

## Natore, Chittagong in zonal finals

### SPORTS REPORTER

Mostafizur Rahman and Wahid Murad both slumped hattricks as Chittagong brushed aside Laxmipur 11-0 in the zonal semifinal of the 3rd JFA Cup qualifying round at Comilla yesterday.

Jobel struck twice while Sekander, Rubel and Mohon added the rest for the winners, who will take on winners of today's second semifinal between hosts Comilla and Habiganj in the final on February 15.

In another match, hosts Natore ousted Panchagarh 2-0 to set a final clash against Gaibandha.

Meanwhile, five zonal finals will be held today at Narail, Manikganj, Mymensingh, Khulna and Shariatpur.

## Proteas put pressure on Australians

### CRICKINFO, undated

South Africa can become the first team to topple Australia from the top spot in the ODI rankings if they beat Pakistan in the final one-day at Johannesburg and if Australia lose the upcoming Chappell-Hadlee series in New Zealand. Australia have been ranked No 1 since the current rankings were introduced in 2002.

South Africa are currently on 127 points, three behind Australia. If they beat Pakistan on Wednesday they will move up to 128. They have hit excellent one-day form since failing to make the finals of the tri-series in Australia in 2005-06, with home series wins over Australia, Zimbabwe and India and qualifying for the semifinals of the Champions Trophy.

If Australia do lose the Chappell-Hadlee series, for which they have rested several regulars, they will drop down to second place and New Zealand will move up to third. England remain at seventh place despite beating Australia 2-0 in the CB Series finals. India could slip from fifth to sixth if they lose the remaining two ODIs of the ongoing series against Sri Lanka.

## Ronaldo enjoys

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power and technique. He just needs a little time."

AC Milan's win lifted them up to seventh and boosted their chances of finishing among the Champions League places, leaving them just two points behind fourth-placed Empoli.

The top two in Serie A go directly into the Champions League, while the teams finishing third and fourth go into the third and final qualifying round, which is played over two legs.

Ronaldo is ineligible for AC Milan's Champions League matches this season as he has already played in the competition for Real Madrid.

## The Keeper

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test. The most important thing was that we bounced back from the back foot on several occasions. The conditions in Harare was also tough," said Bashar, who made his career best 78 in the first match.

One of selectors Golam Nawsher Prince, who accompanied the team in Harare, heaped praise on Mushfiqur and said he was impressed by the way the Bogra lad was gradually improving his performance.

"He (Mushfiqur) served the team best when it was needed most in two difficult situations. We changed his batting order twice and thankfully he served the team purposes. He also improved his keeping as he missed only one stumping chance in the entire series. I am really impressed by his gradual improvement," said the former national paceman.

Also team physio Paul Close informed the reporters that he was confident about the fitness of Mohammad Rafiq and Mohammad Sharif.

Rafique badly bruised his nose during the second game while Sharif had suffered a thigh strain in the third match.

## Mashrafee

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situations," he said.

"The team never lost confidence which impressed me most," he added.

While Mashrafee returned with a relief there was a different kind of dissatisfaction in the mind of Aftab Ahmed as the dashing right-hander missed a golden opportunity to make his maiden one-day hundred in the fourth game which Bangladesh won by one wicket.

"It is really frustrating that I missed the chance only for eight runs. But in the end I am happy that we won the series and that my innings played a role behind the last game victory," said the Chittagongian, who tried to pull pacer Anthony Ireland only to be struck on the pads to be ruled out leg before wicket.



Azman (C), son of late Monem Munna, prays during a milad mahfil at the Abahani tent yesterday to mark the second death anniversary of the legendary footballer.

## A tribute to Munna

### SPORTS REPORTER

Azman takes after his father in many ways. Not only via facial resemblance but also in his quiet disposition and unceasing love for football.

The 10-year-old's characteristic's reminds one easily of his father who would have filled a void in the area.

Death has done the father - Monem Munna - and the family apart but his child grows under the shadow of one of the greatest footballers of the country.

Azman did not have the chance to see Munna in action - which gripped his fans and oppositions alike - because he was too young when his father had retired from the game.

Having kicking a ball at the Abahani ground whenever he gets time has become his favourite pastime. He wants to make it a passion by becoming a footballer.

"I love football and I want to become a footballer," that was all the shy child could say yesterday, shortly after a discussion and a milad mahfil - rather casually organised - at the Abahani tent in Dharmundi on the second death anniversary of Munna.

It would be a great challenge because Munna was not just another player.

The untimely departure of Munna, who breathed his last at a hospital bed two years ago at the age of 39 following critical kidney ailments, sent the

Munna's child day hero

Ashrafuldin Chunnu termed him as a 'complete man' who won millions of hearts at home and abroad.

Dewan Shafiq Arefin Tutul mentioned that Munna was a talented, brave and honest organiser who would have filled a void in the area.

"Munna chose to work for the club in spite of his illness because the decline of football in the country hurt him. If we want to pay tribute to him, we should at least uplift the condition of the game," said Mubashar Hossain adding that works on the book on Munna's life will be completed very soon.

Former national striker Sheikh Mohammed Aslam, Kazi Nabil, Ahmed Sajjadul Alam, Mohammed Jahangir and other Abahani officials, former Bangladesh Football Federation member Moajjem Hossain and the football team management and current booters were present.

Munna's wife Yasmin Monem Suravi, who goes through a painful situation of observing the anniversaries of their marriage and her husband's death on the same day, and their daughter Dania were also present.

At his hometown in Narayanganj, Munna Smriti Sangsad and local Sonali Oti also observed the day organising different programmes.

"We don't want to remember a great player like him just at these anniversary programmes. We have a duty towards him and we want to create opportunities for kids like Azman to be groomed as footballers. We want to name our youth camp after Munna and hope that his playing day colleagues will come forward to help," Harund said.

