

LOCAL SNIPS

SPORTS REPORTER

International Master Abdullah Al Rakib maintained his solo lead in the 33rd National Chess Championship after his 10th round win over FM Taibor Rahman at the NSC hall-room yesterday.

Rakib's win took him to 8.5 points while GM Ziaur Rahman was shocked by Aminul Islam, who won his first IM norm on the previous day. Zia now shares the second place with IM Enamul Hossain Rajib on seven points.

KAI-ALTECH CRICKET

Gazi Tank recorded a comprehensive six-wicket victory against Agrani Bank in the Kai-Altech First Division Cricket League at the BKSP. Having booked Agrani for 94 in 37.2 overs in a rain-affected game, Gazi Tank rattled 96 for four in just 15.3 overs. Kotton topscored 29 for the winners.

In second division, Sinha Textiles (162-6) beat Gulshan Youth (160) by four wickets, Kalindi KC (168-3) defeated Badda Ekota (165) by seven wickets while the match between Wari and Young Ones was abandoned due to inadequate light with both sharing points.

U-14 CRICKET

Tuhin Bannerjee grabbed four wickets for 18 to help visiting (CAB) Cricket Association of Bengal bowl out Rajshahi Division North for 143 in their Under-14 two-day exhibition match at Bogra.

After a 50-run opening stand, the local side lost their way with Priyank and Writwick chipping in with two wickets each for the tourists, who reached 98-4 in 37 overs at stumps at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium. Avishkar Raman made highest 30 for the CAB U-14s.

INTER-SERVICE HOCKEY

First half goals from Didar and Alo helped Bangladesh Army blank Bangladesh Air Force 2-0 in the opening match of the Inter-service hockey meet on Wednesday.

Earlier, Principal Staff Officer of Armed Forces Division Maj Gen Mohammed Jahangir Alam Chowdhury inaugurated the three-team meet at the BAF Base Matir Rajhali Divisional headquarters in Jessor.

GO-KART

Asad Kibria of HS Enterprise emerged champion in the Chery Go-kart Competition 2007 held at the Go-kart Centre in Ashulia recently. Akhter Iqbal of MBA Club finished runners-up while Martin of Simed International clinched third place. HS Enterprise sponsored the competition for the corporate houses with co-sponsors Atek and Rahimafrooz.

Was there

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Rafique, in particular, was at his wily best.

Brought on when half of the runs in the chase were scored, the 36-year-old left-arm spinner brought England down to their knees with his nagging line and immaculately placed arm-balls. Razzak, faster through the air, again showed that he is the man in form. If only Rahim's wicketkeeping complemented the fielding, a win was a possibility.

With just a few days left before their Ireland match at the same venue, the management should be well aware that one slip-up in relentless international cricket is as bad as making a hundred big mistakes.

Silky Shakib

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darting around, but Bashir didn't look for excuses. "We didn't adapt," he said simply. "It was a new wicket and we knew something was going to happen." Some of the shot selection wasn't too clever either, but Bashir justified it by saying: "We thought attack was the best defence."

It was Shakib Al who showed how aggression and caution could go hand in hand, adding 47 with Mortaza, whose restraint finally gave way to an ugly hoick, and 24 with Razzak. But 143 was never likely to be enough and for the spinners to create an impression, there needed to be a dent or two with the new ball.

Once again, it was a left hand that provided the opening. Syed Rasel won't set the pulse racing with raw speed, but his line and length are impeccable, his changes of pace canny. Mortaza worked up a fair head of steam at the other end, but it was Rasel that did the damage, allowing Bashir to bring on Razzak as early as the 13th over. After that, it was spin all the way, with Razzak and the wily Mohammad Rafique probing to reveal many of the old English frailties against the turning ball.

"If we could have got one or two more wickets, there would have been three tailenders," Bashir said when asked if he'd harboured any visions of an upset with England 110 for 6. "But Nixon and Collingwood batted very sensibly."

Even with all the permutations possible, their poor run-rate effectively rules Bangladesh out of the running for a last-four place. "Our chances are very slim," Bashir said, "but the Super Eights are getting interesting." They would have been even more intriguing if he and his boys had put a few more runs on the board.



Australia captain Ricky Ponting having a throw-down during a practice session at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown on Thursday.

Bird irate at ECB

PTI, London

England and Wales Cricket Board's latest announcement that players would be able to challenge umpires' decision in a limited-overs tournament has irked Dickie Bird, who said it signalled the age of "glorified hat stands".

