



The Bangladesh eves footballers training at the Dhanmondi Women's Sports Complex yesterday as preparation for their exhibition matches against visiting Orissa State team.

PHOTO: STAR

Gunners leave

FROM PAGE 20 Warner immediately denying Rosicky with a plunging save, although Arsenal's increasing desperation left their defence riddled with holes.

Fulham could have made the points secure when Healy's right-wing cross sparked havoc but Steven Davis - yet another debutant - could only blast the loose ball straight at Lehmann.

It was a costly miss. With seven minutes remaining, Kolo Toure's surge into the area was checked by Carlos Bocanegra and van Perse slammed his spot-kick high into the top corner.

Arsenal would have been grateful for a point, but they snatched all three with seconds remaining when Hleb finally snaked a shot past the despairing Warner. Arsenal were triumphant, but hardly convincing.

Yadav in line

FROM PAGE 17 first Indian player to do so. "It is a good initiative and I am keen on joining it," he told the Hindustan Times. "Negotiations are on and it's only a matter of days before I join them. I am glad it has happened. It will only help the players."

Yadav has played 12 ODIs for India, with limited success. He has been out of favour with the national selectors over the last two years and makes an ideal target for the ICL, which is keen on recognising players seeking a comeback to big-time cricket.

Yadav said that other Ranji players are contemplating joining the ICL, including a few of his Railways teammates. "I won't name them now but there are about four or five others in our team who are keen on joining the ICL."

Incidentally, Laloo Prasad Yadav, the federal railway minister, has indicated his support for the ICL, saying he would allow organisers to host matches in stadiums under his ministry's control.

Abhay Sharma, the Railways assistant coach, maintained it was too early to draw conclusions on the future of the team. Railways were relegated to the Plate League (the second division) in the Ranji Trophy last season and face the risk of losing key players.

"There is a lot of difference between a statement and a decision," said Sharma. "Having said that I would add that our minister would have thought of something before coming out with such a statement. He must have had something in mind."

Sol delight

FROM PAGE 20 But McClaren hinted last week that he could be in line for a recall as John Terry, Ledley King and Jonathan Woodgate are all set to miss the friendly with Germany on August 22. "It would be silly and foolish of me to dismiss either Sol or Portsmouth keeper David James," said McClaren. "Last season was a very good one for Sol."

Campbell, meanwhile, suggested that he might end his career by playing Major League Soccer (MLS) in America.

"I probably will do my coaching badges and have those in my locker. "Whether in three or four years time I might play football in America, that is a different story. I may want to play a year out there. I would definitely consider that."

Djokovic halts Nadal

Tennis

AFP, Montreal

Novak Djokovic denied Rafael Nadal another installment of his rivalry with Roger Federer, ousting the Spanish world number two Nadal 7-5, 6-3 to book his own final meeting with Federer at the Montreal Masters.

Federer and Nadal were on course for their fifth meeting in the finals this season, but Djokovic crashed the party in reaching his fifth final of 2007.

Federer, the top seed, reached the final on schedule with a 7-6, (8/6), 6-2 win over Radek Stepanek.

Federer reached his fifth final in his last six tournaments, and won his 40th match of the season.

In Djokovic, he'll face a player he has beaten in all four of their previous encounters.

Djokovic has shined in his first hardcourt tournament in months.

The Serb fired 11 aces and saved all eight break points he faced against Nadal, who won the tournament the last time it was played in Montreal two years ago.

"This is one of the biggest wins of

my career. I beat him (on hardcourt) in Miami, and I've done it again," Djokovic said. "I played some really impressive tennis. It was a great atmosphere," said the winner of three titles this season.

Nadal said he ran out of puff. "He was just too good today," said Nadal, who had won five of his six meetings with Djokovic.

At Wimbledon, Nadal took advantage of a retirement by Djokovic to reach the final.

"I have to work on my movement a bit. I had a week off with a knee problem and I've only been practising lightly before coming over.

"I've had a good week and the fans are maybe more disappointed than I am."

The world number two had been severely tested 24 hours earlier by Canadian Frank Dancevic in the quarterfinals.

Federer booked his fifth final in his last six tournaments as he won his 40th match of the season.

"I was very happy the way I played today," said the Swiss star who is just one win away from a 50th career title.

"It was a tough match with a lot of crucial points, a lot of shots played on reaction.

