



Did U Know?

Russian referee Valentin Ivanov made history by sending-off a record four players in the Holland-Portugal second round game in the FIFA 2006 World Cup.



Sourav Ganguly

(India batsman)
"I am not in the race for captainship, at least at the present time. I think we all should back Rahul (Dravid) and we should not even talk about these things when the World Cup is just two months away."

What to WATCH

ESPN
Commonwealth Bank Series
Australia v England
Fourth ODI
Live at 9:15 am
South Africa v Pakistan
Second Test, Day One
(2nd & 3rd Session)
Live at 5:00 pm
STAR Sports
Australian Open
Men's/Women's Third Round
Live at 6:00 am

DAY'S EVENT
Premier Division Cricket League
Old DOHS vs Kalabagh KC
Venue: Fatullah Stadium
Indira Road KC vs Abahani
Venue: Mirpur National Stadium
Partex SC vs City Club
Venue: BKSP

Sourav leaves past behind

BBC ONLINE, undated

Former skipper Sourav Ganguly, back in India's one-day squad after 16 months on the sidelines, says the team's poor performance in 2006 is irrelevant.

He told BBC Sport in an exclusive interview: "I am a firm believer that doing well in the World Cup has nothing to do with past performances."

"It's all about what you do in the five or six weeks of the tournament."

Ganguly has a tally of four centuries in two World Cups, a record he shares with Mark Waugh and Sachin Tendulkar.

India begin a home series of four one-day internationals against West Indies on January 21 hoping to arrest an alarming set of recent results.

Comprehensive series wins in Pakistan, and then at home to

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New manager, why?



SPORTS REPORTER

Even among the high-ups of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), there is disappointment over the appointment of the new national team operations manager for the coming Zimbabwe tour.

The BCB last Saturday named its cricket operations committee member-secretary Ali Asif Khan as manager for the four-ODI series in place of former national skipper Khaled Mahmud, which has already raised eyebrows of many including board vice-president Aziz Al Kaiser Tito.

"I was abroad during the last executive committee meeting that's why I don't know what actually happened. But I was surprised when I learned that the board had changed the team operations manager for the Zimbabwe tour," said an astounded Tito.

"It's injustice and I must say it has been done unfairly. We have simply insulted a former national captain (Mahmud) by taking this decision," he added.

Tito failed to understand why some board officials went for the change with the World Cup knocking at the doors after there had been controversies over the appointment of a retired Air Force

officer recently.

In September 2006, the BCB appointed flight lieutenant (retd) Mohammed Harunoor Rashid Bhuiyan as the team's manager for the Champions Trophy. But in the face of massive criticism, the board brought in Mahmud to the hot seat to save the blushes and, most importantly, wipe out bitter memories of the 2003 World Cup.

"We have bitter memories of the last World Cup and you know this particular post has already become a subject of controversy. From this point of view, we had appointed Mahmud to avoid all those bad things. If I am not wrong we have had a long-term planning with Mahmud and we also discussed it several times."

"I don't understand why we changed Mahmud when he did an excellent job and my personal view is that there is nothing important for him than to continue the demanding job, at least till the World Cup."

He also differed with general secretary Mahbubul Anam's view that Asif had applied for the post.

"Is there any procedure about the appointment of a manager? I think there are many persons who are interested to get the lucrative job and in that case we should give everybody equal chance. General secretary (Anam) discussed many

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PHOTO: AFP

Russian top seed Maria Sharapova follows through on a serve during her second round match against countrywoman Anastasia Rodionova at the Australian Open in Melbourne on Thursday.

Brothers, Arambagh look positive



SPORTS REPORTER

Brothers Union officials promised to provide entertainment in the B. League although they have been heavily damaged in the transfers.

Arambagh Krira Shangha, on the other hand, will look forward to build a cache of footballers for the future by taking part in the Senior Division League besides the inaugural Professional Football League.

With less than one month to go for the launching of the B. League, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) began its promotional programme yesterday by

officially presenting the two participating clubs.

Two-time defending Premier-ship champions Brothers will have former Indian national coach Syed Nayeemuddin at the helm this year, informed Brothers manager Amer Khan at the presentation ceremony at the BFF Bhavan.

