

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Tarek cracked 92 to steer Azad Sporting Club to a comprehensive six-wicket win over Bangladesh Boys in the Kai-Altech First Division Cricket League at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Although Tarek missed a deserving hundred, his side raced to 240-4 with more than five overs to spare after restricting the opposition to 239-9 in 50 overs, built around Arifur's 95.

In other matches, Rupali Bank (192-7) inflicted a three-wicket defeat on Dhaka Wanderers (190), Uttara SC (300-8) handed a 27-run defeat to Dhanmondi Club while Lalmatia Club (219-7) snatched a three-wicket win over Orient SC (218-9).

BKSP CUP

Hosts BKSP got off to a bright start in the BKSP Cup (Under-20) basketball tournament when they dumped BAF Shaheen College 76-13 at their home ground. Shaheen lost their second match too when they went down 87-17 to Notre Dame College. In other games, Green Herald beat Notre Dame 73-57 and St Gregory's defeated Chittagong Basketball Training School 97-65.

NAVY HOCKEY

BNS Haji Mohsin clinched the Bangladesh Navy Hockey Championship when they defeated BNS Issa Khan by a solitary goal at the Sailors Colony playground in Dhaka. SN Malakar of BNS Haji Mohsin was adjudged the player of the 5-day meet. Commodore Jasim Uddin Bhuiyan distributed prizes on the final day as chief guest.

Woolmer may stay put

REUTERS, Kingston

Bob Woolmer could stay on as Pakistan coach beyond his current contract which expires in June, the country's cricket board chairman said on Wednesday.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief Nasim Ashraf said he planned to discuss Englishman Woolmer's future after the World Cup.

Asked by Reuters if he thought Woolmer would extend his deal, Ashraf said: "I would not rule it out.

"Bob is contracted until June 30 as are the other members of our team management. We will sit down and discuss everything.

"I have had nothing but the greatest confidence in Bob Woolmer as a coach.

"Everything needs to be decided after this World Cup and it all depends on how we do here."

Pakistan suffered a 54-run defeat by hosts West Indies on Tuesday but are expected to qualify for the Super Eights as the other two teams in Group D are Ireland and Zimbabwe.

Anderson now breaks finger

AFP, Gros Islet

England suffered a World Cup setback on Wednesday when it was confirmed that fast bowler James Anderson had broken a finger.

The Lancashire quick, 24, fractured the little finger on his right bowling hand during fielding practice, just two days away from the crucial Group C clash against New Zealand.

"James Anderson has fractured the little finger on his right hand. He will be reassessed on Thursday," said an England team statement.

Anderson, one of England's more experienced one-day bowlers, is vying for a place in the attack with Jon Lewis, Sajid Mahmood and Liam Plunkett.

He came home early from the one-day series in Australia last month with a suspected recurrence of a back injury which had sidelined him for most of last season.

It's elementary

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tour the Netherlands in 1891.

It must have been a worthwhile experience for the writer as he went on to play 10 matches for MCC, eight of them at Lord's. He only took one wicket in his career but it was memorable -- dismissing WG Grace for 110.

The first club in the Netherlands was formed in Utrecht by students from both The Netherlands and the Cape Colony in 1856.

Despite those historic social and political links with South Africa, the Dutch, who conceded a world record of 443-9 last year in a mauling by Sri Lanka, will find it hard going to stop the South Africans.

But they are determined to give it a go.

"We'll be out to prove that we belong," said captain Luke van Troost.

"We will be playing for our pride. Our first priority will be to beat Scotland, but we also want to do well against Australia and South Africa."



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi gives his autograph on a small bat for a fan at a hotel lobby in Kingston on Wednesday.

'Hard work will save Pak'

AFP, Kingston



Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer pledged his team would put in the 'hard yards' to salvage their World Cup campaign which suffered a setback at the hands of the West Indies in the tournament opener.

The West Indies won the Group D clash at Sabina Park by 54 runs leaving Pakistan, the 1992 champions, needing to ensure their place in the second round Super Eights by beating Zimbabwe and Ireland.

Victory on Tuesday also gave the hosts a crucial two points to take through to the Super Eights stage.

"It was our goal to take the two points through but we now will have to do the hard yards," said Woolmer.

"The first goal is to get into the Super Eights and then let's see what happens from there."

Pakistan's build-up to the World

Cup has been dogged by problems.

Pace spearheads Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif, who were both at the centre of a doping scandal, were ruled out on the eve of the tournament because of injury. Experienced all-rounder Abdul Razzaq also limped out of contention.

But Pakistan would have fancied their chances of victory on Tuesday after restricting the West Indies to a modest 241 in their 50 overs.

Woolmer admitted his team's batting just wasn't up to scratch.

"Our batting was disappointing because the West Indies bowled with great discipline and we struggled to get on top," said the coach.