"I couldn't really dictate play, he kept coming at me. But I came up with some really nice passing shots when I had to. After while I also started to serve really well, so I was really happy with my performance."

Federer had to fight for 53 minutes to clinch the first set against Stepanek, who is ranked 60th after making a comeback from a nerve injury which affected his racket hand.

The Czech had lost three of four matches against 11-time Grand Slam winner Federer.

The top seed had to be alert in the seventh game of the first set, saving three break points and firing two aces to go 4-3 ahead.

Federer, who won the Canadian event in 2004 and last year, held a 3-1 lead in the tiebreaker only to watch Stepanek close the gap.

The Czech saved three set points but was unable to hold off Federer on a fourth.

Federer seized control in the second set and completed his win in 81 minutes with back-to-back aces, his 12th and 13th of the afternoon.

Tatenda 'not

FROM PAGE 17 leaving in the first place. All the time we were away she was always asking me when we were going back home.

"I realised that God gave me a talent not to play club cricket, but to play international cricket and the only way I could play international cricket was to return home."

What is unclear is how Taibu, who was vociferously critical of the way that Peter Chingoka and Ozias Byute ran Zimbabwe Cricket, made up with the two. All he would say is that "ZC and myself have realised that there is more to life than having disagreements."

Taibu was owed tens of thousands of dollars by the board when he walked out, and Taibu did not confirm or deny whether this sum had been paid to him before his return. In the past he had said that the money was a sticking point and it is believed that he has been paid.

He maintained that money was not an issue. "It is now a matter of playing for my country, I have made enough money in my life and I still have other things that bring me money," he said.

Maria pulls out

FROM PAGE 17 against the world No. 2.

"It's always good to be in a final, but it's good to make your way through," she said. "I'm really disappointed. It's a full stadium. I had a lot of people coming watch me and support me. I was looking forward to that."

Ivanovic's progress to the final couldn't have been more different as she had to save two match points en route to a 4-6, 6-3, 7-5 victory over fellow Serbian Jelena Jankovic.

Ivanovic fired 12 aces in the 2hr 28min match and rallied for a 4-1 deficit in the third set.

With the victory, Ivanovic insured she will reach a career high number four in the world rankings on Monday.

That will still leave her one behind Jankovic, who climbed from 12th at the start of 2007 to No. 3 in the world thanks to four tourna-

Sven slams

FROM PAGE 20 "We ended up the game with five players who came through the academy. When people criticise the foreign signings they should think about this."

Eriksson also revealed that he was looking to purchase two or three more players before the end of August, with a goalkeeper being his main priority.

Both teams came into their opening Premiership fixture with heightened expectations following wholesale playing staff changes in the close season.

A bright spot for the home team was the appearance of striker Dean Ashton for the first time since the May 2006 FA Cup final.

The hitman, who featured in the England squad before suffering an ankle break last August, nearly capped his return with a goal, but instead he volleyed over the bar from Matthew Etherington's cross.

Hammers boss Alan Curtisley apologised for his team's display, admitting it was not good enough.

"I'm extremely disappointed to say the least. We started badly and got worse," he groaned.

"Their passing was miles ahead of ours and they were definitely the most dangerous team. Dietmar Hamann dictated the play and just stroled around the place, we had nothing."

Top players

FROM PAGE 17 Nayeemuddin.

"I am satisfied with the fitness. Lack of combination and understanding remain the main problem and we need to play matches," he said adding that his team beat the BKSP kids by a solitary goal in yesterday's practice match.

"The grounds here were unplayable due to rain but the players have been hundred percent sincere. I don't think there is much difference in strength between the two teams. It's now a mental job for the players to prove they are not inferior."

"The opposition teams (in Nehru Cup) would be strong but our performance would depend on how we gel together. We will not overestimate any team and not give up without a fight," the coach added.

BFF acting general secretary and chairman of National Team Management Committee Manzoor Hossain Malu backed Nayeemuddin's decision to take the best team to Nehru Cup.

"The major thing is that we will have the chance to test the strength of India, who are our main rivals in the SAFF Championship," said Malu.

"We also have a few new faces so it would be good experience and exposure for them playing against India and the others. "It's true that the team going to Merdeka would be relatively weak but I believe the players would be keen to prove themselves and try win a place in the main team."

"Syria would be too good for us but we hope to fight against Kyrgyzstan and India and I feel we should beat Cambodia," hoped Malu.

