

Glamour lights up sports

Grameenphone-Prothom Alo crown Nafees

AL MUSABIR SADI

Bringing the whole sporting arena under one roof seemed to be a difficult job. But that was until one attended yesterday's Grameenphone-Prothom Alo sports awards in the city.

It was not just the whole sports arena -- it is literally impossible to hold such a vast gathering inside the ballroom of a hotel -- but all sections of local sport were represented with distinction when the country's leading cellular phone operator and the leading daily awarded the top sportspersons of the year 2006.

Past and current sports icons littered the cordial ceremony, hosted ably in the distinctive style of Prothom Alo's Sports Editor Upal Shuvra, where cricketer Shahriar Nafees was declared as the Sportsman of the Year.

The carnival came alive when Ranjit Das, star footballer of the 50s, was given a standing ovation when he walked to the stage to take the Lifetime Achievement award from Prothom Alo Editor Matir Rahman and Grameenphone's MD Erik Aas.

The 70-plus Ranjit, who played

hockey and cricket after retiring from football, told that he only started "keeping" because his captain had asked him to do so.

"Obey the captain and you should not regret," the audience murmured in response.

Golam Sarwar Tipu, one of the five juries, perhaps described Ranjit in the best possible way when he wrote for The Daily Star last year about his first memories of watching a domestic football match in Dhaka: "I was impressed by Ranji's dress and movements. He was short, but very fair and really smart. Unlike other goalkeepers of that time (as far as I knew) who used to just stand under the bar, he moved with grace. He was totally different."

At 5ft 4in, Ranjit overcame physical limitations with devotion to become a great goalkeeper of his time.

Former cricket captain Minhajul Abedin Nannu handed over the Emerging Sportsman award to Sakib Al Hasan, whose first year in international cricket has proved that he is made for the long run.

Consecutive South Asian

Games silver medallist Fouzia Huda Jui was an obvious choice for the leading Female Sportsperson but for the first time in its third year, a footballer was not considered.

The two runners-up, both came close to challenge national cricket team's vice-captain Nafees, were Mashrafee-bin-Mortuza and Mahfuzur Rahman Mithu.

Mashrafee, who claimed 49 wickets to become the highest one-day international wicket-taker in 2006, received his award from the country's undisputed superstar and legendary footballer Kazi Salahuddin.

Mithu became the first athlete to win a hurdles gold medal for the country at regional level, winning the 110m hurdles in the 10th SA Games in Colombo last year. The tall athlete, who requested the media to give more coverage of sports other than cricket and football, also urged the need of sponsors' support to the so-called 'small-time games'.

Former national cricket captain Gazi Ashraf Lipu handed over the prizes to the hurdler, who had a difficult

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PHOTO: STAR

Winners of the Grameenphone-Prothom Alo Sports Awards 2006 pose with the juries and organisers during a prize-giving ceremony at a local hotel yesterday.

Ganguly in, Sehwag out

Cricket

AFP, Rajkot

Former captain Sourav Ganguly was recalled to India's one-day squad after 15 months on Friday as the selectors axed non-performing star batsman Virender Sehwag.

Ganguly, 34, who played his last one-dayer in September 2005 in Zimbabwe, was included in a 15-man squad for the first two matches of a four-game home series against the West Indies later this month.

The seasoned left-hander was rewarded for a successful comeback in Test cricket on the recent tour of South Africa where he emerged India's leading scorer with 214 runs in three matches.

Sehwag, who averaged just 14.80 in his last 10 one-dayers, was axed for the two matches but was retained in a 30-man preliminary World Cup squad also named on

Friday.

Chairman of selectors Dilip Vengsarkar said both Sehwag and all-rounder Irfan Pathan were left out for the West Indies matches so they could play domestic cricket to regain form before the World Cup.

"They are important players but both have been out of form for some time," said Vengsarkar, a former Test captain and prolific batsman.

"They need to sort out their cricket. I am sure both Sehwag and Pathan will come back strongly."

