

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, Chaudanga 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

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chance of finally winning something with the Spanish giants.

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

SL playing

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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 rule 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, Russell 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 mid-fielder 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 modest 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.

Slings take

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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 it 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.

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

Eleven reasons...

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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.

- 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 Australia's Australians by seven wickets. And he is in form, having scored 529 runs in 10 matches of the ongoing tournament.

Mahela's time

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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.

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McGrath set

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"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 Jayawardene 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."

"I guess we were a bit disappointed playing against Sri Lanka and them not having a full-strength

The finals so far

Cricket

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 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.

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

5-38 off 11 overs.

1983: Lord's

India beat West Indies by 43 runs