

Abahani play DOHS on May 14

SPORTS REPORTER

Leaders Abahani will resume their Premier League surge when they take on defending champions Old DOHS at the Fatullah Stadium on the opening day of the Kai-Altech Premier Cricket Super League on May 14.

On the same day, Mohammedan Sporting Club will take on Bangladesh Biman at the Dhammondi Cricket Stadium while the last two sides Sonargaon Cricketers play Victoria Sporting Club at BKSP.

Abahani is on top of the table with 20 points as they won 10 out of 11 matches while their bitter rivals Mohammedan are in second place with 17 points. While it was quite easy sailing for Victoria (16 points) as they garnered a good young side, it was not all that easy for the reigning champions DOHS who had to wait on Brothers Union's win over Kalabagan on the final day of the first round back in February.

The relegation dogfight will take place between Indira Road (six points), City Club (four points) and Brothers Union (four points) from which two will go down to the First Division and one survive. But it was unclear when the relegation league will begin.

Tevez beats

FROM PAGE 20

Mikel Arteta kept Everton on course for a UEFA Cup place as his second half penalty set up a 3-0 win against Portsmouth.

Arteta struck from the spot in the 59th minute, then Joseph Yobo added a second and Gary Naysmith scored in the last minute to lift David Moyes's team into fifth place.

Benni McCarthy and Jason Roberts were the goalscorers as Blackburn won 2-0 at Newcastle.

Already-relegated Watford landed just their fifth league win this season as goals from Danny Shittu and Marlon King secured a 2-0 success at Reading.

India turn

FROM PAGE 17

BKS Iyengar, who has worked with Tendulkar too and also had a few sessions with the Indian team during Greg Chappell's tenure.

Giggs's and Langer's experiences suggest yoga is a special help with back injuries and hamstrings, and thus extending their careers into the mid-30s. S Omkar, one of India's earlier yoga instructors, has said that apart from strengthening the quadriceps and hamstrings, yoga relaxes and helps players stay calm. Ancient practitioners believe yoga is close to meditation, an escape into oneself.

It's not a given that yoga extends careers but a look at some of the more regular practitioners -- Langer, Giggs, Matthew Hayden -- lends weight to that belief. Hayden, for example, is known to have amazing powers of concentration and his pre-match routine -- of studying the pitch for a considerable length of time -- suggests a yogic posture.

Considering the views of Dilip Vengsarkar, the chairman of selectors, on the talent pool outside the national team, extending careers is a matter of great urgency. Five thousand years of practice can't be wrong.

EPL to probe

FROM PAGE 20

Merseyside outfit that an "arrangement" had been made between the clubs to that effect.

According to reports in the Mail on Sunday and the News of the World Premier League bosses have indicated that if "third party interference" is proven both clubs could be sanctioned, possibly with points deductions or fines.

Premier League spokesman Dan Johnson said: "We will be contacting both clubs as a matter of urgency to find out what has gone on."

"As Howard's is a permanent transfer there is no reason why he could not have played against Manchester United."

"Had such a clause been included in the transfer we would not have allowed it - it would have been a clear case of third party interference."

"We certainly have no record of an agreement between Everton and United that Howard could not play on April 28."

Earlier this week, Everton spokesman Ian Ross said that as a condition of making the loan deal permanent in February, United had demanded Howard did not play on April 28.

Ross said Everton had no choice, otherwise United would have kept the transfer as a loan deal until the end of the season, and manager David Moyes wanted to sign Howard up before he faced competition from rivals.



PHOTO: STAR
GrameenPhone chief marketing officer Stein Naevdal speaks during a press conference in connection with their title sponsorship for the India tour of Bangladesh at a local hotel yesterday.

Sir Bobby Robson in fifth cancer fight



AFP, London

Former England manager Sir Bobby Robson said Sunday he had been diagnosed with cancer for the fifth time.

The 74-year-old started a six-week bout of chemotherapy last week after small cancerous nodules were discovered in his lungs.

The knight has battled cancer on and off for the last 15 years and has undergone cancer surgery four times.

"Of course, it's not the greatest news I've ever had but I have fought hard throughout my life and I will continue to fight. I will battle as I've always done," he told The Mail on Sunday weekly newspaper.

