

## DCA 3rd Div champions

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhanmondi Cricket Academy emerged champions of the Kai-Atech Third Division Cricket League when they beat Rayer Bazar by seven wickets at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

With both teams gaining promotion in next year's second division, it was a mere formality but DCA made sure they ended on a high note after they comfortably chased a modest 158 set by Rayer Bazar in 34.4 overs.

Opener Akid hit an unbeaten 80 while Rohan struck 41. But the win was initially set up by the DCA bowlers who combined well to bowl out the neighbouring club in 40.2 overs.

Adit took three wickets while Shohag took two.

**NAT'L YOUTH FOOTBALL**  
**Gazipur, Comilla win comfortably**

SPORTS REPORTER

Gazipur thrashed Sherpur 5-0 in the most one-sided match on the second day of the Western Union National Youth Football Championship yesterday.

Asad and Shahid each struck twice to help Gazipur take control at the Sherpur Stadium after Mymensingh's 2-0 win over Netrokona earlier at the same venue.

In other matches, Narayanganj beat Chandpur 3-1, Kushtia blanked Meherpur 2-0, Jhenaidah edged Sirajganj 2-1 and Jessore defeated Faridpur by an identical margin.

At Habiganj, Moulvibazar held the hosts 1-1 but Comilla romped to a 4-0 win over Brahmanbaria with a brace from Russel. Fenji comfortably won 3-0 over Laxmipur, Bagerhat won a five-goal thriller against Barguna 3-2, Kurigram beat Dinajpur 2-1 and hosts Lalmonirhat shared points with Thakurgaon in a 1-1 draw.

**Clarke excites**

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Cup final, said Clarke was making right choices in that direction.

"He is associating himself with the right people. Chris White is his manager. No disrespect to people before him, but for Michael's future he needs to associate and be educated by the right people. I see him making those sort of choices," he was quoted as saying by 'The Australian'.

Clarke's continued development as a batsman was highlighted in the World Cup when he was entrusted with the number four spot, a position traditionally reserved for a pure strokemaker who can either force the pace or be a steady influence when required.

**Bring on Murali**

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Australia reduced Wednesday's semifinal to a no-contest when they bowled out the opposition with more than 18 overs to spare. The total of 149 was South Africa's lowest in World Cup history.

But Ponting refuses to believe that South Africa choked.

"One-day cricket can be that way sometimes. I've never used the word in my life and I won't. They were outplayed by a better team, as simple as that and it was a big occasion," he said.

"It's a World Cup semifinal. They came out really aggressive and very positive and tried to force themselves on the game. Sometimes in one-dayers it comes off and other times it doesn't."

"We have maintained very high standards throughout the tournament and our skills have been exceptional."

**Tigers home**

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coming home series against India.

"There is always pressure in a home series and now the expectation is high after our victory against India. India will definitely be desperate to erase the bitter memory but I am confident of beating them again.

I think it is difficult but not impossible to win the one-day series against India," he said.

Bashar, however, was a bit worried with the two-match Test series as they are going to resume the five-day game after a long thirteen-month break.

"Yes, it would be a tough task for us to return to Test cricket because we haven't played many four-day games in the meantime. But I believe if we can play good cricket in the one-day series then it would be helpful," he explained.

Replies to a question, he said that the boys have professional attitude to work under any coach in the future.

"We have enjoyed good times with our coach (Dav Whatmore) for the last four years. He worked hard with the team but it is his personal decision to quit. I assure that we are very professional and ready to accept anything," he added.

The cricketers, who had a hard physical training session during their four-day overstay in Barbados, will enjoy a seven-day break before returning to business on May 3.



PHOTO: AFP

American greats Lance Armstrong and Andre Agassi (R) attend a press conference in connection with Athletes for Hope at Manhattan Center Studios in New York on Wednesday.

## A brief respite

AFP, Colombo



Sri Lanka's surge into cricket's World Cup final this weekend has raised hopes of a peace dividend on an island united by sport but divided by conflict, even if no one is showing long-term optimism.

Cricket is hugely popular in Sri Lanka and is seen as one of the few things that cuts through political and ethnic lines amid escalating fighting between troops and Tamil Tiger rebels.

The nation is set to come to a standstill for Saturday's final in Barbados against Australia, despite the time lag, while President Mahinda Rajapakse is expected to travel out there to cheer them on.

Back home, fans are planning multi-faith services to bestow blessings on a team that has overcome the divisions to achieve international success.

Sri Lanka's national broadcaster Rupavahini has erected a giant television screen outside parliament while hotels and restaurants have arranged coverage to ensure clients will not miss out.

The streets will be deserted for the game, which -- if Tuesday's semifinal is anything to go by -- will start in mid-evening Colombo time and last until three or four in the morning.

On Tuesday, the guns fell quiet while Sri Lanka were defeating New Zealand in the semifinal, after the Tigers announced that they would be watching the game, and the hope is for another respite for the final.

No attacks were reported on either side, but five hours after the match the rebels were accused of setting off a roadside mine.

