

LOCAL SNIPS

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Iran, Pakistan and Vietnam.

DANONE CUP

The final round of the Grameen-Danone Nations Cup kicks off today at the Bangabandhu National Stadium with six teams competing in two groups.

The winners will represent the country in the Danone Cup to be held in France from June 29 to July 1.

Dhaka, Jhenaidah and Khulna make Group A while the other group comprises of Chittagong, Ch a p a i n a - w a b g a n j a n d Narayanganj.

The final will be played on May 27.

DU SWIMMING

Golam Faruk of Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall and Abdul Halim of Sir AF Rahman Hall emerged joint champions in the Dhaka University Inter-hall swimming championship. Shahidullah Hall student Mahbubur Rahman finished runner-up. A total of 30 swimmers took part in seven events.

Satkhira make it

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Hasan Ripon at struck both the goals in the first half at the Satkhira Stadium to set up the home side's clash against favourites BKSP on May 27 in the last four.

In the other match, Tangail thrashed Jhenidah 6-0 with a hattrick by Rafiqul and a brace from Ripon. Awal added the other goal for Tangail, who face Noakhali in tomorrow's first semifinal.

The final is slated for May 29.

Nothing less

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Bashar was also not bothered that match-winning legspinner Anil Kumble, who did not bowl in the entire first Test due to fever, is fully fit to test them in this game.

"Whenever Kumble plays, he always makes a difference. I think he has got 540 wickets. But every team has that kind of bowlers. So you have to face them," he said.

On other hand, Dravid understandably expressed his satisfaction over his bowling trump card's full fitness.

"Not just now, Anil has been a big factor for Indian cricket for more than a decade now. Him being fit, having to use him in situations where we probably need a few wickets, you know, that might help us. Obviously that to happen Anil has to bowl well as well," said Dravid.

"There is no pressure at all because you sometime go to your next match with one-up or one-down, so it doesn't matter," replied the Bangalore-born skipper when the question was raised whether his side are under pressure to win the series after the no-result in the first game.

What might make the visiting skipper happy was the news from his counterpart about the weather and ground condition.

"The weather looks good. I think we will have a full five-day Test match. The drainage system is pretty good in this ground as well," informed Bashar.

In Chittagong, it was hard to dry the ground due to poor drainage system but here it hardly takes two hours to prepare the ground.

Milan erase

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accuracy and Dida was able to make a straightforward save.

With 13 minutes to go, Benitez brought on Peter Crouch for Mascherano, hoping to benefit from the giant striker's aerial presence.

Inzaghi pounced again eight minutes from time, running onto Kaka's sublime pass before rounding Reina and slotting home from a tight angle.

Kuyt's header gave Liverpool hope, but Milan clung on to banish those dark memories of Istanbul.

Liverpool look

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"We can be proud of ourselves. We've done so well getting to the final and I know we'll play in another one of these finals."

"We've got to pick ourselves up, have a good rest in the summer and then go again next season."

"We're going places, there's no getting away from that."

Liverpool surprised Milan with their attacking verve in the first-half and would have levelled the tie if Gerrard had been able to beat Milan goalkeeper Dida in a one-on-one situation just after the hour mark.

"I think we controlled in the first half but not as much as we would have liked in the second half - but let's not forget that we were playing a top side with top players," he added.

"Credit to AC Milan -- they won and maybe they just about deserved it. In the build-up to the game we said it would be decided on small details and a bit of luck and AC Milan got that."

"We need to strengthen and bring some quality into the club. The manager and the people in charge of the club know that and it will be an interesting summer."

Vaughan to end mix-up

Cricket

AFP, Leeds

course the team are going to get used to the way I captain and it will be better for everyone," Vaughan told reporters at Headingley here Thursday.

"There'll be no confusion. We've just got to make sure I stay on the park and get a good run of games in," said the Yorkshire batsman, who in 2005 led England to their first Ashes series victory in 19 years.

And Vaughan, who has scored 4,595 runs in his 64 Tests at an average of nearly 43 with 15 hundreds, insisted he had not been made a special case, joking comparing himself to Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho, the self-styled 'special one'.

"Are you going to start calling me Jose? Excellent. I'm the England captain, I've made myself available for selection. I've been selected. Surely, that's a positive thing?"

