



Action from the Green Delta Premier Division Hockey League match between Usha KC and Azad Sporting at the Maulana Bhasani Stadium yesterday.

Asif, Shoeb yet to get visa

SPORTS REPORTER

Injured shooters Asif Hossain Khan and Shoebuzzaman's departure for Bangkok was further delayed due to visa problem.

The national shooters, who have been hospitalised since October 2 following brutal police torture, were due to leave Dhaka yesterday for the Thai capital for better treatment but they were yet to receive visa.

The two, still in tremendous pain, will be flown to Bangkok as soon as they receive the visa. National Shooting Federation's joint-secretary Ishtiaque Ahmed Babloo is expected to accompany them.

Meanwhile, Commonwealth and SA Games gold medalist Asif's mother Rehana Khan expressed worries over her son's complete recovery.

"If the decision to send him abroad had been taken earlier, it would have been better. We hope that it 'not already too late," said Rehana over phone.

"I feel that my son will recover and return home but he might not be the same shooter again. His career as a sportsman is at stake," she feared.

"He is really down both physically and mentally. He has already told us that he wants to return his Commonwealth gold medal and we have agreed. It is a long process.

"He is not the person I knew, so what shall I do with a piece of gold?" asked the mother in agony.

Pollock claims 350th wicket

REUTERS, Mumbai

South Africa pacesman Shaun Pollock has become just the fifth bowler in one-day international cricket to claim 350 wickets.

The 33-year-old all rounder reached the mark when he bowled New Zealand opener Lou Vincent for 17 runs with a delivery that cut back in a Champions Trophy group match at the Brabourne Stadium on Monday.

It was the former captain's 262nd ODI match.

Former Pakistan left-arm pacesman Wasim Akram heads the list with 502 wickets.

He is followed by Sri Lanka spinner Muttiah Muralidaran (419), retired Pakistan pacesman Waqar Younis (416) and Sri Lanka pacesman Chaminda Vaas (358).

Rogers, North's missed chance

AFP, Perth

Chris Rogers and Marcus North fell five runs short of the biggest partnership in Australian first-class cricket as Western Australia took charge of their Sheffield Shield cricket match against Victoria at the WACA Ground here Monday.

The two left-handers continued on from where they left off on the opening day, putting on 459 runs for the third wicket before Rogers holed out to a Cameron White full toss for 279.

That left the pair just five short of Mark and Steve Waugh's record partnership of 464, set at the same ground, as WA declared their first innings closed at 608 for three.

North was unbeaten on 239 at the time of the declaration.

Victoria struggled early in their first innings, former Zimbabwe all-rounder Sean Ervine claiming two wickets in his first-class debut for WA as the Victorians stumbled to 146 for four at stumps on the second day.

Lee in love with India



AFP, Sydney

Australia's express pace bowler Brett Lee can't get enough of India, with Bollywood acting offers, burgeoning business interests and music projects in the pipeline, reports said Monday.

Lee, in India for the Champions Trophy one-day tournament, is immensely popular and his fondness for the teeming cricket-infatuated nation has blossomed into a full-blown love affair.

The 29-year-old self-confessed Indophile says he was offered a lead role in a lavish Bollywood production when he visited Mumbai on his way home from Australia's tour of Bangladesh last April.

The notion was floated by Amitabh Bachchan, or the Big B, one of the biggest and most recognisable stars in India's huge film and television industries.

"He asked me if I wanted to play the major role with him," Lee told

The Australian newspaper in Mumbai.

"I said 'mate, I've had no acting experience in my life' and he told me that was okay, that they could sort that out.

"The only reasons I didn't do it was, first, I would have needed to make sure it was the right sort of role for me.

"And second, they needed 50-odd days to film and I just didn't have that time.

"But it's something that, down the track, I would definitely like to be involved in."

Business interests -- he promotes watches and footwear -- have lured Lee to Mumbai and New Delhi at least annually in recent years.

He has also been a guest on one of India's highest-rating television chat shows, where he played guitar and was presented with a sitar, which now holds pride of place in his Sydney home.

Lee also has plans for a couple of future music projects working alongside leading players in the Indian industry, and adds to his growing Hindi vocabulary with each visit.

The fast bowler rates the sub-continent as his preferred travel destination outside Australia.

"In Australia, you might be admired as a sports person, which is quite humbling," Lee says.

"But over here it's as if they want to crowd you with love.

