

## Foreign GMs take over

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladeshi players lost the leading baton in the 8th United Insurance and United Leasing Grandmasters Chess Tournament yesterday as GM Ghaem Maghami Ehsan of Iran and Vietnamese GM Nguyen Anh Dung shared the pole position after six rounds.

The two foreigners jointly led with 4.5 points after Ghaem beat IM Mahmood Lodhi of Pakistan with white in only 19 moves at the NSC conference room and Nguyen defeated Abdullah Al Rakib, the local IM who slipped to second place alongside fellow GM Reefat Bin Satrar, IM Enamul Hossain Rajib, FM Nasir Ahmed and Indian IM PDS Girinath on four points.

In the 6th round, Girinath shocked local GM Ziaur Rahman, Reefat drew with Rajib, Nasir upset GM Niaz Mursheed, FM Abu Sufian Shakil beat FM Aminul Islam, GN Gopal of India beat FM Mehdi Hasan Parag, Lalith Babu of India beat Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar, FM Syed Mahfuzur Rahman Emon beat FM Talib Rahman, Monir Hossain beat Mohammed Javed, FM Rezaul Haque drew with Mohammad Ali and Abdur Maleq beat Sohel Chowdhury.

## LOCAL SNIPPETS



IM Abdullah Al Rakib (R) makes a move against GM Nguyn of Vietnam during the United Insurance and United Leasing eighth Grandmasters chess tournament at the NSC conference room yesterday.

## Captaincy later, says KP



CRICINFO, undated

SPORTS REPORTER

Swabolombi Society fought back from a set down to beat Dhaka Sporting Club 3-1 in the National Bank Dhaka Metropolis First Division Volleyball League at the Wooden Floor Gymnasium yesterday.

After going down 17-25, Swabolombi Society hit back with three consecutive sets, winning 25-22, 25-16 and 25-15.

In the second division, Bhai Bhai Sangha crushed Nabajatak Majlish 25-8, 25-9 and 25-14.

**BOOST-U-13 CRICKET**  
Asif's four-wicket haul ensured Discovery's place in the last four of the Boost Power Cup under-13 cricket tournament at the Kalabagan Cricket Ground yesterday.

After Discovery scored 205 for eight in 25 overs, they bowled out Alfat Cricket Foundation for only 154 runs.

## The little

FROM PAGE 24  
meeting of the Board of Directors today in Turin to discuss the options for the future following Deschamps' departure. Director Marco Tardelli denied he was set to step down from his position.

As for DDF, he will not be taking over at Lyon. The rumoured switch fell through, as today the French club announced that Alain Perrin had replaced Gerard Houllier.

## McClaren plays

FROM PAGE 24  
Beckham won't be the only player with a burning desire to make up for lost time when the teams walk out beneath the Wembley arch. Michael Owen is set to start his first senior England match since suffering a knee injury at last year's World Cup that wiped out most of the striker's season.

London has become familiar territory for Brazil, who are back in the capital city for the fourth time in 10 months as they continue their policy of playing lucrative friendlies around Europe rather than in front of their own fans.

Brazil's coach Dunga has been rebuilding since the Selecao's disappointing World Cup campaign. Relatively unfamiliar names like Wagner Love, Elano, Gilberto and Helton are likely to feature at Wembley as Dunga fine-tunes preparations for Brazil's defence of their Copa America crown in Venezuela next month.

Star quality is never in short supply when Brazil are in town though and Kaka, fresh from winning the Champions League with AC Milan, should figure again in Barcelona's Ronaldinho.

Neither of Brazil's playmakers will have faced Nicky Shorey before and the Reading-left-back, who is in line to make his England debut just six years after playing in League Two with Leyton Orient, is still pinching himself at his remarkable rise.

"It is unbelievable to think I started at Orient," Shorey said. "I look back and think 'how did I get here?'"

"I was in Marbella with Reading when I found out. I just woke up and saw there was a message on my phone."

"It was a bit of a shock when I listened and it was Steve McClaren. I could not believe it, so I kept on playing it back."

## Asoka fails

FROM PAGE 21  
Asoka de Silva and Tyrone Wijewardena, figure in the ICC international panel.

The aggrieved umpires said umpiring standards in the island were dropping due to bungling and favouritism practised by officials.

They want the examination results to be ignored and selections based on individual performances.

## Reeve's road to recovery



INTERNET, undated

Smith writes fondly about Reeve but less effusively about another teammate, Keith Piper, the Warwickshire wicketkeeper who tested positive for cannabis.

Smith told me: "The club could have informed the Professional Cricketers' Association and organised proper treatment, but it was easiest not to bother."

I requested an interview with Dennis Amiss, who was of Warwickshire's chief executive at the time. He did not get back to me, his almost sacrificed during his cocaine-fuelled excesses.

Fame was the corruptive influence, as a bunch of us young cricketers were catapulted into a counterfeit world of wine, adoring women, ecstasy and cocaine.

