

NAT'L YOUTH FOOTBALL Thrilling win for Jamalpur

SPORTS REPORTER

A brace each by Milon and Shamsul helped Jamalpur win a seven-goal thriller against Manikganj at Sherpur yesterday in the first stage of the Western Union National Youth Football Championship.

Goals by Rafiq and Pintu put Manikganj 2-0 ahead before man-of-the-match Milon scored two goals inside one minute to draw level on the hour. Shamsul netted his first three minutes later but Babu equalised for Manikganj as the last ten minutes came alive.

Shamsul finally made it 4-3 in the 90th minute to ensure Manikganj's second defeat in the group.

In other matches, ten-man Madaripur held Munshiganj 2-2, Chuadanga and Rajbari failed to score in 90 minutes, Magura edged Gopalganj 1-0, Narshingdi beat Kishoreganj 2-1, Jhalokathi crushed Barisal 3-0, Nilphamari defeated Panchagarh 1-0 and Rangpur shared points with Naogaon in a goalless draw.

At Feni, Rangamati received walkover after Cox's Bazar failed to turn out.

Russel's regrets

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra regretted the incidents following their 1-0 loss to Arambagh in last week's B. League match.

Two Russel officials and a ball-boy assaulted referee Munaf Sarker as soon as Wednesday's match ended at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The league committee is expected to take stern action against the trio in its meeting due to be held with the next 48 hours.

The club also decided to investigate the matter and punish the guilty.

A press release issued by the club yesterday condemned the acts by their officials but also mentioned that an erroneous decision by the referee denied the club from a certain penalty, which sparked the violence.

The club, which have already apologised to the referee, match commissioner and the league committee chairman, expected fair refereeing in the rest of the matches.

New hair

FROM PAGE 20
chance of finally winning something with the Spanish giants.

Beckham's new look is similar to the one sported by Valencia goal-keeper Santiago Canizares, who Beckham helped to bamboozle last weekend with the free-kick from which Real defender Sergio Ramos headed home the clincher in a 2-1 victory.

SL playing

FROM PAGE 17
skipper Mahela Jayawardene (115 not out) showed in the semifinal against New Zealand, there is more to Sri Lanka's batting than Jayasuriya.

Although Murali took four for 31 against New Zealand, including three wickets in six balls, the attack isn't just about him either.

"He can't do it all the time," said Jayawardene.

"With him, Lasith and Vaas I think I have better options now and obviously as a captain that is a good position to be in."

Australia's middle-order has yet to be tested this tournament but it will be fascinating to see how they respond to the pressure of facing unique off-spinner Muralidaran if Sri Lanka can take early wickets.

Ponting was able to rile the likes of South Africa batsman Jacques Kallis into playing an overly-aggressive shot against McGrath as the Proteas were bowled out for just 149 in the semifinal on Wednesday.

His mind games hit the mark because South Africa like to play them too only they aren't up to Australia's level.

Sri Lanka, less outwardly aggressive, are less likely to be wound up and in coach Tom Moody, a member of Australia's 1987 and 1999 World Cup winning squads, have someone who understands Ponting's tactics better than most.

But it says something for the champions' pre-eminence in the world game that even a Sri Lanka victory will come with an Australian accent attached.

PROBABLE TEAMS

AUSTRALIA: Matthew Hayden, Adam Gilchrist (wk), Ricky Ponting (capt), Michael Clarke, Andrew Symonds, Michael Hussey, Shane Watson, Brad Hogg, Nathan Bracken, Shaun Tait, Glenn McGrath.

SRI LANKA: Upul Tharanga, Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara (wk), Mahela Jayawardene (capt), Chamara Silva, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Russel Arnold, Farveez Maharoof, Chaminda Vaas, Lasith Malinga, Muttiah Muralidaran.

Umpires: Steve Bucknor (WI) and Aleem Dar (PAK).



PHOTO: STAR

Rahmatganj striker Milon (L) fights for possession with a Chittagong Abahani player as visiting midfielder Jony (R) looks on during their B. League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Viv declares his WC XI

AFP, Bridgetown

Vivian Richards praised the contribution to world cricket of Muttiah Muralidaran after naming the off-spinner in his team of the World Cup.

