

Bank ride on Joy 100

SPORTS REPORTER

Joy cracked exactly 100 to guide Agrani Bank to a 19-run victory against Utara Sporting Club in the Kai-Altech First Division Cricket League at the Dhaka University ground yesterday.

Agrani amassed 295-8 in the allotted 50 overs with Ujjal making 52. Utara finished their 50-over quota for 276.

At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, Young Pegasus B rode on Shihab's unbeaten 78 to beat Prantik Krira Chakra by five wickets. Pegasus posted to 168-5 in 47 overs in reply to Prantik's 167-9.

At BKSP, Jatrabari Krira Chakra (253-6) managed a 16-run victory over Lalmatia Club (237-8).

Rani Hamid wins opener

SPORTS REPORTER

Reigning champion IWM Rani Hamid made an auspicious start in the 28th National Women Chess Championship which began at the federation hall-room yesterday.

Rani beat Zakia Sultana in the first round while Shamina Akhter Liza, Nazrana Khan Eva, Hamida Rahman and Mimi Arjuman also won their respective games.

Bond wants to prove his worth

AFP, Bridgetown

New Zealand paceman Shane Bond used to spend as much time on the treatment table, battling a series of crippling injuries, as he did out in the middle.

Now he is determined to prove what many Kiwis have believed for years -- that he is truly world class, even if he has to mellow to prove it.

"There was time when I just wanted to go faster and faster but that has changed," said the former policeman who will get his first taste of the 2007 World Cup in a warm-up against Bangladesh here on Tuesday.

"I'm more relaxed now and the ego is gone a bit. I have added skills to my bowling and I believe I'm a more complete player. My role is to ensure that I get wickets and prove the team a great start."

Dogged by back and leg injuries, the 31-year-old only made his one-day international debut five years ago, and has so far played in just 59 games.

But he has collected 112 wickets at an average of 19.66 and his strike rate is under one every 27 balls.

He was the second fastest bowler in the world to reach 100 ODI wickets, achieving the feat in 54 matches, one more than Pakistan spinner Saqlain Mushtaq.

New Zealand will also face Sri Lanka in a warm-up here on Friday before they head for St Lucia for their first round Group C matches where they face England, Kenya and Canada.

LOCAL SNIPS

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School Handball Tournament at the Dhanmondi Women's Complex.

In boys' group, Residential Model blanked Agha Khan 8-0 but lost an exciting match 7-5 to Narinda Government School in the afternoon. Bhashantek School trounced South Point 14-1, Play Pain beat Rifles School 8-5, Shaheen School outplayed Rahmatullah Model 16-1 and Daud beat Sunnydale 15-4.

In girls' competition, Scholastics beat Agha Khan 7-1, while Play Pain recorded a 4-3 win over Rifles School.

GAIBANDHA BADMINTON

Mahmudul Hasan of Sunrise Club clinched double crown in the Naheed Cotton Badminton tournament in Gaibandha. Having won the boys' singles title, he paired with teammate Rubel to win the doubles title. Sabir Hossain, singles runner-up, also finished second in the doubles pairing with Mehdi Hasan.

Mahmuda Khatun Shahida lifted the girls' singles trophy while Sharmin Akhter and Farzana Haque were doubles champions.

ANNUAL SPORTS

Rakib Doza Akanda of Economics became champion in the annual sports of the Salimullah Muslim Hall (Dhaka University). Shariful Alam (Public Administration) and Humayun Kabir (Social Welfare) finished joint runners-up.

A total of 200 students competed in 15 events at the Jagannath Hall ground.

BUET TT

Suhrawardy Hall bagged the BUET inter-hall table tennis title when they beat Titumir Hall 2-0 in the final on Sunday at the BUET Gymnasium.



England batsman Kevin Pietersen follows through on an off-drive during their World Cup practice match against Bermuda at Arnos Vale in St Vincent on Monday.

More warm-ups today

AFP, Bridgetown



Rahul Dravid, Inzamamul Haq and Ricky Ponting take their first tentative World Cup steps on Tuesday against teams destined to be amongst the whipping boys of the 2007 tournament.

Dravid and his India side face the Netherlands in Jamaica, Pakistan meet Canada in Trinidad while Australia, the defending champions, tackle Zimbabwe on the second day of warm-ups.

"We have a pretty good team and we are very confident," said India skipper Dravid.

