

Dhaka, BKSP in JFA Cup final

SPORTS REPORTER

An 83rd minute strike by Sakhawat Hossain gave hosts Dhaka a place in the final of the 3rd JFA Cup Under-15 Football Championship with a 1-0 win over Kishoreganj in the first semifinal at the Army Stadium yesterday.

Dhaka will play BKSP in Thursday's final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

In the other semifinal also yesterday, BKSP crushed Chittagong 4-0 with a brace from Mamunur Rashid and a goal apiece by Saddam and Galib.

No one is a favourite: Fleming

PTI, Montego Bay

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming says that there are no clear favourites in the World Cup and all the top teams will fancy themselves winning the coveted trophy.

Fleming believes that the recent wins against Australia have been a big confidence booster for his side but the poor show in the warm-up games have also pointed out the flaws that they need to iron out.

"There are no clear favourites, I feel it's anyone's game," Fleming said.

"I feel we should have made the finals of the Commonwealth Bank series ahead of England; but we got a massive confidence from our wins against Australia. Now again, we have struggled in the practice games so a week could be a long time in international cricket," he said.

According to Fleming, good captaincy could be a vital component in a side's campaign in this tournament.

"It's important how you captain, the balance you achieve in your style, how early you are able to adapt and understand the conditions. A captain's input could be vital," he said.

Fleming believes the manner of loss or a win could give a side enough indications on how to prepare for the future games.

Crazy!

**FROM PAGE 17** Sharma, a salesman earning 3,000 rupees (35 pounds) every month, hopes to earn more than 30 times that by selling his kidney.

He has even set up a donation box near his house in the industrial city of Jamshedpur in the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand.

A fan of wicketkeeper Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who also hails from Jharkhand, Sharma says he never misses an opportunity to watch cricket.

It's a mad

**FROM PAGE 17** Posse. It was wonderful and it became an obsession, it became a cult.

"When government ministers come up to you and tell you how important the Trini Posse is to Trinidad it's so gratifying. It feels good, we've worked hard on it, it's a passion and it has turned into something very special, like a baby."

The Bharat Army, which made its mark at the 2003 World Cup, is a group of UK and US based businessmen of Indian origin. Those coming to the World Cup are likely to be mostly US citizens since many in India have found it too expensive to travel so far.

Unlike the raucous Barmy Army, the Bharats believe they have a more-refined outlook.

Founder-member Shailen Tank was once quoted as saying that the Indian team's camp-followers never show no matter how much the performance of their side irritated them, had strict family values and travelled with their mothers, sisters and wives.

"I'm passionate about India and supporting cricket like an Indian," Shailen said.

There is no fans army in Pakistan, but there is one man called "chacha" (uncle) who seems to pop up wherever the team plays. He has a long-beard and usually dresses in the Pakistani flag.

Sri Lanka has its most famous cheerleader named Percy Abeysekera (he's been around since Sri Lanka gained Test status in 1981) but he too is unlikely to be seen in the West Indies.



Did U Know?

England's David Gower and Pakistan's Shahid Afridi both hit their first ball they faced in Test cricket for a boundary off the bowling of Liaqat Ali and Glenn McGrath respectively.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Winners of the 17th AB Bank CAS Trophy Golf Tournament pose with the chief guest Chittagong Area Commander of Bangladesh Army Major General Sina Ibne Jamil during the prize-giving ceremony at the Bhatary Golf and Country Club on March 2.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

International Woman Master and holder Rani Hamid took solo lead after seven rounds in the Aromatic Gold 28th National Women's Chess Championship when she maintained her winning run.

Rani defeated Mimi Arjuman at the chess federation hall-room to stretch her collection to maximum seven points but previous round co-leader Sharmin Sultana Shirin lost to Farzana Hossain Annie to stuck to six points at second place. In other matches, Shamima Akhter Liza beat Hamida Rahman, Zakia Sultana beat Mahmuda Haque Moly, Mehnaz Ahmed Mithila defeated Masuda Begum, and Nazrana Khan Eva beat Kishwara Shajrin Evana.

SCHOOL CRICKET

Dhaka Ideal School rode on a half-century by Akram to make Fairy's Fair International School by 64 runs in the Standard Chartered National School Cricket competition at the East End ground.

Akram struck 70 as Dhaka Ideal reached 248 in 45 overs. In reply, Fairy's Fair were bowled out for 184 in 30.3 overs with Hira top-scoring with 65.