The five teams will play in league basis in New Delhi with the top two meeting in the final on August 29. Bangladesh face Syria on August 18, India on August 20, Cambodia on August 22 and Kyrgyzstan on August 24.

Bangladesh play Indonesia (August 21), Singapore (August 23) and Zimbabwe (August 25) in their group in the Merdeka Cup. The semifinals are slated for August 27 and the final on August 29.

Daily Star cruise to last 8

SPORTS REPORTER

Two down and three more to go. The Daily Star dazzled into the last eight of the Meril Media Cup football tournament when they switched off CSB News with a dramatic 2-1 win over the private television channel at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Mohammad Hasan fired in the last gasp winner for the popular English daily in a match where fortune fluctuated from one end to the other in a classic 30-minute contest. Earlier, Quamrul Hasan had given the winners lead early in the first half before CSB equalised just before the break.

The Daily Star, winners of Group B, will now meet the New Nation, a qualifier by default from Group D after two teams from that group were scrapped, in the first quarterfinal today.

CSB needed a draw to qualify for the last eight of the seven-a-side tournament but a desperate Daily Star, who fired blank in their opening match against the Daily Ittefaq, finally found their scoring power back to end on four points.

New Nation, meanwhile, emerged winners from Group D after Samakal refused to play against Naya Diganta, who were later banned for using illegal players.

Naya Diganta were leading 1-0 against Samakal when a nasty fistfight led to the premature death of the game with just one minute remaining.

New Age and Ekushey TV also advanced to the quarters after goalless draws with Bangladesh Television and Karotoa respectively.

In the day's other matches, Barik Anjam's hatrick inspired Akjer Kagoj drub Independent 6-0 while Sangbad beat Banglabazar Patrika 2-0, Bangla Vision blanked Bhorer Kagoj 3-0 and Channel defeated Jugantor 2-0.

Former national football captain Badal Roy was present as match adjudicator.

Today's quarterfinals: Bangla Vision v New Age, Daily Star v New Nation, UNB v Sangbad, Ekushey TV v Akjer Kagoj.

Liverpool fire

FROM PAGE 20 Downing put Boro ahead before South Africa striker Benni McCarthy was stretchered off having collapsed following a clash of heads. He was later released from hospital.

His replacement, Paraguay striker Roque Santa Cruz, equalised and Matt Derbyshire scored a splendid winner.

UEFA Cup side Everton, out to improve on last season's sixth-placed finish, beat Wigan 2-1 at Goodison Park.

"We did the job and our play merited more goals than we did get," Everton boss David Moyes said.

In a roller-coaster match at Pride Park, newly-promoted Derby County held visitors Portsmouth to a 2-2 draw. "I am very proud of the performance," said Derby manager Billy Davies.

"I know there is no one outside Derby who gives us a chance, and I am not surprised. It's not a shock."

Pompey host Manchester United on Wednesday. "I'd hate to play against them like that because they will rip us to pieces," disappointed Portsmouth boss Harry Redknapp admitted.

Fans can't

FROM PAGE 17 knowing England's tail would not be long in the wagging.

Ryan Sidebottom went to a ridiculous shot and Prior for an inevitable duck, bringing cult hero Monty Panesar to the crease and the loudest ovation of the day.

Monty and Chris Tremlett made it through to the end, but the day couldn't have been much more demoralising for England - who finished still a whopping 338 runs behind India.

A four-day defeat now seems likely and the days of slugging it toe-toe with the awesome Aussies seem a long way away.

England will need to regroup quickly to avoid further embarrassment against this talented and battle-hardened India side in the seven one-day matches that follow this series.

But you sense the fans who came here will quickly turn their attention to Premiership football and try to forget about a painful second half of the summer.

On this evidence, they don't have the stomach for much more.

Ajax refuse

FROM PAGE 20 million euros but the Spanish champions responded by saying their offer was non negotiable and should be accepted or refused within three hours - an ultimatum Ajax refused to meet.

The Dutch club revealed that Real Madrid had therefore withdrawn their offer.

If the contract should eventually go through Sneijder will be Real's second Dutch recruit this season after confirmation of the arrival of midfielder Royston Drenthe from Feyenoord on a five-year deal.