"He is expected to come arrive in Dhaka within a week and take over charge of the team," said Amer of Nayeemuddin, who guided Brothers to their first ever Premier and National League titles three years earlier.

Brothers had to go for the Indian after their coach Wajed Gazi finally decided to join Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra.

"It would be difficult to match the real professional standard in the first year but step by step, we would go ahead. We will try our best to maintain highest standard for players and coaches," added Amer.

The Gopibagh outfit, who will use the familiar orange as their home colours, will use blue for the away games. They have divided their booters in three categories according to salary.

Captain Masud Rana, who was later registered as the club's first ever professional footballer, said that Brothers' strength has not been damaged.

"With young and experienced players, we will be a contender for

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PHOTO: STAR

Combo picture shows players and officials of Brothers Union (L) and Arambagh display their colours for the coming Professional Football League at a presentation programme at the BFF Bhavan yesterday.

Loye's chance at hand



AFP, Perth

England are considering handing a full international debut to 34-year-old opening batsman Mal Loye in Friday's triangular series one-day clash with Australia in Brisbane.

Loye, called up after Michael Vaughan's hamstring injury, has

been on the fringes of the national set-up for more than a decade after representing England at under-19 level.

Loye, who was playing grade cricket in New Zealand before his call-up, is expected to win selection ahead of Ravi Bopara who came into the squad as a replacement for the injured Kevin Pietersen.

"Mal Loye is a definite option for us, he opens the batting for Lancashire where he has been successful," said stand-in captain Andrew Flintoff.

"I understand he has been scoring some runs in New Zealand, so I wouldn't have any worries about him coming in."

If he plays against Australia, Loye will be England's second seasoned debutant in a week after 36-year-old wicketkeeper Paul Nixon as they search for their best limited-overs side ahead of the World Cup.

Loye, Flintoff's Lancashire teammate and a member of England's 30-man provisional World Cup squad, said he was

delighted but not surprised to get the call-up.

"I'm not really surprised because an injury occurred," he said.

"I'm obviously delighted and hopefully somewhere in the tour I might get an opportunity."

"If I play tomorrow (Friday) or in the next few days it would be the ultimate."

Loye faces a baptism of fire at the top of the order, with Australia recalling champion fast bowler Glenn McGrath and speedster Brett Lee.

Rookie paceman Ben Hilfenhaus and Ashes star Stuart Clark will miss the game; with Mitchell Johnson and Nathan Bracken to form the other half of a four-pronged pace attack.

In good news for the other tri-series team, New Zealand, star fast bowler Shane Bond has been cleared of serious injury after being forced from the field with back soreness during Sunday's loss to England in Hobart.

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Easy task for title chasers

SPORTS REPORTER

Old DOHS and Abahani resume the title race when the fourth round of the Kai-Altech Premier Cricket League begins today after a regulation one-day break.

Both the title contenders have won their previous three games and only upsets can remove them from the top of the table as Two-time defending champions DOHS take on Kalabagh Krira Chakra at the Fatullah Stadium with Abahani pitted against winless Indira Road KC at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

At BKSP, bottom-table and newcomers Partex are facing City Club.

Tomorrow's matches, however, will draw more attention as last year's four of the top five finishers are set to clash. Sonargaon Cricketers, the other team to have won all their games, meet Bangladesh Biman at Fatullah while Mohammedan get a chance to recover from a last-round defeat when they play Victoria at BKSP. Brothers meet Young Pegasus at Dhanmondi in tomorrow's other match.

POINTS TABLE

Teams	M	W	L	Pts
DOHS	3	3	0	6
Sonargaon	3	3	0	6
Abahani	3	3	0	6
Mohammedan	3	2	1	4
Victoria	3	2	1	4
Biman	3	2	1	4
City Club	3	1	2	2
Pegasus	3	1	2	2
Kalabagh	3	1	2	2
Brothers	3	0	3	0
Indira Road	3	0	3	0
Partex	3	0	3	0

New committee for Pro League

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) dissolved its Professional Football League committee according to the Pro League statutes.

To fill the void after resignation of Anwar Hossain Ujjal and a few others from the committee, the BFF decided to form a new committee in its executive committee meeting yesterday.

BFF vice-presidents Abdur Rahim and Sirajul Islam Bachchu have been retained chairman and co-chairman. The two have been given the responsibility to pick the other members of the committee.

