

NAT'L YOUTH SOCCER Eight teams in zonal finals

SPORTS REPORTER

Eight teams emerged group champions yesterday to advance to the zonal finals of the Western Union National Youth (Under-18) Football Championship yesterday.

Jibon slammed his second hattrick of the group stage as Gaibandha thrashed Nilphamari 6-0 to win their group at Lalmonirhat.

BKSP dumped Jhalokathi 5-0, Tangail were equally bright in a 5-0 win over Jamalpur, Dhaka blanked Munshiganj 3-0 while Noakhali beat Rangamti 4-3 on penalties after a 1-1 draw in regulation time with all winners moving into the zonal finals.

Pabna, Khulna and Narshingdi also made it to the regional finals despite draws against Chuadanga, Magura and Sylhet respectively.

In the day's other match, Naogaon edged Chapainawabganj 2-1 at Jaipurhat.

BKSP cagers win two titles

SPORTS REPORTER

The BKSP basketball team won two school tournaments in India recently.

The boys from the Savar sport institute defeated Woodstock School in the final of the 21st All India Golden Jubilee basketball tournament in Chandigarh before winning the exciting final of the 17th Afzal International tournament against New Public School 83-82 in Dehradun.

Academy cricket final today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Academy will take on their Pakistan counterparts in the final of the tri-nation tournament at BKSP today.

The home side reached the final at expense of Sri Lanka Academy by virtue of better run-rate after all three teams finished level on four points by winning two games each.

Rajapakse

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assistance to the continued success of Sri Lankan cricket," the president said, adding he wished the team success "in the days ahead."

Just before the match got underway on Saturday in the Caribbean, Rajapakse said over national television he believed Sri Lanka would win the cup because they had a "balanced team."

In Sri Lanka, the game was marred after Tamil Tiger air attacks on the capital during the match forced fans to flee their parties for safety.

Fans dressed in the Sri Lankan team T-shirts and carrying the national flag had earlier braved the rain to gather in their hundreds at playgrounds, clubs, hotels and bars showing live coverage of the match on giant screens.

The rebel Tamil Tigers have waged a campaign for a separate homeland in Sri Lanka that has claimed more than 60,000 lives in the past 35 years.

Australia won the World Cup for a record third successive time when they completed a 53-run victory on Duckworth-Lewis method against Sri Lanka in virtual darkness at the Kensington Oval on Saturday.

SL fans

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would surely have been a different result, argued university student Dinum Pathirage.

Sri Lanka's president congratulated the national team's World Cup effort and pledged to help the side prepare for the future.

"I congratulate the captain and members of the Sri Lanka cricket team on the success in finishing as runners-up in the ICC World Cup 2007 tournament," Rajapakse said in a statement at the end of the two-month competition.

Sri Lanka's Buddhists, Hindus, Christian and Muslims alike had organised religious services to bless the national team and pray for their success.

Cricket, hugely popular in Sri Lanka, is one of the few things cutting across ethnic and religious differences on the troubled island.

Fans dressed in the Sri Lankan team's colours and waving the national flag braved rain to gather in their hundreds at playgrounds, clubs, hotels and bars showing live coverage of the match on giant screens.

But the party mood was punctured by Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels, who carried out air attacks on the capital, Colombo, during the match, forcing some people watching the game to flee for safety.

The rebels' campaign for a separate homeland in Sri Lanka has claimed more than 60,000 lives over the past 35 years.



Photo: AFP
Pallbearers offload a coffin containing the body of recently deceased Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer at the Doves funeral home in Cape Town on Sunday.

Coaching option open for Glenn

CRICINFO, undated

Glenn McGrath has spent more than a decade keeping Australia's bowling stocks strong and he has been offered the chance to make sure they remain healthy after his retirement. While McGrath plans a rest of up to 12 months, he has been given the option by Tim Nielsen, the new national mentor, to work as a bowling coach.

"He would be sensible to take a break from cricket, but down the track you wouldn't knock back the opportunity to have a great bowler like him involved," Nielsen said in the Sunday Age. "We use his action as a visual reference point for a lot of our young quicks, especially at the centre of excellence [in Brisbane], and it would be great to use his knowledge."

McGrath, who ended his international career with 1 for 31 in his third World Cup final win, said in the lead-up to the match he felt he had "a role to play in the game later on". However, his first priorities when he returns from the Caribbean will be spending time with his family and giving attention to his property in western New South Wales.

'Aussies extra special'

AFP, Bridgetown

Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene believes that Australia have that something extra which separates champions from the others.

