

BKSP, Noakhali fight for wins

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

Sabbir struck a hatrick as BKSP beat Narsingdi 4-2 in the final round of Western Union National Youth Football Championship at the Sathkira stadium yesterday.

Although Mobarak started the scoring with a third minute strike for Narsingdi, Sabbir equalised after five minutes as the sides went into the lemon break at 1-1.

Sabbir scored twice more in the second half, in the 46th and 65th minute, but in between Faisal equalised for Narsingdi but because of Sabbir's triple strike, BKSP were in lead before Rabiul put the icing on the cake with a strike, a minute before the referee blew the whistle.

In the other match of the day, Noakhali came back from a goal down to win 2-1 against Khulna. Ziaul and Nurul struck one each for Noakhali while Krishna of Khulna scored the opener in the fifth minute.

Ticket fever

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the 2005 Champions League final in Istanbul when Liverpool famously came back from 0-3 down at half-time to defeat the Italians on penalties.

Around 50,000 football fans are expected to travel to Athens for the final, but only about 35,000 of them will have tickets, Greek police say.

Coupled with the fact that the busy tourist season has already started in Athens and local hotels are booked to capacity, this raises the problem of around 15,000 fans milling around the capital without access to the stadium.

The public order ministry on Tuesday said efforts were underway to minimise the movement of English fans, who frequently cause trouble when abroad.

"Efforts are being made with the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels to place television sets in areas where fans will be staying to facilitate them, and to avoid (fan) movement," the public order ministry said in a statement.

The chief of Greek police on Tuesday briefed British ambassador Simon Gass on preparations for the game, the ministry said.

Fans with tickets will be escorted by police directly to the Olympic Stadium, while the remainder will be permitted to circulate freely around Athens but will have their movements shadowed by riot police, a police source said after an emergency meeting in April between the public order ministry and Athens municipal officials.

Around 15,000 police officers will be mobilised for the event, in an operation rarely seen since Athens hosted the 2004 Olympics.

From Pele

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Beckham to the United States.

Zidane retired after the French lost to Italy in a penalty shootout. But Christian Dior's first male model certainly has the name recognition and rock star persona to draw more attention to the game stateside.

"If he comes, he comes this year," Francescoli said. "The next year, I think it's impossible. But I know Zinedine. For me, he doesn't want to play anymore."

For his part, Beckham insists he still wants to play. The former England captain seems intent on proving he has not lost a step, while telling anyone who will listen about his desire to grow the game in the United States.

That approach has many recalling another era.

"It's almost the same," Pele said. "There are a lot of similarities."

A new start

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During his absence for the last one year Bangladesh team changed a lot following their one-day success and Enamul admitted that he found a new team from he had left after playing the first Test against Australia in April last year.

"It's a different team because everybody is confident. I know it will be a difficult task to do something in the Test series against India but I got the impression from the team that they have the self-confidence," he added.

The young man was shy in response as to how he personally looks at the tag of a Test bowler.



Did U Know?

Charles Bannerman of Australia faced the first ball bowled in Test cricket history from England's Alfred Shaw.



PHOTO: AFP

England opener Alastair Cook pulls a delivery from West Indies paceman Jerome Taylor's on the opening day of the first Test at Lord's yesterday.

Cook steers England

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while still on nought.

But Shah got off the mark before off-driving Corey Collymore for four to bring up England's hundred.

However, on six, he was squared up by a fine delivery that veered over the Lord's slope and was caught by Smith, now at third slip. Powell had struck again and England, not for the first time, had lost two wickets in quick succession.

Pietersen counter-attacked with a cover-driven four off Powell.

England, sent in by new West Indies captain Ramnaresh Sarwan on a pitch freshened by several days of rain, made a cautious start under overcast skies against Powell and Taylor.

Despite the helpful conditions the new ball duo didn't trouble the batsmen too often, the duo not helped by the fact only West Indies batsmen took the field in their lone warm-up match, against Somerset, where two of the three days were washed out. Cook, who had been struggling to time the ball, cashed in when he cut a short ball from

Collymore to the boundary and then pulled Powell to the rope.

Strauss was leading England in the absence of injured first-choice skipper Michael Vaughan. The Yorkshire batsman, who hasn't played a Test in 18 months mainly because of knee and hamstring problems, was ruled out of this game with a broken finger. Also missing was Andrew Flintoff, the all-rounder suffering a recurrence of a left ankle problem.