"My last operation in August was a success but this time the doctors have said they can't operate."

"The good news is that they are measuring the nodules in my lungs in millimetres rather than centimetres!"

"That is encouraging and we are hopeful the treatment will keep it under control."

"I've been advised to keep busy and active, and that's what I will be trying to do whenever possible."

Robson vowed to carry on with his life as normal and plans to attend his annual charity golf day in Portugal next week before celebrating his 52nd wedding anniversary next month with his wife Elsie, two sons and four grandchildren.

His last battle with cancer

came in August 2006 when he had a tumor the size of a grape removed from his brain.

He successfully fought cancer three times previously: he had a golf ball-sized tumour removed from his lung in May 2006, while in 1995, he was discovered to have a rare form of skin cancer behind an eye.

Treatment for that involved complex surgery which left him needing a rubber plug in his mouth. Three years before that he overcame bowel cancer.

Robson played for Fulham and West Bromwich Albion during a successful career. He won 20 England caps and played in the 1958 and 1962 World Cups.

He made his name as a manager with Ipswich in the 1970s, winning the FA Cup in 1978 and the UEFA Cup in 1981 during a 13-year spell with the club from 1969.

Mashrafe

FROM PAGE 17

huge assistance from the pitch to put more pressure on the visiting batting.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh Red XI: 207-7 in 50 overs (Javed 46, Tamim 48, Aftab 26, Shakib 7, Ashraf 0, Bashir 9, Forhad 21, Mashud 25 not out, Nafis 7, Khademul 1 not out, extras 17; Razzak 1-43, Rafique 3-31).

Bangladesh Green XI: 196 all out in 49 overs (Shahriar 29, Zunaed 1, Sadat 23, Tushar 20, Mushfiqur 9, Rajin 25, Mashrafe 49, Rafique 10, Kapali 18, Razzak 2, Rasel 0 not out, extras 10; Shahadat 3-51, Farhad 1-29, Aftab 3-28, Shakib 1-28).

Schalke still top

FROM PAGE 20

Schalke, who have topped the table for the last 12 rounds of matches, had to wait till the 64th minute to find the net through Kuranyi as they look for their first title in almost half a century, though they came close in both 2001 and 2005.

Kuranyi scored his 15th goal of the season, and 10th with his head, in front of 50,000 fans at the Veltrins Arena.

Kuranyi's diving header from a Gerald Asamoah cross must surely be one of the most important goals of his career considering the late stage of the title race.

Schalke coach Mirko Slomka said the championship would go down to the wire.

"We had to show patience today," he said. "But we never faltered and deserved our victory. I think the title will be decided on the 34th and final day."

Schalke's victory was even more important considering Stuttgart's success thanks to goals by

Fernando Meira and Fernando Hilbert. It was Stuttgart's sixth successive victory although they are a young side without a lot of experience.

Motabber no more

SPORTS REPORTER

Motabber Hossain Babu, sports organiser and ex-member of Metropolitan Football League Committee (MFLC) died of kidney ailments at a local hospital yesterday. He was 55.

Motabber, a bachelor, was the vice-president of Purbachal Parishad.

He was buried at the Banani Graveyard in the afternoon.

The Bangladesh Football Federation and MFLC condoled the death and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.

Abahani fight back

FROM PAGE 17

shoehorned their defence with eight men.

The first chance fell to Emily when Zahed's weak effort after a quickly taken Ujjal freekick found the national striker unmarked just seven yards out of goal. But the out-of-form Emily's left-footed placing shot in the tenth minute was palmed out for a corner by goalkeeper Mitul who dived full stretch.

With Abul feeling uncomfortable at the left flank, Abahani concentrated on the right but all their efforts went down the drains as the vital final pass deflected off the forest of Arambagh legs.

Emily was again on target nine minutes before the short whistle but Mitul tipped over his teasing volley from the edge of the area.

Tipu replaced Emily at the break and the veteran, still remembered as the 'super-sub' since scoring Bangladesh's match winner against India in the 1999 SAF Games semifinal in Kathmandu, scored with his first touch on the ball one minute

after resumption.

However, the goal was disallowed as Ibrahim, who set up the chance, was found guilty of a foul.

