



Did U Know?

India's Yajurvindra Singh and Greg Chappell of Australia share the world record of taking the most catches in a Test match -- seven catches.



Michel Platini

(Newly-elected UEFA president)
"Violence of any sort is unacceptable and it has absolutely no place in the game of football -- we do not condone it, we must not accept it and we must act to eradicate it."
After violence erupted in an Italian League match between Catania and Palermo last week that left one policeman dead.

What to WATCH

NEO Sports

India v Sri Lanka

First ODI

Live at 3:00 pm

ITF Jr WORLD TENNIS Locals shine

SPORTS REPORTER

Two local players Prithul Mondol and Ranjan Ram, both wild card entries, moved into the second round of the boys singles competition of the Dhaka Bank 21st Bangladesh International Junior Tennis competition at the Ramna Tennis complex yesterday.

Mondol defeated Phaninthon Pakpoomkamo of Thailand 7-5, 6-1 while Ranjan came from behind to beat South African Kuschke Carl 2-6, 6-4, 6-3.

BOA plans for SA Games

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) has taken the first step to start preparation for the 11th South Asian Games, which will be hosted in Dhaka in December 2008.

The BOA executive committee yesterday sat with the federation general secretaries who have been requested to submit budgets for preparation and their requirements for the regional Games.

The BOA high-ups also took note of the federations' expectations with athletics, football and swimming bosses giving high hopes of winning gold medals.

The BOA has also decided to hold the Bangladesh Games this year after a long time and successful athletes will go through long-term training afterwards.

Staging the Bangladesh Games, probably in December, will also give the BOA have a look at the venues and ideas of what more facilities they will need to build for the SA Games.

Dhaka has previously hosted the Games twice, then known as the SAF Games.

Bangladesh outplayed Hong Kong take 3-0 advantage



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's bid to win their first international at under-23 level in three years suffered a setback when the hosts crashed to a 3-0 defeat to Hong Kong in their first-leg Olympic pre-qualifier yesterday.

Striker Siu Ki Chan fired twice and set up the other for Kwok Keung Sham as the Hong Kong U-23s completely outplayed their rivals before a 5,000-strong crowd at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The return-leg will be held next Wednesday in Hong Kong.

Bangladesh, whose last victory at this level came against Afghanistan in the 9th SA Games in Islamabad, Pakistan in 2004, drew with India and lost to Pakistan in the same tournament.

They fired blank in two more under-23 competitions last year, in

the 10th SA Games in Colombo and the Asian Games in Doha, to remain without a win for nine matches.

Bangladesh seemed to be playing without a midfield as none of the four players managed to put pressure on the opposition, who enjoyed superior possession from the start. The visitors also took little time to notice a whole in the left flank where local right fullback Aurup left wide gaps to attack.

The tall and agile two-goal forward Chan dashed down the left to create the first real opportunity, but goalkeeper Himel intercepted the low cross before Wai could reach the ball.

The young and diminutive goalkeeper, who got the nod to stand under the bar after first-choice Tariq's nervous presence during a practice match against Korean side Ulsna Hyundai last week, could not prove his worth as he looked vulnerable in the air.

Himel was completely out of

position when Wai's freekick from the right curled over the defensive wall to find two strikers unmarked at the far post and Chan's faintest header was enough to separate the two sides after 24 minutes.

Ten minutes from breather, Chan almost scored his second when his weak drop-header on a right-flank centre by Yip beat the keeper. The move was ultimately completed by Sham who found the net with a spectacular backvolley from 15 yards after Maruf cleared Chan's effort from the goal line.

Leung and Chan wasted easy opportunities in first-half injury time but the latter put the match beyond Bangladesh with a brilliant solo effort in the 63rd minute. Sham won a midfield tussle to find Chan, who dribbled past Aurup and centre-back Zahirul on a long run before clinically putting the ball into the far post.

Like the practice match against Ulsan, skipper Waly Faisal was the

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Abahani beaten at last

SPORTS REPORTER



Abahani's nine match winning run was halted in its tracks when Kalabagan prevailed by one wicket in an exciting finish at the Fatullah Stadium in the tenth round of the Kai-Altech Premier League yesterday.

Kalabagan are in with a shout of a place in the Super League after their fourth win in ten matches but their scalp of Abahani was remarkable due to their status as bogey team for the league leaders over the years. Abahani, on top of the pile, now are two points ahead of Victoria but the loss should rankle and drag them out of their comfort zone.

Both matches were again delayed on the day due to heavy fog cover.

Indira Road came out on top in the battle of strugglers when they defeated City Club by eleven runs at the BKSP.