Richards, world cricket's leading batsman during the 1970s and 1980s, said Sri Lanka's Murali and Australia leg-spinner Shane Warne helped revive the disappearing art of slow bowling after years where teams such as the dominating West Indies side he captained had relied on a four-man pace attack.

"There was a craft that was missing for quite some time and they rekindled the spirit of what spin bowlers can be," said Richards.

Murali, who has taken 23 wickets already during the tournament, will be aiming to collect his second World Cup winner's medal to add to the one he won in 1996 when Sri Lanka play double-defending champions Australia in Saturday's showpiece match at Barbados's Kensington Oval.

Richards added it was hard to compare players from different eras.

"Batsmanship will always be, that is why we still here the name of Don Bradman, that is why we still hear the name of Sir Gary Sobers. The Don's name still rings in people's minds, even of people who never saw him play," said the West Indian.

"The one thing that has improved in the game today is fielding. But batsmen will always be batsmen, bowlers will always be bowlers."

However, Richards who averaged over 50 in Tests during an era of fierce fast bowling despite having his head protected by nothing more than a modern, peaked cap, did indicate that modern batsmen had perhaps a more comfortable life compared to his duels with two of Australia's most aggressive quicks.

"We had nasty guys like Jeff Thomson and Dennis Lillee. You see the guys today, they've got a lid on and all that," said Richards.

"If you'd asked the guys today to face Dennis Lillee today without a grille or a helmet they would find it quite hard."

VIVIAN RICHARDS'S TEAM OF THE WORLD CUP

Matthew Hayden, Kumar Sangakkara, Ricky Ponting (captain), Kevin Pietersen, Mahela Jayawardene, Herschelle Gibbs, Scott Styris, Shaun Tait, Shane Bond, Glenn McGrath, Muttiah Muralidaran.

Slingers take

FROM PAGE 17
victory in the semifinal.

Tait had figured in just four one-day internationals before the World Cup and his amazing success story meant Australia did not feel the absence of fast bowler Brett Lee, ruled out of the tournament due to an injury.

Malinga has also been striking at crucial stages.

He has so far taken 16 wickets in seven matches and is behind only off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran (23).

Moody has described Malinga as "unique" who has given his team more bowling options.

"Everything about him is unique -- his very unique action, unique hairstyle, unique that he bowls at 90 miles an hour," he said.

"We tend to get a few (unique bowlers) in Sri Lanka. We've had Murali over the past decade or so who has been a pretty special bowler and still is a special bowler."

"This guy is a little bit different."

Ctg Abahani's second win



SPORTS REPORTER

Rahmatganj paid for numerous misses as Chittagong Abahani came from a goal down to beat the old Dhaka outfit 2-1 in an entertaining B. League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Milon put the home side ahead on the half hour in the clash of the two bottom-table sides but Rahmatganj failed to hold on to the first-half advantage as goals by Khokon Das and Jitu gave the visitors their second win in nine games.

Chittagong Abahani remained second from bottom with six points while Rahmatganj stuck to the base of the 11-team table with just one point following their seventh loss in eight outings.

Rahmatganj dominated most of the show in the first match of the ninth week and came close to score after four minutes. But Apu, who dribbled past the rival goalkeeper, saw his weak effort clear by an Abahani defender.

Narayan made a goalline clearance for the port city side before home defender Shipon helped veteran striker Milon break the deadlock. Shipon raced past a number of opposition players during a run from their own half and lobbed for Milon who chested down the ball to fire past the onrushing goalkeeper.

Shipon then failed to connect the ball from a corner as the match went to the break with his side just 1-0 ahead.

Liberian forward Abraham had a hand in both the goals for the visitors who were on level terms three minutes after resumption when midfielder Khokon nodded home a cross from their only foreign recruit. It was Khokon's second league goal.

Rahmatganj created more openings without any avail as the sky-blues from Chittagong sealed the victory in the 77th minute. Abraham won a tussle with Rahmatganj goalie Anwar outside the penalty area and quickly squared the ball near the goalmouth for Jitu to tap in the match winner.

Four minutes later, woodwork denied the hosts off a certain equaliser when Apu glided the ball on to the sidebar.