"But like all games there were a number of crucial moments. Ramnaresh Sarwan (49) and Marlon Samuels (63) were two important innings although I thought generally we bowled and fielded well.

"It's too early to talk about being in tight corners. Let's make sure we

remain positive for the rest of the tournament."

Pakistan face debutants Ireland on Saturday and Woolmer said he was impressed by what he saw when they had South Africa struggling at 92-8 in a warm-up last week before the world number one team recovered to claim a narrow victory.

"I have watched Ireland and I have been impressed by their discipline in the games against South Africa and Canada. I will watch them on Thursday (when the Irish face Zimbabwe) again after our practice."

Earlier Wednesday, Pakistan skipper Inzamamul Haq blamed his experienced batsmen for the demoralising defeat to the West Indies and demanded they come good in the remaining matches.

"Our middle order is a very experienced batting line-up and we should have taken more responsibility in the opening game of the tournament," said Inzamam.

"There is some pressure on us now, but we will regroup and come back for the next match."

Pushkin's death anniversary today

SPORTS REPORTER

The second death anniversary of sports organiser and hockey player Zahidur Rahman Pushkin will be observed tomorrow.

Abahani will organise a commemorative meeting and a doa mahfil to pay tribute to Pushkin, who was the club's ex-hockey secretary and also the joint-secretary of Bangladesh Hockey Federation.

Pushkin died of cerebral haemorrhage two years ago, within a year of the death of one of his closest friends Monem Munna, an Abahani legend and a former national football captain.

JFA Cup Dhaka's

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka came from a goal down to edge BKSP 2-1 to lift the 3rd JFA Cup Under-15 football championship title yesterday.

In an entertaining final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, Sabuj shot BKSP ahead midway through the first half but Dhaka bounced back with two goals inside four minutes.

Rubel struck the equaliser in the 44th minute while Raju slammed the match winner four minutes later. It was Raju's 12th goal in the competition, which earned him the top scorer's award.

Bangladesh Football Federation president SA Sultan distributed trophies after the final.

Gul & Naved

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as a part of ICC's anti-doping regulations for the World Cup, which requires two players from each of the 16 teams to be selected at random for testing at 15 of the World Cup matches.

The ICC had earlier tested selected players in the World Cup warm-up games

Gul and Naved are the spearheads of Pakistan's attack that had received a pre-World Cup setback when Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif were withdrawn from the squad at the last minute because of injuries.

However, it is suspected that they were held back to shield them from ICC dope tests during the World Cup as there were fears that both still carried traces of nandrolone in their bloodstreams.

Tikolo thrashes

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Kamande	10	1	25	2
Tikolo	9	0	34	2

KENYA

Ouma c Mulla b Dhaniram	58			
D Obuya c Bagai b Cummins	4			
Shah lbw b Bhatti	6			
Tikolo not out	72			
Mishra not out	35			
Extras: (b-1, lb-2, w-18, nb-2, pen-5)	28			
Total: (For 3 wkts in 43.2 overs)203				
Fall of wickets: 1-28, 2-52, 3-119				
Did not bat: C Obuya, Odoyo, Kamande, Odhiambo, Ongondo, Vairaiya				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Bhatti	9	0	44	1
Cummins	8	0	32	1
Osinde	5.2	0	31	0
Davison	9	0	31	0
Samad	3	0	23	0
Dhaniram	9	1	34	1

Result: Kenya won by seven wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Steve Tikolo. Toss: Kenya. Umpires: Asad Rauf and Peter Parker.

Kenya captain

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and several other senior players, it was the old board who went.

When a new regime was installed, Tikolo, now 35, returned as captain, his class and passion for cricket undimmed.

"I'm really glad. The World Cup is the ultimate in any sport and I am glad to be here. At that particular time we had domestic problems back home with the board. That was why I took that decision to step aside because I didn't want to work with a management that was not doing things right."

Reflecting on how the match had gone, Tikolo paid tribute to the performance of opening batsman Maurice Ouma (58) and spinners Jimmy Kamande (two for 25 off 10 overs) and Hiren Vairaiya (one for 19).

"All in all it was a good game. Up front we gave away too many runs but the spinners pulled it back in the middle to restrict them

"Then when we batted, Maurice Ouma batted brilliantly. Then myself and Tanmay Mishra (35 not out) just finished off the game."

At the 2003 World Cup, Kenya enjoyed a stunning victory against 1996 champions Sri Lanka and Tikolo said further heroics were possible against Group C giants England, who Kenya play on Sunday, and New Zealand.

"I believe in my players, I do have confidence in them.

"They know this is the World Cup and this is the big stage. How they carried themselves today goes to show they were up for it."

Rahul serious about Tigers

PTI, Port of Spain



Rahul Dravid has warned India not to underestimate Asian rivals Bangladesh when the two sides meet in the

World Cup on Saturday.

