, batsmen Alistair Cook and Ian Bell, West Indian wicket-keeper Denesh Ramdin, Sri Lankan leg-spinner Malinga Bandara and opener Upul Tharanga and Pakistan fast bowler Mohammad Asif.

This nomination has come on the back of his appointment as the vice-captain of the Bangladesh team for the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy only a week ago.

"It is very encouraging but I don't see anything from an individual's perspective. What is most important is that a Bangladeshi player was

included in the list," said Nafees who got the news of his nomination from The Daily Star Sport.

Nafees however did not want to single out his fabulous knock



SHAHRIAR NAFEEES

against Australia this year, which put him in the world map, as the reason for nomination.

"It was not because of that knock against Australia (138 at Fatullah) rather the whole season where I

showed adequate consistency."

The awards, covering performances from August 1, 2005 to August 8, 2006, will be presented on October 23 in Mumbai during the Champions Trophy tournament.

The 20-year-old Nafees made his international debut in the NatWest Trophy in England in July last year where he caught the eye with a plucky 75 against Australia in Canterbury. He followed it up with a string of good scores after making his Test debut in Sri Lanka later last year.

But the world took notice when he smashed a dazzling 138 against Australia in Fatullah in April this year. He struck 19 fours in what was a knock of the highest caliber against the likes of Shane Warne and Brett Lee.

His only one-day international hundred also came during this year when he notched up 118 against Zimbabwe at Harare last month.

Nafees becomes the second Bangladeshi player to receive this honour after dashing batsman

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PHOTO: AFP

Jelana Jankovic of Serbia makes a forehand return against Elena Dementieva of Russia in the 2006 US Open at the Flushing Meadows in New York on Tuesday.

Rain ruins Day Nine



AFP, New York

Rain washed out the ninth day of the US Open on Tuesday as one women's singles match was completed and two more main draw encounters started but were left in limbo.

Jelena Jankovic of Serbia defeated Russian fourth seed Elena Dementieva in straight sets to reach her first Grand Slam semi-final before the showers hit at 1:35pm (1735 GMT) forcing the others off the court and into the locker-rooms. Play was officially called off at 7:40 pm local time.

Russian seventh seed Nikolay Davydenko was two sets to one up (6-1, 5-7, 6-3) against Britain's Andy Murray in a fourth round tie while another Russian, Marat Safin, was 2-1 up in the first set against Germany's Tommy Haas.

With weather forecasters calling for continued showers overnight the remainder of the day programme and the evening schedule featuring top seed Roger Federer was also postponed.

Federer was slated to play world number 79 Marc Gicquel of France on the main Arthur Ashe Stadium.

But the bad weather certainly didn't dampen the spirits of 19-year-old Jankovic who was bubbling with excitement after her stunning upset of 2004 finalist Elena Dementieva of Russia 6-2, 6-1.

The 19-year-old Jankovic fashioned her third-straight win over a top 10 player and was so busy celebrating she said couldn't even remember the final score.

"What was the score? I don't even know the total score," Jankovic said. "It's amazing. She beat me in Los Angeles. We played for 2 1/2 hours and it was a tough match. I was expecting to have a tough battle. I don't know what happened."

It was the second-straight upset in as many days for Jankovic who looked nothing like the player who dropped nine straight matches between January and May.

"I am happy I pulled it through," Jankovic said. "I'm so excited to be in the semi-finals."

"I played solid, didn't allow her to play her game. I was also returning well."

In fact, Dementieva looked like the lost soul out on the Arthur Ashe Stadium as she couldn't overcome her poor serving and a rash of errors in the 62-minute match.

Dementieva, the runner-up at Flushing Meadows and in the French Open two years ago, had five double faults and 39 unforced errors.

"I am disappointed," Dementieva said. "I'm getting older and I haven't won a Grand Slam. That's what I am thinking about all the time. I feel like I was in

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BFF not to pay full salary to Cruciani

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) executive committee members unanimously decided not to pay Argentine coach Diego Cruciani his full salary for the last month at job.

Cruciani, who joined as national team coach last year, left Dhaka in the early hours of Tuesday after a 13-month stint. The BFF had cut US dollars 3,000 from his salary to pay the fine imposed on the Argentine by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) for assaulting an Indian referee in December 2005 during an Asian Cup pre-qualifying match against Pakistan in Dhaka.

"Everybody had complaints against the coach and decided that Cruciani rather than the federation should pay his fine. The manager's report after the 10th South Asian Games also suggested he was not committed to the job and almost attacked the match officials after the first two games in Colombo. So we have decided to reject his appeal for paying him the salary in full. We will pay the 3,000 dollars to the AFC soon," told BFF general secretary Anwarul Hoque Helal after yesterday's executive committee meeting at the BFF Bhaban.

The BFF also gave a guideline to the league committee for smooth launching of the first ever Professional Football League.

The committee, after discussion with the clubs within this week, will announce a fresh transfer date for the Pro League, scheduled to kick off in November.