This was England's first Test since their 5-0 Ashes defeat in Australia and first under new coach Peter Moores.

West Indies, who haven't won an overseas Test since 2000, also had a new coach in David Moore. This was their first major match since the retirement of former captain Brian Lara, Test cricket's leading run scorer, who quit after the World Cup in the Caribbean where both the hosts and England failed to reach the semi-finals.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at tea on the first day of the first Test between England and West Indies at Lord's on Thursday:

ENGLAND: First innings

Strauss c Smith b Powell	33			
Cook not out	82			
Shah c Smith b Powell	6			
Pietersen not out	26			
Extras: (lb-9, w-1, nb-1)	11			
Total: (For 2 wickets in 43 overs)	158			
Fall of wickets: 1-88, 2-103.				
To bat: Collingwood, Bell, Prior, Plunkett, Hoggard, Harmison, Panesar.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Powell	17	4	49	2
Taylor	6	0	35	0
Collymore	14	4	48	0
Bravo	6	3	17	0

WEST INDIES: Chris Gayle, Daren Ganga, Devon Smith, Ramnaresh Sarwan (capt), Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Runako Morton, Dwayne Bravo, Denesh Ramdin (wk), Daren Powell, Jerome Taylor, Corey Collymore

Toss: West Indies

Umpires: Rudi Koertzen (RSA) and Asad Rauf (PAK)

TV umpire: Nigel Llong (ENG)

Match referee: Alan Hurst (AUS)

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Reazul Smriti Sangha, Combined Sports Club, Sports World won their respective matches by straight sets in the AB Bank Dhaka Metropolitan Table Tennis League at the Wooden Floor Gymnasium yesterday.

Sports World floored Bangladesh Boys 3-0 while Combined Sports crushed Housing and Building Research and Reazul Smriti took Young Pegasus apart.

In the other match, Lalbagh TT Academy beat Molar Club 3-1.

Sports World and Palolic Group lead the two groups with 20 and 22 points respectively.

DIV 2 HOCKEY

Barnak Samaj crushed Tejgaon Agragami 5-0 in the Green Delta Insurance Metropolis Second Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

Lemon Hossain struck twice while Kawser Hossain, Abu Sayeed and Prosenjit Roy scored one goal each for the winners.

In the day's other match, Utdy defeated East End 2-1.

INTER-DISTRICT VOLLEYBALL

Final round of the twelfth inter-district volleyball competition will begin at the Volleyball stadium today.

Khulna, Gazipur, Kushtia, Jessore are in group A while Dhaka, Dinajpur and Naogaon make up Group B. The event will be sponsored by NCC Bank.

Managing director of NCC Bank Mohammad Nurul Amin will inaugurate the tournament as the chief guest.

Bond best in New Zealand

AFP, Wellington

Fast bowler Shane Bond has been named as New Zealand's cricket player of the year after returning to dominating form for the recent World Cup.

Bond bagged 38 one-day international wickets during the 2006-07 season, including a hatrick against Australia. During the World Cup in the Caribbean, he took 16 wickets at an average of 16.38.

The 31-year-old speedster also took 10 wickets in two Tests against Sri Lanka during the season.

He took home two awards -- player of the year and one-day bowler of the year -- at a ceremony in Auckland late Wednesday.

Bond has been plagued by injury since making his international debut in the 2001-02 season but has taken 74 Test wickets at an average of 22.10 and 125 one-day wickets at 19.32.

World Cup

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chief executive Malcolm Speed, said: "The fact that all drug tests at the ICC Cricket World Cup proved negative is a great result for the game.

"But that does not mean the ICC, or any of our members, can afford to be complacent in this area.

"It is encouraging that five of our full members -- Australia, England, New Zealand, Pakistan and South Africa -- are testing their players outside of ICC events and the West Indies is set to join that list in the near future.

"We should never forget that cricketers are role models and they need to be sending out the right messages to the public, and that is one of the reasons why we must continue to have a zero tolerance on the use of performance-enhancing drugs," Speed added.

Lara wishes WI well



AFP, London

Former West Indies captain Brian Lara believes the side will now have a chance to rebuild their ailing fortunes without being overshadowed by his presence even though he bowed out of the game as Test cricket's leading all-time run scorer.

Lara, 38, announced his retirement as hosts West Indies failed to qualify for the semifinals of the recent World Cup in the Caribbean and on Thursday his old side play their first major match without him when they face England in the first Test here at Lord's.