"The finger's fine, it's had three weeks now. I certainly wouldn't put myself up for selection if I didn't think I could get through."

"There's absolutely no reason why I can't go out there tomorrow (Friday) and get a big score because I feel in a good frame of mind."

England were still to announce whether James Anderson or left-arm quick Ryan Sidebottom, recalled six years after his lone Test appearance, will take Hoggard's place at Headingley.

But the bowling, with the exception of left-arm spinner Monty Panesar, was disappointing with spearhead quick Stephen Harmison off-target.

Vaughan said it was important the Durham fast bowler didn't put himself under undue pressure at Headingley.

"If you've continuous leadership rather than stop-start of

"Sometimes you can try too hard and maybe he just tried too hard at Lord's and it got a bit further away from himself. He's just got to relax and bowl."

England, already without Matthew Hoggard after the Yorkshire seamer sustained a thigh strain at Lord's, will once again be missing Flintoff after the Lancashire star's ongoing left ankle problem saw him withdrawn from the squad after practice on Wednesday.

However, that meant England could bring Vaughan back in a straight swap for Owais Shah at three without also having to drop one or other of Lord's centurions Paul Collingwood and Ian Bell.

As for Flintoff, Vaughan added: "We need him back, need him firing and hopefully back to what we all see as his best."

"If that needs a few more weeks, play a few games to get confidence in that ankle, then that is what he's going to have to do," said Vaughan, who indicated England would like to see Flintoff bowl in Lancashire's Championship match away to title-holders Sussex later this month before including him for the third Test at Old Trafford starting on June 7.

England have still to announce whether James Anderson or left-arm quick Ryan Sidebottom, recalled six years after his lone Test appearance, will take Hoggard's place at Headingley.

"It's going to be a tough decision," said Vaughan. "The left-arm quick is a different option and Jimmy has got the potential to bowl great swing."

Smith went in for surgery on his left knee a week ago and is still hobbling around his Cape Town home, albeit without crutches. A river in flood that decided to divert itself through his property at the weekend also caused some annoyance, but the South African captain seems to be keeping his spirits up.

"At the moment it looks like I've got two knees up in the air," he joked. "I went in for a small tear in my meniscus to be fixed, but the specialist decided to do some exploratory arthroscopy while I was there and he discovered that my knee looked like

an empty pancake, which showed there was another tear on the inside. So I had all the scar tissue cleaned up and then he discovered a slight tear in my cruciate ligament."

The specialist in question is Spike Erasmus, a renowned knee surgeon, and he felt Smith's cruciate ligament could be left alone for the time being as he was happy with the stability in the knee. Had the ligament been operated on, it would almost certainly have meant six months out of the game for the South African captain.

Smith will be seeing Erasmus for a follow-up examination on Wednesday but it seems unlikely that he will be able to take his team to Ireland for three one-day internationals against India at the end of June.

"Mickey Arthur's been phoning me, telling me he really wants me to go to Ireland. I haven't written that off yet, but I learnt last year not to

push myself too hard coming back from injury. I killed myself to come back then and it cost me early-season form, so it was a mistake."

"I'm sure the knee will be alright by the Ireland trip, but what about my match fitness? I'm not going to come back this time until I'm 100%, not 75 or 80%," Smith insisted.

South Africa's commitments in the next 18 months include hosting the Twenty20 World Championship, tours to Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, England and Australia, as well as visits by New Zealand and West Indies and the 2008 Champions Trophy.

The hectic programme means Smith is taking no chances and a regime of physiotherapy and strengthening exercises for his quads and hamstrings is in place to make sure his knee stays in workable order.

England badly need at least one of their quicks to back up Monty Panesar, whose six wickets in the first Test were yet another example of his priceless ability to attack and be economical at the same time.

West Indies, who only had two days of match practice in England before the first Test, will be a better side now as they look to end a run of seven years without an away Test win against major opposition.

Their Australian coach, David

Moore, is unlikely to make many changes but Fidel Edwards could live up the attack.

"The key is our consistency and ability to back up a good performance in Test after Test," said Moore.

TEAMS
ENGLAND (from): Andrew Strauss, Alastair Cook, Ian Bell, Michael Vaughan (capt), Kevin Pietersen, Paul Collingwood, Matt Prior (wk), Liam Plunkett, Stephen Harmison, Monty Panesar, James Anderson, Ryan Sidebottom.

