

## Dhaka regain title

SPORTS REPORTER



Dhaka Division regained the first-class cricket title for one season when they recorded a three-wicket win over Khulna at home after a dramatic comeback in the tenth and final round match of the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea 8th National Cricket League yesterday.

The final day of the four-dayers belonged to tailenders who decided the fate of the championship: a 97-run stand for the unbroken eighth wicket between Rashedul Islam and Nazmul Hossain spearheading Dhaka while a 203-run partnership for the undefeated seventh wicket by Chittagong pair Ehsanul Haque and Nadim Uddin shattering hopes of outgoing champions Rajshahi.

Dhaka, having started level with their rivals, overtook Rajshahi with full six points as they finished on 42 points. Rajshahi, who led the 6-team table throughout the race, fell behind in the last round when they collected four points against Chittagong by virtue of a first-innings lead.

Pacer Mohammed Azim was adjudged man-of-the-match with a match haul of eight wickets for Dhaka.

### RAJSHAHI-CHITTAGONG

Desperate to win, Rajshahi rattled 109 runs in 13 overs in the morning after resuming on 211-6 and declared their second innings on 318-7 at the Chittagong Divisional

Stadium. It was Sohrabwary Shuvo who ignited Rajshahi's hopes during an explosive 45 not out off just 15 balls, featuring half-dozen sixes and a four.

The home side, chasing 356 to win from a minimum of 75 overs, slumped to 92-6 with Rajshahi seamer Farhad Reza initiating the collapse with the new ball, taking 4-46. But all the tourists' efforts went down the drains as Ehsanul stood tall to lead to a draw as they reached 295-6 at close.

Man-of-the-match Ehsanul cracked 110 not out off 159 balls laced with 18 boundaries during the magnificent three-hour stand with Nadim, who was unbeaten on 82 from 148 deliveries.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**KHULNA:** 288 and 168.

**DHAKA:** 87 and 372-7 in 129.3 overs (Uttam 47, Anwar 55, Al-Shahri 59, Sajjad 0, Shamsur 50, Marshal 49, Sharifullah 6, Rashedul 31 n.o., Nazmul 65 n.o., extras 10; Manzur 4-113, Ziaur 2-73, Fahim 1-68).

**RAJSHAHI:** 347 and 318-7 declared in 76 overs (Rabiul 64, Junaid 27, Farhad 8, Naeem 27, Anisur 20, Mushfiq 69 n.o., Farhad Reza 10, Hasanuzzaman 43, Shuvo 45 n.o., extras 5, Sunny 1-64, Sajju 2-76, Sabir 4-150).

**CHITTAGONG:** 310 and 295-6 in 75 overs (Salahuddin 15, Nafees 4, Faisal 0, Sunny 26, Mithu 27, Dhiman 13, Ehsanul 110 n.o., Nadim 82 n.o., extras 18, Sumon 1-62, Farhad Reza 4-66).



PHOTO: AFP

Bermuda seamer Saleem Mukudem (2nd L) is the toast of his team after he took the wicket of Sri Lanka opener Sanath Jayasuriya during their Group B World Cup match at the Queen's Park Oval in Port of Spain on Thursday.

## Smith thinks of Dutch

AFP, St Kitts



"We will see when we get to Australia -- we've got two games before that."

Paceman Makhaya Ntini joined the team late Wednesday after attending the birth of his daughter back home.

"I think we will play with the best eleven. Of course, Ntini needs time to find his feet and will play the second match against Scotland before the match against Australia," said Smith.

The South African skipper criticised the facilities during the warm-up matches at Port of Spain where his team's top-order struggled.

"The facilities in Trinidad were poor but here the pitch looks pretty good. I watched the last 12 overs of the Australian innings (against Scotland on Wednesday) and it looks pretty good."

"The straight boundaries look

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"Our key focus has been on getting all the areas of our game right. We have two games to go before taking on Australia," said Smith ahead of his team's opening Group A clash against the Dutch here on Friday.