Munna's child day hero

"We have spoken to the ICC and they have said if any of our selected players are not cleared fit we can seek a replacement from the technical committee before the World Cup,"

Chief selector Wasim Bari, who will return from South Africa after consultations with captain Inzamamul Haq and coach Bob Woolmer, will name the squad despite fitness problems with leading bowlers.

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Even his wicketkeeping was not as sharp as usual, leading for calls for New South Wales keeper-batsman Haddin to also be included for the World Cup.

Gilchrist's opening partner Matthew Hayden had a good series statistically, but the reality was that he enjoyed plenty of good fortune, his footwork was below par and he only looked comfortable at the crease in one innings.

Australia won the Champions Trophy recently and will still be the side to beat in the West Indies when the tournament opens on March 11.

However, their opponents will feel Ponting's men are looking a little more vulnerable than for some time.

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the order, with the explosive Adam Gilchrist's form falling away during the tri-series and averaging just 22.

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## Ricky puts on brave face

### Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Time will tell whether Australia's performance in the triangular one-day series finals against England was a temporary aberration, or sign of things to come at the World Cup.

They will be still be heavily favoured to win an unprecedented third World Cup in the Caribbean, despite their 2-0 loss to England.

Captain Ricky Ponting remained confident after the defeat, but conceded there were concerns over his side.

"As far as our World Cup preparations go, I don't think this really

changes things too much," he said here on Sunday.

"I am sure the selectors will be asking a few more questions of me about the team tomorrow morning with regards to selection for the World Cup squad but I guess that is to be expected when you have a couple of bad performances in a row."

Ponting added he hoped the tri-series finals were a timely wake-up call ahead of the World Cup.

Australia will name its 15-man squad for the tournament on Tuesday and star allrounder Andrew Symonds is expected to be included despite a bicep injury.

Bowlers Shaun Tait and Stuart Clark, allrounders Brad Hogg and Cameron White, and batsmen Brad Haddin and Brad Hodge will anxiously await the selection news.

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## Media post-mortem

### Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Triumphalism has given way to anxiety as Australia's World Cup campaign has faltered with England's stunning tri one-day series victory over the once formidable Aussies, newspapers said Monday.

England shook off their historical five-nil Ashes Test series flogging five weeks ago and their lowly one-day ranking to spank the Australians 2-0 in the best-of-three finals series here Sunday.

Suddenly, Ricky Ponting's team look vulnerable with just a month to go before the World Cup in the

Caribbean.

"The team that appeared impregnable a fortnight ago is now a side under siege, plummeting to its third consecutive defeat to England and its first limited-overs finals defeat on home soil in 14 years," The Sydney Morning Herald said.

"Australia's losses to England have coincided with the long-term biceps injury to Andrew Symonds.

"Without his power and versatility, the Australian line-up suddenly appears unbalanced, unsettled and unsure of itself.

"That was evident again last night, when Australia had its worst batting collapse of the series to finish at 152 for eight from 27 rain-affected overs."

This was all in stark contrast to

the ridiculed England team of early last month - the first to lose an Ashes series 5-0 to Australia in 86 years.

Australia won seven of their eight preliminary games in the tri-series, yet collapsed and lost their last three matches against England to leave question marks over their chances to win a third straight World Cup.

"Australia's World Cup campaign is unravelling in embarrassing fashion after England romped to victory in the tri-series finals," The Australian newspaper said.

"It was a humiliating end to a summer of almost total domination by Australia, with the number one ranked one-day team in the world flogged when it mattered by a side ranked eighth.

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

Sri Lanka are drawn with India, Bangladesh and first-timers

Coach: Tom Moody.

## SL announce WC squad

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recent tour of the Caribbean.

De Mel was confident the squad can help Sri Lanka to repeat their World Cup triumph of 1996.

"The side has got firepower at the top of the order and there's a solid middle order too," he said. "Add to that we have the kind of bowlers who can contain and bowl sides out."

"The squad has variation and most players are experienced as well."

Since a tour of India in 2005 when Sri Lanka were routed 1-6 in the one-dayers, Jayawardene's

men have won 21 of their 41 one-dayers and six out of 11 Tests, a majority of them away from home.

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

**SQUAD**

Mahela Jayawardene (captain), Kumar Sangakkara, Sanath Jayasuriya, Upul Tharanga, Marvan Atapattu, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Russell Arnold, Chamara Silva, Chaminda Vaas, Farveez Maharoof, Lasith Malinga, Dilshan Fernando, Nuwan Kulasekara, Muttiah Muralidaran, Malinga Bandara.

**Coach:** Tom Moody.

## Ex-cricketers hail Sehwag inclusion

PTI, New Delhi

Former cricketers today welcomed the "bold move" to include an out-of-form Virender Sehwag in India's World Cup squad, saying the swashbuking batsman had match-winning abilities and could not be ignored for such a big event.

Many of the players also felt that Sehwag would be more effective as an opener as he could capitalise on the field restrictions and "change the complexion of the game" in the first

15 overs.

Former Indian stumper and chairman of the selection committee, Kiran More said Sehwag may not be in the best of form at the moment but it was necessary to have him in the team considering his past record.

"Sehwag is a very useful player. He is not in the best of form but you take such players for the big events. There are no surprises in the squad. It should have been a tough call for the selectors to leave out Ramesh Powar," More said.

More also approved the decision to include youngsters Robin Uthappa and Dinesh Karthik in the 15-member squad.

"Both of them have been around for a while now. They will be a surprise element for the opposition. Robin has done well, has some solid performances to back him. Dinesh did outstandingly on the South Africa tour," he said.

"The balance is good, with seven batsmen and seven bowlers and two wicketkeepers" he said.