The two teams swapped places as Indira moved on top of City with six points now.

ABAHANI-KALABAGAN

The local derby, which took place in far flung Narayanganj, went down to the wire and only a leg-bye off Monirul Islam ensured Kalabagan's victory with three balls and a wicket to spare.

Needing 5 to win off the final over, paceman Mohammad Shahjada bowled a dot ball. Next ball, Monirul crashed the ball through the covers for a boundary. Then the ball tickled Monirul's thigh as the two batsmen scampered through for the winning run.

Earlier, Abahani had wrong batsmen at the wrong time of their innings. They missed out on singles and twos as Kuntal Chandra and Sri Lankan Sujith Fernando played sedate knocks, both holding the strike too long for top scorer Nazimuddin to play his shots at will.

But Nazimuddin batted with purpose throughout with a solid 64 off 75 balls, hitting nine fours.

In a curtailed match, a few bad overs for the batting side makes all the difference.

Kamrul Islam held the Kalabagan innings together till the 35th over before falling to Shahjada. He struck eight boundaries in his 100-ball knock of 76. His dismissal, however, spurred tail-ender Rashedul Islam and Monirul as they produced two cameo knocks. A vital six from Monirul off Suhawardi Shuvo, who took four wickets, in the penultimate over was the fatal blow for the Abahani supporters.

CITY V INDIRA

Sumon Barua batted well as his knock of 65 runs enabled Indira to post a fighting 212-5 in 43 overs.

In reply, City Club opener Gazi Salahuddin's 59 was not enough as his side fell short by 11 runs as they were bowled out for 211 in 41.3 overs.

Tariqul Islam and Shumon took two wickets each for Indira Road who skipped over City in the points table.

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PHOTO: STAR

Luara Luaha of Romania makes a return against Mohona of India on the first day of the ITF Junior Tennis at the Ramna Tennis Complex on Wednesday.

Rahul blasts spat claims



AFP, Kolkata

India skipper Rahul Dravid on Wednesday dismissed media reports that batsman Virender Sehwag had fallen out with coach Greg Chappell on the recent South African tour.

Local media said team manager Chetan Desai had filed a complaint against Sehwag in his tour report to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), after the batsmen had failed to keep an appointment with Chappell.

Sehwag, according to the manager's report, requested Chappell and team bio-mechanist Ian Frazer for a special net session on the eve of the second Test in Durban but failed to turn up.

When confronted by the duo, Sehwag was reported to have told them he did not feel like practising.

David, preparing for Thursday's one-day match against Sri Lanka here, told reporters he did not take either the media -- or manager's -- reports seriously.

"First, I have not seen that report, and to be honest, there is no problem within the team," Dravid said.

"How authentic your report is, and you obviously got it from somewhere, but anyway I think it is important to put it in perspective," he told reporters.

David also took a swipe at manager Desai, saying he was not an important cog in Indian cricket.

"I have been asked questions and my views on the report given by someone who when I look into the history of Indian cricket, doesn't necessarily feature very prominently," said Dravid.

"So when I am asked to comment on people at least you should expect me to answer questions about people who have been involved with the game or at least played the game in some capacity.

"Anyone is entitled to comment or write a report but me commenting on that is possible only if it is worthy of my comment."

Desai, a cricket official from Goa who was appointed manager only for the South African tour, declined to comment.

"I cannot tell you anything on the manager's report," he said. "I

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh striker Zahid Hassan Emily and Hong Kong defender Li Hang jump for possession during their Olympic men's pre-qualifier first leg at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Wednesday.

Better if forgotten

MOHAMMAD ISAM

A man ran in, uprooted the stumps at the bowler's end and ran towards the west. In the meantime, two more joined in, shoved a few fielders just slightly, while threatening the batsmen verbally. Stumps are gone, fielders running towards the pavilion in fear and the rest of the crowd chasing the three culprits. After a while the three emerge; bleeding on the face after the crowd beat them up furiously: a cricket match in Bangladesh.

In the last decade, such happenings are not rare as it is quite 'honourable' for clubs to threaten or physically beat up their opponents, own players or the umpires if the match did not go according to their wish. Dirty practice to say the least but yesterday at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, it was done in front of thousands of witnesses.

Brothers Union's notoriety lived up to expectations as their club boy Shahid ran inside the hallowed turf of a cricket ground and ran off with the stumps. After all the fracas that followed, umpires called for Rapid Action Battalion's (RAB) assistance to control the crowd.