"We have given a concrete guideline to the league committee so that they can launch the league on November 7," Helal informed.

"The National Sports Council (NSC) will prepare the ground at the Bangabandhu National Stadium for football by September 23 although the athletics track would not be completed. As the clubs have disagreed to go for the transfer without assurance from the NSC, the committee will get a written statement about the handover time of the ground before sitting with them."

"There is a possibility that the league would start in mid November but we have told them to launch the league on November 7 at any cost."

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Bangladesh crash out of AFC U-17 soccer

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh crashed out of the AFC Under-17 Football Championship when they went 7-0 down to Syria at the Bishan Stadium in Singapore yesterday.

Bottom-table Bangladesh, who lost 2-0 to Vietnam in the opener, were trailing 5-0 at the break of their second game in Group D.

Darwish Midou slammed a hat-trick for Syria while Moha-mmad Zaafar scored a double while Solaiman and Ziad Ajouz added one goal apiece.

Vietnam shared the lead with China in the group with four points each after the two drew 3-3 in the day's other match.

Bangladesh play their third and last group match against China tomorrow.

Nafis opens new innings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

National cricketer Nafis Iqbal began a new innings Tuesday night when he tied the knot with Taslima Makim Eva.

Opening batsman Nafis, nephew of former Bangladesh captain Akram Khan, and Eva, teacher of an English medium school, have been engaged since February 3, 2005.

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, national coach Dav Whatmore, manager Shafiqul Haque Hira, chief selector Faruque Ahmad and hosts of fellow cricketers, sports organisers, journalists, friends and well wishers joined the wedding ceremony at the Ladies Club in the port city to wish the new couple a happy conjugal life.

The couple, attired in gorgeous and lavish wedding dresses brought from abroad, also sought blessings from all to be able to go nicely through the new chapter.

Eldiest son of late Mohammad Iqbal Khan, a former footballer and coach, and Nusrat Iqbal, a women's sports organiser in the city, the 20-year old Nafis has so far played 11 Tests and 16 one-day international.

Younis ton fashions win



AFP, Southampton

Younis Khan's 101 was the centerpiece of Pakistan's two-wicket win over England in the day-night third one-day international at the Rose Bowl here Tuesday.

Pakistan, cruising to victory at 215 for four, did suffer a late collapse that saw them lose three wickets for nine runs as they declined to 265 for eight, with fast bowler Stuart Broad striking twice in two balls.

Victory saw Pakistan go 2-0 up and meant they could not lose the five-match series heading into Friday's fourth fixture at Trent Bridge.

"It's a good achievement for us especially under pressure but we're used to these conditions now," Younis told Sky Sports.

"It was a big hundred because against England it's a dream come true."

"But all the time I bat for my team, not for myself, and that's why a lot of the time I'm out for 70 or 80. This time it's nice to get that hundred," he added.

This defeat was England's ninth in nine completed limited overs fixtures this season and meant they had won just four of their last 24 fixtures in shorter forms of cricket.

Set 272 to win, Pakistan finished on 274 for eight after a third-wicket stand of 167 in 31 overs between Younis and Mohammad Yousuf (60) saw the duo defy the conventional wisdom by successfully batting second under the lights after skipper Inzamam-ul-Haq had won the toss.

Inzamam was 44 not out and Shoaib Akhtar two not out as the tourists won with seven balls to spare when the captain pulled Rikki Clarke for four.

But England captain Andrew Strauss took heart from England's improved showing. "I think we showed a lot more positivity with

the bat which was important.

"More than anything we showed a lot of fight in the whole game, and if we keep doing that we'll turn things around sooner rather than later."

"We put the ball in the right areas but were a bit unlucky in the middle. All credit to Pakistan, people keep getting hundreds and Younis Khan did that very well today (Tuesday)."

Broad gave Pakistan a scare by taking two wickets in two balls in the

47th over to get rid of Abdul Razzaq (16), caught and Kamran Akmal, held at point by Paul Collingwood before Navedul Hasan was bowled by seamer Jon Lewis for seven.

Earlier, paceman Naved took four wickets for 57 runs in England's 271 for nine.

Lewis, who had figures of two for 11 in Pakistan's seven-wicket win at Lord's on Saturday, struck with his sixth ball when Shoaib