Eleven reasons...

FROM PAGE 17
port their own teams or anyone that plays against Australia.

- To justify pre-World Cup boasts by most rivals, including minnows Ireland, that Australia were a beatable side. They have not only won all their 10 matches so far, but Matthew Hayden scored more runs (621) and Glenn McGrath claimed more wickets (25) than anyone else in the competition.

- To prove that Australia's five consecutive losses against England and New Zealand before the World Cup were not a flash in the pan. Even though the champions were resting star players like captain Ricky Ponting and Adam Gilchrist.

- To prevent cricket from becoming a yawn. After all, even the die-hard get tired of watching one team win all the time. Australia have not lost a World Cup match since May, 1999 and now chase their third consecutive title.

- To justify the age-old saying that cricket, especially the limited-overs variety, is an unpredictable sport. There is nothing more predictable in the game than an Australian win.

- To bring joy, solace and peace to their strife-torn nation. The Tamil Tiger rebels called a truce for the duration of Tuesday's semifinal against New Zealand so that everyone could follow the match on television. It may happen again on Saturday.

- Sri Lanka will be popular winners. Australians are unpopular, rude, and arrogant. So says Indian legend Sunil Gavaskar, the ICC's pointman for all cricket-related matters.

- Do it for Bob. Slain Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer spent a lifetime, first as England batsman and then as South Africa's coach, plotting Australia's downfall without any success. His widow, Gill, wanted South Africa to win the semifinal. The grief-stricken lady deserves a better deal.

- Finally, Sri Lanka must win it for themselves. They have played outstanding cricket and deserve to be the final -- as the

second-best team in the tournament.

Mahela's time

FROM PAGE 17
exploit the opposition's weaknesses.

Ranatunga had been leading the team for nearly eight years before he won the World Cup, but middle-order batsman Jayawardene is virtually new to the job as he was named captain only last year.

The captaincy is not a burden for Jayawardene.

The Sri Lankan is enjoying his stint, having churned out one big score after another since taking over from Marvan Atapattu. The latest came when he made a century in his team's semifinal win over New Zealand in Jamaica.

That Jayawardene has the temperament and technique to play a long innings was proved last year when he scored a Sri Lankan record 374 against South Africa in the opening Test at Colombo.

His 624-run stand for the third wicket with Kumar Sangakkara (287) was also a world mark.

Sri Lanka's biggest achievement in recent times is that they have learned to win away from home with their aggressive cricket under Jayawardene and Australian coach Tom Moody.

They blanked England 5-0 in a one-day series before sharing a series in New Zealand.

Jayawardene has proved that Sri Lanka have found the right replacement for prolific middle-order batsman Aravinda de Silva, who quit one-day cricket after the 2003 World Cup.

He now needs to do what Aravinda did in the 1996 Cup final, a century that helped Sri Lanka beat Mark Taylor's Australians by seven wickets. And he is in form, having scored 529 runs in 10 matches of the ongoing tournament.

Prayers

FROM PAGE 17
face the Australians.

The monk said his "pirith," or the chanting of religious scripts, would begin when Sri Lankan captain Mahela Jayawardene goes out to toss 30 minutes before the scheduled start at 9:30 am local time (1330 GMT).

"The power of the Viswa Shakthi will be passed on to the team and as a result they will be doing well in the match", the monk told AFP.

Asked if the blessings for the Sri Lankans would have an adverse affect on the Australians, he said: "No, that is not the idea -- wishing well for one doesn't mean bad for the opponent."

Instead, the power of the blessings would bring out the virtues of the Sri Lankan players so they would be the better team, he said.

Kaka better

FROM PAGE 20

"They play open football and in the Champions League they have played better. There is a respect for their top players and for the club."

"Milan have what it takes to progress to the final."

Shevchenko admits that meeting Milan in the final in Athens would be in some ways an ordeal for him.

"I still don't want to think about it," he said. "There are still games to play before the final."

"Of course, for me it would be a thrilling evening and complicated, because Milan is not my former team but a family, a part of my life."

Osasuna stun

FROM PAGE 20

But like his teammate Moises he will also miss next week's trip to Germany after picking up a 67th minute booking.