Tipu, who has mostly been used as late substitute in the previous games, looked dangerous but he fluffed a superb chance when the striker ran too wide of the goal after going past Mitul with a through ball from Abul.

Tipu finally broke the deadlock in the 54th minute with a clinical finish at the far post when he ran free with Ibrahim's through pass and placed an angled left-footer past Mitul.

After a rather colourless first period, Ibrahim got back his rhythm and set an identical chance to Tipu, whose attempt was blocked by Mitul.

The robust Ghanaian then tore apart the rival defence on his own after a concerted move to make it 2-0 in the 78th minute. He took the ball on the edge of the box and weaved through three defenders -- Monu, Ramjan and Akram -- at the left side, drawing the goalie off his line before

Youth football finals from May 14

SPORTS REPORTER

The final round of the Western Union National Youth Football Championship will begin on May 14 in Satkhira.

The hosts have been drawn with Noakhali, Narayanganj, Rajshahi and Khulna in Group A while the other group features BKSP, Tangail, Gaibandha, Jhenaidah and Narshingdi.

The top two teams from each group qualify for the May 26 and 27 semifinals. The final is slated for May 29.

Cruciani

FROM PAGE 17

against Arambagh, which Abahani played under their good old coach Amlesh Sen.

"Shortly after his arrival, Cruciani put pressure on us, threatening to leave because of the crowd pressure. He was irritated by the fans' behaviour at training ground and at the match venues. Finally, he asked for full time security," said Abahani manager Satyajit Das Rupu after Abahani's 2-0 win over Arambagh.

"We did not find any reason to provide him such security because the fans were never threatening. After our loss to Khulna Abahani, the club management thought it was the right time for him to go," he added.

Sources said that Cruciani was actually sacked due to the team's worrying performance despite having the strongest team on paper but Rupu denied the allegation.

"Performance was not the factor. We have been among the top teams throughout the league and still are on top. So we cannot blame him for poor performance. But it is true that we are not happy with the performance of two players he had brought."

He also refuted the claim that Cruciani was bothered by chaos during training.

"Yes, there was a problem with a fan with Ibrahim but that day, neither Cruciani nor any of the Argentine players were present."

Rupu informed that Abahani have decided to release Argentines Hector Parodi and Mariano Sanchez after the first leg but are keen to hold on to their compatriot defender Mariano Caporale.

Parodi was billed to solve scoring problems but the striker has scored just one goal so far while young midfielder Sanchez has also found the net once.

"All three players are contracted till the end of the first leg (May 16). We have decided to let go the two because they have failed to impress. We want to extend the contract with Caporale but he has yet to decide," he said, ruling out the chance of appointing a foreign coach but said Abahani will fill in the gaps with foreign players.

"I hope Caporale would stay," he said about the centre-back, who has been outstanding throughout.

The Abahani management has paid Cruciani his dues and the 43-year-old Argentine is expected to leave on May 10.

Tamim enters fray

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has renewed the six months and rookie contracts for the year of 2006-07.

The six months contract of Tushar Imran, Shahadat Hossain, Abdur Razzak, Syed Rasel, Enamul Haque, Nazmul Hossain and Tapash Baisya has been renewed from April 1 to September 30 this year.

Mushfiqur Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan, Farhad Reza and Mehrab Hossain, who were previously under the rookie contract, have received six months contract for the same period of time. The contracts of Alok Kapali and Nafis Iqbal were not renewed.

Dashing left-hand opener Tamim Iqbal has been awarded a rookie contract (from 01 April 2007 to 30 September 2007) for his impressive showing in the just concluded World Cup in West Indies.

Meanwhile, captain Habibul Bashar, vice-captain Mohammad Ashraf, Shahriar Nafees, Javed Omar, Khaled Mashud, Mohammad Rafique, Rajin Saleh, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Aftab Ahmed are under the one-year contract bracket.

Mehrab, Nazim ensure draw

SPORTS REPORTER

Captain Mehrab Hossain and Nazimuddin made sure Bangladesh Cricket Academy drew the first day match with Sri Lanka Academy at the Khulna Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Both batsmen defended with aplomb as the hosts batted through the entire day to score 199 for four.

Discarded left-hander Mehrab batted for more than five hours to score 60 runs off 216 balls. He struck eight boundaries.