Eng must back Prior

Cricket

MICHAEL ATHERTON

Peter Moores had a busy morning before the start of play on Saturday. He was on the practice area shortly after his assistant coach, Andy Flower, who had taken to reliving past glories by having a gentle net, and was soon into his stride: throwing balls to Alastair Cook, working with Matt Prior on his glove-work and footwork, and generally looking industrious.

Moores is full of youthful vigour - difficult to imagine Duncan Fletcher pumping out press-ups as Moores often does of a morning - and incorrigibly optimistic, but even he must be aware that his honeymoon period is coming to an end, just as India are about to breach the home fortress that Fletcher so assiduously built.

Soon enough the ECB will appoint the superhero who will fulfil all the requirements demanded of the role of managing director of England cricket. At that point, ridiculously, Moores will no longer be ultimately responsible for the performances of the England team. Until such time as Moores must report to the headmaster's study to explain himself, we can happily pass judgment.

Given the difficulty of knowing the level of the new coach's input, much of Moores' initial reputation will be linked inevitably with the form and progress of Prior. Coaches are defined to some extent by the picks that they make. Fletcher's qualities were always highlighted by the success of the likes of Marcus Trescothick and Michael Vaughan whose selections, after moderate county careers, were perceived to be based on the personal hunch of the coach. Their subsequent success fuelled the suspicion that Fletcher, at least at first, had the golden touch.

So it will be with Prior, who, it is thought, received Moores' very personal stamp of approval almost from the moment he walked into the job. Given that, it has not been a good week for both. Prior shelled two chances off Sachin Tendulkar

and VVS Laxman, for heaven's sake, and looked generally flat-footed, untidy and ill-at-ease behind the sticks. Moores must hope, for his own sake, that his protege can overcome his problems quickly.

In some ways, after his part in the juvenile pranks at Trent Bridge, Prior set himself up for a fall. But as bad as the drops were - the first the result of bad technique, the second bad decision-making - the harshness of the criticism has been surprising. Prior is in the infancy of his international career and is surely allowed a bad day or two. After seven Test matches he averages over 40 and for the most part this summer his glove-work has been sound. This is surely no time to sharpen the guillotine or to turn back the clock to names already discarded. Better to give Prior a proper run to make or ruin his own reputation.

To listen to the criticism you'd think that Alan Knott, Bob Taylor, Jack Russell never dropped a catch. I can't speak for the first two, but Russell, excellent as he was, dropped his share (including an easy one on his debut). Perception is part of the issue here, as well as the stubbornness of those who refuse to countenance the fact that a modern wicketkeeper has to make his share of runs. The clash between the traditionalists and the modernists focuses on the choice of wicketkeeper, which has made things tough for recent incumbents like Geraint Jones, Chris Read and now Prior. There's only one wicketkeeper and so the criticism cannot be shared around.

Someone who is perceived to be batsman first, wicketkeeper second will always have his glove-work analysed, and every mistake will be magnified. A wicketkeeper/batsman will find his batting technique put under severe scrutiny. When Read played at the

back-end of last summer, it was not the two edges that flew between him and first slip that raised criticism but his batting technique. It is almost as if it is acceptable for a specialist wicketkeeper to make a mistake but not the 'keeper who is perceived to be makeshift.

When Stewart replaced Russell

he was routinely vilified. Stewart had similar attributes (and problems) to Prior when he first took over the role. He was, like Prior, primarily an athlete behind the stumps rather than a craftsman who idealised the role of the 'keeper. Whereas Russell might talk for hours about the intricacies of wicketkeeping with Knott, Stewart was more concerned with catching the ball. It was a pragmatic approach.

Prior is athletic, too, and if he is as tough as Stewart and as good at dealing with criticism, I believe he can graduate into as good a performer. He needs time, patience and backing. For the moment he has one key flaw that he needs to work on. As he squats he tends to be on the heels of his feet, rather than the balls, which makes his footwork ponderous. When he dives, therefore, he does so from a static rather than a moving position. He might think, too, altering his position to Ryan Sidebottom, so that he stands fractionally wider given Sidebottom's left-arm angle.

Australian wicketkeepers, like Ian Healy, routinely question the footwork of their English counterparts. Australians like to skip across and take the ball on the inside of their waists rather than in front of their bodies. Two things make this more difficult in England: the lack of bounce and the movement of the ball in the air after pitching. That movement has been in evidence throughout the summer, making it nightmarishly difficult at times. So far in this match there have been 49 byes, 33 for Prior in 170 overs and (at the time of writing) 16 for M S Dhoni in 48 overs. Occasionally Dhoni has made Prior look velvet-gloved in comparison.