Vengsarkar said the selectors were worried by India's poor run in limited-overs cricket, which has seen them win just two of their last 10 matches including a 4-0 drubbing in South Africa.

Eight of the 17 players who were involved in the one-dayers in South Africa have been excluded for the matches against the West Indies, including batsmen Mohammad Kaif and Venkatesh Laxman.

Seamer Joginder Sharma, 23,

DOHS take on Partex today

SPORTS REPORTER

The second round of the Kai-Altech Premier Cricket League begins today with three matches taking place at different venues.

Defending champions Old DOHS meet newcomers Partex Sporting Club at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium after an easy first-round sailing over another promoted Young Pegasus while Sonargaon Cricketers, last year's runners-up and another first-round winners, face Kalabagan Krira Chakrata BKSP.

The other match between Indira Road Krira Chakrata and Young Pegasus will be played at the Dharmondi Cricket Stadium.

The remaining three second round games -- Victoria v Abahani (BKSP-2), Mohammedan v City Club (Mirpur) and Biman v Brothers Union (Fatullah) -- are scheduled for tomorrow.

All the big teams including DOHS, Sonargaon, Victoria, Mohammedan, Abahani and City Club faced little hurdle to ensure full points in the first round.

There was good news for the participating clubs as the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) is considering revising the schedule in the wake of the latest political situation that may ensure participation of the national cricketers in more matches before the Zimbabwe tour.

"We will meet the club representatives soon to revise the fixture in wake of the latest political situation. We are thinking to reduce the gap in between the rounds. And more importantly we can use the four-day break due to the general election supposed to be held on January 22," informed Khondokar Jamiluddin, chairman of CCDM, yesterday.

Sourav wants time

PTI, Kolkata

Staging a comeback to the one-day squad for the series against West Indies, Sourav Ganguly on Friday said he would need some time to settle down since he was returning to the shorter format after a long gap.

"I need time to settle down. I am back after 13-14 months. My record for India in the last 11 years (in ODIs) has been good and I hope to carry on from that," the stylish left-hander told reporters at the Eden Gardens here.

Ganguly termed his comeback, which comes on the heels of his return to Test cricket, as an opportunity to put runs on the board and play one-day cricket again.

"I will have to do well and score runs," said the 34-year-old former captain who played his last ODI against Zimbabwe in September 2005.

Ganguly, who was also included in a provisional 30-member World Cup squad, declined to comment on his prospects of making it to the final squad for the quadrennial extravaganza.

"Let's first finish this series. Then there's another series (against Sri Lanka). There are still eight games to go before the World Cup. We should take one series at a time." Ganguly said it was important to win the two series to be able to go into the World Cup with a positive frame of mind.

"It is important for the team to win these eight games. We must go into the World Cup confident about winning matches."

Asif shines on return

Cricket

AFP, Centurion

Hashim Amla made a solid half-century as South Africa recovered from a poor start on the second day of the first Test against Pakistan at Centurion Park Friday.

South Africa were 130 for three at tea in reply to Pakistan's first innings total of 313.

Amla (62 not out) and Ashwell Prince (30 not out) put on an unbeaten 77 for the fourth wicket after opening bowler Mohammad Asif, gaining prodigious swing, reduced South Africa to 53 for three.

Makhaya Ntini was mainly responsible for Pakistan failing to get the total in excess of 350 they had hoped for.

Ntini claimed his 16th five-wicket haul as Pakistan paid a heavy penalty for their obsession with hook and pull shots. Ntini took five for 83.

Seven Pakistani batmen succumbed to hook or pull shots.

Pakistan self-destructed in a frenetic morning's play, scoring 71 runs in 67 minutes and 12.5 overs but losing five wickets.

Three wickets fell to hook shots on the first day and the trend continued Friday, with captain Inzamamul Haq the first offender.

Inzamam was out for 42 in the fourth over of the day when he hooked Ntini straight to Amla on the square leg boundary. He stood at the crease looking disgusted with himself before trudging slowly to the dressing room.