"I know that all the other teams will be aiming to play their best cricket but we are very confident that this is going to be a very good tournament for us."

India will also face West Indies on Friday in their final warm-up before heading to Trinidad for their first round schedule where they face

Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Bermuda.

Pakistan, the 1992 champions, arrived in the West Indies in a state of disarray having lost strike bowlers Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif as well as influential all-rounder Abdul Razzaq to injury.

Skipper Inzamam, second only to Sachin Tendulkar on the all time list of leading one-day international bowlers with 11,665 runs, insists Mohammad Sami, Yasir Arafat and Azhar Mahmood will prove adequate replacements.

"I believe in our team and we believe in ourselves and definitely we will try to do well," said Inzamam, who will be playing in his last World Cup.

After their final warm-up game against South Africa on Friday, Pakistan head to Jamaica for their Group D matches against West Indies, Ireland and Zimbabwe.

Just a few weeks ago, Australia were red-hot favourites to win a third successive World Cup title.

But since crushing England 5-0 to recapture the Ashes, Ponting's men lost the tri-nations series to the English and followed it up with another loss in New Zealand.

Top of that, fast bowler Brett Lee was ruled out of the tournament through injury while Andrew Symonds and Matthew Hayden are battling for full fitness.

"There are some concerns, no doubt about it," said Ponting.

"It's about all of us just looking at our own games and finding little areas that we think we can improve. If we play our best cricket, we are going to be very hard to beat."

Australia will meet England again in their last warm-up on Friday before heading to St Kitts for their Group A dates against South Africa, Scotland and the Netherlands.

Tuesday's other warm-up game sees New Zealand meet Bangladesh in Barbados.

Many observers, including former Australia skipper Ian Chappell and ex-Sri Lanka captain Arjuna Ranatunga, see the Kiwis as definite semi-finalists at least.

TODAY'S MATCHES

AT JAMAICA
India v Netherlands
AT ST VINCENT
Australia v Zimbabwe
AT TRINIDAD
Pakistan v Canada
AT BARBADOS
New Zealand v Bangladesh

Symonds back in nets

AFP, KINGSTOWN



Injured all-rounder Andrew Symonds gave Australia a much-needed boost when he underwent his first net session since having surgery on his injured arm.

Although Symonds has no chance of playing the World Cup warm-ups here against Zimbabwe on Tuesday and England on Friday, the team management are hopeful that he will be available for the final round group game against South Africa in St Kitts on March 24.

It was gentle workout for Symonds who only faced tennis balls during his 10-minute session.

Australia face Zimbabwe here on Tuesday almost down to the bare bones.

Symonds and Matthew Hayden are injured while Adam Gilchrist has been on paternity leave leaving the

defending champions with just 12 players to choose from.

Skipper Ricky Ponting is also keen to see how his pace attack copes with the early 09.30 starts and if the likes of Glenn McGrath, Shaun Tait and Stuart Clark can exploit the conditions.

Their speed in adapting will be crucial for a side shorn of Brett Lee who was forced to pull out of the squad injured on the eve of the tournament.

"We've got flexibility for all of the conditions we are confronted with," said Ponting.

"They are all 09.30 starts so with these two practice games we are just going to have to try to get a feel for how the conditions are going to be at that time of the day."

Meanwhile, Zimbabwe coach Kevin Curran insists his team won't be overawed by their World Cup challenge despite their strife-torn build-up which has meant only one player from the 2003 World Cup has survived to play in the Caribbean.

Proteas ready to shrug off injury woes

REUTERS, Bridgetown



Determined to live up to their new status as the world's top-ranked team, South Africa will be aiming to put World Cup debuts Ireland firmly in their place when the warm-up matches get underway on Monday.

Injury scares to all-rounder Justin Kemp and batsman Herschelle Gibbs were unlikely to have dented the confidence of the African side after it became clear that the duo had not suffered any long-term damage.

Kemp was left grimacing in pain after he was struck on his big left toe by fast bowler Charl Langeveldt during a nets session on Sunday, while Gibbs injured a finger in a

fielding drill.

Their injuries are more of a soft tissue and ligament nature, there is no damage to the bone and they shouldn't be affected too much," South African team doctor Mohammad Moosajee told reporters on Sunday.

Although Kemp and Gibbs could miss the match against Ireland in Trinidad, it would have done little to ease the daunting task that lies ahead for Ireland.

