

DCA 3rd Div champions

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhanmondi Cricket Academy emerged champions of the Kai-Altech 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.

Adil 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, Kushitia 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. Feni 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 stroke-maker who can either force the pace or be a steadying 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.

Replying 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.



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 Russel 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.

The 1996 World Cup victory raised hopes of an end to ethnic bloodshed, but the euphoria did not last long. Peace activists are reminding politicians not to let the chance slip again.

"Cricket may have the potential to help national unity," concurred Tamil legislator Suresh Premachandran of the pro-rebel Tamil National Alliance.

"But I don't think that will be the basis for a settlement."

The LTTE have been fighting for a separate state for the Tamil minority in a bloody war that has claimed more than 60,000 lives since 1972.

A truce was arranged and put in place by peace broker Norway in February 2002, but renewed fighting since December 2005 has pushed the death toll over 4,000, and dimmed hopes of peace.

Rights activists say more than 750 people have disappeared in the island in the past year as government troops battle Tamil Tiger rebels, and in recent months, bodies have been found of people shot dead "execution-style" and dumped in swamps and roadsides.

Howard ready for parade

AFP, Sydney

Prime Minister John Howard said Thursday he would "amazed" if Australia failed to bring home cricket's World Cup after the semifinal win over South Africa edged them closer to a third straight title.

Australia face Sri Lanka on Saturday after overwhelming the South Africans with a crushing seven-wicket win in St Lucia.

"I would be amazed if Australia didn't win," Howard told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"This is an incredibly consistent and strong Australian team and the ease in which we defeated South Africa a few hours ago is a very good omen," said the prime minister, who is an ardent cricket fan.

But Howard warned captain Ricky Ponting's squad not to take victory for granted, as the Sri Lankans would be tough opponents.

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, Kyut had headed an inviting Riise cross over and Carragher was equally wasteful when a Zenden 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 Drogha 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.

"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."

Minnows meet

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Union have a difficult trip to Chittagong where they play the local Mohammedan -- league's surprise package -- while Dhaka Mohammedan will be up against a stubborn Farashganj, who have snatched points from big guns like Brothers, Muktiyoddha and Russel. In the last match, Abahani who share the lead with Sheikh Russel and Muktiyoddha with one match in hand, have a golden chance to post solo lead as they host their less illustrious Khulna namesake in the capital.

FIXTURES
Apr 27: Rahmatganj v Chittagong Abahani (BNS)
Apr 28: Chittagong Mohammedan v Brothers (MA Aziz Stadium), Mohammedan v Farashganj (BNS)
May 1: Muktiyoddha v Arambagh (BNS)
May 2: Abahani v Khulna Abahani (BNS)

AFP, Bridgetown



Sport is war minus shooting, said George Orwell and Sri Lanka's cricketers are doing their part in keeping the guns silent.

Cricket is such an obsession in the strife-torn nation that the team's progress to the World Cup final in the Caribbean has produced a temporary peace dividend 15,000km away at home.

On Tuesday, Tamil Tiger rebels and government soldiers held a truce as their national side reached the final by beating New Zealand by 81 runs in Jamaica.

But five hours after the match, it was bloodshed as usual as two policemen were killed in a roadside bomb attack in Ampara in the east of the island.

Police and military officials said there were no clashes reported

Dav, tired and out!

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thank Andy Roberts for making some changes in my run-up," said an excited Mashrafe, remembering the West Indian great fast bowler's tips.

"It was also a great experience to meet Glenn McGrath and Shane Bond. Actually we have earned lot of respect in the World Cup," said the Narail Express who shaped the five-wicket victory against India with a four-wicket brash and impressed throughout the tournament.

Mohammad Ashraful was the hero in the 67-run victory against South Africa in the second round and his improvising paddle-scoops are still fresh in memories of cricket fans.

"I only go for this shot once I am settled in the middle and then it appears as easy as a cover drive. You should improvise if you want to move the scoreboard. I am happy that at last, I found a batting position (number five). But I am disappointed with my performance in the last three games," said Ashraful, who showed his interest to lead the team.

When asked whether was interested about captaincy, he said, "Everybody has a dream to lead the national team. I am no different and captaincy is nothing new for me as I have led teams at domestic level."

"I am not surprised to be in the top ten list because I was determined to achieve something like this," said left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak, who scalped 13 wickets in

during the live broadcast of the match.

A military source said instructions had gone out to troops and police to maintain a high alert, although the Tigers had announced that they would cease action during the match.

"There were specific instructions to maintain a high alert and ensure that men who were on duty remained in their posts and did not scoot off to watch the match," the source said.

The Tigers had said earlier there would be no attacks while the match was on.

"There may not be any attacks ... because we are also watching the match," Tiger spokesman Rasiah Ilanthiriyar said. Tamil Tiger supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran is believed to be a cricket fan.

Sport and war have always been uneasy partners.

The Christmas truce of 1914 on the Western Front in the First World

the tournament.

"Brian Lara's wicket was the best one among my victims because I will never get another chance to get rid of the great batsman. The only frustration is we lost the game against Ireland," he added.

Shahriar Nafees showed more interest to the home series against India as he is looking forward to get back his rhythm. "I think it is not impossible for our team to win the one-day series against India. I went through a bad patch which I believe will be overcome in this series," said the left-hander, who was the most disappointing performer for the Tigers after spending an award-winning year.

Ace left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique explained the reasons behind the success of himself and the team by a simple sentence: "We were confident."

"I never felt pressure in the tournament," said young and dashing opener Tamim Iqbal, who is very keen to continue his natural stroke-play.

"I think I have fulfilled the goals partially. Besides batting and 'keeping, I tried hard to inspire the bowlers in the field," said young Mushfiqur Rahim.