A Tiger spokesman declined to

say whether the rebels would repeat Tuesday's unofficial break, saying only that Tiger supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran was a "lover of all sports."

Police chief Victor Perera warned his men to maintain their guard.

"Men will be inclined to go before television sets to watch the match, but there must be no abandoning of stations of duty," he said in his instructions to police.

Sri Lanka's cricket team has been hailed as an example of how religious and racial differences can be put to one side in the ethnically divided nation.

Master blaster Sanath Jayasuriya is a Sinhala Buddhist, star spinner Muttiah Muralidaran a Tamil Hindu, Chaminda Vaas a Sinhala Catholic, Farveez Maharoof a Muslim and Russell Arnold a Tamil Catholic.

Religious leaders point to how majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils play side by side and in 1996 won the cricketing world's most prestigious title.

The head of the Anglican Church in Sri Lanka, Archbishop Duleep de Chickera, said the diverse make-up of the national team should be an inspiring example of unity.

"This characteristic of our team should spur our nation towards a similar goal of unity in diversity," De Chickera said in his Easter message.

"I would be amazed if Australia failed to win," Howard told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"They believe Inzamam is now over-the-hill and also blame him for Pakistan's humiliating World Cup performance. The Board and the members of the newly-appointed national selection committee believe that it is time Pakistan brought in new faces in a bid to rebuild the squad for the 2011 World Cup to be played in Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh," the paper said.

The burly batsman has scored 8813 runs in 119 Tests at a handsome average of 50.07 with the help of 25 hundreds and 46 fifties. His one-day career spanned over 378 games in which he scored 11739 runs with 10 centuries and 83 fifties.

The PCB official said at this juncture, Pakistan cricket needed to look beyond individuals and take decisions in the best interest of the team. "We need to work for collective interest because personal milestones mean nothing when it comes to the future of our team."

Asked why such change was taking so long, Gordon said: "I can only speak for the last 18 months and I will tell you that we have attempted to do so. But when you are dealing with a culture that has been inculcated over a very long time, you don't do that and press your fingers and it disappears."

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## Howard ready for parade

AFP, Sydney

Prime Minister John Howard said Thursday he would "amazed" if Australia failed to bring home the prime's World Cup after the semi-final win over South Africa edged in.

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## WC to clear WI debts

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not a project that you can expect your investment to be returned in a year or two, it's a long-term investment."

Gordon, who has tendered his resignation as WICB boss but who has been asked to re-consider, is expected to give the board his final decision on Sunday at a special meeting.

The WICB have been busy this week with planning meetings on the way forward for the cricket following the West Indies' disappointing World Cup performance. Gordon said last week a change of culture was needed, "by laying down rules

on which you are first of all absolutely serious about implementing. Those who don't conform to those rules will know it's their option to conform or otherwise...the new people you bring in, people who are committed to those standards, will ensure that they are maintained."

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say that as a captain he is successful. So it is not a question whether we pick him or not rather he can expect more than that," he added.

"I believe that it is not good to bring too many changes in the team after a good tour. So it would be unwise to unstable the team right at the moment. We should understand one thing that we are going through a very crucial transition period as a team, so there is no scope to take decision on whims," he elaborated.

Questions have been asked about the fate of Bashir's one-day career following his poor batting in the World Cup but his contribution as a skipper for last few years will speak for himself.

"We will meet within two days to take the final decision because the

team will be announced on May 30," he said adding that they will consider experience and current form for the Test squad.

It was Bashir who actually steered the fragile middle order batting for the last few years and because of this it would be harsh to make a conclusion only considering the bad-patch in one tournament.

Moreover, it would make little sense to remove him as there is hardly anyone with such experience to take over before a demanding home series against India.

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## Chelsea take

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"We're not going to get over excited with a 1-0 win as its only half-time and we have seen teams with bigger leading margins than us turned over in second legs."

Liverpool's tempo rose predictably in response but it was not until after the break that the visiting side began to pose a genuine threat to the Chelsea goal.

The half-time team talk appeared to have had a particularly invigorating impact on Steven Gerrard, who sent one side-footed shot narrowly over before forcing Cech into a fine save with a left-foot volley from the edge of the area.

In between those efforts, Kuy had headed an inviting Riise cross over and Carragher was equally wasteful when a Zenzen corner found him unmarked at the back post.

Having initially been unsettled by Liverpool's introduction of Peter Crouch, Chelsea gradually rediscovered their composure and began to threaten again in the final quarter of an hour.

But two fine saves from Reina kept out efforts from Drogba and Lampard and ensured Chelsea's win was restricted to the narrowest of margins.

## No place for Inzy

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ODIs following the team's World Cup fiasco, had said he was still good enough to play in the longer version of the game but top Board officials do not seem to be agreeing with him.

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Gordon said he felt Brian Lara's

appointment as captain for a third time, last year, and his re-commitment to really do everything that he could to put cricket on a new footing, was the start of an important beginning."

But the president conceded last week that West Indies cricket must now go back to the drawing board again. "We were found sadly wanting. We tried but it wasn't good enough because we were not trying the right way, because we are not prepared properly enough to do it. And that's what we've got to correct."

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