He shared a 136-run stand with Nazimuddin for the second wicket which began on the third day with the hosts in arrears by 89 runs. But both batsmen played the ball with soft hands to keep the islanders at bay.

Nazimuddin only hit two boundaries in his 298-minute innings that was ended when left-arm spinner Nishan Komarasu had him caught by Chanaka Wijesinghe for 63. He hit two fours in his painstaking knock.

There was a rare low score for in-form Rokibul Hasan (10) but left-hander Nasiruddin Faruq (25) and Nadif Chowdhury (16) were both unbeaten when the stumps were drawn.

Akram

FROM PAGE 17

resignation saying that it had been a wonderful experience to play the role for the last five years. "I tendered my resignation simply on personal grounds. It was a fantastic experience for last five years to work as a selector," said the former left-arm paceman.

On the other hand Akram said that he was ready to take the challenge to contribute something towards the country's cricket in a different capacity.

"I played with both the committee members so it is not a big deal to work with them. I am really looking forward to taking the challenge because there is a lot of scope to work in this field," he opined.

Clijsters

FROM PAGE 20

Clijsters said earlier this season she would be playing less as her career wound down, and had announced she would not play in two of the season's Grand Slams -- Roland Garros and the US Open.

After her elimination from Warsaw Clijsters admitted that recent injuries had already made up her mind over her future.

"I still like to play tennis but my injuries the last few years have made me not enjoy it as much as before," she had said.

"Last year I was working with trainers but would still get injury problems."

FACTFILE

Kim Clijsters

Born: 08/06/1983

Birthplace: Bilzen (Belgium)

Nationality: Belgian

Height: 1.74 m

Weight: 68 kg

Professional debut: 1997

Titles Tournaments: 34 singles, 11 doubles

GRAND SLAM RECORD

Australian Open: final (2004), semi-finals (2003, 2007)

French Open: final (2001, 2003), semi-finals (2006), doubles title (2003)

Wimbledon: semi-finals (2003, 2006), doubles title (2003)

US Open: won (2005), final (2003)

Won 2 Masters (Los Angeles 2002, 2003), 2 semi-finals (2001, 2006)

Won 1 Fed Cup (2001)

Elected best player for 2005 by International Tennis Federation (ITF).

Highest world ranking: 1st (August 2003)

Best year ending world ranking: 2nd (2003, 2005)

World ranking on announcement of retirement: 4th

Mayweather edges epic



AFP, Las Vegas

Floyd Mayweather remained undefeated by winning a 12-round split decision over Oscar de la Hoya Saturday to take the World Boxing Council super-welterweight title in an epic slugfest of US rivals.

Two judges scored the fight for Mayweather by 116-112 and 115-113, each giving Mayweather four of the final five rounds, while the third saw de la Hoya winning 115-113 by taking three of the final five rounds.

Mayweather, who became a world champion in his fifth different weight class, improved to 38-0 while de la Hoya, a champion is six divisions, fell to 38-5.

"It was easy work for me. He was rough and tough. But he couldn't beat the best," Mayweather said. "I could see the shots coming. I stayed on the outside all night, boxed and made him miss."

"That's what you call a masterpiece of boxing. He's one of the best fighters of our era and I showed what I can do to one of the best fighters of our era."

De la Hoya, who pressed the attack early but tired at the finish, said he thought he had taken the decision.

"I felt I won. I felt I landed the hard punches, the crisp punches," de la Hoya said. "Every time I hit him I hurt him. I was pressing the fight. If I didn't press the fight there would be no fight."

It was the narrowest triumph of Mayweather's career, his first decision that was less than unanimous.

"I'm not Superman," he said. "I

can't win every fight unanimously."

Mayweather also called it the greatest triumph of his career and declared it would be his farewell bout.

"As of right now, Floyd Mayweather is officially retired from the sport of boxing," Mayweather said. "I've done everything I wanted to do in the sport. I beat the best. I made a ton of money. I've got nothing else to prove."

De la Hoya, who had only one fight in the prior 2 1/2 years, said he would analyze the fight before deciding whether or not to retire.

"We'll have to wait and see," de la Hoya said. "I've got to go back to the drawing board and watch the fight, see how my movements were seen by my timing was, just see how my body feels."