Meanwhile, the federation, struggling to rope in sponsors for the Professional League, has taken steps to hasten the arrival of its marketing agents.

Representatives of the Leisure Management of India, the agent, could not get visa to travel to Bangladesh but BFF officials informed that they have contacted with the Foreign Ministry to ease the way.

Two or three representatives of Leisure are expected in Dhaka soon to discuss and finalise the sponsorship issue.

Seeds stamp their class



AFP, Melbourne

Kim Clijsters and Martina Hingis staged a race Thursday to see who could crush their hapless Australian Open opponent first, and top seed Maria Sharapova joined the fun with her own rapid demolition job.

Former world number ones Hingis and Clijsters have been in red-hot form, conceding just nine games between them in the first two rounds of the tournament, while Sharapova came back from a horror opening match.

A scheduling coincidence has meant Hingis and Clijsters have taken to the court at the same time for their opening two matches and they have made a friendly rivalry out of who can wrap up their opponents fastest.

"We almost won at around the same time and then we came into the locker room and we started laughing and she (Hingis) is like 'damn, you beat me, you were there first'," Clijsters said.

"Then today, as well, we were waiting at the office, at the practice desk to be escorted out and she's like 'I hope I'm going to get here before you get here'."

"So we were just kind of joking and laughing, but it's fun, that's what's so good about it."

So far, Clijsters has the edge over Hingis in beating up her early opponents.

The tournament fourth seed scored a rare "double bagel" when crushing Russian Vasilisa Bardina 6-0, 6-0 in just 44 minutes in the first round then swept aside Akiko Morigami of Japan 6-3, 6-0 in 59 minutes.

Hingis downed France's Nathalie Dechy 6-0, 6-2 in 54

minutes in her opening game and took a relatively leisurely one hour eight minutes to get past Russian Alla Kudryavtseva 6-2, 6-2 in the second round.

Fourth seed Hingis and Clijsters will face one another if they make it to the quarterfinals.

The Belgian dumped Hingis out of the tournament at the same stage last year, when the Swiss Miss was returning from a three-year layoff. She also defeated Hingis in the French Open quarters and a hardcourt tournament in San Diego.

Clijsters said there was no tension between the pair.

"We're friends off the court, and you can laugh and say those kind of things," she said. "Once you get on the court, if we get to play each other, it's all business but from the moment that it's done, then those kind of things (friendship) should be possible, I think."

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Smith wary of Pakistan



CRICINFO, undated

Try as he might, Graeme Smith will find it difficult to convince record-keepers that he has just led his side to Test wins in Kolkata and Lahore.

For a start, the victories actually came at Newlands at Cape Town and Supersport Park at Centurion, not Eden Gardens or Gaddafi Stadium.

Smith's liberal approach to geography was actually a broad allusion to the surfaces his men happened upon at each venue: dry, flat, offering more turn the older they got, which is what you might expect at either subcontinental

venue. But having registered such impressive wins in alien conditions, they might be just a touch surprised at coming across a St George's Park pitch that its curator says will provide bowlers with pace and bounce. It'll be a good surprised, though, like reuniting with a pleasant old acquaintance.

AD Carter, the groundsman at Port Elizabeth, where the second Test between South Africa and Pakistan gets underway from tomorrow, told supercric.net that the surface is as different from traditional PE low, slow turners as possible. "It reminds me of the one we had for the match between the Warriors and the Eagles earlier this month," he said. "That one had pace and bounce and we hope this

one will be similar."

It was a pleasant bonus for South Africa that their rookie spinner, Paul Harris, took more wickets than both Anil Kumble and Danish Kaneria on pitches that were supposed to be tailor-made for them. But you'd think on a surface supporting fast bowlers, South Africa would back their trio of Makhaya Ntini, Andre Nel and Shaun Pollock against most others.

Generally, the hosts face few concerns, although AB de Villiers is causing a few nagging problems; he is an abnormally gifted sportsman, though a tally of three fifties in his last ten Tests and an average under 14 in his last four as opener is just plain abnormal. Hashim Amla

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh cricket captain Habibul Bashar (C) along with his teammates exchange pleasantries with war-maimed freedom fighters at a centre in Mohammedpur yesterday.

Ad