"They feel the need to get close. They want to see Ricky Ponting or Adam Gilchrist in the flesh.

"Over here, we are seen much more as entertainers than sportsmen. And they know that, if they don't push themselves forward to get past the person who's in front of them, they're going to miss out.

"They are a bit more forward because they know that, if they don't grab their chance, then they're not going to get anywhere due to the sheer weight of people here.

"But I've never felt anything other than welcome here. I've never felt threatened or in danger.

"And if you feel welcome in a place, then you're going to want to return."

Usha keep on going

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Usha Krira Chakra strolled to a 2-0 victory over Azad Sporting Club at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday to maintain hundred percent record in the Green Delta Insurance Premier Hockey League.

Goals by Mohammed Saqlain and Rafiqul Islam Kamal either side of the break set Usha's fourth win in as many games in the 9-team fray.

Azad, who came to the game on the back of two losses and a draw against mighty Mohammedan, however, came close to embarrass the joint league leaders with two good openings.

Jamil got possession in a one-on-one situation inside the area in the 20th minute but he failed to beat the pads of goalkeeper Zahid who had timely came out of his line. In the very next minute Masum put a chance wide after the young Azad forwards unsettled the rival defence once again.

Usha got back into the game and Pakistan national captain Saqlain scored a breathtaking goal to put the old-Dhaka outfit ahead on the half hour. Picking up the ball in the middle, the playmaker went wide at the right flank and cut back diagonally into the area -- dribbling past half the opposition players in the process -- and neatly pushed the ball home in what can be claimed as the best solo effort in the league.

Kamal doubled the lead in the 41st minute with a clinical finish, thanks to a defence splitting through by Saqlain.

Usha should have left the ground with a bigger victory but had to remain satisfied with a rather slender victory as their forwards wasted a series of chances.

Joint league leaders Abahani take on Ajax Sporting Club today (3pm) after the Sadharan Bima v Bangladesh Sporting Club match (1.30pm).

Sad day

FROM PAGE 17 also positive there will be a hearing by the PCB doping tribunal."

Speed said the dope tests would also be carried out randomly in six matches in the ongoing Champions Trophy.

"The matches and players will be chosen randomly. The team list will be provided before the match and doping agents can pick four players in a game and test them," he said.

This is not the first time the ICC are conducting the dope tests. They began in the 2002 Under-19 World Cup in New Zealand and also at the 2004 Champions Trophy in England and the 2003 World Cup in South Africa.

"Cricket is regarded as a low-risk sport in terms of doping. Five of our members -- England, South Africa, Pakistan, New Zealand and Australia -- carry out regular testing within their own countries," said Speed.

Ancelotti calls

FROM PAGE 20 appeal to the Italian Olympic Committee's Court of Arbitration is successful.

Ancelotti is expected to play with a 4-3-1-2 formation in Belgium with Nelsio Dida protected by a back four from right to left of Daniele Bonera, Alessandro Nesta, Kakha Kaladze and Marek Jankulovski.

Gennaro Gattuso, Andrea Pirlo and Clarence Seedorf are likely to make up the midfield with Brazil international Kaka playing in a more advanced position.

Filippo Inzaghi and Ricardo Oliveira will probably team up in attack. Exciting young French midfielder Yoann Gourcuff has been ruled out with a broken rib, while Brazilian wingback also misses the match due to a back injury.

Stankovic fires

FROM PAGE 20 Inter levelled in the 29th minute when Stankovic headed home Luis Figo's cross.

Stankovic saved Cruz's blushes after the penalty miss by grabbing the winner with an angled shot 15 minutes from time.

Palermo twice came back from behind but to no avail as Fernando Tissone's 56th minute goal clinched a five-goal thriller for Atalanta in Sicily.

Nicola Amoroso condemned Roma to their second defeat of the season by scoring Reggina's winner shortly after the break.

Reggina desperately need the points having started on minus 15 points for match-fixing.

On Saturday Kakha Kaladze's late equaliser salvaged a point for AC Milan -- handicapped by an eight-point penalty for match-fixing - in a 1-1 draw at Sampdoria.

All of the four clubs in Serie A found guilty of match-fixing have lodged their final appeals with the Italian Olympic Committee's Court of Arbitration and are hoping to have their punishments reduced at the end of the month.

Acme, Beximco cruise

SPORTS REPORTER



Phone Corporate Cricket League yesterday.