The ECB has announced plans which allow county players to refer decisions to the TV umpire, in this season's 50-over Friends Provident Trophy.

Only the captain of the fielding side and the batsman involved in the dismissal may refer a decision, under the new plans each team is allowed two unsuccessful referrals per innings on all modes of dismissal, except batsmen being timed out for taking more than two minutes to reach the crease at the fall of a wicket.

But Bird said the Board were taking away umpires' integrity.

Inzamam slams hotel security

AFP, Islamabad

Former Pakistani cricket captain Inzamamul Haq criticised the security at the Jamaican hotel where coach Bob Woolmer was strangled during the World Cup last month.

Woolmer was found dead in his hotel room in Kingston, Jamaica on March 18, a day after cricketing giants Pakistan suffered a shock defeat at the hands of minnows Ireland, knocking them out of the World Cup.

Inzamam -- who quit as skipper after Pakistan's exit and also announced his retirement from one-day internationals -- said if the murder had happened in Pakistan there would have been a big fuss abroad.

"Four international teams were staying in one hotel -- what security arrangements were made for them? There should be an investigation," Inzamam told private Geo television in an interview broadcast Thursday.

"We should raise this question" with the World Cup hosts, he added.

Facile win

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PAKISTAN ACADEMY

225 and 143 all out in 52.1 overs (Rahim 0, Latif 1, Yousuf 2, Fawad 47, Adnan 7, Tanveer 5, Sharfaraz 21, Rauf 0, Zhoibz 33, Maqbool 18, Najaf 0 n.o. extras 9, Zia 3-32, Sajid 2-23, Mosharrar 3-50, Mehrab 2-21).

Result: Bangladesh Academy won by 77 runs.

Marcus is back

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predicting when that will be.

"I believe I will play for England again, but only when the time is right for all concerned."

Trescothick was sorely missed in Australia where Ricky Ponting's men regained the Ashes with a 5-0 whitewash.

"I wouldn't have gone to Australia if I hadn't felt convinced in my own mind that I could handle an Ashes series there," he added. "Now I know that feeling was wrong."

"While viewing the Ashes matches I really wished I could be out there helping the team, but knew deep down that I needed to be at home."

Trescothick has been missed in the Caribbean where the top order has found runs hard to come by.

"With the World Cup it has been different in that I just wish I was there full stop, which in itself demonstrates progress," said Trescothick.

"We took our time because we wanted to be a little more precise. We knew if we could take wickets we could control the game from there. The death bowling wasn't really an option because the game was won by then."

Of his own bowling, he said: "It was a matter of rushing it to get the overs done."

Symonds wants longer innings

CRICINFO, undated

Andrew Symonds might be suffering from a lack of batting time as Australia's top-order dominates at the World Cup, but he feels ready for a long innings if his teammates allow it. Matthew Hayden, Adam Gilchrist, Ricky Ponting and Michael Clarke are in the top 15 run-scorers for the tournament and while the success has been great for the team, it has prevented Symonds from starring in his preferred discipline after returning from arm surgery.

Symonds has bowled in each game and he was able to employ medium pace in the win over England on Sunday, which is a huge bonus for Australia with Shane Watson out injured. However, his batting at No. 5 has been limited to cameos of 18, 13, and 28 not out.

Hayden eyes big one

AFP, Bridgetown

Matthew Hayden's explosive start to the World Cup has put him on course to break Indian master Sachin Tendulkar's record of most one-day international runs made in a year.

The veteran Australian opener is the top scorer in the World Cup with 436 runs which has taken his total for 2007 to 1,042.

Tendulkar holds the record of 1,894 set in 1998 but that mark is in danger because of Hayden's pyrotechnics.

The 35-year-old Australian batsman had already set one record at the World Cup by becoming the fastest man to reach 1,000 one-day runs in a year.

He achieved that when he made an unbeaten 47 against Bangladesh on March 31, almost two months faster than the previous best set by India captain Rahul Dravid in 1999.

"I've had a lot of commitment and passion, to get back into the side,"

said Hayden, who played in the 2003 World Cup winning team.

"In particular, to represent Australia at the World Cup is an enormous privilege and honour. It's a special side to be a part of -- and it's never meant to be an easy thing to play for Australia.

"I said when I got dropped a couple of years back that I didn't feel I was ready to let the (one-day) game go -- that world-class players play both forms of the game. I'm just very happy that it's coming off right now."