Khokon of Dhaka Ideal also had

a good game with his 43 and four-wicket haul.

In other matches, Mugdapara Kazi Zafar Ahmed High School defeated Nawabpur Government High School by 90 runs at the Dhanmondi Club ground while Rayer Bazar High School squeaked past Kurmitola High School by two wickets in Kalindi.

Manikganj correspondent adds: Rabbi powered Manikganj Government High School to a thrilling one-wicket victory over Kusherchar Ismail Hossain High School in the final of the regional school cricket competition at their home ground yesterday.

Man-of-the-match Rabbi's five-wicket haul helped Manikganj Government High bowl out Kusherchar for only 133 runs in 32.2 overs. Then Sakhawat (40) and Atik (21) took matters into their hands to help Manikganj clinch the tournament as they reached their target with one wicket to spare in 34.1 overs.

DIV I CRICKET

BKSP continued their superb run in the Kai-Altech First Division League as they won their sixth consecutive match in the competition with a 71-run victory over Dhaka Mariners Youngs Club at the Dhaka

University ground yesterday.

Batting first, the sports institution piled 276-7 in 50 overs. Mariners only reached 205 before being bowled out in the 46th over.

Nasir (59) and Mahmud (54) gave the BKSP innings impetus with their contributions. Mariners' Rabbi (73) continued his good form but his knock was not enough as left-armer Forkan took four wickets.

Azad Sporting Club prevailed to win by three runs against Dhaka Wanderers Club at the BKSP ground.

Batting first, Azad fought hard to score 215-8 in 50 overs and had Mahfuz and Amit to thank as they held back Wanderers for 212-9 in 50 overs.

Mahfuz and Amit shared seven wickets between them.

In the other matches, Dhanmondi beat Eskaton by seven wickets while Agrani Bank rode on Joys 44 to beat Bangladesh Boys by 72 runs.

OPEN SQUASH

Dilu smashed Raju 3-0 in the 2nd Sharp Blade Open Squash tournament at the Gulshan Club.

In the other match, Masud Rana beat Omar 2-1.

'Stop being sarcastic'

PTI, Montego Bay

West Indian captain Brian Lara has said he could not be "too sarcastic" about his team, which was trying to with their chronic middle order collapse to bounce back in time at the cricket World Cup.

The West Indies, who lost their Champions Trophy title to Australia after losing in the final last year, were thrashed by India after they just managed to prevail over Kenya in their World Cup warm-up games.

"You can't be too sarcastic about the team. We have been in the finals of most of the tournaments we have taken part in. So it's not that the guys haven't performed," Lara said.

The Trinidadian said most of the time the team appeared to struggle when the middle order failed to make any sizeable contribution.

"It's a chronic problem. Our batsmen somehow are able to get out of difficult situations. That's what we are lacking at the moment.

"You would notice that most of these guys bat for number three or four for their state sides so when they need to come lower down the order, they struggle to adapt. It's a situation we are trying to come to terms with," he added.

Molla and co

**FROM PAGE 17** fled from the audience of a seminar recently in presence of Sports Adviser Tapan Chowdhury when fingers were raised by speakers against his (Molla) misdeeds.

Molla admitted last night that they have sent the committee to the NSC.

However, the committee will need approval of the Sports Adviser, who has already promised to clean sports.

Among others, BNP leaders Ali Imam Tapan (Tangail) and Iqbal Ahmed (Manikganj), infamous organisers like Shamsul Alam Anu, Shahiduzzaman Reza and Golam Quddus Nabi are also in the committee.

The NSC last week dissolved 25 committees of district and divisional sports associations that had past their terms.

And the show

**FROM PAGE 17** There are also concerns amongst players and coaches over the state of the pitches on which the matches will be played.

At the warm-up game between South Africa and Pakistan in Trinidad on Friday, the action was held up for 10 minutes as players and officials debated whether the wicket was fit to play.

South Africa slumped to 56-3 and then were all out for 199.

At Trelawny, on the same day, West Indies collapsed to 85 all out in their nine-wicket defeat to India. "Judging from what we have seen and heard of the pitches, it seems that this World Cup will be a 'bowl first' tournament," said South Africa coach Mickey Arthur.

The first match of the World Cup takes place on Tuesday with hosts West Indies facing Pakistan at Sabina Park in Jamaica.

Romario closer

**FROM PAGE 20** Cup winner sprang into action. Romario opened his account when he swept home Abedi's cross in the 64th minute and scored his second with a far-post header from six metres four minutes later.

