



Did U Know?

Ken Rosewall of Australia is both the youngest and oldest man to win the men's singles title at the Australian Open. He won in 1953 at the age of 18 and again in 1972 at the age of 37.



Carlo Ancelotti
(AC Milan coach)
"He's a great striker and is very fast. He hasn't trained much after being dropped at Real Madrid, but he remains an excellent player, who scored almost 100 goals with the Merengues in five years."
On Ronaldo.



Ranjan into qtrs
STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Rajshahi

Ranjan Ram moved to the quarterfinals of the Grameen- phone International Junior Tennis Tournament at the Zafar Imam tennis complex in Rajshahi yesterday. The local lad defeated Indian Rawnak Manu 6-1, 6-2 in the second round.

In the adjacent court, Irfat Hamid Sohel was thrashed at the hands of Japan's Tosa Suzuki 6-1, 6-0 who also moved to the quarterfinals.

In other matches, Aishwarya Sarivasatava and Naik Anoja moved to the next stage of the women's meet where they were joined by Nicha Laripakasinchai of Thailand, Molman of Russia, all of whom won their respective matches on the day.

Kapil blames the media

PTI, Kolkata

Cricketing legend Kapil Dev on Wednesday urged the media not to sow confusion over the captaincy issue for the forthcoming World Cup by repeatedly raking the name of Sourav Ganguly as a possible candidate for the hot seat.

"Selectors are doing their job. Let's support them," Kapil said.

Kapil's response followed a question from a scribe who asked whether the only World Cup winning Indian captain wanted to see Ganguly as the team skipper in the quadrennial showpiece that begins six weeks from now on March 13 in the West Indies.

"Let's not create confusion over captaincy ... Let's be all Indians," Kapil said, admonishing the media.

"We want to prepare a good team for the World Cup. If we win the World Cup, it will be a win for every player -- Rahul, Sachin (Tendulkar) and Sourav," he said.

The former all-rounder, however, made an oblique criticism of coach Greg Chappell's penchant for experimentation.

"I never want experimentation for losing. If you experiment and lose, I won't like it. If you win, then it's ok, and you can keep on experimenting." On Chappell's reliance on experienced Indian players of late after having waxed eloquence on the need for infusing fresh blood for long, he said, "you please put this query to Chappell".

Tigers off to Harare

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

With a mission to erase the heart-breaking memory they are having for a few months now, Bangladesh cricket team left Dhaka to play four one-day internationals against Zimbabwe yesterday.

Habibul Bashar's men had to stay two more hours from the schedule time of flight as dense fog delayed the Qatar Airways flight.

Fresh from the 5-0 whitewash they inflicted on their southern African opponents, the Tigers will play four games on February 4, 6, 9 and 11 at the Harare Sports Club ground as part of their World Cup preparation but the 3-2 away defeat in July-August last year definitely discomforts them.

For dashing left-handed opener Tamim Iqbal it was the first trip to the African nation as most of players have experience of touring the country on more than one occasion.

"My first dream was fulfilled as I was called up to the national team which surprised me, and now my main target is to play good cricket if I get the chance in the playing eleven. I want to play my natural game," said Tamim, who was the

only new face in the 15-member squad that was announced on last Thursday.

"I am also looking forward to play with my elder brother (Nafis Iqbal) in the national team because I believe that his days are not over to make a comeback to the (Bangladesh) side," said Tamim, who is third from his family to represent the national side after former skipper and his uncle Akram Khan and elder brother Nafis.

Captain Habibul Bashar also spoke with the reporters at the Zia International Airport lounge prior to their departure where he reiterated his claim that they were not too bothered with the World Cup but to console their last series defeat.

"We simply want to beat Zimbabwe in their own den to console the last series defeat. This time we are much more cautious about the job in hand," said the 33-year old Bangladesh skipper.

SQUAD
Habibul Bashar, Shahriar Nafees, Aftab Ahmed, Mohammad Rafique, Mashrafee bin Mortaza, Tushar Imran, Mohammad Ashrafi, Sakib Al Hasan, Mehrab Hossain, Shahadat Hossain, Mushfiqur Rahim (wk), Mohammad Sharif, Tapash Baisya, Abdur Razzak and Tamim Iqbal.



TIGERS IN BLUE: Bangladesh cricket captain Habibul Bashar (L) welcomes Tamim Iqbal (2nd from R) to the national team as Mehrab Hossain and Shahriar Nafees look on before they departed for Harare from the Zia International Airport yesterday.

Sylhet withdraws from B. League

SPORTS REPORTER

The B. League suffered a big blow when Sylhet District Sports Association (DSA) withdrew their name from the country's inaugural Professional Football League which is scheduled to kick off this month.