But veteran opener Javed Omar came up with the most entertaining comment when he held his newborn son for the first time. "I hope he'd be a better stroke-maker than his father," said Javed, often criticised for slow batting.

ITALIA v SOUTH AFRICA SCOREBOARD						
FROM PAGE 21						
Bowler	O	M	R	W	W/NB	
Nathan Bracken	7	2	15	1		
Glenn McGrath	8	1	18	3	1w	
Shaun Tait	10	0	39	4	5w	
Shane Watson	8.5	0	49	1		
Brad Hogg	10	2	24	1	3w	
AUSTRALIA	R	B	4s	6s		
Adam Gilchrist b Charl Langeveldt	1	5	0	0		
Matthew Hayden c Graeme Smith b Shaun Pollock	41	60	4	0		
Ricky Ponting b Andre Nel	22	25	5	0		
Michael Clarke not out	60	86	8	0		
Andrew Symonds not out	18	16	3	0		
Extras: (leg byes-5, wides-3, no balls-3)	11					
Total: (For 3 wickets in 31.3 overs)	153					
Fall of wickets: 1-1 (Gilchrist), 2-44 (Ponting), 3-110 (Hayden)						
Did not bat: Mike Hussey, Shane Watson, Brad Hogg, Nathan Bracken, Shaun Tait, Glenn McGrath						
Bowler	O	M	R	W	W/NB	
Shaun Pollock	5	1	16	1		
Charl Langeveldt	6	0	34	1	1nb/1w	
Jacques Kallis	5	1	20	0	1nb/1w	
Andre Nel	7	1	31	1	1w	
Andrew Hall	6.3	0	43	0	1nb	
Justin Kemp	2	0	4	0		
Result: Australia beat South Africa by 7 wickets and storm into the final and meet Sri Lanka on April 28.						
Man-of-the-match: Glenn McGrath.						
Toss: South Africa.						
Umpires: Aleem Dar (Pakistan) and Steve Bucknor (West Indies).						

Australia fire into final

FROM PAGE 21

"Our top order did well in the tournament, but we were up against a quality bowling attack this time and could not do what we had aimed to do. With 149 on the board against a good batting side, it was always going to be tough."

Australia owed their fourth successive appearance in the final to McGrath and fast-improving Tait, who virtually turned the match into a no-contest after reducing South Africa to 27-5 in the opening 10 overs.

In-form Michael Clarke (60 not out) and Matthew Hayden built on the duo's superb efforts with a 66-run stand for the third wicket to ensure an easy win in front of jubilant Australian fans at the Beausejour Stadium.

Hayden also became the first batsman in the tournament to complete 600 runs during his 60-ball 41.

Clarke smashed eight fours in his 86-ball innings.

South Africa's slim chances of making their first appearance in the final after a spineless batting performance depended on early

wickets, but they could grab just two before running into Hayden and Clarke.

Gilchrist was the first to go, bowled by a Charl Langeveldt delivery that swung back to rattle the stumps. The South African bowler came close to getting the wicket of Ponting, but Ashwell Prince dropped the catch at square-leg.

Ponting was then on four, but could not capitalise on the chance as he was bowled by fast bowler Andre Nel after contributing 22.

Australia earlier piled on the pressure from the first over, with McGrath, Tait and Nathan Bracken testing the batsmen with a probing line and length.

McGrath, playing in his last World Cup, became the tournament's highest wicket-taker with 25 in 10 matches, surpassing Sri Lankan off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran (23).

Justin Kemp (49 not out) and Herschelle Gibbs (39) alone offered some resistance, helping their team add 122 runs for the last five wickets.

Gibbs fell to a soft dismissal,

War is believed to have included an impromptu international football match between German and Allied soldiers in no-man's land.

Letters sent home from the front claimed the Germans won 3-2.

Football played a part in sparking an armed conflict in 1969 between feuding central American neighbours El Salvador and Honduras.

The Soccer War lasted for 100 hours and was a six-day conflict which was the culmination of a long period of political and social tensions between the two countries.

These disputes were inflamed by rioting during a World Cup qualifier between the two. On July 14, 1969, the Salvadoran army launched an attack.

A ceasefire was eventually negotiated on July 20, with Salvadoran troops withdrawing in August.

Over 30 years later, sportsmen were still falling in battle.

In April 2004, Pat Tillman, who turned down a 3.6-million-dollar contract to play in the NFL with the Arizona Cardinals, was killed in action in Afghanistan.

He had enlisted in the Rangers in the wake of the September 11 attacks.

Cricketers played major roles in the Second World War.

English left-arm spinner Hedley Verity, who had played in 40 Test matches, died of his wounds in Italy in 1943, two months after his 38th birthday.

Verity, a captain in the Green Howards, had been shot in the chest during the Eighth Army's attack on German positions at Catania, in Sicily.

Australian all-rounder Keith Miller survived the war where his experiences as a fighter pilot taught him to keep his sporting career in perspective.

When asked if he ever felt the strain as a Test cricketer, Miller famously replied: "Pressure is a Messer Schmitt up your arse, playing cricket is not."

Dilhara faces final axe

AFP, Kingston

Struggling pace bowler Dilhara Fernando is likely to be axed from Sri Lanka's team for Saturday's World Cup final after his disastrous performance in the semifinal win over New Zealand.

Fernando was warned twice for running on the pitch during the 81-run win over the Black Caps at Sabina Park on Tuesday while his five overs cost 45 runs.

Sri Lanka's chief selector Asantha de Mel told the BBC they were not happy with Fernando's form and that fellow seamer Farveez Maharoof is likely to get the nod.

"Most probably it will be Maharoof," said De Mel from the Caribbean. "