Reeve is playing club cricket and coaching at an undisclosed location in New Zealand while striving to find a work/life balance more generously skewed towards the wife and children he has almost sacrificed during his cocaine-fuelled excesses.

"I don't want to be part of the rat race," he admits now. "I've been there and done that. I was caught up in a life of proving myself, of trying to get on. I don't want to do it again."

Reeve's drug-taking was exposed by the Mail on Sunday. He confessed that cocaine had been undermining his television career and his family life for two years, but that the trouble started earlier, at Edgbaston in the aftermath of Warwickshire's treble-winning success.

Retreat was the only sensible option. The Reeves sold their home in Birmingham and moved as far away as they possibly could. They are now sustained by his benefit fund, which was close to £500,000. He wrote in Spin: "I'm in a lovely position through the kindness of the Warwickshire public. Their support of my benefit season means I don't need to chase a living."

For those who have worked with him or listened to him broadcast, the concept of Dermot Reeve maintaining a low profile is as alien as the West Indies winning another Test match. If he has not seen his old captain since they played together in an Isle of Man cricket tournament soon after Channel 4 sacked Reeve from their commentary team in the summer of 2005. "Recovery is a long, slow, lonely process," Smith says. "I know what's going through."

"As long as I've got a roof over my head I'm OK," he says. He is angry about Warwickshire's lack of chapter.

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## Kaif's brush with fate

FROM PAGE 21  
you could be facing life as a lower division clerk somewhere instead of a cricketer."

And then, almost inaudibly, he murmurs. "I sometimes wonder about that." The dreamy look is gone and he looks up. "I didn't make the probables camp of 40 but was called back by Sarker Talwar, a selector and the u-15 coach. God knows what he liked about me but whatever it was, I had had my first brush with fate. I did well in the camp and practice games and later, being part of that squad gave me a slight edge when I played grade cricket for UP. My journey began there. But I still had to work really hard, there's no substitute for that."

Now though, life has taken another twist and the future seems less certain. He seems unperturbed. "Everything is an experience and you are moulded by how you use them. I think I've used this time well. I've been able to under-

stand myself and my reactions, I've calmed down through the years, am less bristly with people, more accepting, I've been growing and growing up with all these experiences."

"Let's see... I believe in myself and more importantly, so many ordinary people, on the streets, in trains, in planes, at functions, they come and tell me they believe in me, that I belong with India. Often, I don't sleep straightaway. I lie in bed thinking about life, about what could have been and what is. And finally, I always say, if it wasn't for cricket, I wouldn't have been me. This has been my life and it always will."

It's been a strange journey for Kaif, a man often dubbed a future India captain till recently not just because of an ability to keep a steady head on his shoulders in pressure-cooker situations and win matches for India coming in at a difficult No. 7, but also because he showed none of the off-field quirks of character or unsteadiness that some of his contemporaries displayed.

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## No Premier relegation this year

SPORTS REPORTER

The Premier Cricket League is set to be bloated to fourteen clubs next season after relegation for this season looks set to be put aside.

The board meeting on Saturday will decide the fate of Brothers Union, City Club and Indira Road but it is most likely that there would be no relegation league as the dry season in Bangladesh is virtually over.

None of the three clubs are willing to risk relegation as the matches held now could be hampered by seasonal rain but the Super League, held after nearly three months of the first round of the Premiership, was held almost without any trouble. Only one match -- Abahani v Old DOHS -- was rained off.

It would have been wise for the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) to run the relegation league during that time as they had adequate grounds.

All other relegations and promotions in first, second and third divisions will, however, take place.

## Hoggard in doubt for 3rd Test

CRICINFO, undated

Ricky Ponting looks set to miss the third Test against West Indies at Old Trafford, starting on June 7, after aggravating his groin injury in the nets ahead of Yorkshire's one-day fixture against Derbyshire at Headingly.

Hoggard, who withdrew from England's attack after bowling just 10.1 overs in the first Test at Lord's, had been optimistic about his rehabilitation. He was hoping to play for his club side Baildon on Saturday, as well as today's match, but with a long international season ahead of England, he will not now be risked.

The news is a further setback for England's new coach Peter Moores, who had hinted in the aftermath of the Headingly Test that Hoggard's injury was more serious than the medical Andrew Flintoff set to miss the rest of the West Indies series due to further surgery on his injured left ankle. England's pace attack is down to the bare bones, with the onus yet again on Steve Harmison to locate his best form.

In Hoggard's absence, Ryan Sidebottom, the left-arm seamer who took eight wickets in the Headingly win, is almost certain to retain his place in the side.

## BD lose to India

PTI, Jaipur

Bangladesh lost to defending champions India 3-0 in the men's team event in the 17th Commonwealth Table Tennis Championships yesterday.

Mohammad Hanif lost in straight sets to Sharath Kamal 9-11, 7-11, 8-11 while Al Mabuh Billah showed some resistance as he levelled against Anirban Nandi but still lost 1-11, 11-6, 1-11 and 11-5.

