



Did U Know?

In 86 years, Australia have registered 5-0 Test series wins on four separate occasions -- twice against England and once each against South Africa and West Indies.



Arsene Wenger

(Arsenal manager)
"There are people inside the club that have worked very hard, day and night, and the future of the club is very promising if we can keep the players together."



ESPN

South Africa v Pakistan
First Test, Day 2
Live at 2:30 pm
Commonwealth Bank Series
Australia v England
First ODI
Live at 9:13 am

Boucher takes record catch

AFP, Centurion

South African wicketkeeper Mark Boucher claimed a world record for Test catches on the first day of the first Test against Pakistan at Centurion Park Thursday.

Playing in his 100th Test, Boucher took his 367th catch when he held a simple chance from Faisal Iqbal, his second victim in Pakistan's innings.

Boucher moved ahead of Australia's Ian Healy, who took 366 catches in 119 matches. Healy still holds the record for most dismissals as he made 29 stumpings in his career for a total of 395.

Boucher, who has 15 stumpings, moved into second place with 382 dismissals, one more than Australia's Adam Gilchrist, who has held 344 catches and made 37 stumpings in 90 Tests.

Boucher has played in 99 Tests for South Africa and one for the World XI against Australia last season. He held two of his catches for the World team.

Sehwag's anxious hours

PTI, Rajkot

With selectors' patience running out, Virender Sehwag will have to wait till Friday to know whether he would get another chance to translate his potential into runs.

Apart from Sehwag, there would be quite a few other cricketers who would be eagerly awaiting their fate as the selection panel meets here on Friday to pick the squad for India's first two one-dayers against the West Indies and also draw the 30-member World Cup probabilities list.

SEE PAGE 22 COL 1

Mohameddan, Abahani post identical wins

SPORTS REPORTER



Toss played vital roles as Twenty20 champions Mohammedan and title contenders Abahani made most of the conditions in identical winning starts to the Kai-Altech Premier Cricket League yesterday.

Both the archrivals won their opening matches by five wickets but Brothers Union, perhaps, read the situation wrong which cost them a three-wicket loss to City Club in the other first-round clash.

MOHAMMEDAN-KALABAGAN

Fresh from their Twenty20 success, Mohammedan got off to a flying start in the 50-overs competition with Aftab Ahmed hitting Kalabagan Krira Chakra hard with bat and ball.

After skipper Habibul Bashar elected to field at the Fatullah Stadium, Mohammedan new ball pair Tapash Baishya and Manjurul Islam struck early in a seam-friendly weather.

However, a minor injury to third

seamer Hasibul Hossain proved to be a blessing in disguise as part-timer Aftab, coming in as first-change, ripped through the Kalabagan batting with figures of four for 32 in nine overs.

Opener Uttam Sarkar (32 off 53 balls) survived the opening salvo but lost wickets at the other end as Kalabagan were reduced to 94-7 before Monirul Islam and Rashedul Islam staged a late fightback. The two put on 80 runs for the eighth wicket before falling to Aftab's gentle medium pace.

Monirul made 46 off 78 deliveries and Rashedul 45 from 62 as Kalabagan posted a decent 196 in exactly 50 overs with help of 43 extras.

The total, however, hardly troubled Mohammedan's chase.

Explosive opener Junaid Siddiquee was sent back with the scoreboard reading six but his partner Imtiaz Hossain cracked six fours and two sixes in his 55 off 67 balls to take the score to 109 pairing with Aftab -- man-of-the match -- who was run out after an entertaining 39-ball 32.

Mohammedan's Indian recruit Rahat Elahi, an Uttar Pradesh

batsman, made an impressive debut when he settled the innings with 50 not out after a little hiccup that saw the side lose three wickets including Bashar in the space of 11 runs. Elahi, who is in UP's Ranji Trophy one-day team, hit seven fours in 76 balls as Mohammedan raced to 198-5 in 37.4 overs.

ABAHANI-BIMAN

Abahani's bid to win back their heavyweight status stayed on track as they restricted last year's fourth-placed Bangladesh Biman to just 142 in the only curtailed-over game of the day.

Experienced Abahani captain Khaled Mashud, who could not finish the game due to an injury while fielding, opted to field in the 48-overs a-side game at the BKSP ground and the rival batting had no answer to his three-prong pace attack that moved the ball dangerously.

Mashrafe-bin-Mortuza topped and tailed in figures of 2-15 from 8.2 overs and received adequate support from pacers Ziaur Rahman and Mohammad Shahzada.

Biman, staring at a below 100-total at one stage, reached respectability due to some resistance by

SEE PAGE 22 COL 6



Brothers Union batsman Anisur Rahman plays and misses a cut shot against City Club spinner Zakir Hossain (not in picture) during their Kai-Altech Premier Cricket League encounter at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Mashud injured

SPORTS REPORTER

National wicketkeeper and Abahani captain Khaled Mashud will be out of action for at least ten days following an injury during yesterday's Premier Cricket League match at BKSP.

Mashud had a cut between his thumb and forefinger in the left hand when he was surprised by awkward bounce from a delivery by paceman Mohammad Shahzada in the match against Bangladesh Biman.

Biman had lost their ninth wicket by then and Mashud was rushed to the Apollo Hospital where he received four stitches.

"There is no fracture or dislocation but doctor has advised me to take ten day's rest. I don't know when I can hold the ball again," Mashud told The Daily Star.

Abahani management, however, thought that it would be difficult for him to stand behind the stumps in their next match on January 14. But if the match defers due to the political unrest, he will recover as the injury was not alarming.

Regular opening batsman Jahurul Islam and Kuntal Chandra are the backup stumpers of Abahani.

1st Div unsure of future

SPORTS REPORTER

Cricket Committee for Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM) has yet again delayed the players' transfer date for this year's First Division Cricket League.