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Yousuf, Afridi run riot

CRICINFO, undated

Shahid Afridi unfurled his full repertoire of individual brilliance as it was South Africa's turn to feel the punishment of flashing blades. With a masterful anchoring century from Mohammad Yousuf (101 not out), Pakistan racked up a massive 351 for 4 in the second one-day international at Durban yesterday.

In an attempt to level the series after their dismal effort at Centurion Park, Pakistan packed their side with all-rounders, handing Azhar Mahmood a first ODI since February 2005, and the long batting line-up enabled the top order to play with freedom. The result was Pakistan's highest total against South Africa and the highest score at Durban.

Afridi bludgeoned his way to an unbeaten 76 off 35 balls that contained six massive sixes and five fours after recalled opener Imran Nazir (57) and vice-captain Yousuf Khan (93) had laid the foundation.

Afridi and Yousuf added 129 runs for the unbroken fifth wicket off just 70 deliveries. It was Yousuf's 12th one-day century and first against South Africa that contained 12 hits to the ropes.

Rafique free of fracture

SPORTS REPORTER

Veteran left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique will hopefully be fit before Bangladesh's third one-day international against Zimbabwe to be held on Friday at the Harare Sports Club ground.

Team sources said that the X-ray report found no fracture on Rafique's nose yesterday and the local doctor advised him to take 24 hours rest to recover from the injury.

Rafique was carried off the field after he had collided with Zimbabwe's top-scorer Vusi Sibanda (93 not out) in his follow-through during the second match on Tuesday leaving the spinner bleeding from the nose.

The left-hander made the team highest 41 in his side's ignominious eight-wicket defeat in the match.

The four-match series was locked 1-1.

JFA CUP

Goal drought on opening day

SPORTS REPORTER

The 3rd JFA Cup Under-15 football championship got off to a quiet start yesterday with only nine goals scored in six qualifying matches.

Panchagarh recorded the 'biggest' victory of the day when they knocked out Dinajpur 2-0 at Natore while Jamalpur edged Sherpur 2-1 at Mymensingh.

Naogaon beat Bogra 1-0 at Sirajganj while Laxmipur ousted Feni with an identical win at Comilla.

Two matches were settled in tiebreakers with Bagerhat blanking Jessore 2-0 after a goalless draw at Khulna while Faridpur defeated Rajbari 4-3 at Manikganj following a 1-1 draw in regulation period.

WC prep at its best

India-SL first ODI today



AFP, Kolkata

India and Sri Lanka get an early chance to size up each other ahead of the World Cup when they play a four-match limited overs series starting here on Thursday.

Both teams are drawn together in Group B of the World Cup preliminary rounds alongside Bangladesh and Bermuda, with the top two advancing to the second stage.

India and Sri Lanka will use Thursday's day-night match at the Eden Gardens and the second game in Rajkot on February 11 to gauge current form before picking their World Cup squads by the February 13 deadline.

Local media speculated that the Indian team chosen for the first two matches, which includes the recalled duo of Virender Sehwag and Munaf Patel, will also play in the March 13-April 28 World Cup in the Caribbean.

Sehwag was dropped for the recent home series against the West Indies following a poor tour of

South Africa, but is widely regarded as being a certainty for the World Cup.

Fast bowler Patel returns after missing most of the South African tour and the West Indies series with an ankle injury.

Indian captain Rahul Dravid said he will name the playing eleven on Thursday due to fitness concerns over Ajit Agarkar (fever), Irfan Pathan (sore shoulder) and Yuvraj Singh (stiff back).

"I would have loved to announce the 12 but we will wait till the morning to see how far the three have recovered," Dravid told reporters after practice on Wednesday.

Sri Lanka, who have rested star bowlers Chaminda Vaas and Muttiah Muralidaran for the India series, will also use the first two games to fine-tune their World Cup squad.

"I would say that we've got an idea of about 90 percent of the people we want to take to the West Indies," said Sri Lankan captain Mahela Jayawardene.

"We'll have to take into account things like form, experience, players who can handle pressure, players

who can fit into the combinations that we want and who can contribute to the team."

Sri Lanka's last two tours of India ended in one-day defeats. They were walloped 6-1 by the hosts in October 2005, and failed to make the Champions Trophy semi-finals last year.

Since the 2005 tour of India, Jayawardene's men have won 20 of their 40 one-dayers and six out of 11 Tests, a majority of them away from home.

"We are competing much better overseas," said Jayawardene.

"India actually started our revival. When we lost those six matches badly we had a chat and asked ourselves where we wanted to be in one year's time.

"Today (Wednesday) we are in a different situation, performing consistently. We have grown up as a team and we have put a lot of results together.

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