In a battle of two newcomers, a hattrick by Debabrata Pal went down the drains as StarTel lost to Syfang Fan by ten runs in a rain-affected game.

Akram Khan and Al Shahriar smashed half centuries as Beximco, having scored 254-8 in 50 overs, brushed aside Channel F2 by 133 runs at the Fatullah Stadium.

Akram, adjudged man-of-the-match, made 55 while Shahriar 51 as Beximco made most of being put into bat by the opponents. Rashedul Islam was the pick of the F2 attack with three wickets for 31 while Shakil took 2-36.

In reply, Channel F2 skittled out for 121 with Rashedul and Shakil also dominating their batting, being the only players to get beyond the double-figure.

Pacemen Mohammed Sharif

and Talha Jubair were the wreckers in chief, sharing five wickets between them.

Star-studded Acme Laboratories recovered from an early setback to hand Chittagong Port Authority a six-wicket defeat at the BKSP ground in Savar.

Acme elected to field first and new ball operator and man-of-the-match Alamgir Kabir's 3-15 inspired them to shoot out the Chittagong side for a meagre 94 in 26.5 overs. Mithun top scored with 28.

Acme lost Hannan Sarkar and Nasiruddin Faruque early but an unbeaten 40 by wicketkeeper Sahagir Hossain saw them reach home in the 23rd over.

At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, StaTel were poised to win their first match in the competition when they restricted Syfang Fan to a paltry 133-9 in 50 overs.

The inserted Syfang Fan were 12 without loss when seamer Debabrata took two wickets in the last ball of an over and struck again in the first delivery of his next over to complete a hattrick. Towhid Hossain Shyamol's 46 kept Syfang in the game despite left-arm spinner Mohammed Isam's very tight bowling.

Playing his first match, the young Isam captured two wickets for seven

in eight overs including four maidens.

StarTel struggled with the bat and reached 75-5 in the 35th over when rain stopped play for 45 minutes. They were set a revised target of 107 in 39 overs but scoring 32 runs from remaining 26 deliveries proved a distant target for the lower order which got to 97-9 in the end.

Sabuj, who grabbed three wickets for 11, was adjudged the man-of-the-match.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Beximco: 254-8 in 50 overs (Akram 55, Al Shahriar 51, Shakil 2-36, Rashedul 3-61); Channel F2: 121 all out in 43.1 overs (Shakil 22, Rashedul 16, Sharif 3-13, Talha 2-23).

Chittagong PA: 94 all out in 26.5 overs (Mithun 28, Moin 14 n.o., Mostafiz 16, Alamgir 3-15, Sabbir 2-9, Marshall 2-13); Acme: 97-4 in 22.4 overs (Hannan 17, Sahagir 40 n.o., Faruque 27, Murad 2-12, Shariful 2-24).

Syfang Fan: 133-9 in 50 overs (Towhid 46, Prasenjit 20, Debabrata 4-35, Isam 2-7); StarTel: 97-9 in 39 overs (Bashar 25, Ahsanullah 12, Sabuj 3-11).

Davydenko wins Kremlin Cup



AFP, Moscow

Top seed Nikolay Davydenko beat Russian compatriot and two-time Grand Slam winner Marat Safin here on Sunday to take the Kremlin Cup title.

With the 6-4, 5-7, 6-4 win Davydenko clinched his ninth career title and fourth of the season while also levelling his head-to-head record with Safin at two wins all.

"I'm glad to win at home," Davydenko said. "I lost two of my previous meetings with Marat (Safin) on hardcourts but today I was stronger."

The 25-year-old Monte Carlo resident was slightly more accurate from the outset, breaking the former world number one's serve halfway into the opening set.

Safin, whose last final appearance was in Halle in June 2005 before a knee injury sent his career into a tailspin, broke back immediately to

level at three games all.

But Davydenko, 2004 champion here, broke again to take the opening set in 41 minutes.

No big serves were produced in the second set until the 12th game, when Safin broke to level at one set all after one hour 31 minutes on court.

Davydenko, currently fifth in the ATP race, broke twice from the start in the deciding set to a comfortable 3-0 lead before Safin chalked up his first point in the set also with a break.

However, Davydenko managed to keep his advantage through to win the set and the match in two hours 19 minutes.

The winner received a silver trophy by Cartier and 142,000 dollars, while Safin pocketed 83,600 dollars.

Earlier on Sunday the 19-year-old Muscovite Anna Chakvetadze won the WTA Kremlin Cup title beating fifth seeded compatriot Nadia Petrova in straight sets 6-4, 6-4 in the final.

