

BSWA awards

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Sports Writers Association (BSWA) yesterday announced its sports awards for the years 2005 and 2006.

Both the 'player of the year' awards went to cricketers, national captain Mohammad Ashraful and his deputy Mashrafe Bin Mortaza while left-arm spinner Enamul Junior and striker Zahid Hassan Emily were chosen as the most talented youngsters.

The 2005 winners are Mohammed Sujan (football), Javed Omar (cricket), Russell Mahmud Jimmy (hockey), Enamul Haque Jr (upcoming talent, cricket), Mollah Sabira Sultana (weightlifting), Tayeb Hassan (football referee), Nurul Alam Chowdhury (organiser), Sirajul Islam Bachchu (special achievement), Mousumi Industries (sponsor), Narayanjan DSA (active association) and Mohammad Ashraful (SA Mohsin Trophy for the player of the year).

The 2006 winners are Arif Khan Joy (football), Shahriar Nafees (cricket), Russell Khan Bappy (hockey), Shahjahan Ali Rony (swimming), Mizanur Rahman (taekwondo), Siddique Rahman (golf), Reefat Bin Sattar (chess), Zahid Hassan Emily (upcoming talent, football), Laboni Akhter Jui (swimming), Nadir Shah (cricket umpire), Kutubuddin Ahmed (organiser), Isphani Limited (sponsor), Kazi Alamgir (special achievement) and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (SA Mohsin Trophy for the player of the year).

Meril Media Cup final today

SPORTS REPORTER

The curtain drops on the popular Meril Media Cup football tournament today with Bengali daily Ajker Kagoj facing private TV channel Bangla Vision in the final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The final of the seven-a-side event for journalists, organised by Bangladesh Sports Journalists Association (BSJA), will kick off at 10 am after the third-place play-off between losing semifinalists UNB and New Nation at 9 am.

Bangladesh Olympic Association's acting secretary general

Kutubuddin Ahmed will distribute prizes as chief guest.

Services kabaddi from today

UNB, Dhaka

The Services Kabaddi League will begin at the Mirpur Shaheed Suhrawardy Indoor Stadium today.

Youth and Sports secretary Dr Golam Mostafa Talukder will formally inaugurate the six-team tournament.

The participating teams are Bangladesh Rifles, Bangladesh Police, Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Air Force, Bangladesh Fire Service and Jail Directorate.

Brazil to play

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The US team had been scheduled to play a friendly at Mexico but the match was cancelled due to contractual and financial considerations, the US Soccer Federation said.

US and Brazil squads won their continental championships earlier in the summer to book berths in the 2009 Confederations Cup in South Africa.

The US squad will prepare for the Brazil challenge with a friendly August 22 at Sweden.

Syria bring

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team in the tournament.

The Syrian team consist of several under-23 players who had represented their country at the Doha Asian Games last year.

A big challenge for the Syrian team is getting accustomed to the hot and humid conditions in Delhi.

Scots' date

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international.

The presence of Warwickshire opener Poonia and Worcestershire seamer Nel gives the home side some solidity, and they can also draw on the experience of all-rounder Gavin Hamilton.

However, Dougie Brown -- who is expected to play in the ICC World Twenty20 in September -- is not quite match-fit after an Achilles problem.

SQUADS

SCOTLAND (from): Ryan Watson (captain), John Blain, Gordon Drummond, Gavin Hamilton, Majid Haq, Paul Hoffmann, Neil McCallum, Navdeep Poonia, Deward Nel, Colin Smith, Fraser Watts, Craig Wright.

INDIA (from): Rahul Dravid (captain), Gautam Gambhir, Robin Uthappa, Sachin Tendulkar, Yuvraj Singh, Saurav Ganguly, Mahendra Dhoni, Dinesh Karthik, Zaheer Khan, Rudra Pratap Singh, Piyush Chawla, Ramesh Powar, Ajit Agarkar, Rohit Sharma, Munaf Patel.



PHOTO: AFP

American Andy Roddick stretches to make a backhand return against Spaniard Fernando Verdasco at the Cincinnati Masters on Tuesday.

Roddick rolls, Murray falls



AFP, Cincinnati

Defending champion Andy Roddick advanced without difficulty Tuesday while Britain's Andy Murray was drummed out with ease at the 2.2 million-dollar ATP Cincinnati Masters.

Third seed Roddick, given a bye into the second round, booked the first spot in the third round as he unleashed 13 aces to swamp Spain's Fernando Verdasco 7-6, 6-2.