Australian paceman Glenn McGrath claimed on Wednesday that South Africa, who deposed defending champions Australia from the world top ranking spot recently, can't handle pressure.

The two sides meet here on March 24 in what will be a highly-charged game with the winner taking two extra points with them into the second round Super Eights.

Smith said he was surprised at the timing of McGrath's outburst.

"We were surprised nothing came from Glenn earlier. From our point of view it really means nothing. We've handled pressure better than Australia of late in big games, so I guess it's just another drop in the ocean," said the captain.

South Africa were out of sorts in their warm-up matches, losing to Pakistan by seven wickets after struggling to a narrow win over outsiders Ireland.

However, Smith felt his side has the quality to bounce back.

"We know if we perform we have got the players and the team and the passion to perform well over here. That's our focus at the moment. We haven't really taken too much notice of what's been going on around us."

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## Argentines set for debut

### Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani will bring Argentine flavour to the B. League when this season's top-budgeted side host an impressive Chittagong Mohammedan at the

start of the third week at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

Abahani were without any foreign collection in the opening match of the inaugural professional league and shared points in a goalless draw with Muktijoddha, the strongest team on paper.

Argentine coach Diego Cruciani's boys, however, are guaranteed to give debut to at least two of their three Argentine booters, Mariano Carlos Caporale (defender), Mariano Cesar Sanchez (defender) and Hector Hernando Parodi (striker), against the visitors who come to the game on the back of a stunning 1-0 home win over Muktijoddha after starting the league with a 2-1 defeat to Sheikh Russel.

The sky-blues would have liked

## 70-foot bat & 1m signs

AFP, Dhaka

A Bangladeshi firm has sent what they say is the world's biggest cricket bat on a signature tour to drum up support for the national team at the Caribbean World Cup, a company official said Thursday.

The 70-foot (22-metre) long and eight-foot wide bat has been signed by thousands since it began its nationwide journey from the northern city of Rangpur on Wednesday, said Tariq bin Azam, public relations manager of Akiz Group.

"It's the world's biggest bat and we hope to gather at least one million signatures wishing good luck to the Bangladesh cricket team

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## It's elementary for the Dutch

AFP, St Kitts

Not many World Cup teams can boast a link to Sherlock Holmes.

The Dutch can and they'll need all the sleuth's deductive skills if they are to successfully unravel the talents of world number one South Africa in their opening World Cup clash here on Friday.

Holmes' creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, was an avid cricketer and was part of the first team to

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## Kiwis seek revenge

AFP, Gros Islet

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming will have revenge very much on his mind when the Black Caps open their World Cup campaign against England here at Beausejour on Friday.

Both teams were involved in the triangular series in Australia last month where England, after crushing defeats against both opponents, came from behind to defeat the hosts and reigning world champions 2-0 in the final.

With the Test sides odds-on favourites to qualify from a Group C also featuring Canada and Kenya, Friday's match has added significance.

Assuming they each do make it to the second phase, the winners of this match will carry two points forward into the Super Eights.

"We're smarting over England knocking us out in Australia and to get a good start to this tournament we have to win it, and win it well," Fleming said.

"We also know we lost in Adelaide."

England fell at the first hurdle during the last World Cup in South Africa four years ago but Vaughan said they were now a stronger side.

"We've got some real match-winners in this team -- Andrew Flintoff,

## Gul & Naved picked for dope tests

CRICINFO, undated

The International Cricket Council (ICC) picked Pakistan fast bowlers Umar Gul and Navedul Hasan for random dope tests after the opening match of the World Cup against West Indies at Sabina Park on Tuesday.

PJ Mir, Pakistan's media manager, said that Pakistan were informed that Gul and Naved would be tested for banned drugs

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## TODAY'S MATCHES

Team	Time	Venue
South Africa v Netherlands	7:30 pm	St Kitts
England v New Zealand	7:30 pm	St Lucia

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