His third came when he converted a penalty in the 77th minute. Romario is expected to retire when he reaches the 1,000-goal mark, although the total includes goals scored when he was a junior player and in friendly matches.

MU, Chelsea

**FROM PAGE 20** beat everyone along the way."

Blackburn have knocked out Everton, Luton, Arsenal, and then Manchester City at the weekend, on their way to the last four.

"We played well (against City). We restricted City to very few attempts and deserved to win," Williams added.

Terry

**FROM PAGE 20** and we had lost, but we changed that."

For Martin Jol, the Tottenham head coach, the draw felt like a defeat. A replay on 19 March also leaves the north Londoners with an unwanted fixture pile-up and the work-load is beginning to take its toll on his squad, with Berbatov limping off mid-way through the second half with a groin problem.

"We should have won and perhaps things were going a bit easier than we thought," Jol said. "It was a great prospect for us at half-time but Chelsea are a great team and they were always going to put us under pressure.

"We were a bit unfortunate with how things went in the second half but I don't know about the psychological advantage. We are a bit better at home than away. I still think we can do well."

Dhaka, Rajshahi evenly poised

SPORTS REPORTER



Half-centuries by Naeem Islam and Farhad Reza kept Rajshahi alive in the title race of the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea 8th National Cricket League while contenders Dhaka also fought well on the opening day of the tenth and final round matches yesterday.

Rajshahi, who lost solo lead in the table to start the last round of four-dayers level with Dhaka reached 325 for nine in their first innings against home side Chittagong after electing to bat at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

Dhaka, playing their home match, were put to field by Khulna who lost nine wickets to score 286 at close of play at the Fatullah Stadium.

CHITTAGONG-RAJSHAHI

Naeem scored 68 off 127 balls to steady the Rajshahi innings after a poor start, which saw the visitors reduced to 41-3 by the 16th over.

The number four batsman occupied the crease for nearly three hours and hit nine fours before being scalped by Sajju Dutta, the left-arm spinner who was the peak of Chittagong attack with 4-108.

After solid contribution from the middle-order including a brisk 51-ball 55 by Farhad, who smashed five boundaries and four sixes, the waggled for Rajshahi. Number nine Sohrawardy Shuvo and number ten Arif Hossain chipped in with 31 and 28 not out respectively after Anisur Rahman (36), Mushfiqur Rahman (31) and Hasanuzzaman (28) batted well.

Sumon Saha (1) was batting with Arif at stumps.

DHAKA-KHULNA

Bottom-table Khulna got off to a bright start with opener Imrul Kayes scoring a fine 78 but the lower-order had to give the tourists' total respectability after a middle-order collapse.

Imrul's entertaining two and a half-hour knock featured 11 fours and a pair of sixes before Monirul Islam held the fort during an 89-ball

46.

Dhaka got a stranglehold when they captured six wickets in the space of 94 runs with seamer Mohammed Azim (4-53) and Rashedul Islam (3-80) dominating in the middle. But Fahim Muntasir (39), Mohammed Salim (25) and Ziaur Rahman (22 batting) frustrated the home attack adding invaluable runs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

**RAJSHAHI:** First innings 325-9 in 90 overs (Rabiul 18, Junaid 9, Farhad Hossain 11, Naeem 68, Anisur 36, Mushfiq 31, Hasanuzzaman 28, Farhad Reza 55, Shuvo 26, Arif 28 batting, Sumon 1 batting, extras 14, Vaskuruni 2-14, Sajju 4-108, Sunny 2-43, Dhiman 1-29).

**KHULNA:** First innings 286-9 in 90 overs (Sadat 11, Imrul 78, Sazzadul 26, Monirul 46, Manzarul 2, Jamal 13, Asadullah 8, Muntasir 39, Salim 25, Zia 22 batting, Humayun 0 batting, extras 16, Azim 4-53, Rashedul 3-80, Sharifullah 2-29).

Wright believes in India

AFP, Port of Spain



Former India coach John Wright believes Rahul Dravid's 2007 team are better prepared for a World Cup title assault than they were four years when they reached the final.

New Zealander Wright was in charge of the Indian team in 2003 which finished runners-up to Australia.

He has since been succeeded by Greg Chappell and after watching India steamroll West Indies by nine wickets in their final warm-up game on Friday, Wright was impressed by what he saw.

"They are further ahead than we were in 2003. We had a tough tour to New Zealand prior to the World Cup and at this stage last time out, we lost to what was virtually a Natal third side," said Wright.