For Prior, and for Moores, there is work to do, but it is far too soon to rush to judgment.

(Former England captain Michael Atherton wrote this article on the Sunday Telegraph website.)

India extend lead

FROM PAGE 17 Earlier, Anil Kumble, whose 110 not out had been the centrepiece of India's record innings total against England, ended a last-wicket partnership worth 40.

The 36-year-old moved into sole possession of third place in the list of Test cricket's most successful bowlers, ahead of retired Australia quick Glenn McGrath, with his 564th wicket when he had Panesar lbw for nine. Tremlett was a Test-best 25 not out.

India, 1-0 up, have won just two Test series in England, 1-0 in 1971 and 2-0 in 1986, in 15 tours dating back to 1932.

SCOREBOARD Scoreboard at tea on the fourth day of the third and final Test between England and India at The Oval on Sunday:

INDIA: First innings 664 (Kumble 110 no, Dhoni 82, Karthik 91, Tendulkar 82, Dravid 55, Laxman 51; Anderson 4-182)

ENGLAND: First innings (overnight 326-9) Strauss c Sreesanth b Zaheer Khan 6 Cook c Singh b Kumble 61 Anderson lbw b RP Singh 16 Vaughan c and b Kumble 11 Pietersen c Dravid b Tendulkar 41 Collingwood lbw b Sreesanth 62 Bell c Dhoni b Zaheer Khan 63 Prior c Tendulkar b Sreesanth 0 Sidebottom c and b Zaheer Khan 2 Tremlett not out 25 Panesar lbw b Kumble 9 Extras: (b-16, lb-12, w-10, nb-11) 49 Total: (All out in 103.1 overs) 345

Fall of wickets: 1-12, 2-78, 3-119, 4-124, 5-202, 6-288, 7-303, 8-305, 9-305, 10-345.

Bowler O M R W Zaheer Khan 22 13 32 3

Sreesanth 21 2 80 2 Kumble 29.1 7 94 3 RP Singh 18 3 72 1 Ganguly 5 1 8 0 Tendulkar 7 0 26 1 Laxman 1 0 5 0

INDIA: Second innings Karthik c Collingwood b Tremlett 8 Jaffer lbw b Anderson 0 Dravid c Strauss b Collingwood 12 Tendulkar b Anderson 1 Ganguly c Strauss b Collingwood 57 Laxman not out 16 Dhoni not out 16 Extras: (b1, lb5, nb5) 11 Total (For 5 wks in 46 overs) 121 Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-10, 3-11, 4-76, 5-89.

To bat: Kumble, 1-20, 3-Khan, RP Singh, Sreesanth. Bowler O M R W Anderson 13 8 24 2 Tremlett 11 2 40 1 Collingwood 10 1 24 2 Panesar 12 1 27 0 Toss: India

Toulouse sink

FROM PAGE 20 St Etienne and Lorient follow in fourth and fifth places after victories over Valenciennes (3-1) and Monaco (2-1) respectively.

Nice secured their first points of the season as a late Vincent Hognon goal sunk 10-man Strasbourg.

The big match of the weekend sees Guy Roux's Lens entertain Paul Le Guen's Paris St Germain on Sunday while Lille travel to Metz.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 33 Still 53 Pitcher 20 Crone 23 Destitute 24 Caviar, basically 25 Consume 26 Carton 27 Shell game prop 28 Unfriendly 29 Score units (Abbr.) 31 Hoffman/Cruise movie 32 Terrier type 34 Calandar abbr. 35 "Do unto --" 36 Saccharine 37 Scatter about 38 Talon 39 Golf target 40 Tied 41 Bestowed 42 Four-star review 43 Carreras solo 44 Paraphernalia

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34 Send quickly 35 Sanctions 36 — Lanka recession 37 Messy place 38 Making conversation 45 Wimbledon goose 46 Former filly 47 "All the Things You —" 48 Sheltered 49 Slate with conviction 50 Through 51 Took off 52 11 p.m. broadcast play

Solution time: 27 mins.

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ADG STRAWBERRI
RIO SHOVE
TOMB EWEE ALIAS
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CHAFF MEATY
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