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) received the message from the only Sylhet-based team -- one of the 12 participants -- on Tuesday night, informed tournament committee's co-chairman Sirajul Islam Bachchu.

"We received a letter from the clubs' executive committee Tuesday night that they will not take part in the league," said Bachchu, also a BFF vice-president.

It was learnt that the newly elected executive body of the DSA took the decision with the B. League's opening just two weeks away.

If it were just a move to ignore the past committee's decision, it would be labelled a black chapter in the history of Sylhet's sports, especially after the DSA had taken all measures to go professional.

"Yes it would be a loss not only because reduction of matches but also, we will lose a good venue outside the capital," Bachchu admitted.

Chittagong and Khulna now remain the only venues outside Dhaka after Sylhet's withdrawal.

"We will take action against them according to the law," Bachchu added.

Many think that the BFF should have tried to convince a club from the region to play rather than involving a vulnerable DSA.

Victoria on course

SPORTS REPORTER

KAI ALTECH
Imrul Kayes scored a patient half-century as Victoria sailed to an easy 92-run victory over struggling City Club in the Kai-Altech Premier League at the Fatullah Stadium yesterday.

The left-handed opener made sure that his side join Sonargaon and Mohammad, who also won on the day against Brothers Union by 36 runs, at second position with 12 points each. Sonargaon take on leaders Abahani in a crucial encounter today at Fatullah.

Mohammedan rode on a couple of half-centuries from Rashedul Haque and Zunaed Siddiqui and some good bowling from left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny to eke out a win against relegation-threatened Brothers.

Both matches were curtailed due to heavy fog in the morning with the Mohammedan-Brothers encounter reduced to 40-overs-a-side while Victoria earned their win in a 43-overs-a-side affair.

The local lad defeated Indian Rawnak Manu 6-1, 6-2 in the second round.

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Div cricket meet ahead

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has decided to introduce BCB Challenge Club Cup Cricket in five divisions.

The decision was taken while BCB president M Abdul Aziz met with the chairmen of all standing committees in a special meeting on Tuesday at the board's management office in Gulshan.

The board has taken the initiative to arrange the meet in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Sylhet and Khulna divisions to encourage more local league cricket outside the capital.

This will be a pilot project for the five divisions that in the future will be spread out so that all the districts start playing league cricket.

Although opener Anwar Hossain hit a half-century, City were never in for a fight as they lost wickets in a heap as they pursued 252 to win.

Quarishi took 3 for 17 while Faruque took three catches in the City innings as the Mirpur-based club are slumping closer to the relegation zone.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

India win series in style

Tendulkar hits 41st ton

Cricket

AFP, Vadodara

Sachin Tendulkar struck a dramatic 41st one-day century as India whipped lacklustre West Indies by 160 runs on Wednesday to win the four-match series 3-1.

Tendulkar, the most successful batsman in one-day history, reached his hundred off the last ball of the innings as India piled up 341-3 and then bowled them out for 181 in 41.4 overs in Vadodara.

Marlon Samuels top-scored for the tourists with 55 and Denesh Ramdin made 40, but the remaining batsmen showed no signs of being able to chase down a target of 6.8 runs an over.

The tourists were reduced to 83-5, including the unfortunate run out of captain Brian Lara, who backed up too far at the non-striker's end and was out after a Samuels' straight drive deflected off the bowler on to the stumps.

Ajit Agarkar and Anil Kumble grabbed two wickets each to hand the West Indies a morale-sapping defeat in their final one-dayer before they host the World Cup starting in March.

India will play another four-match series against Sri Lanka at home next month before heading to the Caribbean on March 1.

Tendulkar finished with an unbeaten 100 off 76 balls following a thrilling exhibition of power hitting by the hosts in the decisive match.

Indian captain Rahul Dravid and senior pro Sourav Ganguly joined the run feast with half-centuries after Lara elected to field in good batting conditions.

Mahendra Dhoni hit an unbeaten 40 off 20 balls to help Tendulkar put on a blistering 75 runs from the last 40 deliveries.

Tendulkar, who was on 89 at the end of the 48th over, rotated the strike and also helped himself to two boundaries to reach his first one-day century since making 141 against the West Indies in Malaysia in September.

India did not look back after opener Robin Uthappa smashed

28 off 17 balls in a first-wicket stand of 47 with Ganguly in 6.3 overs.

Left-handed Ganguly then took over with an aggressive 68 that contained eight boundaries and a six to propel India to 148-1 by the 25th over.