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

Umpires: Rudi Koertzen and Asad Rauf.

Eng sans Freddie, again

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having since taken 221 first-class victims at 25 apiece.

The 29-year-old, whose inclusion would add much needed variety, will now be competing for a place alongside James Anderson and Liam Plunkett, misfiring spearhead fast bowler Stephen Harmison all but assured of his place on account of his extra speed despite a wayward display at Lord's.

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Abahani champions

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Talha, who came in as first change, removed Kayes for 30 in the first ball of the tenth over and was on a hattrick when he sent back one down Mushfiqur Rahim, the country's World Cup wicketkeeper promoted in the batting order for known reasons.

Mahmudullah Riyad survived the hattrick ball but he was also scalped by man-of-the-match Jubair who mopped the rival innings with the wicket of top-scorer Faruque to take 4-25 from 6.3 overs.

Faruque, who batted throughout the innings, made 78 of 122 balls featuring ten boundaries.

Left-arm spinner Sohrab Shuvo dominated in the middle as the HSC Examinations candidate captured 3-39.

Makeshift opener Ziaur Rahman contributed 27 as Abahani got off to a flying start, adding 76 runs in the opening wicket in 12 overs. Nazmus Sadat made 40 but Abahani had a hiccup as they lost three wickets in the space of 17 runs, losing the openers and Nazimuddin.

SCORES IN BRIEF
VICTORIA: 172 all out in 47.3 overs (Kayes 30, Faruque 78, Rahim 0, Riyad 9, Rosel 4, Quraishi 14, Alam 10, Sabir 2, Sajib 6, Rabul 0, Aslam 9, extras 10, Talha 4-25, Shuv 39, Naeem 2-29, Chandana 2-10).

ABAHANI: 173-3 in 38.4 overs (Sadat 40, Zia 27, Nazim 6, Naeem 40 n.o., Chandana 43 n.o., extras 8, Faruque 2-28, Hasibul 2-38, Arif 2-29, Monirul 2-29, Rashedul 2-9).

Result: Mohammedan won by 150 runs.

17, Quraishi 2-25, Mahbubul 1-29). **Result:** Abahani won by seven wickets.

BIMAN: 124 all out in 24 overs (Rokibul 24, Nafis 7, Farhad 35, Sanwar 2, Moshfiq 24, Hasanzaman 0, Sajid 17, Mosharrif 0, Murad 0, Sharif 2 n.o., Shafiq 0, extras 13, Alam 5-34, Sharif 2-35, Kapali 3-7).

SONARGAON: 126-3 in 26.5 overs (Opee 33, Al-Shahri 14, Ilia 38, Marshall 33 n.o., Dhiman 3 n.o., extras 5, Moshfiq 1-20, Sharif 2-27).

Result: Sonargaon won by seven wickets.

MOHAMMEDAN: 284-8 in 50 overs (Rashedul 9, Junaid 13, Shama 78, Aftab 37, Sahagir 68, Faisal 45, Arifat 11, Hasibul 0, Monirul 3 n.o., Rezul 6 n.o., extras 18, Dollar 1-32, Mahmud 2-66, Nabil 3-60, Ehsanul 2-40).

OLD DOHS: 134 all out in 31.1 overs (Tammim 10, Shamsur 14, Mahmud 1, Nadir 29, Ehsanul 4, Mazhar 31, Shahin 6, Dollar 5, Emon 7 n.o., Nabil 19, Shobir 0, extras 8, Manjurul 2-28, Hasibul 2-38, Arifat 2-29, Monirul 2-29, Rashedul 2-9).

Result: Mohammedan won by 150 runs.

Ireland claim Intercon Cup

BBC ONLINE, undated

Defending champions Ireland beat Canada by an innings and 115 runs within two days to retain the ICC Intercontinental Cup at Grace Road on Wednesday.

Canada were 92 all out in their first innings with Trent Johnston taking four wickets and Thinus Fourie three.

Ireland replied with 352 all out, Jeremy Bray hitting 146 off 152 balls, Eoin Morgan scoring 84 and Umar Bhatti claiming five wickets on Wednesday.

Kyle McCallan took five wickets as the Canadians then stumbled to 145 all out.

Skipper Johnston's bowling figures in the first Canada innings were 4-12 while Fourie recorded 3-31.