De la Hoya, 34, made 25 million dollars, while Mayweather, 30, took home 10 million dollars and another hefty payday might entice a rematch.

The much-anticipated showdown between Mayweather, considered the supreme pound-for-pound fighter, and de la Hoya, boxing's most popular pay-per-view attraction, was expected to rank among the top moneymaking fights in history.

From the start, the fight matched its action-packed build-up as de la Hoya displayed tenacity and unexpected speed to set the tempo.

De la Hoya pounded at Mayweather with left hooks to the body in the early rounds but did little damage, while Mayweather proved evasive and picked his moments to counter with single punches.

"Everybody counted me out," de la Hoya said. "He's younger than

me. He's fast. But I hurt him with a few punches that I know he felt."

De la Hoya landed nine lefts to the body in a row at one stage of round four while Mayweather was against the ropes, but the challenger began to find his form, taking de la Hoya's best and answering in kind.

"For some reason it wasn't the night of the jab. Every time I would throw it, it would snap his head back and I would hurt him," de la Hoya said. "But for some reason it just wasn't one of those nights."

Mayweather began setting the rhythm in the sixth round, de la Hoya evading and countering. In the seventh Mayweather began landing combinations and smiling, seeing de la Hoya was tiring and far less aggressive than his flashy early fury.

"He threw a lot of punches that weren't landing. I out-punched him. I out-boxed him," Mayweather said. "I was having fun in there. It was a hell of a fight. I told the fans I would give them a good fight and that's what I did."

Mayweather began landing harder punches in the eighth round and kept the pace to the end. The final round was a series of clinches and misses until de la Hoya landed a flurry only to be smashed by Mayweather in response.

The bell rang ending the fight with the fighters trading a furious exchange, then embracing each other.

"As a champion I wanted to stop him," de la Hoya said. "You owe it to the fans. You owe it to yourself to push yourself more. That's why I just tried to close the show."



PHOTO: AFP
Champion Floyd Mayweather Jr. (R) lands a haymaker right on challenger Oscar De la Hoya during their WBC Super Welterweight world championship bout at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas on Saturday.

Fergie wants Mourinho stay

FROM PAGE 20

prompted Ferguson to hit back angrily in response to the Portuguese's claim that United were being favoured by the football authorities and referees.

Then the Scot delivered an even stronger rebuke when his opposite number indulged in a verbal spat with United winger Cristiano Ronaldo.

Ferguson is convinced Mourinho's job is safe and while he wants to draw a line under the current row, he admits that the Chelsea manager's public mutterings bring an added dimension to the battle for supremacy in the Premiership.

"I think that you should always leave it to the players to settle

things," Ferguson said. "But sometimes with Jose there is a continual dialogue that you quite enjoy having a wee go back. Maybe it adds more to the actual game."

"Sometimes we can get to intense about matches and get too focused on the game itself. He maybe brings another agenda which you can join in if you want to or you can sit back and admire what he has got to say."

And he added: "I don't pay attention to the talk about Jose's future. I don't think there is a great substance to these reports. I think he will be there next year."

Ferguson insists he will be happy to enjoy a post-match drink with Mourinho at Stamford Bridge no matter what the outcome and

believes that the challenge from Chelsea will be even stronger next season - although he warned a repeat of the big money deals of the past will be no guarantee of success.

"I don't know what they will do this summer but I am sure they will buy three or four players like they have every year. And they have not been short on paying out incredible sums of money. So I don't know what they will do but I am sure with the money they have behind them they will not be left short in that respect."

"I think it's been proved time and time again that buying big doesn't always work. But if you are buying real quality players then you expect to get success."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	40 Alkali	5 Vichys	24 "By gosh!"
1 Vegas	neutralizer	soisse	25 Chic no
area	42 Hair-care	ingredi-	more
6 Texas city	product	ents	26 Realistic
12 Quarter-	44 Sty cry	6 Heinz	28 Drawers,
back Dan	46 Sgt.	Holliger's	in
13 Straw hat	Snorkel's	instrument	Devon-
14 Tabletop	dog	7 Back	shire
protector	50 Prayer	8 Nosh	30 Buck's
15 Witer	52 Big realm	9 "Hurry!"	mate
. José — y	54 Open	10 Lily	31 Insepa-
Gasset	out	variety	rable