South Africa became the world number one ranked limited-overs team last month when Australia lost their one-day series against New Zealand 3-0.

The European side will be one of four cricketing minnows who will be hoping on Monday to justify their place in the sporting extravaganza that is taking place in the Caribbean for the first time.

Like Ireland, Bermuda will also be stepping into uncharted territory on Monday when they come up against England in St Vincent.

Scotland face 1996 champions Sri Lanka while local fans hope the Kenyans will not put a dampener on the carnival atmosphere that is starting to grip the Caribbean islands when they take on hosts West Indies in Jamaica.

"The fever is getting there but it's still 60 degrees not 90. When the games start, the people will get a feel starting from Monday's games," West Indies team manager Clive Lloyd said.

The 13-a-side game will give England a chance to experiment with their bowling while captain Michael Vaughan says he will play some part in the game as he looks to boost his fitness after knee and hamstring trouble.

England batsman Kevin Pietersen follows through on an off-drive during their World Cup practice match against Bermuda at Arnos Vale in St Vincent on Monday.

Fletcher warns of complacency

AFP, Kingstown

England coach Duncan Fletcher has told his team not to get carried away by their shock tri-nations series win over Australia as they plot their way through the World Cup.

After suffering 5-0 Ashes drubbing at the hands of the Aussies, England then stunned the world champions by winning the Commonwealth Bank one-day series.

That has led to increased expectations that England can finally win a World Cup title after 32 years of heartache.

"When you land in the West Indies, there's a different atmosphere so we've just got to make sure they don't switch off," he told Sky Sports News.

"The other thing is we have to make sure they don't get a little complacent after that good result."

"I don't think they will because they are a bunch of individuals who want to succeed, and they've got the character as they showed in the comeback in that series."

"We're pretty confident, there's a buzz about the side so let's maintain that. At the same time, we must not get over-confident."

England face Bermuda in the first of two warm-ups here on Monday and then face Australia again on Friday.

Their first round campaign gets underway on March 16 at St Lucia against New Zealand followed by further Group C games against Canada and Kenya.

Fletcher still believes Australia, aiming for a third successive World Cup title, are the team to beat.

"From results over the last month or so it's going to be pretty open," said the coach.

"I still believe Australia are favourites but it's opened up a lot and there are a few sides who have come to form at an important stage."

An Anfield

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struggling to fit in time.

The final game on Tuesday is Roma's trip to Lyon with the tie evenly poised following the dire 0-0 bore draw in the first leg.

Lyon will be without midfield star Jeremy Toulalan while Roma should welcome back fit-again Brazilian Rodrigo Taddei.

Lyon start as favourites with home advantage but Roma's Brazilian midfielder Mancini believes his side will rise to the occasion, something they failed to do in the first leg.

"We can win in Lyon. I am confident about our chances because we always succeed in getting good results in difficult situations," he said.

A decade

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"These resources are a combination of overs and wickets and are listed in a table giving the percentages of the total runs in an innings that remain for any combination of overs/balls to be received and wickets lost."

Confused?

It certainly proved too much for hosts South Africa at the 2003 World Cup. They thought they had achieved a winning score of 229 against Sri Lanka only to discover, too late, that was what they needed to tie a match where victory alone would have seen them through to the second phase.

However, the criticism afterwards centred on the South Africa dressing room, not Duckworth and Lewis.

It's a mistake the Proteas, and the rest of the world's leading teams, are unlikely to repeat.

We can catch

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in hand in the Premier League after beating Portsmouth 2-0 on Saturday and meet Tottenham on the FA Cup quarterfinals next Sunday.

Carvalho said he was confident Chelsea will beat his former side FC Porto when the two clubs meet on Tuesday for the second leg of the second round of the Champions League. The two sides drew 1-1 at FC Porto in the first leg.

"The truth is that of the last 78 games we have played at home we only lost one," he said.

"The pressure is all on our side but it is good that it is like that, we prefer it, we deal really well with it," he added.

Del Piero

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"It's always pleasing to score three goals, but the victory is more important," he said.

Juventus' win took them two points clear of second-placed Napoli, and more importantly seven points ahead of third-placed Genoa in the race for the two automatic promotion places.

"The distance between us and third place is good, and let's hope we can pull further away," Del Piero added.

Juve, who were relegated