Bangladesh pulled off a stunning win over New Zealand in the warm-ups last week and the Indian skipper is wary of complacency creeping into his highly-fancied side.

"I expect the team to put up a very professional and clinical performance, irrespective of who we play against. We respect Bangladesh. We have seen what they have done against New Zealand," said Dravid.

"We have to be switched on for that game. I expect everyone to be switched on for every game in the World Cup."

Dravid said his team had been

looking forward to playing against Bangladesh at what should be a packed Queen's Park Oval.

"We are happy to be in Trinidad. We do enjoy a lot of support here. We are looking forward to playing that game and I think the atmosphere will be very exciting," added the Indian captain.

India will also play Group B matches here against Sri Lanka and debutants Bermuda, with the top two sides qualifying for the next Super Eight stage.

Dravid added that he wants his lower order to develop all-round strength if they are to last the course over seven weeks.

"There might be stages in a game where they have to make crucial contributions. There might be one match in the tournament or two, but they could be most important games," he said.

"Credit to them that a lot of them have really improved. They are really working hard on it. We expect runs from them."

AFP, Port of Spain



Indian fast bowler Shanthakumaran Sreesanth is determined to overcome his struggles with form and fitness

to make a major impact at the World Cup.

The 24-year-old, who has so far grabbed 35 wickets in 27 matches since making his one-day debut against Sri Lanka at home two years ago, is one of five seamers in the squad here and is not sure of a starting place.

But he said that if he was given the opportunity, he would gladly seize his chance.

"It's better to struggle than not to be there at all," he said.

"A person who struggles is better than the one who never makes an attempt. If I struggle, I will also learn. I will surely get an opportunity and I will make the most of it. It's a matter of confidence.

"It is a dream come true for me. This is my first World Cup

and I am very fortunate to be even in the squad. I should take it as an opportunity to learn and be with the team."

Sreesanth, who also has 37 Test wickets since making his debut against England at Nagpur last year, believes he will have a major part to play in the tournament.

"I'm sure I'll play a big role in the World Cup," he said.

"It is a great opportunity. I will be very patient and I am sure when the opportunity comes, I will grab it with both hands," he said.

"I have been working hard on my fitness, fielding and batting as well. So with God's blessing, I will surely make good on this tour."

When asked whether he had set any targets, Sreesanth said his aim was to deliver for the team.

"Players do set goals, but every individual has a team goal and the team gives you a goal to achieve throughout the tournament. That is what I have been working on individually. I think it is going to help the team," he

India coach Greg Chappell said the team are ready to play after a relaxing time in Montego Bay in Jamaica.

"The guys have enjoyed a few days of peace and quiet before the tournament, so in a way that's been good. Now, everyone is keen for the tournament to start," said Chappell.

"We've have been practising, relaxing, swimming, sailing and snorkeling. We have been doing things you would expect to do in the West Indies, things that sometimes the guys don't get an opportunity to do."

Chappell was satisfied with his team's performances in the warm-up games where India won both of their matches, beating the Netherlands and the West Indies.

"In warm-up games, you are trying to do different things and I think we got most of things we wanted from these matches," he said.

Sree looks forward

said.

Sreesanth said his Caribbean experience would stand him in good stead as he had learnt a lot on the last tour.

"It was a nice tour and I really learnt a lot, especially in one-day games," said the fast bowler, who toured the West Indies last year with Rahul Dravid's side.

"It was not easy, but I was lucky enough to play most of the games. What I have learnt is that you have to be really patient on slow wickets here. You shouldn't really try too hard, but wait (for the opportunities).

"The grounds are small and wickets are really slow, so you have to work harder as a fast bowler. More than bowling fast, you have to use common sense and if you play with the brain, you will do well."

India open their Group B campaign against Bangladesh at the Queen's Park Oval here on Saturday. Sri Lanka and debutants Bermuda are other sides in the group, with the top two advancing to the next Super Eight stage.

Kiwis seek revenge

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"We're pretty similar in our make up. We've both got good left arm spinners (New Zealand have Daniel Vettori), the all-rounder sides of things is taken care off with Jacob and Flintoff," said Fleming.

However, Fleming said there was an area where he thought his side had the advantage.

"One thing we've got maybe is experience, we have some pretty

experienced players in our side. The English have played a lot of county and domestic cricket but in internationals and World Cups I think we've got them covered."

Both England coach Duncan Fletcher and New Zealand counterpart John Bracewell were at Beausejour for Wednesday's opening group match between Canada and Kenya as they assessed the conditions.

Smith thinks of Dutch

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small, which with our ability to hit the ball up the ground is certainly going to play into our hands."

Smith hoped the intensity would be high during the match against Australia.

"We are in close proximity at the hotel so we bump into each other. In terms of running into Australia it hasn't been a problem. We have shared hotels in Montego Bay and we were on the same plane.