Bremen's task was made all the more difficult when their goalkeeper Tim Wiese was sent off in the 58th minute for a professional foul on Raul Tamudo. Stand-in keeper Andreas Reinke came on in place of Daniel Jensen.

Ferran Corominas came on for Francisco Rufete in the 83rd minute and five minutes later the substitute made his mark on the game, turning in Albert Riera's low cross for Espanyol's third goal.

Bounce me

FROM PAGE 20

Jayasuriya, however, is hardly perturbed.

"It's not as if we haven't played on bouncer pitches. We also have fast bowlers who can take advantage of the conditions. In any case we feel we have the batters who can handle that sort of bowling," he remarked.

Jayasuriya was almost lyrical in his praise for captain Mahela Jayawardene whose century guided Sri Lanka to win over New Zealand in the first semifinal in Kingston on Tuesday.

McGrath set

FROM PAGE 20

"We know each other very well. I know exactly what I want to bowl to Sanath and I'm sure he knows what I'm going to bowl to him."

"He's an aggressive type of player. Those guys, some days they will come off but there is always a chance of giving you their wicket."

But Jayasuriya and the rest of the world's top batsmen at least know that the dreaded "corridor of uncertainty" outside their off-stumps is about to become a slightly safer place.

The finals so far



AFP, Bridgetown

The inaugural 1975 World Cup in England was virtually unrecognisable by modern standards, for it was not all about glamour and slam-bang batting now associated with one-day cricket.

In the run-up to Saturday's 2007 final at Kensington Oval, AFP Sports presents a history of the nine finals so far:

1975: Lord's

West Indies beat Australia by 17 runs

The final will be remembered as much for Clive Lloyd's 102 as for Australia's fightback. Add to it Viv Richards's superb piece of fielding which led to three of the five run-outs.

The West Indies were 50-3 before posting a daunting 291-8 off 60 overs despite a five-wicket effort from Gary Gilmour.

Australian captain Ian Chappell hit a gutsy 62, while fast bowler Keith Boyce taking four wickets to reduce Australia to 233-9.

But the last-wicket pair of Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson threatened to conjure up an unexpected win. The West Indies sweated as the Australians added 41.

The fightback ended when Thomson became the fifth run-out victim trying to steal a bye to wicket-keeper Deryck Murray, who hit the stumps with just eight balls remaining.

1979: Lord's

West Indies beat England by 92 runs

The West Indies were in trouble at 99-4 after being put in to bat by England skipper Mike Brearley, but Viv Richards (138 not out) and Collis King (86) put on 139 for the fifth wicket as England were set a 287-run target.

England openers Geoff Boycott and Brearley put on 129, but consumed more than half of the stipulated 60 overs. The remaining batsmen found it difficult to keep pace with the required run-rate and England lost by 92 runs.

The last eight England wickets fell for 11 runs, with Joel Garner emerging the wrecker-in-chief with

5-38 off 111 overs.

1983: Lord's

India beat West Indies by 43 runs
India managed only 183 against a fearsome pace attack of Andy Roberts, Joel Garner, Michael Holding and Marshall.

But Indian medium-pacers Madan Lal, Mohinder Amarnath, Balwinder Sandhu and Roger Binny were superbly marshalled by skipper Kapil Dev to script a fairytale.

If there were one shot that buried the West Indies' dream, it was Viv Richards's hook off Lal. If there were one catch that resurrected India, it was Dev's to account for Richards.

The West Indies were all out for 140 to hand India a 43-run victory.

1987: Kolkata

Australia beat England by seven runs

Australia had the crowd support at Eden Gardens after England had knocked out India and they were also fortune's favourites as an ill-timed reverse-sweep by Mike Gatting made their day.

Australia rode on David Boon's 75 to post 253-5, a total which never looked safe during a Bill Athey-Gatting partnership. England were strongly placed at 135-2 before disaster struck.

Gatting (41) attempted a reverse-sweep off his counterpart Allan Border only to give wicket-keeper Greg Dyer a simple catch.

1992: Melbourne

Pakistan beat England by 22 runs

Imran Khan led from the front, top-scoring with 72 to help his side post 249-6. Javed Miandad (58), Inzamamul Haq (42) and Wasim Akram (33) also chipped in.