Australia won the World Cup for a record third successive time when they completed a 53-run victory on Duckworth-Lewis method against Sri Lanka in virtual darkness at the Kensington Oval here on Saturday.

"I think they always keep improving. A lot of teams have competed really well against Australia in the past, but maybe when they come to a big tournament they seem to have that little bit of extra," said Jayawardene.

"They have different ways of going about things. They went unbeaten when it was difficult to remain unbeaten in the tournament because of different conditions and opposition, but they played really good cricket."

Australia are unbeaten in their 29 Cup matches beginning with 1999, with their last 22 wins coming under Ricky Ponting's captaincy.

"Probably wait for some of their players to retire soon. One (fast bowler Glenn McGrath) is going," Jayawardene said when asked of the gap between Australia and other nations.

"We thought we had a very decent chance in the final. We initially thought that it's a 100-over game and had an even chance, but they proved us wrong. They have some very good players who deliver in big games."

The Sri Lankan captain was all praise for Australian wicketkeeper-batsman Adam Gilchrist who smashed an unbeaten 149 – the highest ever in a World Cup final – off 104 balls with eight sixes and 13 fours.

Man-of-the-match Gilchrist's blitz

Muktijoddha to play today

Russel punish own officials



SPORTS REPORTER

The B. League match between Muktijoddha and Arambagh will kick off 24 hours ahead of schedule due to the May Day holiday.

The match, which will eventually turn into the battle for the third place, was slated for tomorrow but will now be held today at the Bangabandhu National Stadium at 4pm.

Muktijoddha are third with 15 points from eight games while Arambagh, who have played one match less, are fifth with 13 points.

Local giants Abahani, eyeing the top spot, host their Khulna namesake in the last match of the ninth week on May 2.

The league committee has also revised fixtures of the last two rounds of the first leg – which ends on schedule on May 16 – to accommodate exhibition matches of visiting English club Oldham Athletic, who are due on May 7.

The under-20 squad of the century-old club from greater Manchester will play Dhaka heavyweights Mohammedan and Abahani on May 8 and 12 respectively at the Bangabandhu Stadium and the national U-23s in Sylhet on May 10.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra have suspended two officials for assaulting referee Munaf Sarker after their last match, which the league leaders lost 1-0 to Arambagh.

Russel's football manager Mosharraf Dewan has been suspended for four matches and assistant manager Habibur Rahman Manu for six games according to the decision of the football standing committee of the club.

The club have also banned their ball-boy Sayeed from the all venue premises for the rest of the season.

The B. League committee also sat last night to discuss actions against the two Russel officials.

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Chaos in Colombo

AFP, Colombo

Tamil Tiger planes struck fuel depots around Sri Lanka's capital early Sunday, briefly plunging Colombo into darkness and sending cricket fans watching the World Cup final running for cover.

As explosions were heard and the night sky lit up with anti-aircraft fire, fans scrambled to leave parks and hotels where giant screens showing Sri Lanka playing Australia in the final in Barbados were switched off.

Officials said a fuel storage tank was destroyed in the raid.

Flights at the island's only international airport were disrupted as the air defence systems kicked in, officials said adding that one Indian jet was turned back while several departing flights were delayed.

It was the third time the separatist rebels have used light aircraft to hit military targets. The Bandaranaike International Airport shares a runway with the adjoining military base where warplanes are parked.

"It was total panic because we initially thought it was fireworks," said Zaitheon Bin Ahamed who was partying with friends at a Colombo rugby club.

"Organisers were asking people to stay calm, but people were getting nervous over the constant sounds of gun fire. No one really knew what was going on," said Kamini Edward, who was at a hotel following the game which Australia won.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) planes targeted two petroleum storage depots at the Colombo suburb of Kolonnawa and Muthurajawela, on the way to the airport, rebel spokesman Rasiah Lathiriyayan said.

The defence ministry confirmed that the two facilities – one state-owned and the other run by the multi-national Shell – were hit by four Tiger bombs, but only two exploded at the Shell depot.

Aussie, Aussie

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are the world's best Test side and have now gone 29 games unbeaten at the World Cup – began with the players.

"Each individual has strived for perfection all the time. From a coach's point of view, that is the perfect team. The perfect team is the one that keeps wanting to be better day in and day out.

"I've been basically a passenger for the last three years or so. I get there (to practice), put the gear out and bring it back in again."

But Australia captain Ricky Ponting said: "We shouldn't let the coach get away with that. He's challenged us all the whole time he's been in charge of this team."

"He's always been overlooked."

"It's not an easy thing to do to take over a team that's already playing good cricket and make it better."