Chakvetadze took one hour and 30 minutes to claim her second career

title after winning at Guanngzhou two weeks ago to record her third win over Petrova in as many meetings.

"I was a bit lucky today as Nadia was not 100-percent fit," Chakvetadze said at the award ceremony. "Nevertheless, I'm happy to win at home."

The 19-year-old Chakvetadze looked slightly more focused from the start breaking her opponent's serve twice in the opening set to a 1-0 lead in 51 minutes, while Petrova, who was unbeaten in the finals this year, broke back once.

B samples

FROM PAGE 17 from the WADA laboratory in Malaysia," Ashraf said at a press conference here.

The preliminary test report had been sent to PCB on Sunday and it remains to be seen what action the board takes against the erring duo with the International Cricket Council having said that they would not interfere in the controversy.



PHOTO: AFP

West Indies captain Brian Lara (L) and legend Clive Lloyd confer during a practice session in Mumbai on Monday. West Indies will meet Australia in their first match on Wednesday.

SL taking Pakistan

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also capable of testing rival bowlers.

On the other hand, Pakistan's team management put a brave face on the drug row, saying the team were geared up for the battle against Sri Lanka.

Captain Younis Khan said he was confident of an impressive performance from his side despite missing Akhtar and Asif.

"We have to face it and move on," he said. "Winning or losing is not important at this stage as our aim is to play good, competitive cricket. It is tough to miss two bowlers, but I think we have the replacements."

"Captain (Younis Khan) and I are disappointed that this has

happened," said Pakistani coach Bob Woolmer.

"I am pretty confident that the team will take the adversity in their stride and rise to the occasion. I am sure we will play good, competitive cricket tomorrow."

The Pakistani captain said it was always tough to miss a pair of key fast bowlers before an important match, but it could have been worse had the news come during the tournament.

TEAMS

SRI LANKA (from): Mahela Jayawardene (captain), Kumar Sangakkara, Sanath Jayasuriya, Marvan Atapattu, Upul Tharanga, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Chamara Kapugedara, Farveez Maharoof,

Chaminda Vaas, Ruchira Perera, Dilhara Fernando, Lasith Malinga, Malinga Bandara, Muttiah Muralidaran.

PAKISTAN (from): Younis Khan (captain), Imran Farhat, Mohammad Yousuf, Abdul Razzaq, Shahid Afridi, Faisal Iqbal, Shoaib Malik, Kamran Akmal, Navedul Hasan, Umar Gul, Mohammad Hafeez, Rao Iftikhar. Umpires: Simon Taufel and Billy Bowden.

Barcelona break

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Sociedad opened the scoring from the penalty spot through Xabi Prieto after 26 minutes but were then torn apart by the brilliance of Zaragoza's Argentine playmaker Pablo Aimar.

Aimar's compatriot Diego Milito equalised with another penalty five minutes later before clinching the points before the hour was up with goals from Carlos Diogo and another from Milito.

Real Madrid's unbeaten season came to an end on Saturday when they went down 1-0 at Getafe with Ronaldo being dismissed in the dying moments for a second bookable offence, his first sending off in a Spanish league game.

The red card will rule him out of next weekend's derby with bitter rivals Barcelona.

Trophy Treats

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Speed also admitted that he learnt of such allegations but it was only from the second hand source. "I also heard but it came from second hand source. But we can't comment on rumour," he said.

In accordance with the Anti Doping Policy, PCB had arranged to test 19 players prior to the ICC Champions Trophy from a WADA accredited laboratory in Malaysia.

In July 2006, the ICC became signatory to the World Anti Doping Agency (WADA) and adopted a uniform Anti Doping Code which provides for testing to be conducted at all its major events.

Players or officials breaching the code will face bans of up to two years from the game along with financial penalties.

C R O W D S UNCONCERNED

While media people were rushing about to acquire the latest information about the doping incident of the Pakistani players, a huge crowd who were coming into the stadium to buy tickets looked thoroughly undaunted by the incident.

There is a huge supporter base for Pakistan in the Pink City where an estimable numbers of Muslim community has resided for a number of years.

"I don't know about the incident. We are not bothered with that. We will come to the stadium to watch the Pakistan match," said a middle-aged man, Nasir Ahmed.

The organisers also hoped that the two missing Pakistani stars will not dampen the spirit of today's game.