"Relationships off the field are pretty good and mature. Players chat and say hello. But when it gets onto the field I'm pretty sure it will be competitive, the same way Australia and South Africa play all the time."

Smith said his team has watched some of the footage of the Dutch and Scottish teams and would be ready for both sides.

The Netherlands lost their warm-up matches against India and Kenya but believe they found some positive points.

Their South African-born allrounder Ryan ten Doeschate took five wickets and can exploits any Proteas' batting problems.

Doeschate is the only one of the

15-man squad who plays first class cricket. He plays with English county Essex.

The Netherlands earned their third chance to play in the World Cup after beating the United Arab Emirates to finish fifth in the ICC (International Cricket Council) Trophy in 2005.

TEAMS

SOUTH AFRICA (from): Graeme Smith (captain), Jacques Kallis, Loots Bosman, Mark Boucher, AB de Villiers, Herschelle Gibbs, Andrew Hall, Justin Kemp, Charl Langeveldt, Andre Nel, Robin Peterson, Shaun Pollock, Ashwell Prince, Roger Telemachus.

NETHERLANDS (from): Luuk van Troost (captain), Peter Borren, Daan van Bunge, Ryan ten Doeschate, Mark Jonkman, Muhammad Kashif, Alexei Kervezev, Tim de Leede, Adeel Raja, Darron Reekers, Edgar Schiferli, Jeroen Smits, Billy Stelling, Eric Szwarczynski, Bas Zuidereent.

Umpires: Mark Benson and Tony Hill.

AUSTRALIA-SCOTLAND SCOREBOARD

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Majid Haq run out (McGrath/Tait)	16	22	2	0
Naveed Poonia b Shaun Tait	1	4	0	0
Ryan Watson c Nathan Bracken b Glenn McGrath	6	20	0	0
Gavin Hamilton c Adam Gilchrist b Glenn McGrath	3	18	0	0
Dougie Brown c Shane Watson b Brad Hodge	19	37	3	0
Colin Smith b Brad Hogg	51	76	7	0
Craig Wright lbw b Shaun Tait	4	21	0	0
Glenn Rogers run out (Hayden/Gilchrist)	6	19	0	0
Paul Hoffmann not out	0	0	0	0
John Blain absent hurt				
Extras: (lb-9, w-6, nb-1)	16			
Total: (All out in 40.1 overs)	131			
Fall of wickets: 1-21, 2-27, 3-32, 4-37, 5-42, 6-89, 7-104, 8-131, 9-131				

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Nathan Bracken	6	1	12	0
Shaun Tait	8	0	45	2
Glenn McGrath	6	1	14	3
Shane Watson	7	1	18	0
Brad Hogg	7.1	1	16	1
Brad Hodge	6	0	17	1

Result: Australia won by 203 runs. Man-of-the-match: Ricky Ponting. Toss: Scotland. Umpires Steve Bucknor and Ashoka de Silva.

"My quick assessment (New Zealand spent some time at the ground on Tuesday) was it is going to be slow," said Fleming. "How much turn there is will be interesting keeping in mind the quality of the spinners on show Friday."

TEAMS

ENGLAND (probable): Michael Vaughan (captain), Ed Joyce, Ian Bell, Kevin Pietersen, Paul Collingwood, Andrew Flintoff, Jamie Dalrymple, Paul Nixon (wkt), Liam Plunkett, Jon Lewis, Monty Panesar.

NEW ZEALAND (probable): Lou Vincent, Stephen Fleming (captain), Ross Taylor, Scott Styris, Craig McMillan, Jacob Oram, Brendan McCullum, Daniel Vettori, Daryl Tuffey, Shane Bond, Jeetan Patel.

Umpires: Rudi Koertzen and Billy Doctrove.

Argentines set

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and out striker and not a playmaker. His duty is to score and he is efficient and effective," he added.

Parodi, however, has not been very impressive in training sessions although Caporale, who played for Mexican first division side Monterrey last year, has already been highly regarded by the club officials.

Chittagong Mohammedan coach Nazrul Islam Ledu who has turned a young side into a fighting unit, was confident that the port city team will return home with at least one point.

"We lost the first game but played well. The spirit is high but we know that we are facing a very balanced team in Abahani," Ledu told The Daily Star.

"Abahani will field foreign players for the first time and it could be difficult for them to adjust. We will try to bank on this type of weaknesses if there are any," he added.

70-foot bat

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in the World Cup," he said. He added that the bat was bigger than one made by an Indian company for the last World Cup in 2003.

The firm said the signing tour would end on March 23 at the southern city of Cox's Bazar.

Bangladesh launches its third World Cup campaign starting Saturday against India in Trinidad and Tobago.

The team scored a upset victory over powerful New Zealand in a warm up match and maintained a winning record in the run-up to the World Cup.