"But he's been able to do that with me and with all of us. Some of that is to do with the players, but a lot of it is also to do with how you're coached as well."

And while Buchanan may have called time on his coaching career, McGrath appeared ready to launch his own – for a price.

Asked what it would take to beat Australia, the smiling fast bowler replied: "I don't think I'll give that away for free."

Bob's body reaches SA

Cricket
AFP, Cape Town

The body of Bob Woolmer, the murdered coach of Pakistan's cricket team, arrived in South Africa on Sunday morning, six weeks after his body was discovered in a Jamaican hotel room.

A casket bearing Woolmer's embalmed body arrived at the Cape Town International Airport shortly before 10:00 am (0800 GMT) on a South African Airways Flight from London.

An AFP photographer saw a wooden box wrapped in plastic sheeting being offloaded from the Boeing 747 on the apron and taken with a police escort to the cargo section of the airport. From there it was collected by a van from the Doves funeral group.

Doves Western Cape general

manager Theo Rix confirmed the box contained Woolmer's remains.

The body would be kept at a mortuary while his family makes funeral arrangements.

"We are meeting the family tomorrow morning to make the final arrangements," Rix told AFP.

Woolmer's widow, Gill, who lives in Cape Town's Pinelands neighbourhood, has previously said her English-born husband's cremation ceremony would be a private family affair.

A public memorial service for the former South African coach was held in the city earlier this month.

Woolmer, 58, was found dead in his Kingston hotel room on March 18, the day after Pakistan crashed out of the cricket World Cup in an upset loss to Ireland.

His body was held in legal limbo for weeks after an autopsy indicated the former England Test player had been strangled, but

investigators have yet to make any arrests.

The Kingston coroner in charge of the case ruled that Woolmer's body could not be released until after an inquest that had been scheduled to begin on April 23 was completed.

But the inquest was cancelled following concerns of a lack of police resources as a Cricket World Cup semi-final game was to be played the following day, police said.

Woolmer's body was then ordered to be released to his family.

His death led to a fevered round of speculation as to the motive for the murder. The most common theory is that his killing was linked to match-fixing and illegal betting in cricket.

Some 30 police investigators are working full-time on the Woolmer case and more than 100 witness statements have been taken.

Smith sidesteps politics

AFP, Johannesburg

South African cricket captain Graeme Smith said on Sunday he would not use politics as an excuse for South Africa's performance in the Cricket World Cup in the West Indies.

A Johannesburg Sunday newspaper quoted Jonty Rhodes, the former South African international and the team's fielding coach at the World Cup, as saying Smith had been hamstrung by the selection policies of Cricket South Africa administrators.

Since emerging from the apartheid era, Cricket South Africa has sought to redress the racial imbalances of the past by including a number of black players in provincial and national teams.

They took seven black players to the West Indies, which prompted a number of commentators to imply South Africa did not take their best 15-man squad to the World Cup.

South Africa were well beaten by Australia in the second semi-final of the tournament in St Lucia on

Wednesday.

"We were pathetic against Australia," Rhodes told Rapport, "but South Africa is the only land that can't say they had their best 15 players here."

"In a tournament like this, where every player in every game has to be at his best, is that a recipe for a problem. Can (CSA) honestly say they gave Graeme the 15 men he needed to win the World Cup?"

Speaking at a press conference in Johannesburg after arriving back in South Africa on Sunday, Smith said he had not read the report, but strongly denied that the selection policy had hampered the team in anyway.

"I would never have said that. That's not an excuse. One of the tough things is to control (at the World Cup) is the outside influences on the team, when there are things said and some lies are flying around. I won't be making any excuses about politics," said Smith.

South African coach Mickey Arthur, who is expected to be offered a new two-year contract, believed his team had the right tactics in the tournament.

After the semi-final loss they

were heavily criticised for their overly aggressive batting early on against Australia, which saw them lose five wickets for 27 runs, and only manage a total of 149. Australia won by seven wickets with 111 balls remaining.

"I can honestly say that there was nothing we would have changed," said Arthur.

"I think our preparation was right. Our game plan is the way to go. This is the way one-day cricket has gone, and, to an extent, I think we pioneered it. I believe our tactics and training were right."

South Africa were ranked as the top one-day international team in the world coming into the World Cup, but lost four of their 10 matches at the tournament. Arthur believed his team had nevertheless been successful over the last 12 months.

"We have had a good year," said Arthur. "We won 19 one-day games and lost seven. We were in the semi-final of the Champions Trophy and the World Cup. We won two Test series, four ODI series in a row and became the number one ODI team in the world. Looking back as a team and as a unit, we've had an unbelievable summer."