England then floundered against the leg-spin of Mushtaq Ahmed, who removed Graham Gooch, Graeme Hick and Dermot Reeve. Left-arm paceman Akram also grabbed three wickets as England were all out for 227.

Neil Fairbrother top-scored for England with 62 before Imran sparked celebrations in his team's camp by taking the last wicket.

1996: Lahore

Sri Lanka beat Australia by seven wickets

Sri Lanka played the final as if they had a score to settle with

WC not for fans

CRICINFO, undated



WEST INDIES 2007

and lacked the Caribbean flavour at the match venues.

Diehard English fans, the members of the globe-trotting noisy Barmy Army, and their Australian counterparts, the colourfully outfitted and equally loud Fanatics, had a combined presence of around 2700 members in the region over the six-week period of the tournament. But both groups said the expense of travelling, accommodation and tickets prohibited a greater number of fans from taking in "calypso cricket".

In the case of the Barmy Army, the cheapest package available was £3000 (US\$6000) for a two-

week stay while other packages went as high as £5000 (US\$10,000) for a 10-day stay. They were exempted from the US\$100 visa requirement.

"It's being pretty expensive for people and that has been prohibitive to the younger people," said Barmy Army spokesman Paul Burham. He explained that a lot of the English fans were just coming off the massive January Ashes series in Australia. However, he felt that there would have been many more fans if the price was cheaper, adding that the prices only dropped after organisers got desperate for persons to come.

But apart from the discouraging prices, Burham said that once here the unique atmosphere of a blend of warm tropical colours with rhythmic cheering and lively encouragement from characters at the grounds was missing. "I think the best game . . . was the West Indies- England game. The atmosphere there I think

Australia who had caused controversy earlier in the tournament by refusing to play a group game in Colombo because of safety fears.

Skipper Arjuna Ranatunga defied history when he put the opposition in after winning the toss, for no team had previously won the Cup chasing a target.

Australia were 137-1 after a century stand between Mark Taylor (74) and Ricky Ponting (45) before Ranatunga restricted them to 241.

Australia dismissed explosive Sri Lanka openers Sanath Jayasuriya and Romesh Kaluwitharana cheaply, but Aravinda de Silva received valuable support from Asanka Gurusinha (65) and Ranatunga (47 not out) to steer his team home.

1999: Lord's
Australia beat Pakistan by eight wickets

The final was an anti-climax after Australia's gripping tied semifinal against South Africa as leg-spin magician Shane Warne grabbed four wickets in what turned out to be his last World Cup match.

Australia had recovered after a disastrous start to the tournament where they advanced to the Super Sixes without a point as they had lost to fellow-qualifiers Pakistan and New Zealand in group games.

2003: Johannesburg
Australia beat India by 125 runs

Opinions are still divided over India skipper Sourav Ganguly's decision to put Australia in to bat after winning the toss at The Wanderers with Ricky Ponting (140 not out) hijacking the game with a gem of a knock.

The Australian captain received valuable support from Damien Martyn (88 not out) to put the match beyond India's reach as his team set a 360-run target.

Fast bowler Glenn McGrath rocked India with the prize wicket of Sachin Tendulkar (four) in his opening spell. India seemed to be chasing a mirage thereafter despite Virender Sehwag's 82.

McGrath finished with three wickets and fellow-paceman Brett Lee with two as India were bowled out for 234.

was probably the best, the best atmosphere I've seen in a game of cricket . . . It was a close game. The fans got along well and at the end everyone was shaking everyone's hand and I guess that's what they have been trying to achieve all along."

Steve Laffey, the spokesman for Fanatics, said that while outside of the cricket grounds hospitality was good, members were disappointed in atmosphere at the matches. "It is well below the atmosphere we were expecting at the grounds. We expected it to be a lot more lively, calypso cricket, the atmosphere usually associated with cricket in the Caribbean."

Australians shelled out an average of US\$4100 for a seven-day trip that took in three islands, Barbados, Jamaica and St Lucia. Some of the packages went as high as US\$15,000 for a ten-day trip and those prices, said Laffey, were quite expensive.

Bucknor gets