Kamran Akmal, who made an aggressive 29, top-edged a pull to mid-on off Andre Nel and Shahid Niaz, who could have been out several times in a hit-or-miss innings of 15, top-edged a pull to Ntini off Ntini to gully.

Immediately after Niaz's dismissal Navedul Hasan hooked Ntini high to square leg and Amla took a spectacular diving catch but landed over the boundary for the batsman to score six runs.

Danish Kaneria fell to a routine catch at second slip as Ntini took his fifth wicket before Navedul Hasan was the seventh man to be out hooking or pulling, top-edging a pull for Nel to hold a catch off his own bowling.

The tall Asif swung the ball both ways when South Africa started their innings. His first ball to AB de Villiers swung away and the next swung in, with Asif appealing for a catch behind. Replays showed the ball went off the batsman's thigh pad.

South African captain Graeme Smith, who finished the recent series against India with three successive half-centuries, was out without scoring when he edged a ball that swung away from the left-hander to wicketkeeper Akmal.

De Villiers followed in Asif's next over when he edged an out-swinger to Younis Khan at second slip.

South Africa could have been in worse trouble if Amla had been caught on four when Yasir Hameed could not hold a sharp chance at gully off Asif.

Jacques Kallis made 18 before he was Asif's third victim, caught at second slip, but Amla and Prince steamed the innings.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at tea on the second day of the first Test between South Africa and Pakistan at Centurion

Park on Friday:

PAKISTAN: First innings (overnight 242-5)

Hafeez c Boucher b Ntini 19

Farhat c Amla b Ntini 26

Hameed c Ntini b Nel 65

Younis Khan c Nel b Pollock 68

Inzamam c Amla b Ntini 42

Iqbal c Boucher b Ntini 1

Akmal c Pollock b Nel 29

Navedul c and b Nel 30

Nazir c Gibbs b Ntini 15

Kaneria c Kallis b Ntini 0

Asif not out 1

Prince not out 30

Extras: (lb-6, nb-12) 16

Total: (For 3 wkts in 40 overs) 130

Fall of wickets: 1-3, 2-8, 3-53.

Bowler O M R W

Ntini 24 3 83 5

Nel 26.5 3 100 3

Pollock 18 5 38 1

Kallis 15 3 55 1

Harris 13 2 25 0

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings

De Villiers c Younis Khan b Asif 4

Smith c Akmal b Asif 0

Amla not out 62

Kallis c Younis Khan b Asif 18

Prince not out 30

Extras: (lb-4, nb-12) 16

Total: (For 3 wkts in 40 overs) 130

Fall of wickets: 1-3, 2-8, 3-53.

Bowler O M R W

Asif 9 1 34 3

Navedul 6 1 32 0

Nazir 7 1 29 0

Kaneria 10 1 20 0

Hafeez 8 1 11 0

To bat: Gibbs, Boucher, Pollock, Nel, Harris, Ntini.

Umpires: S Bucknor and B Doctrove (both WI). TV umpire: K Hurter (RSA). Match referee: C Broad (Eng).



PHOTO: AFP

Australian opener Adam Gilchrist pulls the ball as England keeper Paul Nixon (L) looks on during the opening one-day international of the Commonwealth Bank tri-series at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Friday.

Aussies pile on agony

Cricket

AFP, Melbourne

England were again outclassed by the Australians in the opening one-day international here Friday, and suffered a double blow when star batsman Kevin Pietersen was ruled out of the rest of the triangular series with a cracked rib.

Set a modest 243 to win by England after comeback captain Michael Vaughan elected to bat first at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Australia made 246 for two to cruise to victory with 28 balls to spare.

Pietersen had been the one bright light for the English in a

disastrous tour and he top-scored with 82 from 91 balls to help his side reach 242 for eight.

But late in his innings, he was struck flush in the ribs by a Glenn McGrath delivery in the 40th over.