His opening partner Adam Gilchrist has described Hayden as an 'intimidating' talent.

"Matty has been the standout performer," said Gilchrist earlier in the tournament.

"He's in really intimidating form at the moment and to be part of that partnership is really pleasing."

Hayden has a golden opportunity to add his tally here on Friday when Australia face Ireland.

Smith rallies for flair

AFP, St George's

South Africa captain Graeme Smith says playing with freedom and natural flair holds the key to his team's revised Cricket World Cup campaign.

He said an aggressive policy paid off in the 67-run Super Eights win over the West Indies at the Grenada National Stadium Tuesday after what he described as a tentative performance when they suffered a shock defeat by the same margin against Bangladesh in Guyana Saturday.

"We felt we were a little bit tentative against Bangladesh and we wanted to come out and express ourselves and not to put ourselves under pressure and restrict ourselves in the way we play," Smith said.

"We've got ourselves into the top ranking playing a certain style of cricket."

"Against Bangladesh we put ourselves under pressure by not sticking to what we naturally know how to do and what's worked for us. We wanted to go back to that, to relax and just allow ourselves to play with freedom but obviously

you've got to put some brains to it."

Smith strongly denied there was any disunity in the South African camp, which might have contributed to the defeat against Bangladesh.

"We just played very badly against Bangladesh. We knew we had to let ourselves down and it was nice to pick ourselves up. Some of the stuff that went around back home about the team being divided and fighting was all a load of crap."

They were fined five per cent of their match fee, with captain Smith losing ten per cent, for not completing their overs in time against Bangladesh.

With time running out against the West Indies, Smith brought himself on to bowl some expensive off-spinners to get the overs completed before the side incurred another penalty.

"We knew the first 20 overs would be the key for us," he said to explain his tactics against the West Indies.

"New Zealand is a big game," said Smith.

"They have played well in this tournament. They are a pretty balanced team and they play well together. They bat pretty low and they've got a lot of options in the bowling department."

But Smith said South Africa had

a good record against New Zealand and if his team played the way they had against the West Indies they would be confident.

With a seam-based attack, South Africa have struggled to get their 50 overs bowled in time and they have also conceded plenty of runs in the closing overs -- 89 in the last ten against Australia, 80 in the same period against Bangladesh and 70 against the West Indies.

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"They made it very difficult, bowled very straight and those three spinners were a hard option and you can see how they've won games in this World Cup," said Vaughan of the Bangladesh slow bowlers who helped engineer an upset 67-run win over South Africa in Guyana last week.

Mahmood, who took a career-best 4-50 against Sri Lanka last week, hoped he can improve.

"It's a quick and bouncy wicket and hopefully in the next couple of games I can get the ball in decent areas. I think I'm hitting quite good areas and I'm working hard on my consistency in the nets," said the 25-year-old.

Even with all the permutations possible, their poor run-rate effectively rules Bangladesh out of the running for a last-four place. "Our chances are very slim," Bashir said, "but the Super Eights are getting interesting." They would have been even more intriguing if he and his boys had put a few more runs on the board.

New Zealand but lacked the experience and resources to make the most of the opportunities.

They will clash with New Zealand and Bangladesh in their last two matches.

TEAMS
AUSTRALIA (from): Ricky Ponting (captain), Adam Gilchrist, Nathan Bracken, Michael Clarke, Brad Haddin, Matthew Hayden, Brad Hodge, Brad Hogg, Michael Hussey, Mitchell Johnson, Stuart Clark, Glenn McGrath, Andrew Symonds, Shaun Tait.

IRELAND (from): Trent Johnston (captain), Kyle McCallan, Andre Botha, Jeremy Bray, Kenneth Carroll, Peter Gillespie, Dave Langford-Smith, John Mooney, Paul Mooney, Eoin Morgan, Kevin O'Brien, Niall O'Brien, William Porterfield, Boyd Rankin, Andrew White.

Umpires: Billy Bowden and Rudi Koertzen.

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Chittagong derby today



SPORTS REPORTER

last week. However, when Shafiqul Islam Manik's side return to the Bangabandhu National Stadium, they will start at third from bottom, an embarrassing situation the mighty club have had never experienced before.

With a score of mediocre players, the black and whites got off to a good start when they edged Arambagh in the opening round but that remains their only win as they slumped to two defeats and two draws.

Even the four Nigerians have not managed to hide the surprise package of the 11-team competition, are still unbeaten at home and are currently fifth in the table with eight points.

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