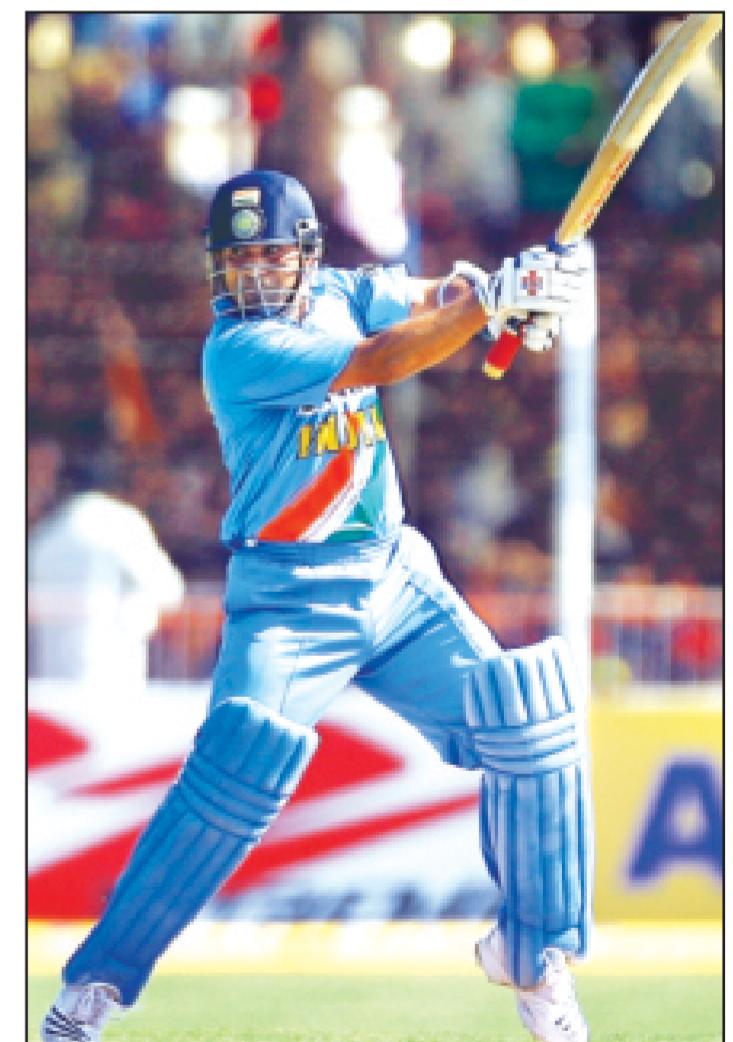
The former Indian captain had put on 101 for the second wicket with Dravid when he charged down the wicket against spinner Chris Gayle, missed the line and was easily stumped.

Dravid and Tendulkar continued the charge during a third-wicket stand of 118 off only 112 deliveries.

Dravid fell for 78 to set the stage for Tendulkar and Dhoni to send the tourists on a leather hunt.

India, still searching for a suitable World Cup combination, recalled Irfan Pathan for his first match since he was sent home from the tour of South Africa last month due to poor form.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



Indian superstar Sachin Tendulkar crashes one through backward point on way to his spectacular unbeaten century during the fourth and final ODI against West Indies in Vadodara yesterday.

Ctg Abahani aim high

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Chittagong Abahani will take inspiration from their third-place finishing in successive National Football Leagues to enter the professional era.

They also became the first team to detach the football club from the main unit of Abahani Limited as per the guideline of the Professional Football League.

"In the 2001 and 2002 National Football League, no one considered us to be a force. But we beat teams like Mukti Joddha and Mohammedan from Dhaka and drew with Abahani to finish third in consecutive seasons. This year, our target is also similar,"

said Abahani's newly nominated football club president Didarul Alam Chowdhury at a B. League presentation of clubs at the BFF Bhaban yesterday.

"We have a young team under a sincere coach. So we want to play good football and result would come naturally," he said adding that they have a handsome 1.20-crore Taka budget which can be increased.

"Our slogan would be 'sports is the unique medium of making harmony' among the youth. We want to involve more young persons in sports."

"We are also on the verge of success is teamwork," Swapan said.

Abahani, who won two Chittagong League titles since their

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Rezaul, Saif finish with wins

SPORTS REPORTER

Rezaul Islam and Abdullah Al Saif won their final round games but still finished way below winner Bitan Bannerjee in the 19th The Telegraph Schools Chess tournament in Kolkata yesterday.

With the wins, Rezaul became ninth while Saif was at 20th position in the tournament which was the best among all Bangladeshis in the meet.

Rezaul earned 8.5 points while Saif ended at eight.