Murray continued to struggle as he recovers from a wrist injury, losing 6-1, 6-2 to unseeded Cypriot Marcos Baghdatis, who needed a mere 48 minutes to send the Scotsman to a lopsided loss for a second straight week.

Roddick improved to 8-2 over Verdasco and left the American at 25-4 at this US Midwest tournament, which he won in 2003 and 2006.

After a combative opening set, Roddick began the second set with a break and added another for

insurance to advance in 76 minutes.

Murray said he will train before going to next week's event in New Haven, his last chance to prepare before the US Open starts on August 27.

In Montreal, the 16th-ranked standout who missed three months with his wrist tendon trouble beat American Robby Ginepri in his first match back then lost badly to Italian qualifier Fabio Fognini.

Lleyton Hewitt struggled for a shade under three hours to subdue Swiss Stanislas Wawrinka 7-5, 3-6, 7-6.

The former world number one, a two-time finalist at the US Midwest event, overcame a patchy day on serve with eight double-faults and just four aces.

Wawrinka, the number two Swiss behind Roger Federer, played the final on clay in Stuttgart against Rafael Nadal last month but has been unable to carry over that form.

The world number 49 has won just one match out of his last four.

Hewitt improved to 19-6 at Cincinnati as he works long distance with coach Tony Roche in

Sydney during the build-up to the US Open starting August 27.

Roche remains at home awaiting the birth of a grandchild.

Hewitt missed the event last year due to a knee injury which kept him out of the Open in New York.

Mario Ancic, back after six months away with glandular fever, upset Germany's Tommy Haas 3-6, 7-6, 6-3 and Argentine Juan del Potro put out Guillermo Canas 6-2, 6-2.

Federer and Nadal learned the names of second-round opponents as Julien Benneteau and Juan Monaco won through.

Frenchman Benneteau defeated Russian Dmitry Tursunov 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 to move into a match-up against Federer while Argentine Monaco faces Nadal by virtue of a 6-4, 6-7, 6-3 defeat of Spain's Feliciano Lopez.

Robby Ginepri became the third American into the second round with a win over Swede Jonas Bjorkman 6-3, 6-3.

Prior feels the heat



AFP, London

England wicketkeeper Matt Prior faces an examination of both his nerve and skill after a rollercoaster first session in Test cricket.

The 25-year-old Sussex keeper-batsman made a storybook start to his Test career by scoring a hundred on debut at Lord's, albeit against a weak and woefully under-prepared West Indies attack.

But in the last Test of the season, across London at The Oval, Prior found himself dropping catches and making a first innings nought against India.

In the intervening period it seemed he'd become England's chief sledger.

Prior, conscious the keeper is the man who is expected to gee-up his teammates on the field, rarely let up with what some within the England

set-up labelled "aggressive" cricket although former England coach David Lloyd branded it "puerile" chatter.

Meanwhile, at The Oval, former England wicketkeeper Alec Stewart -- Prior's agent -- highlighted a technical flaw that meant his client's footwork was below par because his weight was on his heels rather than the balls of his feet as the bowler came in.

However, in the second innings, Prior did bat for 93 minutes in making an unbeaten 12 as England saved the third Test although a draw gave India the series 1-0.

England coach Peter Moores, who guided the keeper's early career, said of Prior: "He can look back on the summer and say he has a Test match average close to 40 and he kept pretty well there.

"He's made some mistakes but he's learning and he's getting better," former Sussex wicketkeeper Moores added. "The challenge is whether he becomes

mentally stronger from this game."

England's behaviour reached a low point during a seven-wicket second Test defeat at Trent Bridge where the scarcely credible sight of a jelly bean left on the pitch angered India's Zaheer Khan when he was batting.

Both Prior and the rest of the England team had turned down the volume at the start of the third Test.

Moores said he wanted England to make life uncomfortable for opposition batsmen but stressed that could be done while upholding the spirit of cricket.

"I know Matthew well and I know he's a good lad who respects the game and respects the people he plays against," said Moores. "He will have balanced it up and learned something in the process."

England and India, who both had a lacklustre World Cup, are now set to play seven one-day internationals with the first at the Rose Bowl on Tuesday.