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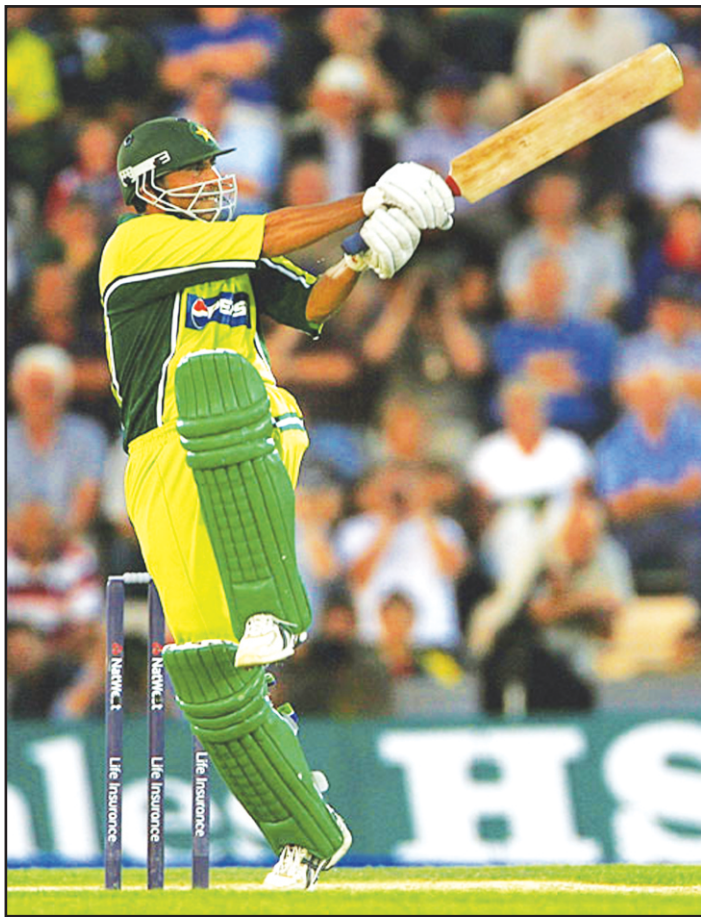


PHOTO: INTERNET

BRILLIANT: Pakistan vice-captain Younis Khan pulls one for four during his match-winning hundred in the third one-dayer against England at The Rose Bowl in Southampton on Tuesday.

A three-batsman race



AFP, New Delhi

Rahul Dravid, Ricky Ponting and Mahela Jayawardene have been nominated for four International Cricket Council (ICC) awards, it was announced here on Wednesday.

The Test captains from India, Australia and Sri Lanka dominated the nominations, including the Sir Garfield Sobers Award for the cricketer of the year.

Ashes hero Andrew Flintoff of England and Sri Lankan spin wizard Muttiah Muralidaran were the other prominent players in the running for the top award, which included a surprise nominee in young England spinner Monty Panesar.

Dravid, Ponting and Jayawardene were also in contention for three other awards -- Test Player of the Year, Captain of the Year and One-Day Player of the Year.

The awards, covering performances from August 1, 2005 to August 8, 2006, will be presented on October 23 in Mumbai during the Champions Trophy tournament, ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed said.

The nominations were compiled by five former Test stars led by Sunil Gavaskar of India, who is also the chairman of the ICC's Cricket Committee.

The other selectors were Allan Donald of South Africa, Ian Healy of Australia, Arjuna Ranatunga of Sri Lanka and Waqar Younis of Pakistan.

The final selection will be voted by a 56-member ICC academy comprising the 10 Test captains, 18 members of the umpires and match referees panel and 28 legends of the game and members of the media.

Bangladesh opener and newly-appointed vice-captain Shahriar Nafees was nominated as one of the contenders for the Emerging Player of the Year award, on the back of his consistent run in Test and one-day cricket since making his debut on September 2005.

The Captain of the Year and Women's Cricketer of the Year awards have been introduced this year.

"Cricket is not just about runs, wickets and catches," said Speed. "It is also about tactics and the way a side conducts itself and the captain plays a pivotal role in those aspects of the game."

"The Captain of the Year Award is designed to recognize the leader's contribution to the game and to the spirit of cricket we all value so highly."

"The Award for Women's Cricketer of the Year is a welcome and very appropriate addition to this year's ceremony."

"It will serve to showcase the

very best women's cricketers, something that is vital as the ICC seeks to ensure the continued growth of the game at all levels."

NOMINATIONS CRICKETER OF THE YEAR

Ricky Ponting (Aus), Shane Warne (Aus), Muttiah Muralidaran (SL), Michael Hussey (Aus), Andrew Flintoff (Eng), Mohammed Yousuf (Pak), Rahul Dravid (Ind), Mahela Jayawardene (SL), Younis Khan (Pak), Monty Panesar (Eng), Brett Lee (Aus), Makhaya Ntini (SA), Adam Gilchrist (Aus).

TEST PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Michael Hussey (Aus), Ricky Ponting (Aus), Mohammed Yousuf (Pak), Andrew Flintoff (Eng), Shane Warne (Aus), Muttiah Muralidaran (SL), Kumar Sangakkara (SL), Rahul Dravid (Ind), Mahela Jayawardene (SL), Kevin Pietersen (Eng), Younis Khan (Pak), Matthew Hayden (Aus), Makhaya Ntini (SA).

ONE-DAY PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Yuvraj Singh (Ind), Michael Hussey (Aus), Ricky Ponting (Aus), Shane Bond (NZ), Irfan Pathan (Ind), Andrew Flintoff (Eng), Mahela

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PHOTO: STAR

National opener Nafis Iqbal (L) and his bride Eva pose for photograph during the couples wedding ceremony at a local hotel in Chittagong on Tuesday.