The left-hander was, however, a controversial figure.

While his batting in a 17-year international career commanded admiration, his three spells of captaincy in a declining side were frequently criticised.

Lara, who scored 11,953 Test runs at an average of nearly 53, including a world record 400 not out against England in Antigua three years ago, said he hoped a largely youthful team led by Ramnaresh Sarwan would now have a chance to rebuild away from the glare of publicity he generated.

"After 1995 we sort of went downhill. It doesn't matter how many runs one person puts together. We want to get partnerships and get 400 runs on the board. One person can't get 400 runs on the board if there is nobody at the other end," Lara said.

"Maybe the disparity between my achievements and how the other guys were looked upon was a problem. My expectation is that the team raise a bit and rally round Ramnaresh Sarwan.

"You don't need a group of superstars, you need a team work-

ing together to bring you better results."

Lara said it would feel strange to be at Lord's and not be taking the field.

"I saw the covers and the greenery and it was tough. Thursday will be emotional for me.

"But at the end of the day it's not the reason I play cricket because I want to play at Lord's, added Lara. "I really want to see West Indies do well. We've got to move on."

However, Lara said he hadn't given up on the idea of playing first-class cricket. "I'm still physically fit and still capable of playing so I'm not going to rule that out. I am not going to put on 10 or 15lbs and forget about the game."

But he revealed his international retirement had been hastened by West Indies early World Cup exit.

"I thought we were making a lot of strides in the one-day game, getting to the ICC finals in 2006 after winning it in 2004 was a stepping stone.

"I thought I can exit and continue to play Test cricket which honestly is the game I love the most. We went a bit backwards and physically I don't know what else I could have done to really make a difference.

Should anyone at Lord's need reminding of Lara's achievements all they have to do is visit the MCC Museum behind the Pavilion where a special exhibition charting his career is being staged.

But inside the Pavilion itself, where the honours board in the dressing room records all the players who have scored a Test hundred at Lord's, Lara's name is surprisingly absent.

"I didn't get on the boards. My intention was to score a hundred and get the bat to Lord's but I brought everything over," Lara joked at the exhibition launch here

Moody still dreams



AFP, Sydney

Tom Moody says he still harbours ambitions to become Australia's national cricket coach even though he pulled out of the running to replace outgoing John Buchanan earlier this year.

Moody, who capped a two-year tenure as Sri Lanka's coach by taking the team to last month's World Cup final, is returning to his home town of Perth on July 1 to become coach of Western Australia.

"I'd definitely be interested, in time," Moody told Australian Associated Press Thursday from Abu Dhabi, where he is on his final coaching assignment with Sri Lanka in a one-day series against Pakistan.

"Having the opportunity to coach Australia would be a huge honour."

Moody and Centre of Excellence coach Tim Nielsen were co-favourites to succeed Buchanan after the World Cup before Moody withdrew last January to spend more time with his family with his two children entering critical school years. Nielsen got the job.

"I have no regrets. None whatsoever," Moody said. "It's been very clear to me what my priorities are at this stage of my life."

"I've got plenty of time to continue coaching at international level, but I've only got this passage of my life -- which is five or so years -- where I can commit 100 per cent as a father and a family man."

"The kids aren't going to suddenly wait for me to finish my coaching to go through their junior and senior schooling."

He wants his children, who have been living in England, to grow up in Perth, where the family has not lived since 2000.

Western Australia, the home state for Australian Test players Adam Gilchrist, Mike Hussey and

'Australia fund terrorism'

AFP, Sydney

Zimbabwe's government, furious over the cancellation of a key Australian cricket tour, on Thursday accused Canberra of funding "terrorist activities" in the troubled African nation.

Harare hit back days after Prime Minister John Howard banned Australia's tour of Zimbabwe, saying it would provide a propaganda boost for its "grubby dictator" Robert Mugabe.

Zimbabwe's Information Minister Sikanyiso Ndlovu claimed Howard's government was trying to topple Mugabe by funding political violence in Zimbabwe through cash channelled to aid groups and vowed the alleged bid would be thwarted.

"The monies that come to them are to cause violence, terrorist activities," Ndlovu told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. "I've got a list, a long list of their terrorist activities here."

"We will not tolerate violence by the puppets here who are funded by the Australian government," he said, also taking the opportunity to slam Howard as acting in "Gestapo"-like fashion by banning the cricket tour.