Road to redemption



CRICINFO, undated

Defeated but not disgraced was Michael Vaughan's verdict, as England's proud six-year home record was finally brought to an end. England were, by their captain's admission, the lesser side over the space of the three Tests. Their failure to convert their Lord's opportunity into a win was mitigated by two consecutive matches in which they were most definitely second-best. Had Rahul Dravid needed to gamble at The Oval with the series tied at 1-1, he would surely have done so, and most likely would have succeeded.

For Vaughan it was a bittersweet finish to a summer of personal redemption. The manner in which he fought back from the brink of career oblivion epitomised the drive and indefatigability of his captaincy, and his two centuries of the season were, in very different ways, among the most memorable of his career. But the team to which he has returned has changed beyond all recognition in his time on the sidelines, and India's victory underlines just how arduous the rebuilding process promises to be.

When Vaughan's knee buckled in Lahore in November 2005, England had racked up six series wins in a row, culminating of course in that summer's Ashes triumph.

Since then, however, they've managed just two wins out of seven -- the second of which, against West Indies earlier in the summer, was a desperately untaxing affair that probably did the team more harm than good. England, for instance,

found no way through their one world-class opponent, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, and so they went around him instead. Against India, however, not even the weakest links were of the exploitable variety.

England scored some notable hits in the course of the series -- none of India's batsmen made a century, for instance, a statistic that left Vaughan incredulous -- but their best punches were absorbed by opponents whose greater experience matched their greater desire. This series mattered dearly to India -- a team still smarting from their early World Cup exit and one stacked with legendary cricketers for whom time is running out to make their marks for posterity. England's spirit was willing but found wanting, for theirs was a side nearer the start of their journey than the end.

Little has been made of the absenteers in the England set-up, and rightly so on two counts. Firstly, this is a new era -- as epitomised by the appointment of Peter Moores as coach -- and so the time for Duncan Fletcher-style excuses is passed. Secondly, when they have been available to England, the established stars have not exactly covered themselves in glory in recent months, with Steve Harmison's flaccid performances against West Indies a case in point.

But you can't put a price on experience, as India themselves will be reflecting today. England's new-look four-man attack performed above all expectations. Ryan Sidebottom was outstanding in his consistency, James Anderson pulled killer deliveries from thin air and suffered fewer off-days than ever before, while Chris Tremlett

showed he knows how to combine height, pace and accuracy. Only Monty Panesar lost ground in the reputation stakes, but then he was never going to trump his 23 wickets against West Indies.

But they were unable to land the body-jarring blows that marked England out as such a top-draw side two summers ago, and that, as much as anything, was the fault of England's batsmen. High-class swing bowling limited the Australians to just three centuries in the 2005 Ashes (only one of which came in the first four matches), but two years on it was England's turn to be turned inside out by the moving ball. Vaughan's artistry and Kevin Pietersen's appetite meant England scored three centuries to India's one, but either side of those efforts, England's failures were glaring.

The trouble began at the top, where Andrew Strauss, who once boasted a tally of ten Test hundreds in 30 matches, has now gone 41 international innings without adding to that figure. His alliance with Alastair Cook is England's loosest since Graham Gooch and Tim Robinson were themselves turned over by India in 1986, and if Marcus Trescothick were to make himself available, Strauss would be out of the door like a shot. In Trescothick's absence, he has taken it upon himself to be England's enforcer, but Strauss has been playing outside his comfort zone for 12 months now, and looks in desperate need of a break.

CSA hopeful on Kallis

BBC ONLINE, undated

Cricket South Africa selection convenor Joubert Strydom says all-rounder Jacques Kallis remains "a cornerstone of the Test and one-day side".

Kallis resigned the vice-captaincy after being omitted from the squad to play in the inaugural ICC World Twenty20 on home soil in September.

CSA issued a statement on Tuesday registering its disappointment.

But Strydom said philosophically: "I was a bit surprised (by the resignation) but Jacques must do what he must do."

Speaking to iol.co.za, Joubert went on: "I spoke to him personally before we announced the team and he was very good to me."

"He told me he respected the decision, but that he would have to reconsider his position in general and how long he still wanted to play."

"There are long-term strategic decisions that I have to take. We have 11 Test and 11 one-day matches coming up in the next 18 months."

"Jacques is the cornerstone of our Test and one-day teams. We felt that because of what he brings to the Test and one-day teams, it wasn't worthwhile sacrificing him in the Twenty20."

CSA chief executive Gerard Majola had earlier taken a dimmer view of Kallis.