"India are well ahead of that. They

have also beaten Sri Lanka at home. At this stage they are better placed."

India were comprehensively outplayed in the one-day series 4-1 when they toured the Caribbean last year although they did take the Tests 1-0 for a first series win in the West Indies for 35 years.

"The one-dayers didn't go well but the team will have remembered the conditions," said Wright.

"They will remember how the wickets behaved. Is it better to chase runs or put them in? You need to do the research."

The toss will be crucial at the World Cup where the quality of pitches has already been brought into question during the warm-up games.

David saw his bowlers dismiss the West Indies for just 85 at Trelawny in Jamaica on Friday while, on the same day, South Africa protested over the state of the pitch at the Frank Worrell Ground in Trinidad in their game with Pakistan.

Play was held up for 10 minutes as

Not the last for Inzy?

AFP, Kingston



Captain Inzamam-ul-Haq believes it's his responsibility to win the World Cup for Pakistan but if he fails he might just be tempted to try

again next time. Inzamam, whose batting helped steer Imran Khan's Pakistan team to the 1992 title, will be 41 when the 10th World Cup is held in the sub-continent in 2011.

But the thought of going down in history is driving him on.

"I see that as I'm nearing the end of my cricketing career, I'd like to feel that my responsibility lies in the way that I try and win this Cup for Pakistan," said Inzamamul on the eve of his side's opening Group D match against hosts West Indies.

"When I started in 1992, I was a young player and there weren't many responsibilities on me, but today I'm the captain and there is, of course, a lot more responsibility.

"But I'll continue to play as long as I feel I can give a performance and there is no deadline for any player to end their career, as long as he continues to do well for his country."

Inzamamul, who turned 37 nine days ago, has enjoyed a colourful, run-filled but controversial career. He is the second-highest run-

maker in the history of the one-day game having racked up 11,665 runs with 100 centuries. He has played in 375 matches, bettered only by Indian master Sachin Tendulkar and Sanath Jayasuriya of Sri Lanka.

But where the Pakistan team goes, trouble seems destined to follow them.

They came into the World Cup without the services of Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif, two of the game's best fast bowlers.

Both men were forced out through injury but had spent the run-up to the tournament overshadowed by a doping scandal.

Inzamamul, too, is never far from the danger zone having forfeited the fourth and final Test against England at The Oval in 2006 in a row over allegations of ball-tampering. He and his team were cleared of the charge.

Despite their troubles, Pakistan looked impressive in their warm-up win over world number one South Africa last week and Inzamamul insists all their problems are behind them.

"There have been problems in the Pakistan team as far as injuries and some situations are concerned," said the skipper.

"But the Pakistan team is certainly looking forward to this World Cup. The team is very well prepared.

"We have played before without

Shoaib and Asif and, of course, Asif has been in this Pakistan team for only a year. It's a loss but we have enough good players to do well.

"All the players have had practice, the bowlers have had their share as well as the batsmen and we're all geared up for the World Cup."

Pakistan will rely on the likes of Inzamamul, as well as the team's experienced heart of Mohammad Yousuf and Younis Khan, to guide them through the marathon event.

Meanwhile, Inzamamul believes that two-time defending champions Australia are still the favourites to win the trophy for a fourth time despite Ricky Ponting's men having suffered recent defeats to England and New Zealand.

"Any team can win the Cup but Australia, if you look at their record for the past 10 years, I would still call them the favourites," Inzamamul said.

Pakistan face the West Indies at Sabina Park here on Tuesday before also taking on Zimbabwe and Ireland.

The top two teams will qualify for the second round Super Eights.

Battle

**FROM PAGE 17** is very important because the winners will take early edge in the table. I expect a good match."

Russel are certain to make one change, bringing in captain Bourdif Mohammed in place of his Moroccan compatriot Mohamed Khoubbache.

Centre-back Bourdif missed their opener, which Russia won 2-1 against a spirited Chittagong Mohammedan, due to a suspension and his presence will boost a rather inexperienced backline.

Roeber quits

**FROM PAGE 20** Dutch coach Bert van Marwijk.

Despite regular home crowds of 80,000, Dortmund have failed to revive the glory days of the mid-1990s when they won the German title twice and captured the European crown when managed by Ottmar Hitzfeld, who is currently in charge at Bayern Munich. Roeber is the eighth Bundesliga coach to be leave his post prematurely this season. Felix Magath was sacked from Bayern Munich and Thomas Doll was sacked from SV Hamburg.