"He is the international Gestapo and a criminal ... he is worse than anybody else, his actions in banning the cricket is just one example of being the Gestapo," Ndlovu said of Howard in an angry outburst.

Bradley status now

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Bruce Arena, dropped after the US team's first-round exit from last year's World Cup in Germany.

Bradley made a strong impression on US Soccer Federation president Sunil Gulati by winning three and drawing one since taking over the US squad in December - a run that included a 2-0 home victory over Mexico in February.

"Bob Bradley has shown everyone in the past few months just how ready he is for this job," Gulati said.

"Every decision he has made has been about the betterment of the team, and the betterment of the program, not about 'what might be best for the future of Bob Bradley.'"

"While it has only been a few months, you can already see those decisions paying dividends. I firmly believe Bob has the ability to take this program forward."

Gulati appeared near a deal with former German national team coach Jurgen Klinsmann, but talks failed and Gulati appointed Bradley. He said he wanted to wait until the European league seasons ended to consider other candidates.

Tuesday.

In 2004, the last time they played England in Test series, West Indies lost 3-0 at home and 4-0 away.

Lara said the key problem was the domestic set-up in the West Indies which didn't convert youthful talent into Test match standard players.

"I still believe West Indies has the best Under-15, Under-19 talent. It's just the infrastructure doesn't go hand in hand with that and international cricket. That's where the problem lies."

West Indies' only series successes in their last 15 Test campaigns have been against Sri Lanka and strugglers Bangladesh and Zimbabwe.

Ex-England coach Duncan Fletcher has been touted by West Indies great and former skipper Clive Lloyd as the man to restore the team's fortunes.

"He did a great job for England," said Lara of Fletcher. "But the infrastructure has to do well too. He would be very frustrated if he had to deal with the present situation."

Among the exhibits at Lord's is the bat Lara scored 213 with against Australia in a Test at Kingston. "That has a lot of significance. My 213 was the best innings I've ever played."

Also included is the bat with which he made 375, then the record Test score, against England at Antigua in 1994 which has been signed by his then West Indies team-mate and fast bowling great Curtly Ambrose, "375 not enough Brian."

However, the bat with which he scored 277 against Australia in Sydney in 1993 is missing.

"At aged 21 I don't know what I did with that bat. Maybe we can have an international request to have it back," Lara said.

Sevilla retain

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recover his ground sufficiently to get a touch on the ball, ensuring Palop could not get enough of a contact to push it round the post.

Sevilla hauled Maresca off at half-time to allow Jesus Navas to ply his tricks down the right flank, but it was Espanyol who displayed the greater appetite for victory.

Palop did well to keep out another Tamudo strike at close range after Christian Poulsen had casually conceded possession in midfield and the Sevilla goalkeeper had to produce an even better save to deny Riera a second goal from a shot that was destined for the top corner.

Uruguay's Walter Pandiani, who had surprisingly been left on the bench at the start, had been introduced by that stage, but Espanyol's commitment to attack was to be compromised by the loss of Moises with just over 20 minutes left.

With Sevilla surging forward in search of a winner inside 90 minutes, Irazoz pulled off a superb reflex stop from Kanoute and, with the ball rebounding to the edge of the six-yard box, Ivica Dragutinovic blasted a glorious chance to kill off the contest high into the stand.

No special plan

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Mohammad Ashraful's brilliant unbeaten knock of 158 against India is still fresh in many cricket fan's minds but David said that they have no plan with one or two players.

"No special plan for Ashraful. We do not focus on one or two players. We made plans for all the batsmen because all of them can perform well. Ashraful is obviously a talented player and he played superbly against us in the last series. So hopefully this time we do not let him that many runs in the series," he said with a smile.

Like Bangladesh captain, David also battled with the issue of Day Whatmore but he was not interested to say anything about the issue.

"I do not know anything about that. I am only hearing it from you. I do not want to talk about that. I want to focus only on cricket now," he responded.

Dav still our

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reputation enhanced after Bangladesh qualified for the second round for the first time and secured wins over India and formidable South Africa.

Under Whatmore, Bangladesh secured their lone Test win against Zimbabwe in 2005, and won five one-dayers against established teams like world champions Australia, South Africa, India (twice) and Sri Lanka.

Whatmore declined an offer by Bangladesh to remain with the team, saying he was looking for "new challenges."

All four Asian Test teams are seeking a new coach. While Chappell resigned after the World Cup, Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer died during the showpiece event and Sri Lanka's Tom Moody opted to return home to coach Western Australia.