He said in a statement: "It is most disappointing that Jacques took a unilateral decision after speaking to me to publicly announce his resignation as vice-captain."

"This is regrettable."

"Jacques is employed by CSA, and we expected him at least to sit down at a meeting and go through the matter before he made his own decision to make a public announcement."

Chappell slams

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his admirers.

"It's alright for some ex-players and scribes to say anyone can have a bad match, but you've got to see something there for the future, and I think Prior is so far off being an international wicketkeeper at Test level. One-day matches, he'll probably be terrific and that's fine, but Tests? Forget it."

Chappell, who played alongside one of the game's greats in Rod Marsh, was particularly critical of Prior's footwork as a wicketkeeper, and felt that it reflected badly on England's new coach, Peter Moores, who was Prior's mentor at Sussex. "I'm told (Moores) has had Prior since the Under-13s and if that's the footwork from that coach from U-13 to now, they've got a problem."

"England have got to seriously look at how they judge wicketkeepers, because they are making huge mistakes," said Chappell. "What we've seen lately with Jones and Prior just isn't going to work. They got very lucky in the Ashes in 2005, and got away with that, but they've got to revisit the way they select wicketkeepers."

"No way in the world are they going to win against Australia with a wicketkeeper that like. He's going to let somebody off -- Ricky Ponting, Adam Gilchrist, Michael Clarke -- and boy, you're going to play heavily for that."

India's own wicketkeeper, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, entered this series with some question marks about his ability at the highest level, but Chappell believes he's left his English counterpart trailing in his wake.

"Dhoni is rough and ready but I see the basis there for some improvement," said Chappell. "He's pretty good standing up to (Anil) Kumble and does a decent job. The difference is I see a future in what Dhoni is doing. I don't see any future as a Test-match wicketkeeper in what Prior is doing."

Keane slams

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London, Monaco, wherever - and any half-decent footballer will be a multi-millionaire anyway. Why is there such a big attraction with London?

"If a player doesn't want to come to Sunderland because his wife wants to go shopping in London it's a sad state of affairs."

Chelsea deny

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Champions League squad for Wednesday's night's qualifier against AEK Athens.

The decision to omit the 24-year-old fuelled rumours of an impending move to the London club but a Chelsea statement countered the Spanish reports.

The Chelsea statement read: "Contrary to reports from Spain, Chelsea Football Club has not reached an agreement for the transfer of Daniel Alves from Sevilla."

"Chelsea FC has confirmed its interest in the player to the club but as yet there is no agreement."

The Spanish press said the signing would pave the way for Dutch winger Arjen Robben's proposed move from Chelsea to Real Madrid, for around 30 million euros.

Remembering Palmer

HUBERT ARUN ROZARIO

A renowned sportsman of our country, Francis Donald Alfred Palmer passed away on June 8, 2007 in Oxnard, Ventura County, California. He was 70. He is survived by his wife Janet Palmer, son and two daughters, seven grand children.

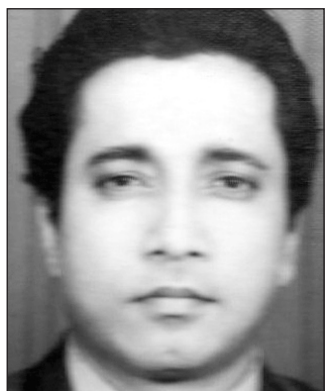
He also left behind one sister, two brothers and a host of relatives and friends in the United States and in Bangladesh.

Many will remember Francis as the eldest son of the Scout Master Late Alfred Palmer of St. Gregory's Fifth Dhaka Troop, and School Teacher Late Kathleen Palmer, St. Francis Xavier's School. Francis was a great sportsman in the then East Pakistan and Pakistan in the 60s. He was General Manager of the KLM Royal Dutch Airlines in Dhaka for 32 years. After retirement he migrated to the United States in the early 90s.

I take this opportunity to reminisce about a sportsman who had a great personality. It was a privilege for me to know him and to play under his leadership. Francis had the ability to inspire the young people in our country and to take them to higher levels of sportsmanship, particularly team play. Youth under him aspired to be in a win-win situation.

Francis had the rare distinction of playing soccer, field hockey and basketball simultaneously in First Division tournaments in Dhaka. He played soccer and basketball for the famous Dhaka Wanderers Club, and hockey for Wari Club. It required a lot of skill, tenacity and

determination to compete in these sports. He was very versatile and played other sports where he also shined. For example, he played baseball for the US Embassy team in Dhaka and handball in St. Gregory's High School. He had that rare talent and tremendous courage to follow it.