Sharath Kamal set the tempo by beating Mohammad Hanif 9-11, 7-11, 8-11 and then Anirban Nandi lost a game before surging to 11-11, 11-11, 11-5 win over Al Mabuh Billah.

Pathik Mehta carved out a 11-5, 13-11, 11-2 win against Manash Chowdhury in the third set.

## Azzurri duo

FROM PAGE 24

Nazionale is scheduled to return on Sunday before flying to Lithuania, when both absentees are expected to be available.

Italy will have to adapt to the severe climate ahead of this weekend's clash, as the temperature has rarely been higher than 12°C in the past few weeks and Torshavn is swept by gusts of wind of up to 60 kph.

For those who have worked with him or listened to him broadcast, the concept of Dermot Reeve maintaining a low profile is as alien as the West Indies winning another Test match.

Reeve has the cockiness to re-establish himself in this country, even though that aspect of his personality puts some people off. He is certainly has the credentials to be a major figure in the game and heaven knows, we need progressive thinkers -- but he may decide that the simple life is better after all.

It's been a strange journey for Kaif, a man often dubbed a future India captain till recently not just because of an ability to keep a steady head on his shoulders in pressure-cooker situations and win matches for India coming in at a difficult No. 7, but also because he showed none of the off-field quirks of character or unsteadiness that some of his contemporaries displayed.

Now though, life has taken another twist and the future seems less certain. He seems unperturbed. "Everything is an experience and you are moulded by how you use them. I think I've used this time well. I've been able to under-

## Prasad, Singh should stay

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

Ricky Ponting never forgets to acknowledge the contribution of the support staff at the presentation ceremony. As the leader of a team which has given a new dimension to dominance on the field, he understands that the support staff form an important part of Australia's phenomenal success.

A seven-member group, including the chief coach, prepares the Australians for the tough mental and physical contests. Supreme fitness is the reason behind the country's unmatched conquests for close to a decade now.

In modern cricket, the support staff has a critical role to play and the Indian team has come to accept that there is a place for a bowling coach, a fielding coach and also a batting coach, not to forget the physiotherapist, trainer and a masseur, all striving to keep the players in shape in the most testing conditions.

That Robin Singh and Venkatesh Prasad worked behind the scenes to bring about a refreshing change in the way the team prepared for the just-concluded series in Bangladesh is something that the

team management, coach Ravi Shastri and the players will readily acknowledge.

Robin, a mentally tough player who displayed controlled aggression during many match-winning performances, settled into his role nicely, getting the players to understand their bodies well and making them react well to different situations, especially when anticipating catches.

Prasad, a wily seamer with an admirable quality to effect breakthroughs, worked tirelessly with the bowlers, motivating them and getting the best out of them with his brilliant analysis. Prasad's advantage is his immense international experience, and it showed in the performance level that Zaheer Khan attained.

Loss of confidence was the reason for Zaheer struggling to put the ball in the right areas but Prasad's words of wisdom made the left-arm realiser his potential. On a placid pitch, which was two-paced only on the third afternoon, Zaheer came up with an enviable display of seam bowling.

Prasad had analysed the pitch astutely and to Zaheer's credit, the bowler returned his first five-wicket haul in three years. "Mainly injuries," was the reason Zaheer professed for his inconsistency, but there was no doubt that it was

mental thing. Once Zaheer realised that he had an efficient guide in Prasad, who had gone through similar problems during his playing days and managed to overcome them, he settled down to bowl a length that proved difficult to handle for the Bangladeshi batsmen.

Prasad had devised a plan and Zaheer executed it perfectly. There was support from Rudra Pratap Singh, who got some of his swing and pace back. The constant monitoring by Prasad helped R.P. Singh become an improved bowler.

Robin played his part quietly and effectively. He worked on the fielding drills with a fresh approach, and more importantly, made the players enjoy them. It was a welcome break from the monotonous exercises the team had been following.

Shastri was all praise for Prasad and Robin. "They shared the responsibility and did an excellent job. Their experience helped the bowlers a lot and brought in a professional touch," he said.

For their outstanding work, Prasad and Robin deserve a proper contract from the Board. It would help them concentrate on their jobs better. Needless to say, they have the support of the captain and the coach.

## Where's Monty the artist?

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Every time Monty Panesar floats up to the bowling crease it is impossible not to put in the mind's eye the finest left-arm spinner most of us have had the privilege of watching, Bishan Bedi.

It is what Monty strives for. He has spoken with the great man and has absorbed the teachings. Like Bedi, he is balanced, fixed on his target, calm, metronomic and, at his best, mesmerising. There are few flourishes or idiosyncrasies. The art comes in the repetition and the tiniest changes in angle, flight, turn, pace. It is like watching a coaching manual come to life.

But Panesar is in a minor dilemma of sorts. Bedi operated in more conventional times, before jumbo bats, flat tracks and reverse sweeps, before Twenty20 and four-runs-an-over Tests, before the energy level of batting rose and spinners saw their best deliveries irre