PHOTO: AFP
South Africa captain Graeme Smith (C) addresses a press conference alongside vice-captain Jacques Kallis (R) and coach Mickey Arthur in Johannesburg on Saturday.

The final dilemma

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Fast bowler Glenn McGrath grabbed three big wickets to play a big role in dismissing India for 234 in the 40th over.

But Australia were also involved in two memorable finals.

The first came at Lord's in 1975 when they lost to the West Indies by 17 runs and the other at Calcutta in 1987 when they defeated England by seven runs.

The Lord's final will always be remembered for Australia's never-say-die spirit as they were struggling at 233-9 chasing a challeng-

ing West Indies' total of 291 in a 60-over final.

The last-wicket pair of Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson brought their team closer to victory with their gutsy stand before Thomson became a run-out victim in the penultimate over.

The West Indies were comfortable winners by 92 runs in the 1979 Cup final against England after scoring 286-9, thanks to a superb unbeaten century from Viv Richards.

England were all out for 194 despite half-centuries from open-

ers Mike Brearley and Geoff Boycott.

India denied the West Indies a hattrick after surprisingly winning by 43 runs in a final of fluctuating fortunes in 1983.

The West Indies were expected to win the match after restricting India to a modest 183, before collapsing to 140 against a disciplined seam-swing attack.

The 1987 World Cup also threw up a surprise winner in Australia after a closely-contested final.

Allan Border's Australians scored 253-5, a total which never looked safe against England till skipper Mike Gatting's reverse-sweep which led to his team's defeat by seven runs.

England were again involved in an engrossing final, this time losing to Pakistan by 22 runs in Australia in 1992. And this was the last time the finalists looked evenly matched.

AUSTRALIA V SRI LANKA SCOREBOARD

FROM PAGE 17

SRI LANKA

Tharanga c Gilchrist b Bracken
Jayasuriya b Clarke
Sangakkara c Ponting b Hogg
Jayawardene lbw b Watson
Silva b Clarke
Dilshan run out (Clarke/McGrath)
Arnold c Gilchrist b McGrath
Vaas not out
Malinga st Gilchrist b Symonds
Fernando not out
Extras: (lb-1, w-14)
Total: (For 8 wickets in 36 overs)
Did not bat: Muralidaran
Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-123, 3-145, 4-156, 5-188, 6-190, 7-194, 8-211.

Bowler	O	M	R	W	NB/W
Bracken	6	1	34	1	w-1
Tait	6	0	42	0	w-2
McGrath	7	0	31	1	w-1
Watson	7	0	49	1	w-3
Hogg	3	0	19	1	-
Clarke	5	0	33	2	w-2
Symonds	2	0	6	1	-

Result: Australia won by 53 runs (D/L method)
Man-of-the-match: Adam Gilchrist.
Man-of-the-series: Glenn McGrath.
Toss: Australia.
Umpires: Aileen Dar and Steve Bucknor
Match referee: J Crowe (New Zealand)

WORLD CUP TOP BOWLERS						
Bowler (Country)	M	W	BB	Avg.	4wk	5wk
G McGrath (AUS)	11	26	3/14	13.73	0	0
M Muralidaran (SRI)	10	23	4/19	15.26	2	0
S Tait (AUS)	11	23	4/39	20.30	1	0
G Hogg (AUS)	11	21	4/27	15.80	2	0
L Malinga (SRI)	8	18	4/54	15.77	1	0
N Bracken (AUS)	10	16	4/19	16.12	1	0
D Vettori (NZL)	10	16	4/23	27.93	1	0
A Flintoff (ENG)	8	14	4/43	21.28	1	0
A Hall (RSA)	9	14	5/18	23.92	0	1
C Langeveldt (RSA)	8	14	5/39	25.78	0	1

WORLD CUP TOP BATSMEN						
Batsman (Country)	M	R	HS	Avg.	100s	50s
M Hayden (AUS)	11	659	158	73.22	3	1
M Jayawardene (SRI)	11	548	115*	60.88	1	4
R Ponting (AUS)	11	539	113	67.37	1	4
S Styris (NZL)	10	499	111*	83.16	1	4
J Kallis (RSA)	10	485	128*	80.83	1	3
S Jayasuriya (SRI)	11	467	115	46.70	2	2
A Gilchrist (AUS)	11	453	149	45.30	1	2
K Pietersen (ENG)	9	444	104	55.50	2	3
G Smith (RSA)	10	443	91	49.22	0	5
M Clarke (AUS)	11	436	93*	87.20	0	4