FRANCIS DONALD ALFRED PALMER

His endeavour in sports started in his loving St. Gregory's High School. He broke ground training in hockey, soccer and basketball in the school's sports field. In 1960, Brother Thomas More, csc, Sportmaster of St. Gregory's High School, popularised basketball in East Pakistan. He organised tournaments in Dhaka schools. Francis captained the first East Pakistan provincial basketball team and the players made their mark in the Pakistan National Games in Peshawar. Later on, Francis led the Dhaka Wanderers basketball team in many other

tournaments. It was his privilege to lead his team and win the championship in the first floodlit tournament in Dhaka. Many will remember this as the "Sujat Ali Basketball Tournament" organised by Dhaka Wanderers Club in 1962. Francis was an idol for many sports lovers and a positive force for our country's youth. The Dhaka crowd loved his games which he played with a unique style. He spent his leisure time practicing, always striving for success. He played all his matches without flaw.

Francis was not only a player but an incredible sports organizer. He organized a soccer team and toured many districts in Bangladesh in those days when sports were not well patronised by government or organised. His leadership in sports was viewed with esteem in Dhaka. Many sportsmen in Bangladesh still remember him lovingly for his contribution to the small sports world then in our country.

To be remembered is not only his style and selfless service in the field of sports in our country but also his gentleness. I have never seen him get angry on the sportsfield. We owe it to his memory to remember how crowds cheered when he played. In asking for his soul to rest in peace we recall to mind Francis' purity of heart and the art with which he participated in every sport he competed in.

Younis's no to ICL



CRICINFO, undated

Younis Khan has rejected a lucrative offer from the Indian Cricket League (ICL) and has expressed his preference of playing for Pakistan.

Younis, currently playing for Yorkshire, is also keen to be part of Pakistan's domestic season, the dates for which may clash with the ICL's planned itinerary.

"I don't run after money. To me, playing for my country is a bigger honour," Younis said. "And I don't want to miss the domestic matches."

However, Asim Kamal, the Test discard who last represented Pakistan almost two years ago, is "seriously considering" an offer put forward by the league. Being out of favour even after a Test average of over 37, Kamal is close to signing that deal according to sources close to him.

"Right now the situation is I am not sure if I will ever be given a chance to play for Pakistan again. I

have got an offer (from ICL) and it is a very good one. I have spoken to Inzamamul Haq about it and I am giving it a serious thought because the money is very good," Kamal told PTI.

Younis, who is one of four players yet to sign the national contract, says that he will not be able to sign the national contract until after his return to Pakistan on August 22, thus missing the August 15 deadline set by the Pakistan Cricket Board.

"Right now I am busy with county cricket and I plan to return home on August 22 after which I will consult my lawyers and only then take a decision on signing the documents."

Younis, in the aftermath of a disastrous World Cup campaign, made himself unavailable for national selection until after the county season finished at the end of September. He was, however, named in the Pakistan squad that toured Scotland and has also been named in the squad for the inaugural Twenty20 World Championship that starts on September 11.

Meanwhile, in a letter written to former Test batsman and national selector Pranab Roy, the Cricket

Carragher won't

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with Carragher, but the situation remained the same.

"I met Jamie on Monday and had a very good conversation but unfortunately he's stayed with the decision to not be involved with us," McClaren told a press conference.

"We respect that, Jamie has been a fantastic servant for England."

"I won't close the door, who knows in the future."

McClaren said that former captain David Beckham will continue his international comeback against Germany providing he has not further setbacks with an ankle injury. Beckham played a full part in Los Angeles Galaxy's training for the first time on Tuesday.

And McClaren, who travelled to the States to see the midfielder recently, said: "We've got to assess it over the next few days. He'll be in

the squad, we want him to come over and play a part against Germany but it all depends on what happens this evening (when Galaxy face DC United in the SuperLiga).

"We'll be keeping in close contact with him and the Galaxy medical staff to see his condition."

"If at all possible of course we'd like David to join us on Monday."

The England manager said he was looking forward to next week's game with their old rivals and insists both sides will be taking the game seriously.

"It's a great friendly. Is there ever a friendly against Germany? I think for anyone who puts on an England shirt it's not a friendly. They want to win the game and we do and we will be preparing from Monday morning to do exactly that," he added.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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