At a meeting with club officials yesterday, the guardians of Dhaka cricket have set another date for a meeting with the officials to finalise a timeframe for the transfers, which will be the precursor to the league.

The meeting has been confirmed for January 16 when the date for transfers and other pronouncements will be announced.

Decision is also pending on the

SEE PAGE 22 COL 1

Rakib runner-up in Peerless chess

SPORTS REPORTER

International Master Abdullah Al Rakib finished runner-up in the Bengal Peerless FIDE Rating chess tournament which concluded in Kolkata, India yesterday.

RR Luxman of India emerged champions with 8.5 points when he beat Bangladesh Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman in the 11th and final round. Rakib and two more Bangladeshi participants, GM Zia and IM Enamul Hossain Rajib ended level on eight points. Zia finished fourth and Rajib eighth.

In the final round, Rakib drew with Sawpan Mitra to drop valuable half a point while Rajib shared points with Saptarshi Roy.

Bangladesh's FM Sheikh Nasir Ali, FM Abu Sufian Shakil, Mohammed Javed, Abdul Maleq, Debaraj Chatterjee and FM Syed Mahfuzur Rahman clinched 12th, 15th, 18th, 20th, 23rd and 28th places respectively.

Strauss fit to play

Tri-series begins today



BBC ONLINE, undated

England batsman Andrew Strauss has been passed fit for Friday's one-day game against Australia in Melbourne.

Strauss was hit on the head by a ball from Brett Lee during the final Test of the Ashes series and missed Tuesday's Twenty20 loss with a stiff neck.

"Turning around was a little bit awkward, but I am now fully looking forward to getting stuck in," he said.

Strauss will not have to contend with fast bowler Lee at the MCG as he is still suffering from bronchitis.

Australia have, however, picked exciting left-arm Mitchell Johnson after he recovered from a stomach muscle strain and have Ashes stars Glenn McGrath and Stuart Clark in their starting line-up.

McGrath is likely to share the new ball with the one-day specialist Nathan Bracken, another left-arm.

The retirement of Damien Martyn, meanwhile, will offer Michael Clarke the chance to move up the order with one-day cricket's official best batsman Michael

Hussey remaining at six.

"Michael Clarke is going to bat at four with Andrew Symonds at five and Michael Hussey at six," said captain Ricky Ponting.

"Huss has been incredibly down the order in one-day cricket and for the last five or six years of his career has batted in that position.

Watson, being the sort of player he is, will be able to fit into our line-up pretty much anywhere down the order.

"Michael Clarke has got a

chance up the order. He has been a bit starved of that over the last couple of years, has been dying to go up, so his chance has come now."

Ponting said all-rounder Shane Watson remained part of the team's plans for the World Cup in March despite having missed most of the season with a hamstring problem.

The injury put Watson out of the Ashes series and he has been told he must play two four-day games for state side Queensland before he will be considered for the national team.

"Watson, being the sort of player he is, will be able to fit into our line-up pretty much anywhere down the order. I see him as being a really crucial player for us," said Ponting.

"I think it's a day-by-day assessment with him really, just to see how he's going and how much bowling he can get done.

"We'll just keep our fingers crossed and hope it's sooner rather than later for him."

TEAMS

AUSTRALIA: Ricky Ponting (captain), Adam Gilchrist, Matthew Hayden, Michael Clarke, Andrew

SEE PAGE 22 COL 1



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan's opening batsman Mohammad Hafeez avoids a bouncer off South Africa fast bowler Makhaya Ntini (not in picture) on the first day of the first Test in Centurion on Thursday.

Ys steady Pakistan



AFP, Centurion

Vice-captain Younis Khan shared an unbeaten century partnership with Yasir Hameed as Pakistan made a solid recovery after the loss of their openers in quick succession on the first day of the first Test against South Africa at Centurion Park Thursday.

Pakistan were 160 for two at tea, with Khan unbeaten on 55 and

Hameed on 53.

They came together shortly before lunch after South African fast bowler Makhaya Ntini struck twice within five balls to end a promising start by the tourists.

Mohammad Hafeez and Imran Farhat put on 48 for the first wicket after Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq won the toss and decided to bat.

But Ntini dismissed both openers shortly before lunch.

On a hot afternoon, Younis and Hafeez batted soundly to reduce the South Africans to settling largely defensive fields.

They added 110, including 96 between lunch and tea.

Younis was first to his fifty, reaching the mark off 78 balls with eight fours, but Hameed reached his half-century in more spectacular fashion, flicking Jacques Kallis off his toes for the first six of the match. Hameed took 102 balls and hit seven fours and a six.

Earlier, Ntini bowled a poor first spell, conceding 14 runs in four overs without looking like getting a wicket, while new ball partner Andre Nel gave both batsmen some

anxious moments.

The left-handed Farhat played and missed several times and was missed on 14 when he top-edged a pull against Nel and Paul Harris at mid-on turned awkwardly and could not get to the ball.

Ntini replaced Nel at the Hennops River end, where there seemed to be more bounce for the bowlers, and had Farhat caught at backward point for 26 when the batsman played a loose shot.

In his next over Ntini claimed the wicket of Hafeez for 19, with a ball which seamed back at the right-hander as he tried to withdraw his bats.

Hafeez looked unhappy when he was given out by umpire Steve Bucknor but a slow motion replay showed the ball brushed his glove before being caught by wicketkeeper Mark Boucher.

Boucher was playing in his 100th Test, of which 99 have been for South Africa and one for the World XI against Australia last season.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at tea on the first day of

SEE PAGE 22 COL 8



PHOTO: AFP

Russian superstar Maria Sharapova returns off the forehand during a practice session on Thursday for the Australian Open in Melbourne which begins on January 14.

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